Pertanika Journal of

# SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

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PERTANIKA
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# PERTANIKA JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

## About the Journal

### *Overview*

Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities is the official journal of Universiti Putra Malaysia. It is an open-access online scientific journal. It publishes original scientific outputs. It neither accepts nor commissions third party content.

Recognised internationally as the leading peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal devoted to the publication of original papers, it serves as a forum for practical approaches to improve quality in issues pertaining to social and behavioural sciences as well as the humanities.

Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities is a **quarterly** (*March*, *June*, *September*, *and December*) periodical that considers for publication original articles as per its scope. The journal publishes in **English** as well as in **Bahasa Malaysia** and it is open for submission by authors from all over the world.

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Most scientific papers are prepared according to a format called IMRAD. The term represents the first letters of the words ***I****ntroduction*, ***M****aterials and Methods*, ***R****esults*, ***A****nd* ***D****iscussion*. IMRAD is simply a more 'defined' version of the "IBC" (*Introduction*, *Body*, *Conclusion*) format used for all academic writing. IMRAD indicates a pattern or format rather than a complete list of headings or components of research papers; the missing parts of a paper are: *Title*, *Authors*, *Keywords*, *Abstract*, *Conclusions*, *References*, and *Acknowledgement*. Additionally, some papers include *Appendices*. For manuscripts in **Bahasa Malaysia**, the title, abstract and keywords should be written in both **English** and **Bahasa Malaysia**.

The *Introduction* explains the scope and objective of the study in the light of current knowledge on the subject; the *Materials and Methods* describes how the study was conducted; the *Results* section reports what was found in the study; and the *Discussion* section explains meaning and significance of the results and provides suggestions for future directions of research. The manuscript must be prepared according to the journal's **Instruction to Authors** (http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/Resources/regular_issues/Regular_Issues_Instructions_to_Authors.pdf).

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Notification of the editorial decision is usually provided within 120 days from the receipt of manuscript. Publication of solicited manuscripts is not guaranteed. In most cases, manuscripts are accepted conditionally, pending an author's revision of the material.

As articles are double-blind reviewed, material that may identify authorship of the paper should be placed only on page 2 as described in the first-4-page format in Pertanika's Instruction to Authors (http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/Resources/regular_issues/Regular_Issues_Instructions_to_Authors.pdf).

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2. The Chief Executive Editor sends the article-identifying information having been removed, to 2 to 3 reviewers. They are specialists in the subject matter of the article. The Chief Executive Editor requests that they complete the review within 3 weeks.

   Comments to authors are about the appropriateness and adequacy of the theoretical or conceptual framework, literature review, method, results and discussion, and conclusions. Reviewers often include suggestions for strengthening of the manuscript. Comments to the editor are in the nature of the significance of the work and its potential contribution to the research field.

3. The Editor-in-Chief examines the review reports and decides whether to accept or reject the manuscript, invite the authors to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or seek additional review reports. In rare instances, the manuscript is accepted with almost no revision. Almost

without exception, reviewers' comments (to the authors) are forwarded to the authors. If a revision is indicated, the editor provides guidelines to the authors for attending to the reviewers' suggestions and perhaps additional advice about revising the manuscript.

4. The authors decide whether and how to address the reviewers' comments and criticisms and the editor's concerns. The authors return a revised version of the paper to the Chief Executive Editor along with specific information describing how they have addressed the concerns of the reviewers and the editor, usually in a tabular form. The authors may also submit a rebuttal if there is a need especially when the authors disagree with certain comments provided by reviewers.
5. The Chief Executive Editor sends the revised manuscript out for re-review. Typically, at least 1 of the original reviewers will be asked to examine the article.
6. When the reviewers have completed their work, the Editor-in-Chief examines their comments and decides whether the manuscript is ready to be published, needs another round of revisions, or should be rejected. If the decision is to accept, the Chief Executive Editor is notified.
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9. The editorial office ensures that the manuscript adheres to the correct style (in-text citations, the reference list, and tables are typical areas of concern, clarity, and grammar). The authors are asked to respond to any minor queries by the editorial office. Following these corrections, page proofs are mailed to the corresponding authors for their final approval. At this point, **only essential changes are accepted**. Finally, the manuscript appears in the pages of the journal and is posted on-line.

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## ABSTRACTING AND INDEXING OF PERTANIKA JOURNALS

The journal is indexed in SCOPUS (Elsevier), Clarivate-Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), BIOSIS, National Agricultural Science (NAL), Google Scholar, MyCite, ISC. In addition, Pertanika JSSH is recipient of "CREAM" Award conferred by Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), Malaysia.

## Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities
## Vol. 29 (4) Dec. 2021

## Contents

# Foreword

Welcome to the fourth issue of 2021 for the Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (PJSSH)!

PJSSH is an open-access journal for studies in Social Sciences and Humianities published by Universiti Putra Malaysia Press. It is independently owned and managed by the university for the benefit of the world-wide science community.

This issue contains 42 articles; three review articles and the rest are regular articles. The authors of these articles come from different countries namely Australia, Colombia, Ethopia, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Phillipnes, Thailand, United Kingdom, USA, Sweden and Vietnam.

Mohd Kamel Mat Salleh and colleagues review an interesting polemic on whether fatwa is rightly constitutional and as part of law systems practised in Malaysia, in their article entitled “Position of Fatwa in the Constitution: A Legal Analysis”. The study shows that the fatwa and its institutions are legal and valid according to Malaysian law despite it is not literally mentioned in the Constitution. Further details of the study can be found on page 2171.

A selected article from the scope of Sociology, titled “Covid-19 and Collective Memory Among Malaysians: Does Generation Matter?” targets to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the collective memory among Malaysian generational cohorts. The study shows significant cohort effects on the collective memory of Covid-19, with lower recall recorded among the older generation as compared to the younger generation, which provided stronger support to the Critical Years Hypothesis. Details of this study are available on page 2371.

A regular article titled “A Study on Cognitive Aspects of Students’ Mathematical Reasoning Habits: Utilizing Lesson Study and Open Approach” sought to investigate the cognitive aspects of the mathematical reasoning habits of students by utilizing Lesson Study (LS) and Open Approach (OA) in teaching mathematics. This study shows the importance of OA treatment in the LS process in improving students’ mathematical reasoning habits. The detailed information of this article is presented on page 2592.

In the last 12 months, of all the manuscripts peer-reviewed, 24% were accepted. This seems to be the trend in PJSSH.

We anticipate that you will find the evidence presented in this issue to be intriguing, thought-provoking and useful in reaching new milestones in your own research. Please recommend the journal to your colleagues and students to make this endeavour meaningful.

All the papers published in this edition underwent Pertanika's stringent peer-review process involving a minimum of two reviewers comprising internal as well as external referees. This was to ensure that the quality of the papers justified the high ranking of the journal, which is renowned as a heavily-cited journal not only by authors and researchers in Malaysia but by those in other countries around the world as well.

We would also like to express our gratitude to all the contributors, namely the authors, reviewers, Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board Members of PJSSH, who have made this issue possible. PJSSH is currently accepting manuscripts for upcoming issues based on original qualitative or quantitative research that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation.

**Chief Executive Editor**
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# Global Connectivity and Ethnic Fractionalization: New Frontiers of Global Trade Agenda

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## ABSTRACT

International trade is an exchange that involves goods and services between countries or international territories, and it signifies a significant share of gross domestic product. Global trading provides opportunities for the country to show its products and services through imports and exports. While this international event gives rise to a world economy, global connectivity and ethnic heterogeneity play a significant role. This paper aims to determine whether the ruggedness of a country supports international trade and global connectivity and whether the ruggedness of ethnic heterogeneity supports global trading. This paper uses the non-experimental quantitative inferential design utilizing Fractal Analysis to determine the self-similarity of countries engaging in international trade in terms of their global connectivity index and ethnic fractionalization. The International Trade data provided by the World Integrated Trade Solutions and the Global Connectivity Index (GCI) data through Huawei Technologies are plotted in a histogram through Minitab Software to determine the fractality and further apply exponential logarithm. Study shows that global connectivity and ethnic fractionalization induce the fractal characteristics of the countries' international trade ruggedness. Specific to the behavior is that countries with very high international trade also behave similarly with high global connectivity and very low ethnicity fractionalization. As countries sustain a progressive economic stance, their societies maintain very few ethnic groups to promote social cohesion, much less conflict created by many ethnic groups that vary in their concerns. This paper further explains

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that only countries with digital economic competitiveness and cultural homogeneity survive robust international trade.

*Keywords:* Ethnic heterogeneity, fractal analysis, Global Connectivity Index, Gross Domestic Product, global connectivity, globalization, international trade, world economy

## INTRODUCTION

International trade is considered the engine of world economic growth. Imports and exports become significantly responsible for much of the development and prosperity of the modern industrialized world and even of developing economies. A country maximizes its goods and services for export when sold at a much higher value and sold domestically. A country contributes its needs economically by importing goods and services locally unavailable or insufficient, cheaper, and better quality than domestic supply. World Bank data show that world exports as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have increased from 12% in 1960 to around 30% in 2015.

Through the years, the importance and impact of international trading have been captured in different concepts like technology, innovation, and knowledge (TIK) (Andersson et al., 2016). Much is written about TIK in an international context. Still, the literature has grown to a point where we have seen numerous papers and articles on global connectivity and ethnic diversity pursuing international trading.

International connectivity measured by GCI is a concept that has been at the core of the worldwide economy evolution and international business growth. GCI is an annual report published by Chinese Technology firm Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd. to analyze each country's broad spectrum of indicators based on information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and digital transformation. It is a complete guide for the country's policymakers and industry leaders towards a digital economy agenda. Its core methodology analyzes 40 indicators and four technology enablers–Broadband, Cloud, IoT (Internet of Things), and AI (Artificial Intelligence)–that identify progress made in the interplay of four economic pillars: supply, demand, experience, and potential. These indicators involve the entire chain of ICT development a 360-degree view of the digital economy. As a global trademark for digital transformation assessment, GCI annually ranks 79 nations along with an S-curve graph based on their latest GCI scores (Huawei, 2019). The first report, which was published in 2014, covered 25 nations and ten industries. It expanded to 50 nations with 38 indicators in GCI 2015 Report. From 2018 until the present, the GCI broadened the scope from 50 to 79 nations, exhibiting digital competitiveness in ICT investment, ICT maturity, and digital economic performance. Also, this index which benchmarks 79 countries, accounts for 95% of global GDP when combined. Using the ICT components, the S-curve classifies each country into three different GCI clusters: Frontrunners, Adopters, and Starters. Nations with GDP per capita of

$58,100 and a GCI score of 65-85 are called frontrunners, mainly developed economies that focus on enhancing user experience and prioritizing shifts to investment in big data. Countries with average GDP per capita of US$17,200 and GCI score of 40-64 are clustered as the adopter, who experience the most significant GDP growth from investment in ICT Infrastructure and focus on the growing demand for high-speed connectivity to facilitate digitization. Lastly, those with average GDP per capita of US$3,800 and a GCI score of 23-39 are nations in the early stage of ICT infrastructure build-out, which focus is on expanding connectivity to give their people access to the digital economy.

A specific example of international trading vis-à-vis global connectivity, which features their home country as the study context, is the work of Li (2007), which looks at how a Hong Kong theatre expresses its country's relationship and contribution to globalization. Their performances feature global connectivity using responses to the challenges of internationalization and patriotism. Berman et al. (2020) analyze two forms of innovation connectivity in Italy – 'reaching-out' and 'reaching-in' processes. Findings show that the regional innovation system of Italy is rising rapidly in terms of connectivity due to the reaching-in processes managed by foreign entities. Also, the economy of Australia was historically aligned towards international trade (Sigler & Martinus, 2018). Since the early colonial period in the "Land Down Under," export-led growth has paved the way for raw materials to be shipped overseas. According to Dhawan and Zilio (2014), the world is rapidly getting integrated, and China is at the epicenter of this globalization drive. Their study focuses on Chinese global connectivity and its rapidly changing trade relationships in the past few decades. Another study is Nees' (2005) work, which investigates the tenacity and perseverance of New Zealand's trade in commodities, which accounts for a large portion of their export receipts. The country's export returns and income continues to be sourced from bulk commodities. Further, Alkaabi et al. (2013) discuss the promising features of the aerotropolis model in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) developed by Kasarda (2019) in pursuit of a more conventional urban evolution and global connectivity.

On the other hand, there is a rising study on the effect of economic and cultural globalization on local communities featuring international trading and ethnic fractionalization. As defined by mental health research, ethnic heterogeneity or fractionalization can be observed in two ways: ethnic density, or the proportion of immigrants or ethnic minorities in an area (Budescu & Budescu, 2012); and ethnic diversity, measured by the probability of selecting two individuals of different ethnicities in a locality (Erdem et al., 2017). However, does diversity play a significant feature in prosperity? On the other hand, does the globalization of culture create heterogeneity? A striking example of this study is the work of Van Der Bly (2007), which analyzes the data for Leixlip, the most vital globalized village in Ireland, being one of the world's most globalized economies. The findings show that globalization of culture generates fractionalization, namely as local adaptations of world cultural forms. Another study is from Thailand (Duanmu & Guney, 2013), which attempts to untangle the heterogeneous effect of ethnic networks on international trade. The paper shows the magnitude of outcomes across different ethnicities and their attributes to economic activities. Also, the study of Hirte et al. (2020) reveals that international trade exasperates economic polarity only in nations with steeper within-country diversity in their access to the world market and their within-country trade costs. This study is further proven by the work of Ahmad and Amin (2020), which investigates whether ethnic or religious diversity affects international trade and environmental performance by using the data of 187 countries. The results indicate that ethnic and religious diversity significantly impacts the country's international trade and environmental performance.

There is some evidence on the detrimental impact of ethnic heterogeneity on global connectivity and economic growth. Wunnava et al. (2015) found out that economic globalization has had a significant positive effect on the growth rate over the period under consideration, and ethnic heterogeneity has taken a considerable toll. Interestingly, once we introduce the interaction term between economic globalization and ethnic fractionalization, the coefficient on the ethnic fractionalization variable is more significant than any of the previous specifications and remains so regardless of whether we use the Alesina et al. (2003) or the Fearon (2003) measures of heterogeneity and whether we include or exclude the non-ethnic dimensions of group difference from our model. They also found out that countries marked by a high degree of ethnic fragmentation have, on average, attained lower growth rates than more homogenous societies. According to the study of Hughes (2012), ethnicity often manifests itself in phenomena such as cultural stereotyping and socio-economic and political discrimination. Ethnic identity is a valuable part of the range of "identities." The critical point is that it belongs to our nature to construct this type of identity, and without it, we are less than we can or ought to be. Globalization is a movement that fosters uniformity. It claims to unite people all over the world. In fact, according to Alesina and La Ferrara (2005), it is somehow easy to point to economic failures of fractionalized societies, but it is not a general phenomenon. Prosperous, democratic nations work well with diversity, like in the United States, which is very well in growth and productivity. Even within the developing world, similar levels of ethnic diversity are associated with very different degrees of conflict and inter-ethnic cooperation.

Studying fractal properties on international trade has also been done by many researchers. One good example is Karpiarz et al. (2014) study, which uses two independent methods, the counting method, and the spatial choice method, to capture the notion of the globalization puzzle. Thus, the fractality of the international trade system provides a simple solution for that puzzle. Fractal stock markets are also being studied by Bianchi and Frezza (2017), which presents an example of a complex system whose dynamics continuously adapt to the decisions of its components such as banks, governments, traders, and the like. Li et al. (2014) also propose a new agent-based model to study the source of liquidity and the emergent phenomenon in the financial market with fractal structure. Another study is the work of Dyck (2006), which uses fractal planning as a new approach to economic development. Finally, the efficiency or inefficiency of the market during COVID-19 also undergone fractal analysis in the study of Frezza et al. (2020). These suggest a rising interest in fractal analysis for international trade, providing a basis for sustained socio-economic welfare within a nation that encourages collaborative democracy and social learning.

This paper investigates the impact of increasing global integration on economic growth through international trading, emphasizing its interaction with international connectivity and ethnic heterogeneity of 79 countries using Fractal Analysis. This paper investigates further the factors which stimulate trade and environmental performance. From a fractal perspective, this study specifically aims to:

1. determine whether the ruggedness of the countries supports international trade;
2. determine whether the ruggedness of the countries supports the pillars of global connectivity; and
3. determine whether the ruggedness of the ethnic heterogeneity supports international trade.

## Framework of the Study

Although goods and services undergo trading to serve critical economic purposes, the trade volume also shows how countries increase dependency on each other and allow other broader implications such as technological connectivity and ethnic heterogeneity. In increasing international trade, the value of digital connectivity becomes essential, and the possibility that diversity changes over time. Figure 1 illustrates the framework of this study.

The figure shows three significant components for fractal analysis: global connectivity, ethnic heterogeneity, and international trading. Global connectivity measured by GCI assesses a nation’s digital transformation by looking at four economic pillars: ICT supply, demand, potential, and experience, added with four technology enablers: broadband, Cloud, AI, and IoT. Three clusters of nations, using this methodology, are grouped according to their GDP per capita and GCI position: Frontrunners, Adopters, and Starters.

On the other hand, Ethnic Heterogeneity is measured by 1) ethnic density, defined as the proportion of first- and second-generation immigrants with two foreign-born parents; and 2) ethnic diversity, using the fragmentation index (Johnson-Singh et al., 2018).

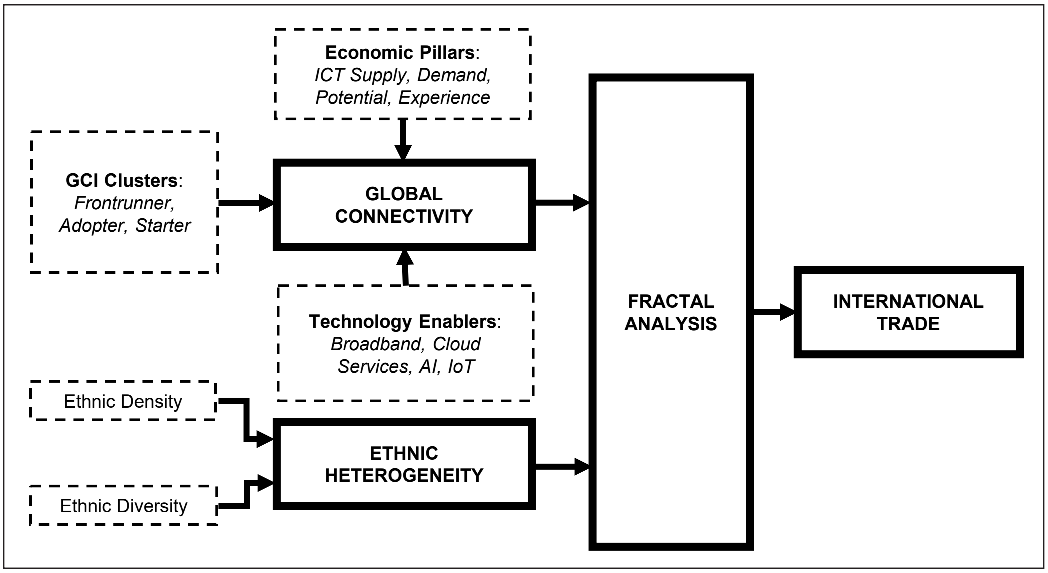

*Figure 1*. Framework of the study

Global connectivity and ethnic heterogeneity are subjected to Fractal Analysis to determine their ruggedness and support international trading. Thus, in increasing international trade, the value of digital connectivity becomes essential, and the possibility that ethnic diversity changes over time.

## METHODS

The research paper employs the non-experimental quantitative inferential design utilizing the Fractal Analysis to determine the self-similarity of countries engaging in international trade, vis-à-vis their global connectivity and ethnic heterogeneity.

### International Trading

The data used in the study were extracted from World Integrated Trade Solutions (WITS) TradeStat Database, as shown in Table 1, which displays the International Trade of 79 countries (Bankası, 2019). It provides the latest international merchandise and commercial services trade data and overview of country and region's imports and exports, tariff and non-tariff measures.

The trade data for each nation is divided into four sections. The first section shows a country profile summary that outlines key tariffs, trade indicators, top import and export partners and top exported products. The following section shows trading partners, which outlines the country's leading import or export partners with the trade value and partner share. A final section is a by-product group that provides details of imports and exports of the country by various standard product groups.

WITS permits the user to calculate and illustrate the following trade indicators: country's share of world exports, percentage of product in total exports, the share of the market in total exports, Hirschman

Table 1
*Ethnicity fractionalization index, international trade, and global connectivity index of 79 countries*

| **Country** | **Ethnicity Fractionalization** | **International Trade** | **Global Connectivity Index** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Algeria | 0.3394 | 77.08 | 29 |
| Argentina | 0.255 | 113.34 | 36 |
| Australia | 0.0929 | 379.04 | 59 |
| Austria | 0.1068 | 293.22 | 58 |
| Bahrain | 0.5021 | 27.64 | 44 |
| Bangladesh | 0.0454 | 79.79 | 23 |
| Belarus | 0.3222 | 51.15 | 39 |
| Belgium | 0.5554 | 770.74 | 58 |
| Bolivia | 0.7396 | 18.5 | 22 |
| Botswana | 0.4102 | 13.42 | 27 |
| Brazil | 0.5408 | 322.79 | 39 |
| Bulgaria | 0.4021 | 54.97 | 41 |
| Canada | 0.7124 | 792.04 | 57 |
| Chile | 0.1861 | 118.68 | 46 |
| China | 0.1538 | 3685.56 | 45 |
| Colombia | 0.6014 | 75.87 | 38 |
| Croatia | 0.369 | 35.48 | 42 |
| Czech Republic | 0.3222 | 301.57 | 47 |
| Denmark | 0.0819 | 179.49 | 64 |
| Ecuador | 0.655 | 32.99 | 29 |
| Egypt | 0.655 | 80.56 | 32 |
| Estonia | 0.5062 | 29.64 | 49 |
| Ethiopia | 0.7235 | 20.84 | 22 |
| Finland | 0.1315 | 117.83 | 66 |
| France | 0.1032 | 1049.44 | 58 |
| Germany | 0.4923 | 2401.42 | 59 |
| Ghana | 0.6733 | 22.02 | 27 |
| Greece | 0.1576 | 75.41 | 43 |
| Hungary | 0.1522 | 195.11 | 47 |
| India | 0.4182 | 617.03 | 31 |
| Indonesia | 0.7351 | 280.14 | 32 |
| Ireland | 0.1206 | 206.32 | 59 |
| Italy | 0.1145 | 866.11 | 46 |
| Japan | 0.0119 | 1251.85 | 62 |
| Jordan | 0.5926 | 26.72 | 32 |
| Kazakhstan | 0.6171 | 61.95 | 40 |
| Kenya | 0.8588 | 21.93 | 27 |
| Kuwait | 0.6604 | 87.07 | 44 |
| Lebanon | 0.1314 | 23.8 | 32 |
| Lithuania | 0.3223 | 52.37 | 48 |
| Luxembourg | 0.5302 | 31.96 | 61 |
| Malaysia | 0.588 | 357.79 | 44 |
| Mexico | 0.5418 | 760.94 | 38 |
| Morocco | 0.4841 | 64.56 | 30 |
| Namibia | 0.6329 | 11.54 | 26 |
| Netherlands | 0.1054 | 803.21 | 64 |
| New Zealand | 0.3969 | 70.08 | 58 |
| Nigeria | 0.8505 | 149.41 | 26 |
| Norway | 0.0586 | 162.44 | 61 |
| Oman | 0.4373 | 47.71 | 42 |
| Pakistan | 0.7098 | 67.53 | 22 |
| Paraguay | 0.1689 | 18.25 | 23 |
| Peru | 0.6566 | 72.23 | 35 |
| Philippines | 0.2385 | 142.22 | 33 |
| Poland | 0.1183 | 384.98 | 43 |
| Portugal | 0.0468 | 123.31 | 50 |
| Romania | 0.3069 | 138.18 | 42 |
| Russia | 0.2452 | 467.75 | 43 |
| Saudi Arabia | 0.18 | 365.31 | 44 |
| Serbia | 0.5736 | 33.7 | 36 |
| Singapore | 0.3857 | 612.88 | 71 |
| Slovakia | 0.2539 | 152.73 | 45 |
| Slovenia | 0.2216 | 52.16 | 48 |
| South Africa | 0.7517 | 148.85 | 39 |
| South Korea | 0.0392 | 901.6 | 62 |
| Spain | 0.4165 | 584.32 | 51 |
| Sweden | 0.06 | 280.34 | 69 |
| Switzerland | 0.5314 | 573.85 | 67 |
| Tanzania | 0.7353 | 12.62 | 24 |
| Thailand | 0.6338 | 412.9 | 37 |
| Turkey | 0.32 | 341.15 | 38 |
| Uganda | 0.9302 | 7.8 | 24 |
| Ukraine | 0.4737 | 75.65 | 36 |
| United Arab Emirates | 0.6252 | 569.53 | 51 |
| United Kingdom | 0.1211 | 1047.83 | 64 |
| United States | 0.4901 | 3698.67 | 73 |
| Uruguay | 0.2504 | 15.1 | 38 |
| Venezuela | 0.4966 | 132.91 | 32 |
| Vietnam | 0.2383 | 327.8 | 31 |

Herfindahl index, comparative advantage index, trade complementarity index, trade intensity index, export specialization index, export diversification index, index of export market penetration, Hummels-Klenow (products) intensive and extensive margin, and Hummels-Klenow (markets) intensive and extensive margin.

For example, we can now compute the terms of trade (TOT). The TOT refers to the measure of a nation's export prices relative to its import prices. It is calculated by the ratio of export price to import price. Let *Px* be the index of export prices and *Pm* be the index of import prices. Hence, the (barter or commodity) TOT is defined as Px/Pm, as shown in the formula below:

$$TOT = (Px / Pm) \times 100$$

To compute the export and import prices index, we choose the base year and the current period. Suppose, export price index rises to 150 and the import price index rises to 120. Thus, TOT rises to 125.

### Global Connectivity Index

The GCI was designed to assess the nation's digital transformation in terms of its economy by looking at several indicators for ICT infrastructure (Huawei, 2020). First published in 2014, it offers a comprehensive guide for policymakers and industry leaders to develop a plan for the digital economy. Over time, the index has adapted its methodology to capture how technology evolves and evaluate the correlation between ICT investment and GDP growth.

The index tracks and benchmarks the progress of 79 economies deploying digital infrastructure and capabilities, looking into core technologies and future growth. The index value is computed in terms of four economic pillars, four technology enablers, and 40 indicators, which are described below:

**The Four Economic Pillars.** The four economic pillars of the GCI Index are Supply, Demand, Experience, and Potential or popularly known as SDEP. It measures the level of supply of ICT products and services, connectivity demand, experience, and potential for future development of the digital economy.

**The Four Technology Enablers.** In GCI 2019, notable changes were made when the Data Centers parameter was merged with Cloud and put Big Data under the newly created AI parameter. Although the research methodology expanded in 2019, Huawei integrated the five enabling technologies of "Intelligent Connectivity" into four technology enablers: Broadband, Cloud, IoT, and AI. Aside from the four pillars, the GCI analyzes the technology enablers' crucial role to benchmark the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and difficulties facing digital economies. Further, these technology enablers must function on a platform of robust measurements of ICT fundamentals for a nation to transform into a new digital economy. Broadband provides connectivity to feed data and information to AI and carry instructions to IoT and decision-makers. Cloud stores data and information while providing computing capabilities to run. AI impacts broadband and cloud services by minimizing network congestion and optimizing resources. Finally, IoT creates and collects data to feed AI systems.

**The 40 Indicators.** The 40 indicators can be analyzed vertically (Supply, Demand, Experience, Potential) and horizontally (Broadband, Cloud, IoT, and AI), as shown in Table 2.

**Measurement and Normalization.** These variables are measured against GDP PPP (Purchasing Power Parity), the number of households, and the total population. These factors assess the connectivity capability for each country (e.g., app downloads per person or fiber optic penetration against total households). It also gauges nations according to their overall rate of acclimatization with ICT across the economy and entire population.

The data inputs are first computed against a normalizing variable like the country's population size in all instances. Thus, the index can measure nations according to relative levels of connectivity rather than absolute market sizes, which

Table 2
*The 40 indicators interplaying with economic pillars and technology enablers*

| | **Supply**<br>*It assesses current levels of supply for ICT products and services used for digital transformation.* | **Demand**<br>*It benchmarks demand for connectivity in the context of users and activities relating to digital transformation initiatives.* | **Experience**<br>*It contains variables for analyzing the experience of connectivity for end-users and organizations in today's digital economy.* | **Potential**<br>*It covers a forward-looking set of indicators that point towards the future development of the digital economy.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fundamentals** | ICT Investment<br>Telecom Investment<br>ICT Laws<br>International Internet Bandwidth<br>Security Software Investment | App Downloads<br>Smartphone Penetration<br>e-Commerce Transactions<br>Computer Households<br>Secure Internet Servers | E-Government Services<br>Telecom Customer Services<br>Internet Participation<br>Broadband Download Speed<br>Cybersecurity Awareness | R&D Expenditure<br>ICT Patents<br>IT Workforce<br>Software Developers<br>ICT Influencing New Business Models |
| **Broadband** | Fiber Optic<br>4G/5G Connections | Fixed Broadband Subscriptions<br>Mobile Broadband Subscriptions | Fixed Broadband Affordability<br>Mobile Broadband Affordability | Broadband Potential<br>Mobile Potential |
| **Cloud** | Cloud Investment | Cloud Migration | Cloud Experience | Cloud Potential |
| **IoT** | IoT Investment | IoT Installed Base | IoT Analytics | IoT Potential |
| **AI** | AI Investment | AI-enabled Robotics/Demand | Data Creation | AI Potential |

would be more contemplative of economy size.

**Scoring and Aggregation.** A country receives a rating of 10 being high and 1 being low for each variable, based on the data input. Each indicator has a scale equivalent based on a realistic target value for 2025 and beyond, with a score of "10," which implies that the target value has been reached.

These target values are deduced from market penetration projections based on the highest-ranked countries, historical market performance, and expert opinions. Its normalized raw data value then computes each nation's score with this scale. Finally, a percentage of the target value is allocated a particular GCI score, as shown in Table 3.

Suppose the average values are significantly lower than the median. In that case, the formula is adjusted to include meaningful differentiation at the lower end of the scale and avoid excessive clustering of countries with equal (low) GCI scores. The final index score is then computed by accumulating the four segments using the formula:

Table 3
*Percentage of target value and their corresponding GCI score*

| Value (% of target value) | GCI Score |
|---|---|
| 1-10% | 1 |
| 11-20% | 2 |
| 21-30% | 3 |
| 31-40% | 4 |
| 41-50% | 5 |
| 51-60% | 6 |
| 61-70% | 7 |
| 71-80% | 8 |
| 81-90% | 9 |
| 91-100% | 10 |

$$GCI\ Total = (Supply + Demand + Experience + Potential) / 4$$

## Ethnic Fractionalization Index

Ethnic Heterogeneity, determined by the Ethnic Fractionalization Index, is a nominal measurement of diversity. It is the most commonly employed measure of aggregate ethnic diversity. It is also the probability that two individuals selected randomly from a country will be from different ethnic groups. It pertains to the pattern of ethnic diversity across countries and measures cultural and ethnic heterogeneity, showing how ethnically homogeneous or heterogeneous countries have become over time.

In Fearon's (2003) analysis, ethnic fractionalization is approximated by a measure of similarity between languages, varying from 1, where the population speaks two or more unrelated languages, or 0, where the entire population says the same vocabulary. Alesina et al. (2003) also compiled various measures of ethnic heterogeneity, which try to tackle the fact that the difference amongst groups manifests itself in different ways and different places. Finally, the dataset is calculated based on the degree of ethnic fractionalization using the most universally applied formula in the empirical literature, which is a decreasing transformation of the Herfindahl concentration index measured by:

$$\mathrm{EFc} = 1 - \sum \mathrm{Si}^2\ n\ i{=}1$$

where *EFc* is the level of ethnic fractionalization in country *c*, *i* is the index of ethnic groups, and *Si* is the proportion of the population in unit c belonging to ethnic group *i (i = 1, …, n).*

All data undergo Fractal Analysis, where they are plotted in a histogram to determine the fractality and further apply exponential logarithm. Finally, the log method presents the exponential data to find self-similarities among countries. Self-similarity is defined when the pieces of an object in space, or parts of a process in time, are smaller versions of the whole object or process (Liebovitch & Shehadeh, 2003; Patac Jr. & Padua, 2015).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### On the Ruggedness of the Countries in Terms of their International Trade

Among the 79 countries in the study, the international trade volume ranges in millions of dollars countries with the lowest 20 from 7 to 51; 39 countries with 52 to 379 volume; and the highest 20 with 380 and above. The histogram in Figure 2 shows outliers or countries with international trade volume much higher than other countries.

Table 4 shows the international trade of 79 countries. The World Economic Forum (Desjardins, 2018) describes the international trade behavior of countries on the following merchandise: automobile and car parts; refined and crude petroleum; broadcasting equipment, computers, telephones, and integrated circuits; pharmaceuticals, human or animal blood; gold and diamonds as the top-most traded goods.

Although economies in world trade conferences try to push further global trade liberalization, economic protectionism prevails. Highly developed countries trade most with each other while developing countries also trade most with each other. In particular, the United States has become the second largest export economy globally, and trades most to Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, and Germany; and the top import origins from the same four countries. The United States topped in 8 out of 12

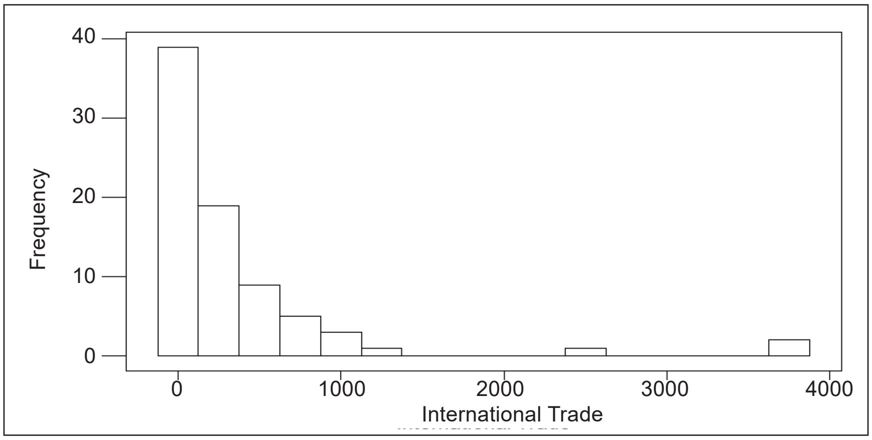

*Figure 2*. Histogram of 79 countries making international trade with fractal dimension of 1.202

Table 4
*The 79 countries and their international trade*

| Country | International Trade | Country | International Trade | Country | International Trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uganda | 7.80 | Slovenia | 52.16 | Poland | 384.98 |
| Namibia | 11.54 | Lithuania | 52.37 | Thailand | 412.90 |
| Tanzania | 12.62 | Bulgaria | 54.97 | Russia | 467.75 |
| Botswana | 13.42 | Kazakhstan | 61.95 | United Arab Emirates | 569.53 |
| Uruguay | 15.10 | Morocco | 64.56 | Switzerland | 573.85 |
| Paraguay | 18.25 | Pakistan | 67.53 | Spain | 584.32 |
| Bolivia | 18.50 | New Zealand | 70.08 | Singapore | 612.88 |
| Ethiopia | 20.84 | Peru | 72.23 | India | 617.03 |
| Kenya | 21.93 | Greece | 75.41 | Mexico | 760.94 |
| Ghana | 22.02 | Ukraine | 75.65 | Belgium | 770.74 |
| Lebanon | 23.80 | Colombia | 75.87 | Canada | 792.04 |
| Jordan | 26.72 | Algeria | 77.08 | Netherlands | 803.21 |
| Bahrain | 27.64 | Bangladesh | 79.79 | Italy | 866.11 |
| Estonia | 29.64 | Egypt | 80.56 | South Korea | 901.60 |
| Luxembourg | 31.96 | Kuwait | 87.07 | United Kingdom | 1047.83 |
| Ecuador | 32.99 | Argentina | 113.34 | France | 1049.44 |
| Serbia | 33.70 | Finland | 117.83 | Japan | 1251.85 |
| Croatia | 35.48 | Chile | 118.68 | Germany | 2401.42 |
| Oman | 47.71 | Portugal | 123.31 | China | 3685.56 |
| Belarus | 51.15 | Venezuela | 132.91 | United States | 3698.67 |
| | | Romania | 138.18 | | |
| | | Philippines | 142.22 | | |
| | | South Africa | 148.85 | | |
| | | Nigeria | 149.41 | | |
| | | Slovakia | 152.73 | | |
| | | Norway | 162.44 | | |
| | | Denmark | 179.49 | | |
| | | Hungary | 195.11 | | |
| | | Ireland | 206.32 | | |
| | | Indonesia | 280.14 | | |
| | | Sweden | 280.34 | | |
| | | Austria | 293.22 | | |
| | | Czech Republic | 301.57 | | |
| | | Brazil | 322.79 | | |
| | | Vietnam | 327.80 | | |
| | | Turkey | 341.15 | | |
| | | Malaysia | 357.79 | | |
| | | Saudi Arabia | 365.31 | | |
| | | Australia | 379.04 | | |

import merchandise traded but transcended 2 out of 12 export merchandise. As imports increase more than exports, the international trade of the United States reaches an imbalance. Such behavior of opening a highly developed economy to more imports may be politically motivated to gain global control than global goodwill. For Germany, almost two-thirds of German merchandise exports (58.1%) went to other European Union, and 65.6% of the German imports from European countries. This international trade behavior underlines the continuing centrality of the European markets for Germany. In the case of China, it is the largest export economy in the world to top export destinations, the United States, Hong Kong, Japan, Germany, and South Korea, and the top import origins from the same four counties.

The international trade behavior of top trading countries demonstrates protectionism and reciprocity. This behavior affects the international trade of developing and least developed countries that trade among themselves because of the tariff issues such as high export barriers on agricultural products and preferential markets of industrialized nations that offer some entrenched interests other than trade.

### On the Ruggedness of the Countries to Support the Pillars of Global Connectivity

The fractal dimension of 1.268 for the GCI explains only a little ruggedness, as shown in Figure 3. The countries have very close self-similarities in making themselves connected digitally, although the progress or pace of digital transformation may vary from one country to another.

Of the 79 economies, 56 are already adopters and frontrunners of digital economic technology, and only 23 countries as starters. Also, 17 of these countries are outliers, as shown in Table 5.

The GCI study includes 79 countries that deploy broadband networks and invest in different enabling technologies. The GCI is an authoritative source that informs policymakers and industry leaders on the status of digital transformation in their countries by looking at the four technology enablers that collectively impact the digital

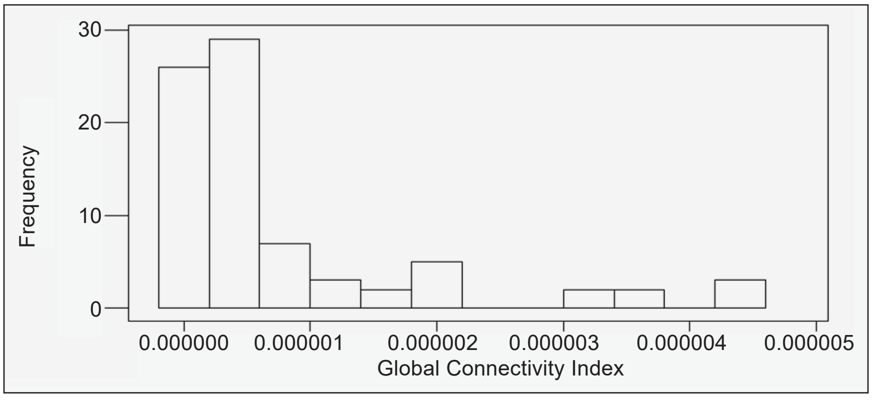

*Figure 3*. Histogram of GCI of 79 countries making international trade with fractal dimension of 1.268

Table 5
*The outlier of 79 countries in terms of GCI*

| Country | Global Connectivity Index | Global Connectivity Index(1/GCI^4) |
|---|---|---|
| Bolivia | 22 | 0.0000043 |
| Ethiopia | 22 | 0.0000043 |
| Pakistan | 22 | 0.0000043 |
| Bangladesh | 23 | 0.0000036 |
| Paraguay | 23 | 0.0000036 |
| Tanzania | 24 | 0.000003 |
| Uganda | 24 | 0.000003 |
| Namibia | 26 | 0.0000022 |
| Nigeria | 26 | 0.0000022 |
| Botswana | 27 | 0.0000019 |
| Ghana | 27 | 0.0000019 |
| Kenya | 27 | 0.0000019 |
| Algeria | 29 | 0.0000014 |
| Ecuador | 29 | 0.0000014 |
| Morocco | 30 | 0.0000012 |
| India | 31 | 0.0000011 |
| Vietnam | 31 | 0.0000011 |

economy. In addition, the GCI includes other indicators such as workforce, ICT laws, and e-Government services.

Table 6 shows GCI scores and clusters of 79 nations. Countries that belong to the Starter category show similar characteristics. ICT investment of these countries is less than 2% of their GDP; E-commerce is valued at only 5,000 USD per capita in a year, and Internet users are only 40% of the population. Adopters increase their ICT investment due to their GDP to speed up their broadband coverage, render subsidies for smartphones, and many others. Frontrunners are highly developed economies, and they consistently use big data analytics and the IoT to create an intelligent, more productive society. The countries that remained in the top Four (4) with 70 and above GCI for the past three years are United States, Singapore, Sweden, and Switzerland. Interestingly the Philippines scored highest among the “Starter” category of the GCI.

### On the Ruggedness of Ethnic Heterogeneity to Support the International Trade

Homogeneity and heterogeneity denote the amount of differing ethnicity among individuals. Finally, the ethnic fractionalization index measures the possibility that two randomly selected individuals belong to the same ethnic group. The higher the ethnic fractionalization, the nation has high ethnic heterogeneity, while the lower the ethnic fractionalization, the country has low ethnic heterogeneity or high ethnic homogeneity. Figure 4 shows

Table 6

*GCI of countries by cluster and score*

| **Starters** | | **Adopters** | | **Frontrunners** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (GCI Score 20-34) | | (GCI Score 35-55) | | (GCI Score 56-85) | |
| Philippines | 33 | Spain | 51 | Singapore | 71 |
| Egypt | 32 | United Arab Emirates | 51 | Sweden | 69 |
| Indonesia | 32 | Portugal | 50 | Switzerland | 67 |
| Jordan | 32 | Estonia | 49 | Finland | 66 |
| Lebanon | 32 | Lithuania | 48 | Denmark | 64 |
| Venezuela | 32 | Slovenia | 48 | Netherlands | 64 |
| India | 31 | Czech Republic | 47 | United Kingdom | 64 |
| Vietnam | 31 | Hungary | 47 | Japan | 62 |
| Morocco | 30 | Chile | 46 | South Korea | 62 |
| Algeria | 29 | Italy | 46 | Luxembourg | 61 |
| Ecuador | 29 | China | 45 | Norway | 61 |
| Botswana | 27 | Slovakia | 45 | Australia | 59 |
| Ghana | 27 | Bahrain | 44 | Germany | 59 |
| Kenya | 27 | Kuwait | 44 | Ireland | 59 |
| Namibia | 26 | Malaysia | 44 | Austria | 58 |
| Nigeria | 26 | Saudi Arabia | 44 | Belgium | 58 |
| Tanzania | 24 | Greece | 43 | France | 58 |
| Uganda | 24 | Poland | 43 | New Zealand | 58 |
| Bangladesh | 23 | Russia | 43 | Canada | 57 |
| Paraguay | 23 | Croatia | 42 | **20 “Frontrunner” countries** | |
| Bolivia | 22 | Oman | 42 | | |
| Ethiopia | 22 | Romania | 42 | | |
| Pakistan | 22 | Bulgaria | 41 | | |
| **23 “Starter” countries** | | Kazakhstan | 40 | | |
| | | Belarus | 39 | | |
| | | Brazil | 39 | | |
| | | South Africa | 39 | | |
| | | Colombia | 38 | | |
| | | Mexico | 38 | | |
| | | Turkey | 38 | | |
| | | Uruguay | 38 | | |
| | | Thailand | 37 | | |
| | | Argentina | 36 | | |
| | | Serbia | 36 | | |
| | | Ukraine | 36 | | |
| | | Peru | 35 | | |
| | | **36 “Adopter” countries** | | | |

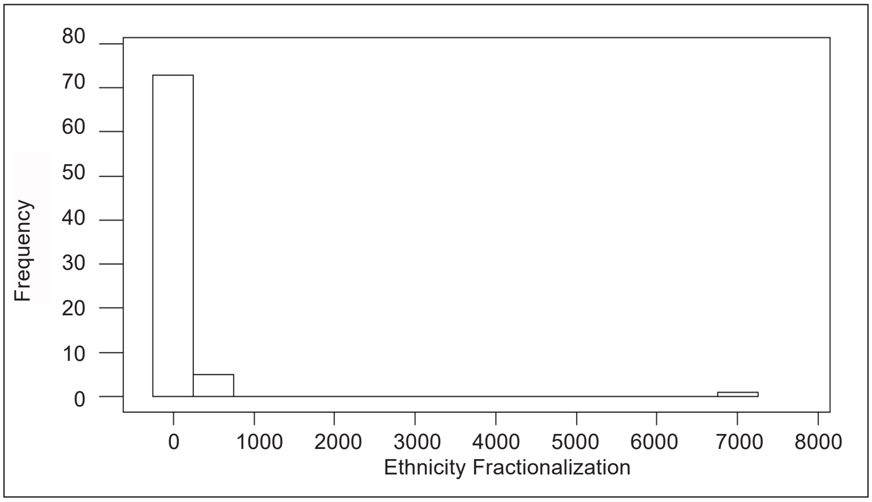

*Figure 4.* Histogram of ethnicity fractionalization of 79 countries with fractal dimension of 1.3

the histogram of the ethnic fractionalization of 79 countries.

As shown in Table 7, among the 79 countries, 48% of the countries retained their ethnic homogeneity while 52% of the countries experienced ethnic heterogeneity. Thirty-eight countries have low ethnic fractionalization (20% or less), and 41 countries have average to high ethnic fractionalization (above 20%).

Uganda is the most ethnically heterogeneous country in the world, with an ethnic fractionalization index of 0.93. The other top three with the highest ethnic fractionalization are Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Thus, countries with almost complete heterogeneity (index close to 1) are found in Africa.

There are 37 countries, or 47%, that have very low to low ethnicity fractionalization. Thus, these countries are ethnically homogenous. The least ethnically diverse countries are Japan and South Korea in Asia, with an ethnic fractionalization index of 0.0119 and 0.0392, respectively. Thus, these countries have an almost complete ethnic homogeneity (index close to 0). Likewise, most European countries, namely Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Poland, Ireland, United Kingdom, and Finland, are ethnically homogenous.

There are 41 countries or 53% that have average to very high ethnicity fractionalization. Hence, these countries are ethnically heterogeneous. The most ethnically diverse countries are South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda an ethnic fractionalization index of 0.7517 to 0.9302. Thus, these countries have an almost complete ethnic heterogeneity (index close to 1). Also, most Middle Eastern countries, Latin American countries, some countries in Africa have an average to high ethnicity fractionalization index. Table 8 shows the outlier countries making international trade with their fractal dimension.

Table 7
*Ethnicity fractionalization index of countries by cluster*

| **Very Low Ethnic Fractionalization** | | **Low Ethnic Fractionalization** | | **Average Ethnic Fractionalization** | | **High Ethnic Fractionalization** | | **Very High Ethnic Fractionalization** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0-0.0194 23 Countries** | | **0.195-0.0374 14 Countries** | | **0.375-0.0554 18 Countries** | | **0.555-0.745 19 Countries** | | **0.755-1.00 4 Countries** | |
| Chile | 0.1861 | Croatia | 0.3690 | Mexico | 0.5418 | Bolivia | 0.7396 | Uganda | 0.9302 |
| Saudi Arabia | 0.1800 | Algeria | 0.3394 | Brazil | 0.5408 | Tanzania | 0.7353 | Kenya | 0.8588 |
| Paraguay | 0.1689 | Lithuania | 0.3223 | Switzerland | 0.5314 | Indonesia | 0.7351 | Nigeria | 0.8505 |
| Greece | 0.1576 | Belarus | 0.3222 | Luxembourg | 0.5302 | Ethiopia | 0.7235 | South Africa | 0.7517 |
| China | 0.1538 | Czech Republic | 0.3222 | Estonia | 0.5062 | Canada | 0.7124 | | |
| Hungary | 0.1522 | Turkey | 0.3200 | Bahrain | 0.5021 | Pakistan | 0.7098 | | |
| Finland | 0.1315 | Romania | 0.3069 | Venezuela | 0.4966 | Ghana | 0.6733 | | |
| Lebanon | 0.1314 | Argentina | 0.255 | Germany | 0.4923 | Kuwait | 0.6604 | | |
| United Kingdom | 0.1211 | Slovakia | 0.2539 | United States | 0.4901 | Peru | 0.6566 | | |
| Ireland | 0.1206 | Uruguay | 0.2504 | Morocco | 0.4841 | Ecuador | 0.655 | | |
| Poland | 0.1183 | Russia | 0.2452 | Ukraine | 0.4737 | Egypt | 0.655 | | |
| Italy | 0.1145 | Philippines | 0.2385 | Oman | 0.4373 | Thailand | 0.6338 | | |
| Austria | 0.1068 | Vietnam | 0.2383 | India | 0.4182 | Namibia | 0.6329 | | |
| Netherlands | 0.1054 | Slovenia | 0.2216 | Spain | 0.4165 | United Arab Emirates | 0.6252 | | |
| France | 0.1032 | | | Botswana | 0.4102 | Kazakhstan | 0.6171 | | |
| Australia | 0.0929 | | | Bulgaria | 0.4021 | Colombia | 0.6014 | | |
| Denmark | 0.0819 | | | New Zealand | 0.3969 | Jordan | 0.5926 | | |
| Sweden | 0.0600 | | | Singapore | 0.3857 | Malaysia | 0.588 | | |
| Norway | 0.0586 | | | | | Serbia | 0.5736 | | |
| Portugal | 0.0468 | | | | | | | | |
| Bangladesh | 0.0454 | | | | | | | | |
| South Korea | 0.0392 | | | | | | | | |
| Japan | 0.0119 | | | | | | | | |

Table 8
*Outlier countries making international trade with their fractal dimension*

| Country | International Trade | Ethnicity Fractionalization | Global Connectivity Index |
|---|---|---|---|
| United States | 3698.67* | 0.2383** | 73*** |
| China | 3685.56 | 0.1538 | 45 |
| Japan | 1251.85 | 0.0119 | 62 |
| France | 1049.44 | 0.1032 | 58 |
| United Kingdom | 1047.83 | 0.1211 | 64 |

## CONCLUSIONS

### On International Trade, Global Connectivity and Ethnic Fractionalization

Global connectivity and ethnic fractionalization induce the fractal characteristics of the ruggedness of international trade of countries. Specific to the behavior is that countries with very high international trade also behave similarly with high global connectivity and very low ethnicity fractionalization. As countries progress in the same economic stance, they engage in international trading with similar trade policies, reforms, and practices. Moreover, as countries sustain a progressive economic stance, their societies maintain very few ethnic groups to promote social cohesion, much less conflict created by many ethnic groups that vary in their concerns. This progress further explains that only countries with digital economic competitiveness and cultural homogeneity survive robust international trade.

According to the Law of Increasing Returns for ICT infrastructure investment, every additional 1 USD invested could pay off up to 5 USD in GDP growth by 2025. A multiplier effect of an additional US$17.6 trillion in GDP to the global economy is forecast by 2025 for 10% of ICT infrastructure investment each year. Only countries with digital economic competitiveness, such as the forerunners, thrive in international trade. Overall, cutting-edge technologies make trading more efficient, more inclusive, and less costly.

However, the Starters countries need to ensure ICT maturity in Internet Innovation for e-commerce can forge economic improvement. This move can be realized with faster broadband expansion. Broadband, data centers, cloud services, big data, and IoT have become an emerging digital economy landscape. Among the ASEAN partners of the Philippines, Malaysia rose in its GCI ranking the most, increasing by five positions. The Malaysian government consistently increased investment in ICT infrastructure, with emphasis on cloud computing investment and application. By formulating an ICT industry policy, Malaysia provided policy support for cloud services, extensive data analysis, IoT, and other innovative technological applications and infrastructure in the ICT sector. In international trade, Malaysia has the highest global trade volume and the only economy among the ASEAN nations to attain the Top 23rd in international trade.

For countries with the highest volume of international trade, their ethnic fractionalization indexes are the lowest. Study shows that greater ethnic diversity is associated with weaker economic performance (Alesina et al., 2004; Easterly & Levine, 1997). Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005) find a negative effect of measures of ethnic diversity on economic growth. When there is less cultural diversity, the more cohesive a society remains. Strong social cohesion creates a strong sense of commonality and belonging for all regardless of different backgrounds. Strong social cohesion also facilitates group conflict resolution and policy formulation. A high ethnic fractionalization indicating cultural heterogeneity becomes socially divisive and alienates one ethnic group from another—social divide cascades to other social-political institutions and their economic functions.

### On International Trade and Global Connectivity

International trading and technological advancements have made world economies more inter-connected. To enable policymakers to tap into the $23 trillion value of the global digital economy, GCI 2018 includes AI Readiness Index, based on three significant components: data, algorithms, and computing power. The scarcity of AI developer talent will become a big challenge for all nations in the three GCI clusters.

AI will be at the forefront in preparing for the digital economy and reaching $23 trillion by 2025. Frontrunner like Ireland has been investing in AI considerably, thus gaining a competitive edge in the digital economy. At year-end 2017, Ireland had 66 companies working on AI, employing 2,500 people and taking advantage of its growing computing power, thus leading the way to becoming the EU’s AI Hub. Another Frontrunner, the UK, has been deploying ICT infrastructure significantly in recent years and has focused on becoming a global leader in 5G.

Literature indicates that by 2025, there will be 100 billion connections from intelligent sensors producing 175 zettabytes of data per year. Most enterprises leverage connectivity to streamline their business processes, reduce costs, improve efficiency as they technological innovation, and move the focus from a consumer-driven internet to an industrial one.

Countries with low ethnic fractionalizations demonstrate cultural homogeneity than heterogeneity. Cultural homogeneity looks upon as “Closed” societies and as a “closed system.” Social protectionism is demonstrated in trade protectionism as highly developed countries trade with each other. Countries with high ethnicity fractionalization look upon cultural heterogeneity that divides societies and restrains economic progress.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For countries to advance the global connectivity to sustain or increase their international trade will need to pursue investments in adopting the five (5) technologies that will disrupt the future of global trading. First, blockchain and blockchain-based distributed ledger technologies can significantly impact the global trade supply chain. Second, AI and Machine Learning can improve trade shipping courses, manage traffic at ports, and many others. Third, trading services via digital platforms make it increasingly more accessible and faster to trade services online. Fourth, high-speed 3D printing on world trade is mass-adopted since it requires less labor and lessens the need for imports. Fifth, mobile payments must be embraced to allow market opportunities and facilities for e-payments. Finally, mobile money accounts are now a prime factor for financial inclusion or deepening, especially in emerging market economies.

For countries with trade protectionism but low global connectivity, this is usually observed among developing nations trading only. This action is the “Matthew Effect” phenomenon that explains how this trading behavior makes developing countries poorer. It is alarming when poor economies have little progress in digitization. Poverty will continue to threaten international trade. Armed conflict, armed piracy, and terrorism will continue and may worsen as different ethnic groups fight for rivalry and survival. Perhaps, this could be the new frontier in the global trade agenda.

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# Bullying and Cyberbullying: A Legal and Public Policy Perspective in Colombia

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## ABSTRACT

Children and adolescents have evolved in the cultural contexts of the digital age as a result of the technological revolution, which has led to new forms of bullying. This research consists of analyzing bullying and cyberbullying in Colombia from a legal perspective. The methodology used is the legal analysis of law and policy documents on school matters in Colombia. It is concluded that restorative justice should be used in cases of bullying and cyberbullying, taking into account that it enables spaces for reconciliation and restoration of the infringed damage. It also involves victims, perpetrators, and the educational community in its process. In terms of public policies, considering the severe damage caused by cyberbullying, it is advisable to consider the school programs´ implementation that informs potential victims about the precautions they should take to avoid the risks of virtual harassment.

*Keywords:* Cyberbullying, harassment, personal privacy, public education policies, virtual society

## INTRODUCTION

In Colombia, the use of the Internet has become more widespread in recent years. However, this new space has not only been useful to simplify life but has also spread real-world problems (Bechara-Llanos, 2018). One of the most significant problems is cyberbullying. It mainly affects young people who are avid consumers of technology (Abuín-Vences et al., 2019).

This article will analyze the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying in Colombia from a legal perspective within policy documents on school matters. The qualitative research and the legal analysis of law and policy documents facilitated the inquiry, the

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recovery, the study, and the interpretation of secondary data. This data involves laws cases, legal textbooks, Colombian laws, jurisprudence, and doctrine to expand and build more knowledge.

## The Impact of Globalization on Virtual Environments

Globalization is usually understood as a succession of events on a planetary scale tending to aggregate national economies into the world economy. This process is based on the conceptual archetypes of productive specialization and international trade. It is evident from the public economic policies of national states which emerged in the 1980s. These policies favored globalization through strategies to insert their economies into different regional and international economic spheres (Obstfeld, 2021). Because of this process, national States have adapted their domestic legal system. It is achieved by enacting favorable legislation for the free movement of capital, services, manufacturing, raw materials, and companies (Arrieta-López et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, this barely represents one side of the globalizing phenomena. Globalization also implies processes of permanent rupture of certain boundaries historically imposed on technology and cross-border´s links between human beings (Arrieta-López, 2018). Globalization has enabled not only those mentioned above profound political and legal changes but also technological advances. It takes place, among other reasons, because technology constitutes the main instrument that drives globalization in its other dimensions (Kowalski et al., 2014). Barreda et al. (2012) has pointed out the following concept on the relationship between globalization and international society:

> Globalization is only partially a natural process of international society. It is also to the extent that human beings are sociable by nature and tend to communicate with other members of their kind—for reasons of survival, innate sense of solidarity, lack of self-sufficiency in the pursuit of their interests, etc.—by developing technologies that intensify the consequences of their innate sociability. (Barreda et al., 2012, p. 4)

It should be emphasized that globalization is not a natural process. In other words, it does not comprise events that result from the economy's immutable laws (Alfaro, 2020). Instead, globalization, to a large extent, is a social construction produced by global and individual human determinations (Arrieta-López, 2019).

Transportation, communications, and information technologies are affecting the lives of human beings up to the point of becoming one of the main current references of cultural globalization (Silva, 2008). Although communications and information technologies (ICTs) play a preponderant role in social development and national and global productions, their cross-curricular thematic in society implies a determining element for certain problems emerging in the contemporary world (Arrieta-López, 2020). Online platforms, for example, through their interactivity, link millions of people from almost every nation-state in the world (Abdel-Wahab, 2012). As a result, it has generated not only new communication paradigms but also severe new problems. One of these problems is cyberbullying.

## Bullying and the Emergence of Cyberbullying

Bullying is usually described as premeditated and intentional psychological and physical abuse. It involves the permanent repetition of aggression and mockery of a minor by another or others. The responsible individual is usually similar in age, whose purpose leads to cruel subjugation and social exclusion of the bullied (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Olweus (1998), professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, was the first to define bullying as "mistreatment by peer abuse." It involves acts of psychological or physical persecution by the bullying student or students against another student or students who are singled out as victims of repeated and vicious attacks.

Eyuboglu et al. (2021) and Roldán (2013) explain that any form of psychological abuse or extreme violence between students repeatedly over some time is continuous torture. In this situation, the aggressor subjugates, marginalizes, and despises the victim. It is all conducted in the face of the indifference, silence, and complicity of other colleagues. The abused victim remains emotionally in the hands of the aggressor, who generates severe consequences in a minor who has not yet forged his personality (Alcaine & Sánchez, 2020).

Guinot (2013) specifies the type of violence contained in the bullying as follow:

> According to the English term, what we are talking about is a kind of abuse that occurs in the classrooms. It is also said that this scenario can last from the beginning of elementary school and end with high school. (Guinot, 2013, p. 29)

ICTs have been used as a means for bullying. It affects the social life of the victims in the framework of social networks (Abbasi et al., 2018). Consequently, among the different forms of bullying, a new trend called cyberbullying has emerged. This type is defined as a succession of malicious and offensive behavior that manifests itself over long periods and uses electronic media to destroy and subjugate the victims affected by the harassment. (Chan et al., 2021).

According to the Constitutional Court (Ruling T-365, 2014), cyberbullying is based on the weapon sensation of transport, ICTs to intimidate, bully, harass and exclude an individual or group from another larger community. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the seriousness of cyberbullying. Furthermore, according to Carvalho et al. (2021), González-Prada et al. (2015), and Li (2006), bullying among peers through new technologies can have severe consequences for the victim, which in extreme cases can lead to suicide.

## METHOD

This is a qualitative research with a legal analysis of law and policy documents on school topics. We recovered, studied and interpreted secondary data such as texts of doctrine, jurisprudence, laws and decrees of the Colombian legal system and public policies documents of the city of Bogotá. Three selection criteria were applied in the search for information: relevance and scope of the proposed objectives; completeness in the review of all available sources, and timeliness. This information allowed us to define the elements of analysis related to bullying and cyberbullying in Colombia from a legal research perspective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Rights Affected

In the Colombian legal system, a specific norm describes cyberbullying (Law 1620, 2013). However, there are other legal guarantees based on fundamental rights, in addition to certain specific rules that protect the victims of bullying and that are contained in the Code of Childhood and Adolescence (Law 1098, 2006).

Based on this, the Constitutional Court (Ruling T-713, 2010) has indicated that:

> One of the problems that have increased with new technologies is school bullying. (…) Information technologies have had a negative impact on this type of behavior by increasing the harm caused by many of the attacks and harassment that a student may suffer. (…) According to the National Police, when a person torments, threatens, harasses, humiliates, or annoys another person through the internet, mobile phones, games consoles, or other similar technical means, it is considered cyberbullying. (para. 72)

Colombia has incorporated first generation human rights into its domestic legislation, such as human dignity, good name, honor, and privacy. These fundamental norms become the first guarantees against cyberbullying. Consequently, the Constitutional Court (Ruling T-261, 1995) stated the following about the right to personal and family privacy:

> It is derived from human dignity and the natural tendency of every person to have freedom, autonomy, and self-preservation and protect the private sphere of the individual and his or her family as the closest human nucleus. Both are in a position to demand a minimum particular and public consideration of their interiority. (…) These are not part of the public domain; therefore, they should not be the subject of information provided to third parties, intervention or analysis of outside human groups, or disclosures or publications. (para. 33)

The above jurisprudential development served as a basis for establishing the five principles that underpin the safeguarding of the right to privacy. According to the Constitutional Court (Ruling T-787, 2004), without it, "the corresponding intangibility of the guaranteeing content of the immunity of the individual from the necessary interference of others would be lost" (para. 128). It implies that these five principles must be legally manifested to make legitimate an intrusion or intrusion against a person's privacy.

> Five principles support the protection of the right to privacy. The *principle of freedom* states that the personal data of an individual may only be recorded or disclosed with the free, prior, express, or tacit consent of the holder unless the legal system imposes an obligation to disclose such information to fulfill a constitutionally legitimate objective. (…) The *principle of purpose* states that it must be expressed in the requirement to submit the collection and disclosure of data for the realization of a constitutionally legitimate purpose which prevents forcing citizens to disclose intimate data about their personal life without support in the Constitutional Text that legitimizes the release of part of their interiority for the benefit of the community. The *principle of necessity* states that the personal information to be disclosed is strictly limited to that which is related to the purpose of the disclosure. Thus, the recording and disclosure of data that exceeds the constitutionally legitimate purpose are prohibited. In addition, the *principle of truthfulness* states that it is required that the personal data that may be disclosed correspond to real situations; therefore, the disclosure of false or erroneous data is prohibited. Finally, the *principle of completeness* states that the information to be disclosed must be provided in full. In this way, it prevents the recording and disclosure of partial, incomplete, or fractioned data. (Ruling T-787, 2004, para. 129)

The five principles set forth in Ruling T-787 of 2004 entirely lead to the protection of the right to privacy when cyberbullying occurs. It takes place because the bully has no legitimacy to violate the limits of the right to privacy, particularly if one takes into account that "social networks are a multiplying channel of the information that is published there, so that a person cannot use this media to disseminate personal information without causing this action to harm the fundamental right to privacy" (Piedrahita, 2011, p. 4).

It is worth mentioning the right recognized by the Colombian Political Constitution in Article 13, Constituent Assembly of Colombia (Political Constitution of Colombia, 1991), which can protect citizens from bullying. This article states that:

> All individuals (…) will receive equal protection and treatment

> from the authorities and will enjoy the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities without any discrimination on account of gender, race, national or family origin, language, religion, political opinion, or philosophy (...). (Colombian Political Constitution, 1991, art.13)

Article 13 safeguards the rights of individuals taking into account that it establishes fundamental guarantees against cyberbullying. The Code of Childhood and Adolescence contained in Law 1098 of 2006 (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2006) is another instrument established in the Colombian legal system that is useful in the issue of bullying. These advocates, among other guarantees, the protection framework against bullying. It is based on the principles of comprehensive protection of children and adolescents and the best interests of children and adolescents, both positive in the instrument above (Law 1098, 2006, art. 8).

It must be added to these principles the protection of the personal integrity of children and adolescents for which the Code for Children and Adolescents states:

> This Code states that child abuse is understood as any form of prejudice, punishment, humiliation, physical or psychological harm, neglect, omission or negligent treatment, mistreatment or exploitation, including abusive sexual acts and rape and, in general, any form of violence or aggression on the child or adolescent by their parents, legal representatives or any other person. (Law 1098, 2006, art. 18)

The article mentioned above refers to bullying in the understanding that it protects minors against any harm to their physical and psychological integrity (Piedrahita, 2011) by members of their school and community group. However, it was not until the enactment of Law 1620 of 2013 that the Colombian legal system described cyberbullying together with the conduct of bullying both concepts as follows:

> Bullying has consequences on the health, emotional well-being, and school performance of students, the learning environment, and on school climate of the educational establishment. Cyberbullying or school cyberbullying should be understood as a form of bullying with the deliberate use of information technologies (internet, virtual social networks, mobile telephony, and online video games) to exercise psychological and continuous mistreatment. (Law 1620, 2013, art. 2)

According to Law 1620 of 2013, cyberbullying is not described as harassment but as a form of intimidation that continuously uses transportation, communications, and information technologies to exercise psychological mistreatment. As a consequence of the referred problem, the

National System of School Coexistence and Training for Human Rights, Education for Sexuality and Prevention and Mitigation of School Violence was instituted among other functions in articles 7 and 8 of the law mentioned above to create "mechanisms for reporting and monitoring on the Internet, social networks and other information technologies to cases of cyberbullying" (Law 1620, 2013, art. 8.9). Likewise, the education secretariats were assigned the responsibility of promoting the "development of citizenship competencies, the exercise of Human, Sexual and Reproductive Rights," the promotion of "healthy lifestyles," and the prevention of "bullying and cyberbullying in Complementary School Days" (Law 1620, 2013, art. 16.6).

Even though since the second decade of the 21st century, there is legislation in vigor against cyberbullying, there is a notorious lack of evidence-based anti-cyberbullying programs built on national, regional, and local research (Hernández et al., 2009). Law 1620 (2013) and Act 1965 (2013) are not entirely effective since there are no precise legal resources against cyberbullying regarding the penalization of punishable conducts that may involve the different forms of virtual bullying. In addition, there is a lack of special precautionary or preventive measures that can be requested before officials with jurisdictional power to stop the use of transportation, communications, and information technologies due to bullying manipulation in virtual media.

## The Public Policy of School Life in Colombia

The events that occur during the "school stage" are important that children experience in educational establishments are essential for developing their personality and will mark their lives for many years after its culmination (Kowalski et al., 2013). The relationships that develop during the school stage constitute school coexistence. It does not mean the absence of conflicts, but rather that they are handled without violence. Then, coexistence refers to the quality of relationships conducive to consensus, mutual recognition, respect, dialogue, and the positive valuation of living while respecting and recognizing differences (Secretary of Education of Bogotá, 2019).

Being a guarantor of the fundamental right to education (Political Constitution, articles 44 and 67), the State must develop a public policy that determines the conditions under which it will be carried out. It also must indicate how to resolve the conflicts that arise and affect school coexistence. According to the definition adopted by Velásquez (2009), a public policy, is an inclusive process of decisions, actions, inactions, agreements, and instruments, developed by public authorities with the possible participation of individuals aimed to solve or prevent a situation defined as problematic. Therefore, it should include not only the identification of the situations that are considered conflictive but also the range of actions to be undertaken depending on the nature and seriousness of the situation as well as the entities that should be articulated for their correct management and subsequent follow-up.

Concerning the State's public policies, the Constitutional Court (Ruling C-351, 2013) has pointed out that any public policy aimed at guaranteeing a constitutional right should have a priority to guarantee the effective enjoyment of the right. Therefore, a review of the public policy of the State in relation to school coexistence should not be limited to an analysis of its content, but also of its application, taking into account that its existence is of no use if it is not applied or if its application leads to non-existent mitigation of the problems it seeks to address.

The National System for School Coexistence and Training for the exercise of Human Rights, education for sexuality, and the prevention and mitigation of school violence (SNCE) were enforced by Law 1620 of 2013 (regulated by Decree 1965 of 2013), which is composed by two instrument: the Unified Information System for School Coexistence (SIUCE) and the Integral Attention Route (IAR). The NSSC aims to prevent and mitigate situations that affect school coexistence and the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights, including bullying and cyberbullying.

Among the pillars of these tools is the classification of situations that affect school coexistence and the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights into three types, as it is stated in Decree 1965 (2013):

> Type I situations. Examples of this type are the conflicts handled inadequately and those sporadic situations that negatively affect the school climate and that in no case generate damage to the body or health. Type II Situations. Examples of this type are the situations of school aggression, bullying, and cyberbullying, which do not have the characteristics of the commission of a crime, and that comply with any of the following characteristics: a) That they occur repeatedly or systematically. b) That they cause damage to the body or health without generating any disability for any of the parties involved. Type III Situations. Examples of this type are the situations of school aggression that are part of alleged crimes against freedom, integrity, and sexual training, referred to in Title IV of Book 11 of Law 599 of 2000, or when they constitute any other crime established in the Colombian criminal law in force. (art. 40).

According to the seriousness of the situation will be the different scenarios of the current educational institution. Therefore, the alluded tools of the NSSC are defined. On the one hand, the SIUCE is defined as a System for the Identification, Registration, and Follow-up of cases of harassment, school violence, and violation of sexual and reproductive rights that affect children and adolescents in educational establishments (Law 1620, 2013).

Therefore, it is a technical tool that is fed by case reports. Only information that guarantees the identification, registration, and follow-up of type II and types III situations should be reported to the SIUCE. In this sense, the SIUCE is considered a tool for improving public policy on school life. It creates strategies in favor of peaceful school relationships, conducts research on school harmony situations, and undertakes more effective actions to prevent violence in schools. Nevertheless, young people reported will have their information accessible to any educational entity, which implies that it may be grounds for non-admission in any of these.

On the other hand, the Integral Attention Route -IAR- defines the institutions' processes and protocols to be followed in all cases where school coexistence is affected (Law 1620, 2013, art. 29). Therefore, it could be considered that the IAR is the travel route that indicates the stops to be made at each stage of the path of prevention, promotion, care, and monitoring of situations that affect school coexistence. Hence, these are precisely its four components.

Act 1965 of 2013 also established that educational institutions should create protocols to set the necessary procedures to timely assist the educational community in situations that affect school coexistence and the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights. Such protocols would establish different actions, depending on the type I, II, or III situations presented.

For type I situations, mediation with the persons involved is the first step to follow. Schools should ensure forms of dispute in an impartial, equitable, and fair manner. It must aim to seek reparation of damages caused, restoration of rights, and reconciliation. They are as follow:

1. Mediate pedagogically with the people involved.
2. Establish forms of solution in an impartial, equitable, and just manner, seeking reparation for the damage caused, the restoration of rights, and reconciliation.
3. Follow up on the case and the commitments.

Only in Type II and III situations, in cases of harm to body or health, should the parents or guardians of students be involved immediately without mediation being attempted first. In such cases, the school must guarantee immediate attention to the physical and mental health of those involved by referring them to competent entities. The procedure should be:

1. In cases of damage to the body or health, guarantee immediate attention to the physical and mental health of those involved through referral to the competent entities.
2. When measures to restore rights are required, refer the situation to the administrative authorities.
3. Adopt measures to protect those involved in the situation from possible actions against them.
4. Immediately inform the parents or guardians of all the students involved.
5. Generate spaces where the parties involved and the parents, or guardians of the students, can expose and specify what happened. It must be done while preserving, in any case, the right to privacy, confidentiality, and other rights.
6. Determine the restorative actions that seek the reparation of the

damages caused, the restoration of rights and reconciliation, as well as the consequences applicable to those who have promoted, contributed, or participated in the reported situation.

7. The committee will carry out the analysis and the follow-up.
8. The school coexistence committee will record everything that happened. The decisions must be made in the minutes. All members and participants must signed them.
9. The president of the school coexistence committee will report the case´s information to SIUCE.

In both type II and III situations, the school is obliged to generate spaces in which the parties involved and the parents or guardians of the students can expose and clarify what happened. It is done while preserving, in any case, the rights to privacy and confidentiality. At last, type (III) procedure should be as follow:

1. In cases of damage to the body or health, it must be guaranteed immediate attention to the physical and mental health of those involved through referral to competent entities.
2. Parents or guardians of all the students must be immediately informed. These actions will be recorded.
3. The president of the School Coexistence Committee will immediately bring the situation to the attention of the National Police in the most expeditious way.
4. The president of the school coexistence committee will inform the participants in the committee of the facts. However, the president will also keep confidential information that may violate the right to privacy and confidentiality of the parties involved as well as the report made before the competent authority.
5. The school coexistence committee will adopt the measures of the educational establishment aimed at protecting the victim who received the aggression and the people who have reported or are part of the situation presented within the scope of its powers. This performance will be recorded.
6. The president of the school coexistence committee will report the information of the case to SIUCE.
7. The cases subject to this protocol will be monitored by the school coexistence committee, the authority that assumes the knowledge and the municipal, and the district or departmental school coexistence committee that exercises jurisdiction over the educational establishment in which the situation took place.

In order to analyze the tools used by the public policy of school coexistence in Colombia, a case is presented. The events took place in 2014 while being already the SNCE in action. Sergio, a 17-year-old boy, was holding a romantic relationship with a classmate. Their parents, as well as the educational institution, were unaware of their relationship. It all started when a teacher confiscated the cell phone that contained a photo of a kiss between the two boys taken outside the school while wearing their uniforms. Both young people were called the next day to appear before a school psychologist because, as they were told, they had committed serious misconduct. The manual of coexistence of the college pointed out as a serious fault any manifestation of love obscene, vulgar, or grotesque in couple relationships inside and outside our institution, or wearing the same uniform.

The college decided to make parents of teenagers aware of the disciplinary process in progress and their sexual orientation. Following that meeting, while the parents of Sergio reacted by supporting their child, the parents of the other boy not only disagreed but also decided to engage in a criminal prosecution of Sergio for the charge of "sexual harassment" against their son. After this meeting, the school´s directives were later classified in court as harassment from an *institution to a student*. They can be summarized at the following:

- Only the permanence of Sergio in the educational institution was conditioned to their directions. The other boy was never jeopardized.
- They demanded that Sergio had to obtain external psychological accompaniment. However, they did not ask the same for the other boy.
- Despite both young people kept a follow-up with the psychologist of the institution and accepted on multiple occasions to be holding a romantic relationship, the institution never presented this as evidence in the criminal investigation.
- The criminal investigation only aggravated the already difficult situation of Sergio with his peers. He was already a bullied boy, but now every school's decision gave his peers more reasons for the harassment to continue.
- As a result of one of the sessions with the school psychologist in which Sergio stated that his mother had to travel regularly to another city, the institution established a complaint of abandonment against the child's mother before the Institute of Family Welfare. They stated to the assigned social worker that his "sexual deviation" was due to the mother's absence.

A few days after the mother of Sergio finally decided to withdraw his son from college, he committed suicide. The director of the college was later interviewed by the media, pointing out the cause of the death of the minor, the abandonment of his mother, his sexual orientation, and his political ideas. The school position was later reaffirmed in a public statement sent to every parent's e-mail account.

The mother of Sergio decided to request the constitutional protection of her son's rights to equality and non-discrimination. She had previously (even when Sergio was alive) tried to reach the Educational Secretary authorities, but she never had an answer. She pointed out that the college adopted a systematic behavior of discrimination against the teenager, motivated primarily by his sexual orientation. The ruling of the Constitutional Court (Ruling T-478, 2015) regarding this case agreed that there was an evident difference in the way they treated Sergio and Horacio. It became the *first* time that it was accepted that bullying could occur not only between peers but also from a person or institution in a higher position.

This shift was important. The Constitutional Court also questioned the efficacy of the NSSC. In 2014, SIUCE had not been implemented by the Ministry of National Education, and, as for the IAR. However, the content of the protocols was clear; Act 1965 had not established a deadline for educational establishments to adopt them. Furthermore, it was clear that before advancing a pedagogical process between the parties for the events that occurred, the school preferred to initiate a disciplinary-sanctioning process without promoting a space for conciliation that included Horacio's parents. Despite this, the school ignored the value of dialogue and the collective construction of solutions in the academic environment. It was also noted that Educational Secretary authorities failed to fulfill their legal obligations.

For this reason, the court ordered the Ministry of National Education to implement the necessary actions for the creation of the National School Life System within a maximum period of six months as stated in Law 1620 of 2013 and Decree 1965 of 2015. It also set a deadline of one year to perform an extensive and comprehensive review of all school behavior guidelines[1] in the country to determine that they are respectful of students' sexual orientation and gender identity. Thus, it was not until after this ruling that actions were taken to implement the mechanisms already provided for in the public policy on school coexistence, such as SIUCE and RAI. A systematic review of the school behavior guidelines was carried out.

After this, most schools had to revise their internal rules to transition from a disciplinary-sanctioning process policy to a pedagogic process in a conflict scenario. As shown in Sergio's case, it evolved in a rapid and almost uncontrolled manner. What started as a Type I situation, in which it was necessary to mediate pedagogically with the people involved, ended with a suicide. All this took place within three months, between June and August 2014. In order to comply with the court´s orders, the Ministry of National Education had to create guidance for the educational institutions to make those changes.

The final result was the publication of guidance books (in some cases, these books were just one-page long infographics) with general orientations regarding the suggested content of the rules of coexistence and the procedures to follow when conflict occurs. These books also aimed to prepare educational institutions and teachers in

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[1] The behavior guidelines is a document that is part of the Institutional Educational Project of a school in Colombia and contains the set of principles, rules, procedures and other aspects that regulate and make possible the coexistence of the members of an educational institution.

general because it was evident that an incorrect assessment of the situation could imply that the competent entities may never handle a case if it is never reported by the person who first handles it. Sergio´s case had shown that perhaps, the weakest part of the Colombian public policy on school coexistence is that its correct functioning depends on the people in the institutions.

There is no doubt that several educational institutions across the country have changed their rules of coexistence by making a shift in their policies. However, to the date this research was carried out, there was not a study made by the Ministry of Education or any other authority that intended to supervise and corroborate those changes were done. There is also a serious doubt regarding if the published guidance books were enough to comply with the court´s orders. It is our opinion they were not. The other weak point is how the measures created by IAR had to be implemented. It is another issue that is currently unsupervised.

## CONCLUSION

Bullying and cyberbullying constitute discrimination when unwanted conduct occurs and is linked to some suspected discriminatory criterion (sex, sexual orientation, race, national or family origin, language, religion, political or philosophical opinion). It takes place with the intent to violate the dignity of a person or to create an offensive, harmful, humiliating, degrading, and intimidating environment.

According to the Constitutional Court, the recommendation was noted to validate the rules already in action that exhort to access restorative justice of bullying and cyberbullying, instead of a disciplinary-sanctioning process which was the common path in educational institutions. Restorative justice should be used in cases of bullying and cyberbullying. It enables spaces for reconciliation and restoration of the damage caused and involves victims, perpetrators, and the educational community in the process.

Considering the severe damage caused by cyberbullying, it is advisable to propose recommendations such as implementing school programs that inform potential victims of the precautions they should take to avoid virtual harassment. Furthermore, it must be emphasized that links with strange or suspicious characteristics should be avoided, unknown contacts should not be accepted, and personal data should not be published on social networks.

School life has challenges of coexistence typical of community life. One of these elements is bullying. It is a phenomenon that has significant consequences on the development of children and adolescents. It also affects their personality and the forms of adaptation the individual has in the different contexts in which he/she interacts. School is one of the scenarios of human development and implies facing different social, cultural, and family contexts. Social networks are part of this process, and, therefore, these “virtual relationships” can become common problems of coexistence.

Ensuring peaceful school coexistence is a goal of the State. It must be understood that it does not seek to eliminate conflicts because these are part of human nature. However, they can be dealt with without the use of violence. According to the Colombian Constitutional Court, any public policy requires three conditions: It exists; it guarantees the effective enjoyment of the right; and that the processes of decision making, elaboration, implementation, and evaluation of public policy allow for democratic participation. The second condition implies that it is impossible to speak of public policies without being clear about the actions that seek to guarantee their implementation. In this case, we cannot speak of a public policy in school coexistence without an adequate system for its assurance.

The SIUCE and the IAR constitute the National System of School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human Rights -SNCE, for its initials in Spanish-, created by Law 1620 of 2013 and regulated by Act 1965 of 2013. Both tools must respond effectively to situations that affect school coexistence. Cases such as that of Sergio David Urrego Reyes, who was initially harassed by his schoolmates and systematically by officials of the educational institution on account of his sexual orientation, should be a reference that leads to a question of whether the SNCE is fulfilling its purpose. Either because it is not known by the actors involved or because it is not sensitive to the real problems that affect school coexistence, there are still situations that raise alarms.

Although the NSSC is composed of a complex network of preventive and corrective actions that, from an objective point of view, can lead to an assurance of school coexistence, the decision to implement most of these actions is in the hands of individuals. Implementing a correct system depends entirely on their correct assessment of the situations that arise in schools. On the other hand, a wrong decision or assessment can cost lives on some occasions, such as the one described in these lines.

It is also important to highlight that the NSSC cannot be merely a symbolic public policy, not accompanied by real and concrete actions. In this case, there is no doubt there is a program, but the lack of supervision and audit has made it impossible to confirm that it is working. In addition, it is even difficult to measure if it is serving its purpose of creation. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the Administration bill a new law that enables the city educational authorities to audit the implementation of NSSC and fix a dateline. Then, we could affirm that a public policy in Colombia aims to prevent and mitigate the effects of bullying and cyberbullying.

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# Salience in the Media and Political Trust in Nigeria: The Mediating Role of Political Participation

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## ABSTRACT

Political distrust is prevalent in many parts of the world. Scholars have discovered many factors affecting political trust, but they have paid little attention to the influence of issue salience in the media on political trust. Focusing on the role of media in assigning salience to corruption issues in Nigeria, this study examined the influence of mainstream media and social media on political trust. In addition, we treated political participation as a mediating factor and investigated its effect on the relationship between perceived salience of corruption in media and political trust. A survey was conducted on a sample of 688 Nigerians aged above 18 years old using a multi-stage cluster sampling technique. The data was later analyzed using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). We found that salience in media predicted political trust, and the effect was stronger for social media than mainstream media contexts. Our findings also suggested that political participation directly affected political trust and was a significant mediator that affected the relationships between salience in the mainstream media (SMM) and political trust and between salience in the social media (SSM) and political trust. The results imply that salience in media leads to political participation, leading to political trust. This study supports the assumptions of both agenda-setting and agenda-melding theories. It suggests that policymakers in Nigeria should adopt media, especially social media, to restore the people's trust in government.

*Keywords:* Corruption, political participation, political trust, salience in the media

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## INTRODUCTION

Political trust, which is described as confidence in government, is one of the key resources for the development of modern societies because it is critical to democratic governance (Wang, 2016). It is the support for government, parliaments, political parties, or political institutions that can be regarded as an evaluative orientation of citizens towards their political system or some part of it, based on their normative expectations (Hetherington, 1998; Wang, 2016). Consequently, the trust between citizens and their elected representatives and government officials is fundamental for liberal democracy and is a vital element of a well-governed society (Allen, 2016; Berg, 2019). Without political trust, citizens become cynical about their political system and disaffected with the existing order (Kumar et al., 2020). However, building support for democratic government depends on how much citizens trust their government to do right. Newton et al. (2018) and Wang (2016) contend that a democratic society cannot probably emerge without political trust, leading to the loss of political power by the incumbents.

However, previous studies have discovered that the majority of the citizens around the world distrust their governments (Allen, 2016; Ceron, 2015; Wang, 2016). The declining trend of political trust is evident in the United States, United Kingdom, other Western democratic nations, and many Asian and African nations (Camaj, 2014). This trend is also prevalent in Nigeria, which has consistently faced many problems, particularly high corruption levels that deteriorates political trust. Corruption in Nigeria is endemic, so much so that its pervasiveness has led to a high poverty rate, miserable economic performance, and low national development. Moreover, scholars claim that corruption has continued to threaten the unity, stability, and peace of the nation (Ogbeidi, 2012; Okafor et al., 2020) and has severely undermined people's trust in institutions and political systems in general (Iroghama, 2012). Inevitably these issues have become the media's focus, including mainstream and social media platforms in Nigeria. By giving salience to corruption, this study argues that the media can shape people's opinions about an issue eventually affecting their participation and trust in the government.

Unlike previous studies that investigated the effect of social media on political participation (Dagona et al., 2013; Mustapha & Omar, 2020), we focused on the effect of corruption salience by mainstream and social media on political trust in Nigeria and the mediating effects of political participation on the relationship between salience in media and political trust. It is important to note that most past studies examining media influence on political trust were carried out in western contexts (Camaj, 2014; Ceron, 2015), with a few studies conducted in Asian nations (Wang, 2016; Wilkes, 2015). Thus, investigating it in another context like Nigeria, a multilingual, multi-ethnic, multireligious, and multi-party nation, is a welcome development (Camaj, 2014; Iroghama, 2012). Moreover, the study findings can give insights into addressing the precarious problems of insecurity, noncompliance with the law by the citizens, and other socio-political problems that arose due to low political trust among Nigerians.

In doing so, we developed a model drawn from agenda-setting and agenda-melding perspectives to demonstrate the influence of mainstream media and social media, respectively. The model was further extended by introducing political participation as a mediator between salience in media and its relation to political trust. The novelty of this study is the extension of literature on agenda-setting as the theory of media's effect to agenda-melding, which is a new theoretical preoccupation being adopted to explain social media effect on political trust. We argue that while agenda-setting declared that mass media effectively sets the agenda for the people and government, thereby influencing the salience of attitude towards political outcomes by determining the news items readers should read (Mustapha & Wok, 2015), agenda-melding assumes that it is the audience which set the agenda for the government and the people (Allen, 2016). In other words, agenda-melding maintains that the audience is active participants who initiate and produce news to influence people's opinion through the news items they produce, modify, like, and share with other readers (McCombs et al., 2014; Ragas & Roberts, 2009). Hence this new media theory claims that unlike mainstream media, where the audience is perceived as passive participants, they are active and major agenda setters (Bantimaroudis et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the limited literature on the effect of media salience on political trust has prompted this research to extend the investigation on political trust by examining mainstream media and social media as determinants of political trust and political participation as factors that mediated the relationship between media salience and political trust. We assumed that citizens' exposure to corruption that the media have given news salience would affect their participation in politics, eventually affecting their levels of trust in the incumbent government.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

In this study, two theoretical lenses, agenda-setting, and agenda-melding, were adopted to explicate the effect of salience in traditional mainstream media and social media. The two theories are interconnected but distinguished by their contexts (Bantimaroudis et al., 2020; McCombs et al., 2014). While agenda-setting involves how mass media determine what the people read and think about government, agenda-melding sees the audience as a major stakeholder in news production and sharing. Agenda melding submits that mass media no longer has the monopoly of news production and the only opinion molder. Thus, agenda setting research emphasizes how the media consciously transfer the salience to specific issues to set the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In other words, through the gatekeeping process, journalists manipulate audience opinion to set agendas for the people and consequently for the government (McCombs et al., 2014). Furthermore, through the press's priming and framing activities, the media indirectly informs the audience what to think and tells them how to think about it (Hänggli, 2020).

Kiousis (2011) asserts that the theoretical assumption of the agenda-setting theory is the transferring of salience from the media to the people by presenting news items to influence audience opinions (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs et al., 2014; Mustapha & Wok, 2015). The theory assumes that the audience is passive. The media feeds them the news and therefore influences their opinion through the quantity, prominence, and attention given to issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The theory is often applied to understand how media organizations dictate what people should think about. The emergence of new media has called for renewed attention to the relationships between old and new media (Omar, 2017) and the introduction of new theories to understand a new phenomenon (Siapera, 2017). Agenda melding is one of the new theories that emanates from the agenda-setting theory (Bantimaroudis et al., 2020; Cheng, 2021: McCombs et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2020). It provides an insight into how the audience, rather than being passive as explicated by agenda-setting, is active. Social media users become producers and presenters of news. Thus, in this age of digital, audiences now, from their personal views, intentionally decide, initiate, select, comment, frame, like, salience, create and share news items to modify people's political opinion and therefore set national agendas (Allen, 2016; McCombs et al., 2014; Ragas & Roberts, 2009).

Through the agenda-melding process, social media users gather various agendas to create the ‘‘personal communities’’ in which the users willingly choose to live (Allen, 2016; McCombs et al., 2014). Unlike agenda-setting theory, where the media gatekeeping the news items deliberately and select news issues to influence people's opinion, agenda-melding theory gives the audience opportunities to initiate and create the public and media agenda. Concerning media use and political trust, past research confirmed a positive relationship between mainstream media and political trust (Camaj, 2014). Drawing from the views of previous researchers and the perspective of both agenda-setting and agenda-melding theories, we contend that the media effect which arises from the way and manner through which mass media and social media users used the gatekeeping process to intentionally influence the opinion of the audience on their political decisions. Consequently, this study adopted agenda-setting and agenda-melding media effect elements to explain media use as a strong determinant of political trust. Adopting the agenda-setting and agenda-melding is expected to broaden our understanding of political trust within a Nigerian context.

## Hypothesis Development

**Salience in the Media and Political Participation.** Media is a vital source of influence on political trust. This study developed a research model depicting the relationship between media salience, political participation, and political trust (see Figure 1). Both mainstream and social media use for political news reinforces political participation by playing an essential role in bringing the politicians and the generality of the people together (Kiousis, 2004; Mustapha & Omar, 2020). Through the media, people are informed, educated, and influenced politically. Supporting this assertion, Krishna and Jha (2017) noted that mass media like radio, television, and newspaper impact people's socio-political lives. They disseminate political information upward or downward (Echeverría & Mani, 2020). Färdigh (2013) and Park (2012) maintained that through framing corruption issues in certain ways and assigning salience to them, the media influence people's opinions about the menace of corruption. Media can shape and influence people's opinions, attitudes, behaviors and perceptions towards political leaders and political activities by giving prominence to certain issues and ignoring others (Kiousis, 2004). By exposing the corrupt activities of the politicians, the media helped increase society's political knowledge and behavior at large (Aarts et al., 2012). In addition, past studies have consistently found that social media use predicted political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Shahzat & Omar, 2021). Extending past studies that mainly focused on general media use or social media use per se, we examined the degree of salience given by mainstream media and social media on corruption and how it affected people's trust in politics. Hence, we hypothesize that:

> **H1**: Salience in the mainstream media is positively associated with political participation.
>
> **H2**: Salience in social media is positively associated with political participation.

**Political Participation and Political Trust.** Democratic governments perform better when the people understand and trust the government. Political trust facilitates talking and working together among individuals and between the public and the government (Wilkes, 2015). Generally, the level of political trust depends on the individual objective evaluation of government performance. Jacob and Schenke (2020) claimed that regardless of media exposure intensity to poor governance of the incumbent government, members of the ruling party can hardly believe that the government is bad and can easily feel satisfied with their performance, unlike those in the opposition party. Thus, an individual with party affiliation generally believes that a party they associate with performs more effectively and efficiently than other parties (Jacob & Schenke, 2020; Wilkes, 2015). Regarding the possible relationship between political participation and political trust, past studies (Bonifácio & Paulino, 2015; Wilkes, 2015) found that party affiliation, tolerance, for and experience with corruption determined people's trust in the incumbent government. Hence, we propose that:

**H3:** Political participation is positively associated with political trust.

**Media Use, Political Participation, and Political Trust.** There is an interdependence between politics and media. Skamnakis (2006) argued that since 1960, politics and media do not only continue to have a close relationship, but they are interdependent. Media provides a platform for articulation and contestation of viewpoints that assists the audience to make an informed decision on their political activities (Mustapha & Wok, 2015) and solidify or reduce their support in the government (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2020). This study asserts from media salience literature, that the volume, placement, and valence of issues are necessary to produce media effects. Past research has established the effects of media use on political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Shahzad & Omar, 2021) and political trust (Aarts et al., 2012). A few studies also found the association between political participation and political trust (Bonifácio & Paulino, 2015; Wilkes, 2015). Linking these studies together, we argue that salience in media leads to political participation, which in turn leads to political trust. Hence, we treat political participation as a mediator and hypothesize that:

**H4:** Political participation mediates the relationship between salience in the mainstream media and political trust.

**H5:** Political participation mediates the relationship between salience in social media and political trust.

## METHOD

This study, based on a survey research method, focuses on Nigerian electorates 18 years and above. In Nigeria, the political structure of six geopolitical zones, 36 states, and 774 local governments make the country a complex one (Mustapha & Wok, 2015). As a result of the country's complex political structure, the study adopted a multistage sampling technique to obtain a representative sample from the population. A questionnaire was used to gather information from the respondents. We used the G*power to determine the minimum sample size of 77, with three predictors, medium effect size, and a power of 0.80. However, the sample size was increased to 688 since we are dealing with

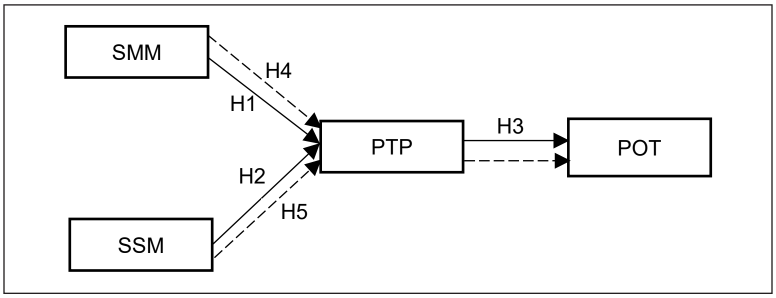

*Figure 1.* Research model
*Note:* SSM = Salience in the Social Media; SMM = Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media, PTP = Political Participation, POT = Political Trust

a heterogeneous population. Some scholars (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Omar & Ahrari, 2020) suggested a comparison of the study sample with the national demographic statistics to achieve generalizability and increase the sample's representativeness. Therefore, a questionnaire was administered to 688 respondents in the 36 states and 774 local governments that make up the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. As shown in the demographic profile in Table 1, it could be inferred that the sample of this study is almost similar to the demographic data of the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017). Thus, the sampling bias in the current study was minimized.

This study sample comprises 688 Nigerians above 18 years old. Since the minimum voting age in Nigeria is 18, anyone below the voting age was disqualified from participating in this study. The data was collected in February 2019, before the country's general election. As indicated in the table, more males (59.3%) than female respondents (40.7%). The highest age category was between 18 and 34 (64.5%). In relation to education levels, most respondents of this study possessed Bachelor or Higher National Diploma (HND) degree (56.3%), followed by Diploma certificates (23.4%), master's degree (12.8%), and Ph.D. (2.6%). This analysis indicated that the majority of respondents were young educated Nigerians. The distribution of respondents according to geopolitical zones shows that the number of respondents across all zones was almost equal. In terms of government support, more than half of the respondents (57.1%) indicated their support, while the rest (42.9) did not identify as supporters of the current government in power.

### Measurement

This study has four constructs. First, we treat salience in mainstream media and social media as independent variables, political participation as the mediating variable, and political trust as the dependent variable. Second, all items were adopted from past studies. The items were adapted from past studies (Schneider, 2017), while political participation was adopted from Huddy et al. (2010). Third, we adopted the salience in media for both traditional mainstream media and social media contexts from the work of Kiousis (2004). They used content analysis to derive a few themes of media silence. Finally, we developed statements from the themes and tested them empirically in this study. The variables were measured based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree and 7=Strongly Agree. Three experts of political communication were consulted to validate the study's items. A pilot study was also conducted to improve the questionnaire. Based on the contributions of the experts and the feedback from the pilot study, the instrument was amended and reworded to enhance its richness and clarity.

## FINDINGS

To analyze our model, we used Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to allow us to examine relationships between constructs

Table 1
*Respondents' demographic profile*

| **Demographic Factors** | **Freq.** | **Pert** |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 408 | 59.3 |
| Female | 280 | 40.7 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18- 24 years | 168 | 24.5 |
| 25-34 years | 275 | 40 |
| 35-44 years | 119 | 17.3 |
| 45-54 years | 85 | 12.4 |
| 55- 64 years | 34 | 4.9 |
| 65 years and above | 7 | 1 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Single | 363 | 52.8 |
| Married | 314 | 45.6 |
| Others | 11 | 1.6 |
| **Level of Education** | | |
| Do not Attend School | 1 | 0.1 |
| Primary School | 5 | 0.7 |
| Secondary School | 28 | 4.1 |
| Diploma | 161 | 23.4 |
| Bachelor /HND | 387 | 56.3 |
| Masters | 88 | 12.8 |
| PhD | 18 | 2.6 |
| **Income (N)** | | |
| Up to 18,000 | 198 | 28.8 |
| 18001- 30,000 | 112 | 16.3 |
| 30,001- 50,000 | 138 | 20.1 |
| 50,001- 70,000 | 68 | 9.9 |
| 70,001- 100,000 | 94 | 13.7 |
| Above 100,000 | 78 | 11.3 |
| **Types of Employment** | | |
| Self | 268 | 39 |
| Government | 253 | 36.8 |
| Unemployed | 167 | 24.3 |
| **Religion** | | |
| Islam | 404 | 58.7 |
| Christianity | 281 | 40.8 |
| Others | 2 | 0.3 |
| None | 1 | 0.1 |
| **Ethnicity (Geopolitical Zones)** | | |
| Hausa (North Central, North East & North West) | 345 | 50.1 |
| Igbo (South East & South-South) | 227 | 33 |
| Yoruba (South West) | 116 | 16.9 |
| **Political Participation** | | |
| African Action Congress (AAC) | 4 | 0.6 |
| Action People's Congress (APC) | 245 | 35.6 |
| All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) | 21 | 3.1 |
| People's Democratic Party (PDP) | 196 | 28.5 |
| Others (Parties) | 3 | 0.4 |
| No (not belong to any party) | 219 | 31.8 |
| **Government Support** | | |
| Yes | 393 | 57.1 |
| No | 295 | 42.9 |

simultaneously (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is suitable for this study because the explanatory nature of our study and the normality tests shows our data was not normally distributed (as the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, Mardia test of multivariate normality, Skewness and Kurtosis were all significant). Since our data were collected in a single survey, we also checked for common method bias (CMB), using Harman's single factor test. The results showed that a single factor only explained 18.6% of the variance, suggesting that we do not have an issue with CMB since it does not exceed the threshold of 50%. We also confirmed the variance inflation factor (VIF) and found that none were above the threshold of three (Hair et al., 2017) (Table 2). Therefore, we followed the two steps approach; first, we analyzed the measurement model and then tested the structural model.

### The Measurement Model

In the measurement model, we established the validity and reliability of measures

Table 2
*Measurement model assessment*

| Construct | Items | Loadings | CA | CR | AVE | VIF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media | SMM1 | 0.806 | 0.851 | 0.893 | 0.625 | 1.302 |
| | SMM2 | 0.772 | | | | |
| | SMM3 | 0.769 | | | | |
| | SMM4 | 0.797 | | | | |
| | SMM5 | 0.808 | | | | |
| Salience in the Social Media | SSM1 | 0.784 | 0.888 | 0.915 | 0.643 | 1.302 |
| | SSM2 | 0.852 | | | | |
| | SSM3 | 0.845 | | | | |
| | SSM4 | 0.795 | | | | |
| | SSM5 | 0.78 | | | | |
| | SSM6 | 0.749 | | | | |
| Political Participation | PSP1 | 0.877 | 0.918 | 0.938 | 0.752 | 1.000 |
| | PSP2 | 0.861 | | | | |
| | PSP3 | 0.834 | | | | |
| | PSP4 | 0.877 | | | | |
| | PSP5 | 0.887 | | | | |
| Political Trust | POT1 | 0.8 | 0.915 | 0.931 | 0.658 | - |
| | POT2 | 0.816 | | | | |
| | POT4 | 0.792 | | | | |
| | POT5 | 0.736 | | | | |
| | POT6 | 0.834 | | | | |
| | POT7 | 0.871 | | | | |
| | POT8 | 0.821 | | | | |

before assessing the structural relationships in this study. Firstly, we determined the convergent validity by checking the Cronbach's alpha (α), average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and the loadings. As a result, the α values were above the threshold of 0.70, AVE was above 0.50, CR was above 0.70, and the loadings were all above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017), suggesting that the results satisfied the criteria for convergent validity and composite reliability (See Table 2).

Secondly, we tested the discriminant validity to establish the differences between variables. Two criteria (Fornell & Larcker and HTMT) were used to determine discriminant validity. For the Fornell and Larcker criterion, Table 3 shows that each construct's AVE's square root surpassed the correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results of the HTMT, as shown in Table 4, also demonstrates that none of the diagonal values were above the threshold of 0.85 (Ramayah et al., 2018). Thus, the criteria for discriminant validity were also met.

## The Structural Model

In examining the structural model, scholars (Hair et al., 2014) recommended that researchers look at the $R^2$, beta β, and t-values through a bootstrapping technique of 5000 samples. In addition to these basic steps, it was also suggested that the predictive significance ($Q^2$) and the effect sizes ($f^2$) should also be assessed. The structural equation model results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. The results show that 51% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.51$) in political participation is explained by the salience in mainstream media and salience in social media. Political participation, in turn, contributes to 35% of the variance in political trust ($R^2 = 0.35$). As shown in Table 5, all direct hypotheses were supported. Firstly, we found a positive relationship between

Table 3
*Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion)*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Political Participation | 0.867 | | | |
| 2. Salience in the Social Media | 0.412 | 0.802 | | |
| 3. Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media | 0.346 | 0.482 | 0.791 | |
| 4. Political Trust | 0.136 | 0.068 | 0.138 | 0.811 |

Table 4
*Discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Political participation | - | | | |
| 2. Salience in the Social Media | 0.454 | | | |
| 3. Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media | 0.385 | 0.551 | | |
| 4. Political Trust | 0.138 | 0.091 | 0.169 | - |

salience in the traditional mainstream media and political participation (β = 0.192, p<0.001), supporting H1. Secondly, the positive relationship between salience in social media and political participation was endorsed (β = 0.319, p < 0.001), supporting H2. Thirdly, we hypothesized a positive association between political participation and political trust, and our data supported it (β = 0.136, p < 0.001). Finally, we further confirmed that the $Q^2$ values for political participation ($Q^2 = 0.111$) and political trust ($Q^2 = 0.146$) were s greater than 0 (Hair et al., 2014), suggesting that the model has sufficient predictive relevance. With respect to the effect size ($f^2$), it could be seen in Table 5 that the effect size ranged from medium to large, which resonated with the threshold of Cohen (1988).

Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2018) noted that we adopted bootstrapping method to test the indirect effect, Based on Table 6, we found the indirect effect between salience in mainstream media and political trust (β = 0.336, p = 0.000) and between social media and political trust (β = 0.297, p = 0.000) were significant. For the indirect effects at 97.5% Bootstrapping Confidence Level Bias Correction (BC) assessment, we found that there was no 0 value in between lower limit and upper limit (LL= 0.245, UL=0.412), (LL= 0.218, UL=0.381). The results suggest a significant mediation. Political participation was a significant mediator that affected the relationship between salience in media (for both mainstream media and social media contexts) and political trust. Hence, both H4 and H5 were supported.

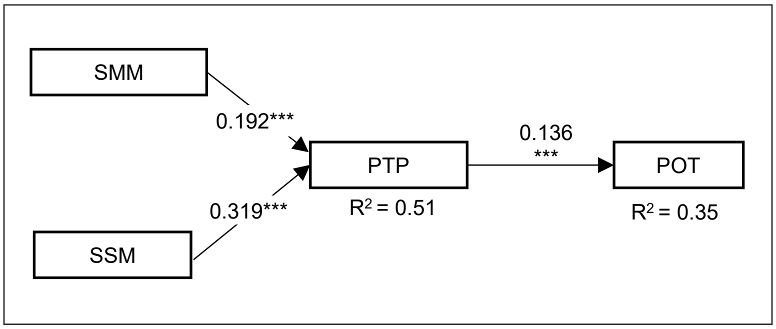

*Figure 2.* The structural model

Table 5
*Direct relationships*

| Path Analysis | Beta | S.E. | t-value | p-value | LCI | UCI | R2 | f2 | Q2 | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SMM -> PTP | 0.192 | 0.043 | 4.505 | 0.000 | 0.110 | 0.275 |  | 0.234 |  | Supported |
| SSM -> PTP | 0.319 | 0.041 | 7.806 | 0.000 | 0.237 | 0.397 | 0.51 | 0.382 | 0.146 | Supported |
| PTP -> Political Trust | 0.136 | 0.035 | 3.870 | 0.000 | 0.199 | 0.269 | 0.35 | 0.162 | 0.111 | Supported |

NB: SSM = Salience in the Social Media; SMM = Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media, PTP = Political Participation, LCI = 2.5%, UCI = 97.5%.

Table 6
*Indirect (mediating) relationships*

| Path Analysis | Beta | S.E. | t-value | p-value | LI | CI | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SMM -> PTP -> Political Trust | 0.336 | 0.077 | 7.161 | 0.000 | 0.245 | 0.412 | Supported |
| SSM -> PTP-> Political Trust | 0.297 | 0.058 | 6.474 | 0.000 | 0.218 | 0.381 | Supported |

*Note:* SSM = Salience in the Social Media; SMM = Salience in the Traditional Mainstream Media, LCI = 2.5%, PTP= Political Participation, UCI = 97.5%.

## DISCUSSION

This study affirmed the general postulation that the media, as the information provider of political and current affairs news, is crucial to the democratic development of any democratic nation (Camaj, 2014; Ceron, 2015), especially for a nation with a nascent democracy like Nigeria. Contrary to the cynics, the general results of this study show that both traditional mainstream media and social media are generally indispensable to democratic development and political outcomes. It is because the media is essential to influence citizens' perception of government activities. Furthermore, it corroborates the suggestions of previous studies in Allen (2016), Camaj (2014), and Ceron (2015) that the audience accumulates political knowledge, which is germane to political trust through media exposure.

This study argues that media can shape and influence people's opinions, attitudes and behavior by salience to selected issues. Focusing on how people perceive the salience of corruption in traditional media and social media, this study found that perceived salience in both media contexts has positive effects on political participation and political trust. This outcome supports our hypotheses 1 and 2. The significant relationship between these constructs indicates that traditional mainstream media and social media can enrich people's political knowledge that affects their political behavior. It further shows that mainstream media and social media complement each other, rather than working at cross purposes (Albarran & Moellinger, 2013; Mare, 2013). In this sense, both media types can increase public awareness about corruption and increase people's political participation and trust.

Furthermore, affirming the existing studies on the relationship between political participation and political trust (Jacob & Schenke, 2020; Wilkes, 2015), this study demonstrates the high relevance of political participation to political trust. It thus emphasizes that political participation is a strong predictor of political trust in Nigeria. It supports our H3. Moreover, we treated political participation as a mediating variable in this study to reveal its indirect effect on political trust. Political participation was found to be a significant mediator. Our findings suggest that the media exerts its influence on political participation, affecting political trust. Thus, H4 and H5 were supported. When comparing the results of direct and indirect effects, we found a higher increase in political trust when political participation mediated the relationship in traditional mainstream media than social media contexts. Our findings have theoretical and practical implications.

### Theoretical Implications

Previous studies identify the perception of corruption, political performance, and economic performance as determinants of political trust (Drakos et al., 2019; Murtin et al., 2018; Wang, 2016), but this study identified media salience as one of the crucial determinants of political trust. The incorporation of media as a strong predictor of political trust showed the importance of media in restoring people's trust in their government. Furthermore, political participation is also a mediating variable and significant determinant of political trust in Nigeria.

Also, this study contributed to the theoretical advancement of the concept of political trust. The previous study adopted media malaise and virtuous theories to predict that mass media will cause political alienation by fueling citizens' cynicism (Cheng, 2020; Marien, 2017). However, in this study, the theories of agenda-setting and agenda-melding were employed to explain media influence on political trust. Combining the two theoretical lenses is unique since no study on the political outcome has combined the two theories in a study. It has therefore enhanced the richness and interconnectivity effects of the two theories in this study. This study also fills the gap in the previous studies by demonstrating that both agenda-setting and agenda-melding theories operating in different contexts act together to impact political trust.

### Practical Implications

The study provides some insights on the important role of the media in restoring trust towards the government by assigning salience to important issues in society. Our findings can help the government develop effective media strategies to address the problem of low political participation and low political trust among the people, especially among the younger generations. To achieve this, the government should utilize both traditional mainstream media and social media to reach out to the people. One of the ways is by leveraging on national issues, such as corruption, affecting so many people in Nigeria. In doing so, media can serve as a tool to attract people to participate in politics. Harnessing on the indispensable roles of media in priming, framing, and giving salience to important issues in society, both mainstream media and social media in Nigeria can act as catalysts of change in society by fostering active participation in politics among the people and hence increasing their trust in the incumbent government.

## CONCLUSION

Our study is set to uncover the role of different media types (i.e., traditional mainstream media and social media) in influencing political participation and political trust in Nigeria. We found support for all hypotheses in our study. We concluded that traditional mainstream media and social media significantly affect political participation in Nigeria because they strengthen citizens' political knowledge and motivate efficient media information processing by giving salience on certain issues over others. In other words, it allows Nigerians to become more knowledgeable and develop their stance on political issues. Our study found that greater salience given to political media content increases citizens' participation in politics and subsequently increases political trust. In this study, we also confirm the direct link between political participation and political trust. The key factor in increasing political trust in Nigeria is participation in politics. When people are alert and active, they are motivated to participate in many activities and committed to programs and policies that bring more development. These activities lead to trust in the government. Future research should examine the types of political participation that can enhance political trust further to understanding the dyadic relationships between media and politics.

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# Position of Fatwa in The Constitution: A Legal Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Fatwas in Malaysia seems to be existing without legal power and value since they are not mentioned literally in the Federal Constitution. Accordingly, there has been a perception of fatwa institutions issuing fatwas without legal authority to bind Muslims to certain legal decisions and views. Hence, this study is to clarify that fatwas are valid and recognized as part of the legal reference in Malaysia. More importantly, this paper refutes the claim that fatwa is unconstitutional in terms of its legal position. Additionally, this study intends to clarify that the philosophy of federalism practiced in Malaysia is solid evidence that fatwas are indeed an authoritative source of law in Malaysia. This study is conducted qualitatively using document analysis instruments with reference to the Federal Constitution and legal provisions practiced in Malaysia. Investigation of this study found that fatwa and its institutions in the country are valid according to Malaysian law. However, they are not mentioned literally in the Constitution, particularly fatwa authority that involves state jurisdiction in Islamic affairs. Moreover, this paper is highly significant to highlight the validity of fatwa from the Constitution perspective and further support the authority and credibility of its institutions according to Malaysian law.

*Keywords*: Civil law, fatwa, federal constitution, Shariah law

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## INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Constitution recognizes Islam as the religion of the Federation and allows followers of other religions to practice their respective religions. This provision makes Islam dominant in the legal landscape of the country compared to other religions. In Article 74 (2) and

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Item 1, State List, Ninth Schedule, Federal Constitution provides that all matters relating to Islam and Islamic law are under the jurisdiction of the state. The question is whether the institution of fatwa and the existence of Mufti Departments in Malaysia is considered constitutional?

In Malaysia, the role of fatwa and muftis are not limited to resolving issues pertaining to Islamic law. However, they also deliver an interpretation of Islamic hukum and practices pursuant to the Government policy. Thus, the fatwa also represents the government on matters or disputes related to Islamic practice. In Malaysia, two fatwa institutions are established under national law, at the national and state levels. For a practical implementation of both fatwa institutions, the federal government has established the Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI Fatwa Committee) established in early 1970 under Regulation 11, Regulations of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia [JAKIM], (2013). While at the state level, the State Fatwa Committee is established under the provisions of each Act / Enactment of the Administration of Islamic Religion of the States. Decisions from the *muzakarah* issued by the MKI Fatwa Committee cover national interests in various fields such as faith, Shariah, *muamalat,* law, medicine, pharmaceutical, biotechnology, including political and state issues (JAKIM, 2018).

The National Muzakarah Committee under the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) is an organization that issues legal views at the federal level. As provided in Rule 14 of the MKI Rules, this Committee has to consider, decide and issue fatwas on any matter relating to the religion of Islam referred to it by the Conference of Rulers (Majlis Raja-Raja). The Committee will submit its opinion to the MKI, then submit its recommendations to the Conference of Rulers. It shows that the Conference of Rulers directly refers to this Committee as the highest monarchical institution in Malaysia. The Federal Constitution itself recognizes and protects the unique position of the Conference of Rulers as provided in the Article.

While at the state level, the establishment of the State Fatwa Committee and its functions are found in every Act/Enactment of the Administration of Islamic Religion of the States. For example, section 32 (1) of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act [Act 505] (1993) provides that the Yang Dipertuan Agong may, on the advice of the Minister and after consultation with the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP), appoint qualified and suitable persons to be Mufti and Deputy Mufti of the Federal Territories". Additionally, the fatwa administration and management at the state level is governed by the Mufti Department responsible for executing tasks enacted by the State Islamic Religious Council as a religious authority.

Hence, this article mainly discusses the position of fatwa as a legal instrument in Malaysia with a focus on its status within the context of the Federal Constitution, State and Civil Islamic Law, and other acts enacted by the Government. Accordingly, this paper seeks to answer whether fatwa is constitutional or merely an opinion of Muftis without legal basis.

This explanation will impact the understanding of the relevance of the fatwa institution as the highest source of Islamic law in explaining the views of law and recognized in the legal system in Malaysia.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### Document Analysis

Document analysis is used as a research method to answer whether the fatwa is considered constitutional under the principles of federalism. Apart from that, it is also to find the position of fatwa in Shariah and civil law practiced in Malaysia. This method examines several statutes related to fatwas and legislation to see how closely they are related.

Document analysis is sometimes explained as content analysis that is often used through a systematic examination of records and documents. As for this study, documents either in handwriting or printed form such as books or recorded materials that report or record an event or matter are among the documents to be analyzed in this study (Long, 2009). The document analysis comes from two data sources: primary source such as the Federal Constitution and provisions of laws implemented at the state level like Statutes of Administration of Islamic Religion of the States and secondary sources such as journal articles, seminars and conferences papers. Similarly, documents related to fatwas from the historical context and its development and other issues are written and printed. Additionally, documentation on the institution and management of fatwas in Malaysia in terms of its position in the legal system in Malaysia is mentioned in Statutes of Administration of Islamic Religion of the States and act/enactments/ordinances of the states that will also be taken as reference. Therefore, each data collection in this study is based on two sources of documents, namely primer or primary data and secondary or supporting data.

Among the sources of documentation used for this study are scriptures either in Arabic or English, which are considered a major source of discourse on the position of fatwa in Malaysia. In addition, Islamic legal books that discuss legal issues and fatwas issued by local and foreign writers are also considered as a primary reference in this work.

Similarly, the documents that are the source of legislation and judgment, such as the Federal Constitution, related statutes, are also the primary reference to support the source of fatwa authority in court. Thus, the source includes the State Islamic Religious Administration Act, Enactments and Ordinances, State Criminal Offenses Act, Enactments and Ordinances, and other related statutes. Also, several other acts such as the Evidence Act and Syariah Courts Act.

## DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data analysis process of this research begins with the data collection process in document form. The procedure of data collection and analysis goes together with the techniques introduced by Merriam (2009). Moreover, the procedure is carried out continuously to ensure a smooth flow of data collection and analysis processes for a systematic data organization. It is based on the view of Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Iksan (2011).

For data analysis and review purposes, the researcher uses the necessary methods that are useful for this research, namely:

### Text Analysis

This method is used to analyze data in the form of texts related to the background, history, development, role, and function of fatwa institutions in the history of Islamic law, especially in terms of its position in the Constitution as well as Shariah and civil law practice in Malaysia.

### Descriptive Method

The data obtained from this study are primary and secondary data presented in descriptive form; to study the extent to which this fatwa is constitutional, which certainly refers to the sources of the Constitution, State Islamic law, and some provisions of the relevant enactments and acts.

### Thematic Method

For this study, the researcher uses thematic methods by examining the themes identified from data findings. As a result, several key themes have been formed that reflect the overall study findings. Major themes that are salient in this study are to be presented as follow:

1. Fatwa is something that is deemed constitutional based on the Federal Constitution
2. Fatwa in Malaysia is considered authoritative and complies with the concept of federalism practiced in Malaysia through the division of jurisdiction at the federal and state levels
3. Fatwa is recognized based on the State Islamic and civil law practiced in Malaysia.
4. Fatwas that have legislative power are fatwas gazetted at the state level.

## FATWA IN THE CONSTITUTION AND CONCEPT OF FEDERALISM

Based on the federalism concept on the distribution of powers as practiced in Malaysia, the administration of Islam that includes fatwa matters falls under the jurisdiction of the state. Therefore, it is provided in Item 1, State List, Ninth Schedule, and Federal Constitution:

> "Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, Islamic law and personal and family law of persons professing the religion of Islam, including the Islamic law relating to succession, testate and intestate, betrothal, marriage, divorce, dower, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy guardianship, gifts, partitions and non- charitable

> trusts; Wakafs and the definition and regulation of charitable and religious endowments, institutions, trusts, charities and charitable institutions operating wholly within the state; Malay customs. Zakat, Fitrah and Baitulmal or similar Islamic religious revenue, mosques or any Islamic public places of worship, creation and punishment of offences by persons professing the religion of Islam against precepts of that religion, except in regard to matters included in the Federal List; the constitution, organization and procedure of Syariah courts, which shall have jurisdiction only over person professing the religion of Islam and in respect only of any of the matters included in this paragraph, but shall not have jurisdiction in respect of offences except in so fat as conferred by federal law*, the control of propagating doctrines and beliefs among persons professing the religion of Islam; the determination of matters of Islamic law and doctrine Malay custom." (Federal Constitution, 2006).

The Federal Constitution does not entirely deny state power over Islamic law and administration. However, states are still bound by the provisions contained in the Constitution. Any Islamic law enacted by the state should not be contrary to the Federal Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land (Majid, 1997). Therefore, matters related to Islamic law cannot be implemented except through laws enacted by the State Legislative body. It should be read together with Article 74 (2), which provides:

> "Without prejudice to any power to make laws conferred on it by any other Article, the Legislature of a State may make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State List (that is to say, the Second List set out in the Ninth Schedule) or the Concurrent List." (Federal Constitution, 2006)

The articles mentioned above imply that any discussion on fatwa and its institutions need to refer to provisions contained in the Federal Constitution and State Law to ensure its authority as a source of Islamic law of the country. The issue here is the term 'fatwa' that is not being mentioned literally in the provisions of the Constitution. Thus, to what extent does the Constitution authorize the Islamic institutions involved in the issuance of fatwa? This matter needs to be understood in the context of the Constitution, which also provides for the position of Islam as mentioned in Articles 3, 11, 12 (2), and 150 (6A). These provisions may directly or indirectly affect the realization of Islam (Bari, 2005).

The Constitution also authorizes the Parliament to come up with laws related to Islamic affairs. Article 76 (1) of the Federal Constitution addressed the power of Parliament to enact laws for states in some issues, including laws to promote the uniformity of law between two or more states. Similarly, if requested by any State Legislative Assembly, the Parliament has to make law, including Islamic-related laws. However, the federal power must be exercised at the request or permission of the state (Federal Constitution, 2006).

The Constitution also distributes power to the state through the State Legislative Assembly to enact laws, including those related to the administration of fatwas to be part of the law being enforced. Thus, once the gazetted fatwa is violated, legal action can be imposed on the parties involved. This provision indicates that laws relating to violations of fatwa are among the rights of the state. It follows from the provisions of the Constitution, which make it clear that a law cannot be enacted in a state until it has been adopted as law by the State Legislature concerned. The validity of fatwa, which is part of the State law, is based on the provisions of this Constitution. On this basis, Shariah-related laws were enacted at the state level to ensure that matters on Islamic administration are governed under the provisions of the Constitution.

Several other provisions, as in Articles 11 (3), 12 (2), 150 (6A), and the Fourth Schedule of Article 37, can also be used to justify fatwas as the source of Islamic law in Malaysia. Therefore, it must be read together with Article 74 (2) and Item 1, State List, Ninth Schedule, Federal Constitution.

Articles 11 (3) and 12 (2) of the Federal Constitution provide that each religious group is independent and has the right to manage its religious affairs (Federal Constitution, 2006). Based on this provision, the Constitution has authorized the establishment or maintenance of Islamic institutions. The state can provide financial assistance to establish Islamic institutions and teach Islam to Muslims (Abas, 2006; Aziz, 2015). Islamic institutions are responsible for administering matters related to the fatwa. The establishment of fatwa institutions and the distribution of financial allocations to these institutions do not conflict with the Constitution. Establishing a fatwa institution at the national or state level is one way to create authoritative management and administrative system in fatwa-related matters. Apart from that, the fatwa institution is intended to develop new Islamic laws and fatwas as a guide to the society and reference the formulation of government policies on religious issues. Not only that, but the fatwa institution also serves to assist the judicial institutions in resolving disputes.

In Article 150 (6A), the Federal Constitution provides for six rights that cannot be violated even if the country is in an emergency, among them are those related to Islamic law, including Administration of Islamic Law (Bari, 2005; Federal Constitution, 2006; Halim, 2013). This provision also strongly justifies the position of fatwa as part of Islamic law. Hence the fatwa and Islamic law implemented in Malaysia can be considered a form of protected, high-ranked and unchallenged through means that are considered unconstitutional. Therefore, the Islamic law includes the enacted fatwa as part of Islamic law, which cannot be revoked even in the case of an emergency.

Also supporting the position of fatwa as constitutional refers to the Fourth Schedule of Article 37 of the Federal Constitution as cited from the oath made by Yang Dipertuan Agong during the day of his coronation:

> "...Further we do solemnly and truly declare that we shall at all time protect the religion of Islam and uphold the rules of law and order in the Nation...." (Federal Constitution, 2006).

This provision can be explained and interpreted as upholding, preserving, and protecting Islamic institutions (Halim, 2013). According to Bari (2005), although the Yang Dipertuan Agong is not positioned as the religious leader for the entire Federation, he has the role and responsibility to ensure that the position of Islam is well preserved and honored. This role also refers to the fatwa institution protected by the Yang Dipertuan Agong and the Malay Rulers. The establishment of the fatwa institution is mainly to advise the Yang Dipertuan Agong and the Malay Rulers on matters pertaining to Islamic affairs. Therefore, the provision mentioned above is an explicit declaration of the Yang Dipertuan Agong's responsibility to defend and uphold Islam as the Federal Religion. Although the word fatwa is not mentioned, the confession of preserving Islam includes protecting the fatwa institution from being interfered with by any devious parties.

Article 38 of the Constitution also provides for the role of the Conference of Rulers, among others:

> (b) agreeing or disagreeing to the extension of any religious acts, observances or ceremonies to the Federation as a whole;
>
> (c) consenting or withholding consent to any law and making or giving advice on any appointment which under this Constitution requires the consent of the Conference, or is to be made by or after consultation with the Conference.

What is the relationship between the Conference of Rule and the fatwa institution as a constitutional body, and protected by law? On 17 October 1968, the 81st Conference of the Conference of Rulers of Malaysia agreed that a coordinating body for matters relating to Islamic affairs in Malaysia should be established. This agreement led to the official establishment of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI) on 1 of July 1969. The duties of the MKI are:

1) to discuss, deliberate, and manage any issues referred to the Council by the Majlis Raja-Raja, any State Government or State Islamic Religious Council or member of the Council, to provide advice or recommendation.
2) providing advice to the Majlis Raja-Raja, State Government, or State Islamic Religious Council on any matter relating to Islamic Law or the administration of Islamic Law and Islamic education to improve, coordinate or encourage standardization in law or administration.

With reference to the Constitution's provisions, the Fatwa Committee, both at the national or state level, was established to impart a thorough understanding of Islamic law to the community. Beginning with a proper setup before the arrival of the British in Malaya, the fatwa institution gradually improved over time to ensure its existence remained relevant as an authoritative source of law. Apart from that, the fatwa institution and Mufti have been recognized as the highest reference in resolving disputes about Islamic law. Their important position in the Constitution is evident, although they are not mentioned in any provision. This argument is solid to rebuff the claim that the fatwa institution is unconstitutional and has no legal power.

## FATWA IN STATE ISLAMIC LAW

Fatwa Malaysia is administered through Acts, Enactments, and Ordinances under the Islamic Religious Administration of the States. As Ibrahim (1999) explained, the Islamic Religious Council and officials such as the Mufti, Qadhi (*syarie* judge), and other positions were created to play a role in the governance of the law. The Mufti, who is usually the Chairman of the Fatwa Committee, is responsible and given the task of issuing fatwas. The rules of fatwa administration are established to ensure that the fatwa institution is well managed and compliant with the law. Thus, the fatwa management is seen as regulatory and constitutional. The Mufti can only be issued a fatwa through the legal process with members of the Fatwa Committee. This process also involves the State Islamic Religious Council and consent from the Sultan before it is gazetted as a fatwa. This procedure avoids any release of a fatwa by those without the authority, particularly when it comes to legal views on major issues that involve national interests (Ismail, 2014; Husin, 2012; Shuaib, 2009).

The procedures mentioned above explain that fatwa practice in Malaysia does have its legal effect owing to statutes and legal provisions in the Acts, Enactments, and Ordinances of the Islamic Religious Administration of the States and State Enactments related to fatwas. Similarly, muftis are part of the law that must be complied with. Should there be any violation or opinion that contradicts the gazetted fatwa, it is considered an offense and can be prosecuted.

Up to December 2021, two states have enacted fatwa laws exclusively. The Mufti and Fatwa (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2008 and the Fatwa Enactment (Sabah) 2004. Compared to other states, provisions related to fatwas are only included in the Islamic Administration Act, Enactment, and Ordinance in their respective states.

Laws related to fatwas are also found in Acts, Enactments, and Ordinances under the Shariah Crimes of the States, which involve various offenses, namely:

1) False Doctrine (s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) [Act559] 1997, s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Johor) 1997; s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences Ordinance (Sarawak) 2001; s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences

Enactment (Selangor) 1995; s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Takzir) (Terengganu) 2001; s. 5 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Pahang) 2013; s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (State of Penang) 1996; s. 52 Syariah Criminal Offences (Sabah) Enactment 1995 and s. 4 Syariah Criminal Offences (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2014.

2) Contempt or defiance of religious authorities (s. 9 Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) [Act559] 1997; s. 9 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (State of Penang) 1996; s. 65 Enakmen Kesalahan Syariah (Melaka) 1991; s. 50 Syariah Criminal Enactment (Negeri Sembilan) 1992; s. 9 Syariah Criminal Offences Ordinance (Sarawak) 2001; s. 9 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Johor) 1997; s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Selangor) 1995; s. 10 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Takzir) (Terengganu) 2001; s. 14 Crimes Syariah Enactment (Perak) 1992; s. 56 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Sabah) 1995; s. 38 Criminal Offences in the Syarak Enactment (Perlis) 1991 and s.9 Syariah Criminal Offences (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2014. Meanwhile, in s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Pahang) 2013 and s. 32 Syariah Criminal Code (Kelantan) 1985; it is included in disobeying the Sultan/Raja order due to the offense of not complying with the order through a notification in the Gazette.

3) Insulting, or bringing into contempt, etc., the religion of Islam. This offense involves ridiculing or causing contempt for any law in force, including fatwas related to Islam. It is allocated in the s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) [Act559] 1997; s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Johor) 1997; s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences Ordinance (Sarawak) 2001; s. 10 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Selangor) 1995; s. 8 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Takzir) (Terengganu) 2001; s. 11 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Pahang) 2013; s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (State of Penang) 1996; s. 14 Crimes Syariah Enactment (Perak) 1992; s. 53, 54 & 55 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Sabah) 1995 and s. 7 Syariah Criminal Offences (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2014. In s. 62 and s. 63 Enakmen Kesalahan Syariah (Melaka) 1991, it was placed under the offense of insulting Islam, while in s. 39 Criminal Offences in the Syarak Enactment (Perlis) 1991, convicted of insulting Islam and fatwas.

4) Opinion contrary to the fatwa. It is allocated in the s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) [Act559] 1997; s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Johor) 1997; s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences Ordinance (Sarawak) 2001; s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Selangor) 1995; s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences (Takzir) (Terengganu) Enactment 2001; s. 15 Syariah Criminal Offences (Pahang) Enactment 2013; s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences (State of Penang) Enactment 1996; s. 21 Crimes Syariah Enactment (Perak) 1992 and s. 9 Syariah Criminal Offences (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2014. In s. 47 Enakmen Kesalahan Syariah (Melaka) 1991; s. 51 Syariah Criminal Enactment (Negeri Sembilan) 1992; s. 50 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Sabah) 1995) addresses this offense under the section of the invalid or unlawful fatwa that contradicts any fatwa issued by the Mufti and which has been gazetted. While in s. 35 Criminal Offences in the Syarak Enactment (Perlis) 1991 is the official fatwa related to Islamic law.
5) Offense related to religious publication contrary to Islamic Law/ hukum syara'. All states have this provision except for Kelantan. It allocated in s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Federal Territories) [Act559] 1997; s. 16 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Selangor) 1995; s. 54 Syariah Criminal Enactment (Negeri Sembilan) 1992; s. 48 Enakmen Kesalahan Syariah (Melaka) 1991; s. 22 Crimes Syariah Enactment (Perak) 1992; s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (State of Penang) 1996; s. 36 Criminal Offences in the Syarak Enactment (Perlis) 1991; s. 51 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Sabah) 1995; s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Ordinance (Sarawak) 2001; s. 17 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Pahang) 2013; s. 14 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Takzir) (Terengganu) 2001; s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Johor) 1997) and s. 12 Syariah Criminal Offences (Kedah Darul Aman) Enactment 2014.
6) Terengganu is the only state that provides the "Issuing fatwas" section, which prohibits anyone from issuing fatwas on Islam or Islamic law either orally or written except for the Mufti or the Fatwa Committee (s. 13 Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (Takzir) (Terengganu) 2001). This provision is not available in the Acts, Enactments, and Ordinances under Criminal Offenses of other States.

From the point of view of Islamic law and its implementation in the state, the fatwa shows the value of binding *(mulzim)* to the Muslims who gazette the fatwa. This provision is found in the Acts, Enactments, and Ordinances of the Islamic Religious Administration of the states. For example, Section 34 of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) [Act505] 1993 provides:

> (3) When published in the Gazette, a fatwa shall be binding on every Muslim residing in the Federal Territories as his religious teachings. It shall be his religious obligation to comply with and adhere to the fatwa unless Hukum Syarak permits him not to follow the fatwa is in matters of practice, belief, or personal opinion.

## FATWA IN CIVIL LAW

Apart from the Federal Constitution, several other civil laws can justify that the establishment of fatwa and its institutions are valid based on the legal system practiced in the country. Section 45, Evidence Act (1950) provides for expert evidence that the court can, when necessary, obtain an opinion or matter from those who are skilled in a particular field of specialization (Evidence Act, 1950). Several cases in the civil court involve the views of the Mufti as expert evidence, among them, the case *Penang Islamic Religious Council v. Abdul Latiff Hassan (As Administrator of Estates of Hj Mohammad Hj Abdul Rasid; Deceased) & Anor* (2016); case *Linggam Sundarajoo v. Kedah Darulaman State Religious Council* (1994); case *Fathul Bari Mat Jahya & Anor v. Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council & Ors* (2012); case *Penang Islamic Religious Council & Seberang Perai v. Khatijah Yoan & ORS* (2010).

In the discipline of knowledge related to the Islamic judicial system, the expert's testimony is called *ra'y al-khabir,* which means the testimony of a skilled person in a field. Zaydan (1995) refers to them as *ahl al-khibrah,* i.e., those who are experts or experienced, i.e., experts chosen by judges from among those who are fair, trustworthy, and experienced in judicial matters that require their expertise in convicting and strengthening something. At the same time, al-Damm (1982) stated that the judge might ask for scholars of the two disputed parties present at the trial or judgment to discuss and present views on the issues in dispute or discuss the dispute. However, the judge should not imitate the views of the so-called scholars because the judge should be more precise in deciding the law based on evidence. Therefore, the scholars' view as skilled persons is just a process of ijtihad to help the judge make decisions.

The court can seek the opinion of those who are members or experts based on specialized knowledge in a field to help him decide a case under trial (Othman, 2003). A court judge should do this action to seek an expert's opinion in a field to assist him in upholding justice. However, judges should always be careful in accepting advice and opinions from others, even if it comes from an expert. In matters related to Islamic law, the muftis are among those who are categorized as experts, and their views can only be consulted in resolving disputes that occur either in the Syariah or civil courts. This Act can be considered an added value in strengthening the position of fatwa institutions that have a legal basis in Malaysia. The Syariah Court Evidence (Federal Territories) [Act 561] (1997) provides for taking of evidence or opinion of experts in dispute cases in the Shariah court. It is included as one of the means of proof as found in Sections 33 (1) (2) and (3) and section 34 of the Act:

> Section 33. Opinion of experts.
>
> (1) When the Court has to form an opinion upon a point of foreign law or science or art, or as to identity or genuineness of handwriting or finger impressions or relating to the determination of nasab, the opinions upon that point of persons specially skilled in that foreign law, science or art, or in questions as to identity or genuineness of handwriting or finger impressions or relating to the determination of nasab, are qarinah.
>
> (2) Such persons are called experts.
>
> (3) Two or more experts shall be called to give evidence where possible, but if two experts are not available, the evidence of one expert is sufficient. If two experts give different opinions, a third expert shall be called to give evidence.
>
> Section 34. Facts bearing upon opinions of experts.
>
> Facts not otherwise qarinah are qarinah if they support or are inconsistent with the experts' opinions when such opinions are qarinah.

The question is, can the views and opinions of the Mufti have considered as expert evidence? While it may be true that it is rather difficult to confirm this view, the State Islamic Religious Administration Act, Enactments and Ordinances provide that Mufti's testimony can be accepted in court. Moreover, it can be assumed that Mufti's opinion will be accepted because of his capacity as a legal expert in Islamic law. Therefore, taking everything into account, the provisions in the Evidence Act (1950) do include the testimony of the Mufti as an expert in matters related to Islam.

## LIST OF FATWA RELATED CASES IN MALAYSIAN COURTS

The lists of cases related to a fatwa, whether they are references or not in the Syariah and civil courts, have been analyzed at length in the article discussing fatwa authority and the opinion of the Mufti in Shariah and civil law court in Malaysia (Mat Salleh & Samuri 2016, 2018). The following are some of the cases related to fatwas referred by courts in Malaysia as in Table 1.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Authority of Fatwa in the Constitution and State of Islamic Law

Some of the pivotal points supporting the validity of fatwas in the Malaysian legal system refer to the background of the Malaysian Constitution and the State Islamic law. Both of these sources are important to justify and discuss the position of fatwa and

Table 1
*List of fatwa-related cases in Malaysian courts*

| | Fatwa and Opinion of the Mufti as a Reference in the Shariah Court |
|---|---|
| NO. | CASE NAME AND YEAR |
| 1 | *Mohd Faizol bin Zainal v. Suhaila bt Yusoff* (2014) |
| 2 | *Najim Alden Mohammad Saide v. Nadiah Abdul Aziz* (2013) |
| 3 | *Tengku Zainul Akmal bin Tengku Besar Mahmud & Anor v. Islamic Religious and Malay Customs of Terengganu & Anor* (2012) |
| 4 | *Norhairy Cheong Abdullah @ Cheong Foo Siong* (2010) |
| 5 | *Wan Shahriman Wan Suleiman & Anor v. Siti Norhayati Mohd Daud* (2010) |
| 6 | *Halijah Abdul Rahman v. Zambree Baharom* (2009) |
| 7 | *Noridah bt Ab Talib v. Hishamuddin bin Jamaluddin* (2009) |
| 8 | *Wan Ismail Wan Endut v. Wan Puziah Wan Awang* (2007) |
| 9 | *Bakhtiar Adnan v. Mohd Fawzi Nahrawi & others* (2006) |
| | Fatwa and Opinion of the Mufti Not as a Reference in the Shariah Court |
| NO. | CASE NAME AND YEAR |
| 1 | *Faizal bin Rabion v. Nurul Fazila bt Nawi* (2014) |
| 2 | *Zafrin Zulhilmi bin Pauzi v. Noor Aini bt Nasron* (2013) |
| 3 | *Nor Aniza bte Idris v. Mohammad Fauzi bin Ahmad* (2006) |
| 4 | *Che Mas Abdullah v. Mat Sharie Yaakub* (2005) |
| | Fatwa and Opinion of the Mufti as a Reference in the Civil Court |
| NO. | CASE NAME AND YEAR |
| 1 | *Penang Islamic Religious Council v. Abdul Latiff Hassan (As Administrator of Estates of Hj Mohammad Hj Abdul Rasid; Deceased) & Anor* (2016) |
| 2 | *Ahmad Yahaya v. Penang Islamic Religious Council* (2015) |
| 3 | *Ikbal bin Salam v. Malay Johore Cooperative Credit & Investment Society & Anor* (2012) |
| 4 | *Penang Islamic Religious Council & Seberang Perai v. Khatijah Yoan & ORS* (2010) |
| 5 | *Re Bentara Luar, Deceased, Hj. Yahya bin Yusoff and others v. Hassan bin Othman and others* (1981) |
| 6 | *Linggam Sundarajoo v. Kedah Darulaman State Religious Council* (1994) |
| 7 | *Dalip Kaur v. Police Officer, Bukit Mertajam* (1991, 1992) |
| 8 | *Viswalingam v. Viswalingam* (1980) |
| 9 | *Re Estate Sheikh Mohamad bin Abdul Rahman bin Hazim* (1974) |
| 10 | *Nor A'shedah Jamaluddin @ Yusor & Anor v. Datuk Zainul Arifin Mohammed Isa & Anor* (2012) |
| 11 | *Fathul Bari Mat Jahya & Anor v. Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council & Ors* (2012) |
| 12 | *Hjh Halimatussaadiah bte Hj Kamaruddin v. Public Services Commission, Malaysia & Anor* (1994) |
| | Fatwa and Opinion of the Mufti Not as a Reference in Civil Courts |
| NO. | CASE NAME AND YEAR |
| 1 | *Isa Abdul Rahman and others v. Penang Islamic Religious Council* (1996) |
| 2 | *G Rethinasamy v. Penang Islamic Religious Council and others* (1993) |
| 3 | *Commissioner of Religous Affairs, Terengganu and others v. Tengku Mariam* (1969) |
| 4 | *Victoria Jayaseele Martin v. Federal Territory Islamic Religious Council & Anor* (2001) & (2011) |
| 5 | *Titular Chief Priest of Roman Catholic Kuala Lumpur v. Minister of Home Affairs & Anor* (2010) |

*Note:* This table refers to court cases obtained through Malayan Law Journal (MLJ) Current Law Journal (CLJ) and Shariah Law Reports (ShLR).

the opinion of Mufti as an authoritative legal source. The study findings determine that the Federal Constitution and State Islamic Law recognize the position of fatwas as a source of Islamic law in Malaysia. This recognition is based on the involvement of state religious authorities, including Raja and Sultan, the Office of Legal Advisers, and the State Islamic Religious Council in strengthening the legitimacy of this fatwa institution.

Hence, the existence of fatwa institutions both at the state and national levels is considered constitutional as mentioned in Article 1 of List 2, Schedule 9 of the Federal Constitution that provides for the jurisdiction of Islamic law under the jurisdiction of the State (Federal Constitution, 2006). Similarly, the role of the Yang Dipertuan Agong and the Council of Rulers (Majlis Raja-Raja) as the patron saint of religion at the Federal and state levels proves that the fatwa institution is constitutional and recognized. Furthermore, the power of the Council of Rulers opens the door to the existence National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI), national and state level fatwa institutions.

The division of powers at the federal and state levels through the concept of federalism, which is modeled on the Federal Constitution, is a strong backbone that enable the fatwa institution to be lawfully administered. It involves various matters related to the management, administration of fatwas, gazetting, coordination, standardization and enforcement of fatwas. All this is legal because the Constitution protects it.

The position of fatwa as an authoritative source of legislation is illustrated through the diagram below as in Figure 1.

On a final note, the Mufti and fatwa are both constitutional when it comes to their existence. Reference to the supreme law in Malaysia gives the right to the State Government to administer matters related to fatwa matters. The Yang Dipertuan Agong and the Council of Rulers as the religious patron are institutions that protect the existence of the fatwa institution as the most authoritative body and source of

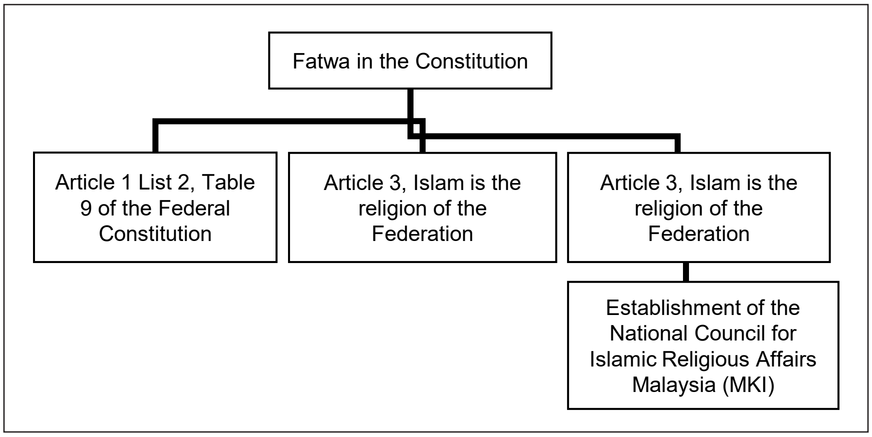
Fatwa in the Constitution
Article 1 List 2, Table 9 of the Federal Constitution
Article 3, Islam is the religion of the Federation
Article 3, Islam is the religion of the Federation
Establishment of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI)

*Figure 1.* Position of fatwa as an authoritative legal source

legal reference in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI) and fatwa institutions at the state level are solid evidence that the Federal Constitution gives privileges to Islamic organizations to manage the administration of matters related to religion and Islamic law. The recognition of their authority also expands in civil law, thus making this fatwa institution valid and legal constitutionally. The existence of several provisions in the State Islamic law related to fatwas also shows that a fatwa is constitutional and is part of the law.

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# Contribution of Life Cycle Knowledge towards Environmental Performance of ISO 14001 Certified Malaysian Companies: Analysis of ISO 14001 and Selected Life Cycle Management Tools

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## ABSTRACT

The ability to enhance environmental performance has emerged as a pivotal corporate strategy for businesses in Malaysia. While the ISO 14001:2015 has been promoted extensively by the Malaysian Department of Standards, its adoption remains low and at a slow pace. There is scarce research to demonstrate the linkage between environmental knowledge, the implementation of life cycle management tools and environmental performance. Therefore, the first aim of this study is to assess the different knowledge levels of respondents on ISO 14001:2015 and four assessment methodologies (i.e., Life Cycle Assessment, Carbon Footprint, Water Footprint, and Material Flow Cycle Accounting). The second aim is to determine whether these knowledge bases contribute to the firms' environmental performance. A total of 157 ISO-certified firm owners responded to the self-administered questionnaires. A One-Way ANOVA test revealed a difference in knowledge levels, with Life Cycle Assessment having the highest score and Material Flow Cycle Accounting having the lowest. Multiple regression revealed ISO 14001, Material Flow Cycle Accounting, and Carbon Footprint knowledge to contribute to environmental performance significantly. Counterintuitively, Life Cycle Assessment and Water Footprint exerted no significance on environmental performance. Policy implications include information dissemination and training by governmental officials for firm owners and exposure to life cycle management tools.

*Keywords:* Carbon footprint, environmental performance, green innovation, industrial ecology, life cycle thinking, life cycle assessment, water footprint

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's business responsibility entails incorporating sustainability within its production domain (Abdullah et al., 2017; Suryanto et al., 2018). While trade-offs are common in pursuing the sustainability agenda, a discussion on introducing synergy into the business arena is considered worth the extra effort. A rising consensus can be seen after which socioeconomic outputs and environmental welfare are jointly increased. A new paradigmatic shift that expands the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) (i.e., profit, planet, and people) positively (Svensson et al., 2018) is necessary, hence requiring businesses to implement a new program or tool in their production.

The ISO 14001 standard is now a ubiquitous benchmark for organizations wishing to communicate with stakeholders regarding their environmental accountability (Boiral et al., 2018; Ejdys et al., 2016; Murmura et al., 2018). However, despite its prolific popularity, arguments have arisen among academicians and non-academicians alike: the standard perceives sustainability through considering environmental impacts only via product distribution, simultaneously ignoring end-of-product life cycles (Pfister et al., 2017). Following the increased awareness for smart development, the standard underwent revision in 2015 in which a significant modulation involved the incorporation of Life Cycle Thinking (Ingrao et al., 2018; International Organization for Standardization, 2017; Lee et al., 2017). Life Cycle Thinking is an approach to evaluate the tangible environmental impacts of production activities and a medium to understand and visualize a broader sense of both upstream and downstream decision impacts (Fernando & Sathasivam, 2017; Testa et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2016).

The potential to streamline life cycle activities in conjunction with an adaptable holistic inventory of economic, environmental, and social impacts is highly advantageous to its adopters (Pawel et al., 2016; Rieckhof & Guenther, 2018). It provides users with a systematic assessment of existing issues that may not have been recognized earlier. Other benefits include delineation of specific roles among different stakeholders, the input of data required by different stakeholders, and thorough cost-benefit decision analysis (Ridoutt et al., 2016; Weidema et al., 2018). The latter is possible by working with quantitative inventory tools inputs, namely Carbon Footprint, Life Cycle Assessment, Material Flow Cost Accounting, and Water Footprint (Giannarakis et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Pfister et al., 2017).

Despite extensive promotion being made by Malaysian environmental advocates, the adoption of ISO 14001 remains low and at a slow pace. Both governmental authorities and businesses were found to be still utilizing the ISO 14001:2004, either unaware or ignoring the update to its more sophisticated successor, the ISO 14001:2015 (Nero et al., 2016). Moreover, the recognition and influence of Life Cycle Thinking and Life Cycle Analysis have been marginal among businesses in Malaysia. It can be postulated that the contributing factor to this phenomenon is the knowledge and consciousness levels of the standard users.

To our knowledge, the paucity of studies relating to ISO 14001 knowledge, adoption rates by businesses, and environmental performance are present both across the local and international domains. A similar phenomenon can also be observed about research on Life Cycle Thinking and Life Cycle Management tools. Moreover, the availability and credibility of the existing literature on environmental awareness and its impact on environmental performance differ substantially across regions and case studies. The varying information prevents its general utilization and applicability to user behavior. The literature also lacks comparative studies on knowledge levels of companies about different environmental management tools and certification systems.

Hence, the aim of this study is two-fold in nature. Firstly, we aim to explore the knowledge levels of ISO 14001 certified firm personnel. Their knowledge levels will be assessed via a survey where they will be tested based on ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management tool guidelines. The second aim is to measure the significance of different knowledge bases on firm environmental performance. It will be analyzed through multiple regression techniques. The cognizance of qualitatively different levels in which firm owners understand ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management inventory tools will help to reveal a new focal awareness of the different dimensions of environmental management standards. Hence, relevant stakeholders will discern the critical information aspects that require evaluation for further improvement and dissemination.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Phases of Life Cycle Assessment and Life Cycle Management Tools

While the definition of environmental performance varies across studies, content assessment places it in two distinct categories. The first one deals with performance as operational performance indicators, such as input use, water emission, consumption, and waste generation (Jolliet et al., 2018; Kjaer et al., 2018). Even though these indicators successfully capture short-term changes, long-term ones such as stakeholder benefits are ignored. In a nutshell, operational performance indicators deal with quantitative methodologies (i.e., numerical indicators). Meanwhile, the second category views performance in a broader scope in which benefits are perceived without the assistance of numerical data. The indicators include standard compliance augmentation, waste reduction, economic savings, systemization of production operations, and competitive advantage amongst competitors (Marota et al., 2017; Rieckhof & Guenther, 2018). These qualitative data are richer in scope and unrestricted to performance based on mere rigorous indicators.

### ISO 14001

Although the IS0 14001 standard does not recommend a universal corporate method for mitigating adverse environmental impacts, it does obligate businesses to consider resources in both past and current production activities (Fernando & Sathasivam, 2017; Murmur et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2016). In 2015, the ISO 14001:2004 underwent a rather elaborate revision and emerged with ten clauses instead of four previously and 16 mandatory guidelines instead of 12. A key difference lies in the newly incorporated Life Cycle Thinking (Fonseca & Domingues, 2018; Pfister et al., 2017). Succinctly, this perspective involves the organizations' control and influence on how their products are designed, manufactured, distributed, and consumed to ameliorate negative environmental impacts at any stage within the life cycle (Chatzisymeon et al., 2017; Pawel et al., 2016; Testa et al., 2016). Previously, it was not mandated for businesses to peruse and consider their production impact on the environment. Another major change is the evaluation specificity on the firm's environmental performance. All evaluations will from herewith necessitate quantitative data and periodic monitoring (Oliveira et al., 2016).

These key amendments in the ISO standard emphasize the use of Life Cycle Thinking to prevent adverse impacts from being shifted unintentionally outside the product life cycle (Ridoutt et al., 2016; H. K. Salim et al., 2018). Furthermore, life Cycle Thinking necessitates businesses to expand their monitoring to both raw material suppliers (up the chain) and customers (down the chain), to evaluate their environmental impact, if any (Daddi et al., 2017; Jolliet et al., 2018; Weidema et al., 2018). With this additional information, businesses are accountable for addressing these impacts via the utilization of environmental management tools and/or systems, like those discussed below.

### Life Cycle Assessment

Under the banner of Life Cycle Management is Life Cycle Assessment, which evaluates the environmental triggers and potential impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle stages; from raw input acquirement to manufacturing and distribution, and finally, end-of-life treatment (Kjaer et al., 2018; Pawel et al., 2016; Ridoutt et al., 2016). Life Cycle Assessment, a non-monetary instrument, aims at portraying environmental impacts that are impossible to internalize in a monetary form (Ridoutt et al., 2016). The phrase "life cycle" defines the interlinked, continuous stages of a product system, from the extraction of raw material to the final disposal (Pawel et al., 2016).

In the second phase, the life cycle inventory evaluates and quantifies resource inputs and outputs (Rieckhof & Guenther, 2018). Again, two kinds of data are required, namely a) natural resource inputs and b) techno-sphere materials, e.g., fuel, electricity, and heat energy. In this study, only two forms of inventoried data (Carbon Footprint and Water Footprint) were reviewed based on its review popularity among academicians.

### Carbon Footprint

Carbon Footprint gives insights on climate change via greenhouse gas emissions (Giama & Papadopoulos, 2018; Giannarakis et al., 2017). It measures carbon emissions that are directly or indirectly generated by manufacturing activities accumulated over a product's life span (Carvalho et al., 2016). While there appear to be significant differences among footprint calculations, the carbon dioxide equivalent ($CO_2$-e) mass established in the 100-year Global Warming Potential (set as 1) has been ubiquitously received as the mandatory reporting unit for footprint analysis (Fernando & Hor, 2017; Giannarakis et al., 2017). Emissions of carbon, methane, and sulfur dioxide emitted through fossil fuel combustion, manufacturing, distribution, and site clearance are converted into carbon dioxide equivalents.

The evaluation mentioned above is primarily tailored to monitor and calculate greenhouse gas emissions throughout the entire supply chain (Carvalho et al., 2016; Giama & Papadopoulos, 2018). In addition, periodic appraisals are aimed at identifying ways to decrease emissions.

### Water Footprint

Water Footprint is another mono-criterion tool that deals with water usage and discharge, including ignition and run-off (Pfister et al., 2017). It involves direct water consumption released by industries and indirect water usage associated with manufacturing along the supply chain stages (Aivazidou et al., 2016; Hoekstra, 2017). Technically, Water Footprint is the volume of direct and/or indirect freshwater used in producing a particular product that is also measured at the point of production in the supply chain (Lee et al., 2016; Safie et al., 2018).

Under the banner of Life Cycle Analysis, there are two types of impact assessment linked to this tool: midpoint indicator that describes a potential impression in the center of the cause-effect link, i.e., water deficiency and endpoint indicator that delineates potential damage transpiring at the end of the cause-effect link (e.g., river ecosystem scarcity due to factory usage) (Aivazidou et al., 2016; Hoekstra, 2017). This assessment involves numerous indicators for evaluation, but data is reportedly more tangible and allows a systematic collection and comparison of varying environmental occurrences (e.g., consumption, pollution).

**Material Flow Cost Accounting.** Material Flow Cost Accounting is primarily recognized as a tool to reduce material loss and positively impact economic and environmental performance. It aims at mitigating both impacts and waste cost simultaneously; thus, increasing financial efficiency (K. M. Salim et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2016). It is primarily an accounting tool that quantifies input flow in physical and fiscal components (K. M. Salim et al., 2018). It is centered on an input-output examination of material flows. A relatively new life cycle thinking approach is designed to implicitly recognize material and energy flows in business operations (El-Mousawi & Charbaji, 2016; Marota et al., 2017). An extra feature is the production performance evaluation index. It is essential as it provides ample physical and numerical data on the value of poor-quality products, i.e., negative output and disposal cost (Rieckhof & Gunther, 2018; Turner et al., 2016).

The merging of Material Flow Cost Accounting with previously mentioned assessment tools is favorable based on two rationales. First, all these approaches are built on similar constructs of material flow and, therefore complementary (Turner et al., 2016). The premise of the Life Cycle Assessment is built upon the ability to identify resource consumption hotspots and related impacts (Marota et al., 2017). Similarly, Material Flow Cost Accounting aids in visualizing material flows of limited inputs and monetizing resource inefficiencies (K. M. Salim et al., 2018; Marota et al., 2017). From an economic standpoint, the reduced negative output will decrease the cost of the finished product. It, in turn, generates positive impacts, namely higher customer satisfaction and an increased market share amongst competitors (Turner et al., 2016). Concisely, the broader dissemination of Material Flow Cost Accounting amongst Malaysian companies is beneficial as the tool improves a firm's environmental performance via efficient resource utilization and allocation (K. M. Salim et al., 2018).

Together, these approaches successfully determine hypothetical incompetence and potential refinements (Jolliet et al., 2018). All approaches provide a common denominator for assessment by different individuals with varying focus points, e.g., engineers and environmental officials (Pawel et al., 2016). Jointly, these approaches generate a thorough feedback process involving improvement approaches and investment measures (Daddi et al., 2017; Jolliet et al., 2018). Feedback in the form of environmental indicators assists in increasing awareness amongst stakeholders via sustainability reporting (Fernando & Sathasivam, 2017).

**Relationship between Knowledge and Intent to Adopt Sustainable Tools.** The theory of knowledge and awareness by Marton and Booth (1997) is relevant for this study as it examines learning outcomes from the focal viewpoint of industry owners to ISO 14001, Life Cycle Management, and its tools. Knowledge acquisition is a constituent that occurs in the human automatic approach (Sammalisto et al., 2016). The acquisition may occur either consciously or through a series of unconscious actions. The awareness precedes the control, modification, and subsequent change in behavioral decisions (Ahmad et al., 2016; Mei et al., 2016). Thus, purposeful, active behavior, i.e., adoption of ISO 14001, is materialized via knowledge procurement. Two types of knowledge are relevant to this study: system knowledge, i.e., awareness of how a system or process operates (ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Thinking), and effective knowledge, i.e., characteristics and benefits of a process or behavior. Each form possesses a pivotal influence in decision-making (Anđić & Vorkapić, 2017).

Having high environmental awareness is not necessarily stimulated by pro-environmental behavior; in fact, it may precede it (Marton & Booth, 1997; Mei et al., 2016). Another scenario is that an environmentally aware individual may not necessarily prescribe pro-environmental behavior (Ahmad et al., 2016). In this research context, measuring environmental awareness is related to the firm owner's understanding of the mandatory guidelines of ISO 14001 and the four Life Cycle Management tools.

The three levels of awareness utilized to generate behavioral change: 1) perception in which the characteristics and dynamics of the relevant element(s) are visually perceived, 2) understanding in which the information processes from the first level are upgraded to comprehend the element's significance in alignment with pertinent objectives or mission, 3) projection where the potential to project any decision made soon exist (Anđić & Vorkapić, 2017).

## METHODS

Prior to data collection, interviews were conducted with a panel of experts on ISO 14001 standard and Life Cycle Management tools, i.e., lecturers, Malaysian Department of Standards officer, Health and Safety executives from the private sector. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was used to analyze the validity of the individual content validity index (I-CVI) and the overall scale content validity index (S-CVI) for all sections. According to Dudovskiy (2016), acceptable scale content validity indexes should exceed 0.78 to deem it fit for further evaluation, i.e., pilot study. After a thorough assessment from five experts, all six questionnaire sections recorded a scale content validity index exceeding 0.78, albeit a few item omissions deemed unnecessary, and too lengthy.

It was essential to specifically delineate the definition of environmental performance that we were seeking from the respondents. Then, based on previous relevant literature, respondents were asked to express their feedback on procedural and reward-based issues, including standard compliance augmentation, waste reduction, and systemization of production operations and gained advantages or disadvantages.

The final questionnaire contained six sections: 1) respondent's demographic information, 2) knowledge on ISO 14001, 3) knowledge on Carbon Footprint, 4) knowledge on Life Cycle Analysis, 5) knowledge on Material Flow Cost Accounting and 6) knowledge on Water Footprint. The questions were close-ended and had multiple choice answers. An Environmental Compliance Audit Checklist requiring respondents to validate their compliance with environmental regulations was also enclosed at the end of the questionnaire. The regulation examples included an updated scheduled waste inventory, wastewater treatment plant, and permissible dark smoke limit for new facilities.

Succeeding the pre-test, the questionnaire was pilot tested on 15 ISO certified firms. Each interview lasted an hour, and the respondents were guided through the questionnaire on specific sections. They were encouraged to be open and provide details exemplifying their own experiences in handling ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management tools to accompany their answers. The reliability of each scale for the items was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. A. H. Sharaai (personal communication, March 25, 2017) recommends the item values to be within the range of 0.65 to 0.95 to be deemed satisfactory. Fortunately, all 71 items recorded an overall value of 0.809. Table 1 displays the Cronbach alpha values and the total number of items for all sections of the questionnaire.

Initially, a total of 200 questionnaires were mailed to ISO 14001 certified firms across the Klang Valley. Due to the scattered firm locations, a postal survey was deemed appropriate. Not only is the postal survey cost-effective, this ubiquitously utilized methodology also enables the gathering of substantial, representative data. The sample frame consisted of firm owners from a variety of sectors; the majority hailing from stationery and furniture manufacturing sectors. Information on registered firm owners was derived from the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers directory online. We relied on the portal to identify and contact prospective firm owners. The information available included the firm's name, address, and contact number. This is a form of judgmental sampling, whereby the sample choice is purely at the discretion of the authors' judgement. There was a continuous follow-up procedure via telephone calls, emails, reminder letters and even personal visits to two respondents to ensure response. Care was taken to ensure that utilization of the information was conducted in a prudential manner that safeguarded the firm owners' privacy and rights. Table 2 displays the distribution of the 200 firms initially contacted according to sectors.

We recognized the possibility of survey response bias in which 'greener' and stringently compliant companies may be more prone to completing the questionnaire. In contrast, poorly performing certified companies may be averse to participate in the survey. Hence, the anonymity of the respondents was ensured to reduce reporting bias. Non-response bias was assessed

Table 2
*Distribution of firms according to sector*

| Sector | Number of firms contacted |
|---|---|
| Stationery | 75 |
| Furniture | 30 |
| Oil Refinery | 38 |
| Food Products | 44 |
| Electrical | 13 |
| Total | 200 |

Table 1
*Reliability analysis for questionnaire sections*

| Sections | Cronbach's alpha | Item numbers |
|---|---|---|
| Demographic | 0.899 | 10 |
| Knowledge on ISO 14001 | 0.879 | 25 |
| Knowledge on Carbon Footprint | 0.733 | 11 |
| Knowledge on Life Cycle Analysis | 0.722 | 13 |
| Knowledge on Material Flow Cost Accounting | 0.791 | 10 |
| Knowledge on Water Footprint | 0.700 | 12 |

by comparing questionnaires that were returned early with those returned late. Both responses were divided into two groups and eight items were randomly selected. T-tests were carried out on the responses. All t-tests resulted in no statistically significant differences among items tested.

It was salient that the respondents possessed a basic knowledge of environmental management techniques embedded within the ISO 14001 standard and Life Cycle Management tools at the firm level. Hence, a preliminary screening inquiry to determine the job qualification of the respondent was included. Results demonstrated a variety of employment positions and functions, i.e., environmental quality manager, project manager, senior manager, safety and training managers. The diversity of respondents validates the generalizability of the findings obtained, which is in accordance with the objectives of this study.

## RESULTS

Out of 200 questionnaires sent, a total of 157 completed questionnaires were received back in good condition. The response rate (78.5%) was deemed exceptionally good despite no incentive being enclosed together with the questionnaire.

### Descriptive Statistics

The demographic variables described in Table 3 are the respondent's gender, age range, education level, and employment industry type.

Table 3
*Descriptive statistics of demographic variables*

| Variable | Frequency | % (percentage) |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| Male | 82 | 52.22 |
| Female | 75 | 47.77 |
| *Age* | | |
| < 23 years old | 47 | 29.94 |
| 24-30 years old | 40 | 25.48 |
| 31-40 years old | 35 | 22.29 |
| > 41 years old | 35 | 22.29 |
| *Education level* | | |
| High school | 15 | 9.55 |
| Foundation | 20 | 12.74 |
| Diploma | 30 | 19.11 |
| Degree | 47 | 29.94 |
| Postgraduate studies | 45 | 28.56 |
| *Industry type* | | |
| Stationery Products | 63 | 40.13 |
| Furniture Products | 16 | 10.19 |
| Oil Refinery | 27 | 17.20 |
| Others (Food and Electrical) | 51 | 32.48 |

Male respondents constituted the highest percentage (52.2) in comparison to female respondents. Majority were aged below 23 (29.94) and possessed a basic degree (29.94) in terms of education. Majority also worked in companies selling stationery (40.13).

### Analysis on Different Knowledge Levels between ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management Tools

One-Way ANOVA revealed significant differences between knowledge levels respondents had between ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Analysis, Material Flow Cost Accounting, Carbon Footprint and Water Footprint [F (3, 624) = 136.95, P <.05]. The

Table 4
*Test of between-subjects effects*

| Source | Df. | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 3 | 136.953 | 0.000 |
| Intercept | 1 | 54210.193 | 0.000 |
| Life Cycle Management tools | 3 | 136.953 | 0.000 |
| Error | | 624 | |
| Total | | 628 | |
| Corrected Total | | 627 | |

Table 5
*Pairwise-comparison estimates of Life Cycle Management tools*

| | | | | | Knowledge of Life Cycle Management Tools Comparisons | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | *n* | Mean | SD | Carbon Footprint | Life Cycle Assessment | Material Flow Cost Accounting |
| Carbon Footprint | 157 | 92.20 | 9.289 | | | |
| Life Cycle Assessment | 157 | 95.25 | 6.722 | 3.051 | | |
| Material Flow Cost Accounting | 157 | 75.41 | 11.794 | 16.790* | -19.841 | |
| Water Footprint | 157 | 91.11 | 9.609 | -1.089 | -4.140 | 15.701 |

test of between-subject effect values is listed in Table 4, while the pairwise comparison estimates of each Life Cycle Management tool are listed in Table 5.

Life Cycle Analysis knowledge recorded the highest mean, while Material Flow Cost Accounting the lowest. After the control of the type 1 error using the Bonferroni method, the Carbon Footprint-Materia Flow Cost Accounting comparison recorded a significant mean difference value of 16.79 (p <.05). Also, the Life Cycle Analysis-Water Footprint pair displayed a significant difference with the mean value of 4.14 (p <.05), followed by the Life Cycle Analysis-Carbon Footprint pair (mean difference = 3.05, p <.05). However, there was no significant difference between Carbon Footprint and Water Footprint (mean difference = 1.089, p> .05). There was only a small mean difference between these two tools, i.e., Carbon Footprint (min 92.20) and Water Footprint (min = 91.12).

## Analysis of Factors Contributing to Environmental Performance

Results show that three of the five independent variables significantly contributed toward the environmental performance of all 157 ISO 14001 certified firms, i.e., Carbon Footprint (β = .330, p < .05), ISO 14001 (β = .309, p< .05) and Material Flow Cost Accounting (β = .230, p < .05). The multiple linear regression results are displayed in Table 6 as follows.

Table 6
*Regression estimates of variable coefficients*

| Model | | *B* | *SE B* | *β* | *t* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | (Constant) | 62.474 | 5.530 | | 11.298 | 0.000 |
| | Carbon Footprint | 0.314 | 0.059 | 0.398 | 5.276 | 0.000 |
| 2 | (Constant | 51.410 | 5.616 | | 9.155 | 0.000 |
| | Carbon Footprint | 0.320 | 0.055 | 0.406 | 5.783 | 0.000 |
| | ISO 14001 | 0.153 | 0.031 | 0.344 | 4.908 | 0.000 |
| 3 | (Constant) | 47.602 | 5.584 | | 8.524 | 0.000 |
| | Carbon Footprint | 0.260 | 0.057 | 0.330 | 4.564 | 0.000 |
| | ISO 14001 | 0.137 | 0.031 | 0.309 | 4.470 | 0.000 |
| | Material Flow Cost Accounting | 0.139 | 0.044 | 0.230 | 3.155 | 0.000 |

*Note.* Dependent variable: Environmental Performance

## DISCUSSION

### Identifying the Different Knowledge Levels between ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management Tools

The different levels of knowledge are related to the duration of exposure and advertisement by environmental bodies. The role of information dissemination has been emphasized by various researchers as a critical medium for comprehension and behavioral formation among users of technology (Kjaer et al., 2018; Nero et al., 2016; Suryanto et al., 2018). Life Cycle Assessment has existed for over a decade and most environmental management standard users have been exposed to the standardized techniques and methodology to access potential impacts of a product over its life cycle stages. Thus, a high knowledge score on Life Cycle Assessment is expected and reasonable.

In contrast to preconceived notions, Carbon Footprint and Water Footprint recorded high mean scores. This is attributed to the fact that these footprints consider the impact perspective of only one observable resource respectively. Concisely, both focus on a specific category of emission, consider the quantification of natural resources either as positive exploitation or waste generation (both being life cycle stages) and are limited to certain processes (Giannarakis et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Safie et al., 2018) Lastly, these two resources are inherently linked, whereby a large supply of energy (carbon) is generated for supply, treatment and usage of freshwater in product manufacturing (Hoekstra, 2017). Hence knowledge dissemination on calculation and treatment is focused, interlinked and not overgeneralized. Assessments have been duly promoted by the Malaysian SIRIM organization under the banner of product footprint certification (Abdullah et al., 2017; H. K. Salim et al., 2018). The officials are responsible for convincing ISO 14001 certified firm owners to utilize energy sources efficiently and reduce energy and water consumption. It should be noted that these assessments have been implemented since 2005; hence, governmental officials have had ample time to disseminate the knowledge via workshops and seminars.

The low score recorded for Material Flow Cost Accounting was expected, as it is a relatively new monetary tool aimed at improving environmental and economic performance simultaneously. Most respondents were unfamiliar with the economic terms contained within the questions. Another major hurdle is the pronounced familiarity of respondents with conventional cost accounting for financial management. Material Flow Cost Accounting differs significantly from conventional cost accounting. This is perceived in how both methods segregate production outputs into complete products and effluents (El-Mousawi & Charbaji, 2016). Conventional cost accounting lists total output as a complete product and assigns effluent waste as an overhead cost. On the other hand, Material Flow Cost Accounting not only divide outputs into finished product and waste, but it also gathers flow output into an assigned quantity center (Marota et al., 2017; K. M. Salim et al., 2018). Here, the data is examined in order to pinpoint which parts flow to the products, and which parts are merely losses. Hence the latter is a more systematic method to delineate material loss.

### Factors Contributing to Environmental Performance

As predicted, knowledge of ISO 14001 proved to be positively significant in influencing environmental performance. This was demonstrated through the respondents' ability to answer most questions accurately regarding clauses on ISO 14001, Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) guidelines and origin information. ISO 14001 certification guidelines, motivations, and benefits are readily available online and free for perusal (Nero et al., 2016; Mei et al., 2016). Moreover, the standard is extensively promoted via the Department of Standards (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2017). Periodical seminars and workshops are often organized by the organization. Several respondents also highlighted the decentralized participatory-based approach conducted by officers emphasized an open, top-down approach.

Carbon Footprint was also a significantly positive determinant. Knowledge of Carbon Footprint allows the lessening of carbon emissions that are directly or indirectly generated by manufacturing activities over the lifespan of a product (Fernando & Hor, 2017; Giannarakis et al., 2017). Respondents were duly aware of the quantification of direct emissions (e.g., heating, manufacturing, transport, on site incinerators), controlled indirect emissions (purchased electrical or heat machines) and non-controlled indirect emissions (raw material commutes, labor travels) based on their questionnaire answers. Questions on emission control benefits also revealed that majority of participants understood that performance of their firms would improve via reduced energy costs, and amelioration of the firms' surrounding environmental health.

Unexpectedly, Material Flow Cost Accounting was deemed to be a significant determinant. This is counterintuitive to the previous finding on knowledge levels where it was the lowest amongst firm owners. Fundamentally, it is a monetary tool whereby owners can implicitly recognize material and energy trends in business operations and perceive how these trends relate to expenditure (Marota et al., 2017; Rieckhof & Guenther, 2018). It is postulated that the positive appraisal of Material Flow Cost Accounting as an environmental performance booster is correlated with the utility maximization paradigm, i.e., an individual is assumed to be rational and choose a practice or methodology that optimizes his utility options. In this context, firm owners recognize its potential to boost both environmental and economic performance (K. M. Salim et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2016). Being business-oriented individuals, profitability is a pivotal decision-making determinant (El-Mousawi & Charbaji, 2016; Testa et al., 2016). This paradigm can be conceptualized as a livelihood consideration. While the knowledge and awareness on Material Flow Cost Accounting were demonstrated as low, the interest on it as a significant environmental performance investment could be a steppingstone in increasing its dissemination knowledge by experts.

Contrasting results were observed on the statistical significance of Life Cycle Assessment and Water Footprint knowledge. Both were not significant in influencing environmental performance. One probable factor is that firm owners generally regard the unrevised ISO 14001 version as sufficient to address environmental issues and perceive the inclusion of Life Cycle Thinking and Life Cycle Assessment tools as unnecessary and cumbersome (Pfister et al., 2017). This may explain the low number of firms reverting to the ISO 14001: 2015 (H. K. Salim et al., 2018). On the other hand, firm owners may also perceive Life Cycle Assessment and Water Footprint as complex and challenging to comprehend. Components that need to be studied and inventoried include functions of the product system, functional units, input allocation, impact assessment categories and their relevant methodologies (Pawel et al., 2016; Weidema et al., 2018). Moreover, these tools require constant data update on a variety of inputs in settings that may experience constant change (Pfister et al., 2017). Concisely, both Life Cycle Assessment and Water Footprint are complex inventory tools that involve numerous technical choices and assumptions (Chatzisymeon et al., 2017; Pfister et al., 2017). Examples include Water Footprint reduction benchmarks and reporting.

Another is the limitation of data required to calculate Water Footprint. If a firm owner is not familiar with varying impact categories, impact assessment steps, data calculation involving multiple products and unit processes, and how to interpret the results obtained, then the Life Cycle Assessment is perceived to be too technical for the common layman and represent an unnecessary trade-off in relation to increasing environmental performance (Chatzisymeon et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2016). The calculation of Water Footprint in Malaysia nationally is limited at both state and city levels (Lee et al., 2016). This is unfortunate as information obtained on these levels will be useful in guiding development planning. The fact that there is no commonly accepted method for Water Footprint calculations poses a challenge. Another is the limitation of data required to calculate Water Footprint.

## CONCLUSION

Relevant environmental education pertaining to Life Cycle Thinking and Life Cycle Management tools for all levels in a firm is necessary for effective corporate environmental management (Ingrao et al., 2018; Murmura et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2016). Themes revolving around environmental policy, environmental impacts and economic planning pertaining to input flow analysis should be addressed and implemented (Lee et al., 2017; Suryanto et al., 2018). Insufficient training and knowledge dissemination by ISO 14001 and Life Cycle Management experts will result in the unwillingness of both management officials and employees to be environmentally proactive (Ejdys et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2016). A business culture that emphasizes a top-down approach and decentralized form of education can help develop positive green perception and value, which are necessary to create a sustainable business model (Carvalho et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2016).

Future research can augment these findings by appraising the perceptions and surmises amongst a wider number of local stakeholders: notably, small and medium retailers that have been certified. In addition to increasing the sample size, alternate theoretical perspectives focusing on the influence of internal and external firm characteristics should be included. Spatial and temporal determinants should be evaluated to capture their influence on the motivations and barriers to environmental management standards adoption. Since environmental performance was found to vary across the different knowledge levels as evidenced by the recorded scores, the causes in knowledge variation across the ISO certified sector should be explored further. Other environmental assessment indicators, i.e., risk assessment, cost-benefit analysis, eco-labeling, Social Life Cycle Assessment should be included as well.

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# “I am What I ought to Be”: Women Cyberslacking in Ethiopian Public University

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## ABSTRACT

Today, the Gen ‘Y’ (born during 1981-1995) is the world’s largest workforce; and they are employed at digitized workplaces. Cyberslacking (personal use of the internet at the workplace) is the new normal for the recently emerged Ethiopian digital workplace and workforce. Globally, enough cyberslacking studies have been conducted on the losses and the gains; however, no study has been done in the Ethiopian context. This investigation explores how far cyberslacking is beneficial for both the organization (university) and its employees (secretaries) in the Ethiopian setting. The research questions were: what attitudes do the female secretaries have towards cyberslacking? What opportunities do the female secretaries gain through cyberslacking? How far does cyberslacking change the lives of female secretaries? Furthermore, do the female secretaries have an addiction to cyberslacking? To this end, mixed-method design (n=45): questionnaire (n=29) and retrospective interview (n=16) were employed. The triangulation analysis concludes four positive dimensions of women cyberslacking in an Ethiopian university setting: the rationales of cyberslacking (advanced communication, free time, energizer, and legitimization); the opportunities of cyberslacking (gathering information, receiving entertainment, contacting family and friends, and getting day today news updates); the changes attributed to cyberslacking (improvement in English communication skill, knowledge base enhancement, job innovation, and creativity, and modernity); and the low addiction level to cyberslacking (‘prone to be addicted’). Finally, the implications for future practice, policy, and research are explored.

*Keywords:* Cyberloafing, cyberslacking, employee’s productivity, Ethiopia, internet at workplace, women cyberslacking

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## INTRODUCTION

Cyberslacking has been hotly debated in the literature and a burning issue for more than two decades. Cyberslacking is the act of using the internet by an employee during working hours for personal gains (Agarwal, 2019; El Din & Baddar, 2019; Mamat & Baqutayan, 2019; Sze et al., 2019). Cyberslacking is a non-work-related engagement at the workplace which includes social networking, e-mailing, downloading, calling, texting, streaming, surfing, gaming, blogging, job hunting, gambling, billing, and booking (Dursun et al., 2018; Mamat & Baqutayan, 2019). Cyberslacking is also known as cyberloafing, cyberbludging, cyberdeviance, online loafing, internet deviance, internet abuse, internet addiction, internet dependency, and junk computing (Abdullahi et al., 2019; Arabaci, 2017; Nwakaego & Angela, 2018; Yildiz et al., 2015). The issue of cyberslacking has been studied extensively across the world from different dimensions like frequency, pattern, nature, gender, age, educational level, occupational status, work autonomy, ethics, guidelines, and the like (Mamat & Baqutayan, 2019).

This plethora of studies is that cyberslacking is significantly related to the time, efficiency, commitment, and effective functioning of the organizations. Cyberslacking has brought forth many organizational issues of the workers, for instance, absenteeism, dishonesty, aggression, rumor-mongering, and misbehaviors (Agarwal, 2019). Cyberslacking has been considered a loss of billions of dollars per year for organizations wherein employees waste 60–80% of their total working hours (Jandaghi et al., 2015; Mamat & Baqutayan, 2019). According to Oosthuizen et al. (2018), 30–40% of employees are fired every year due to the act of cyberslacking in their organizations. Previously, the issue of cyberslacking was considered an area of business and management studies. However, it has been taken seriously in educational research recently because the internet is abundantly used in educational institutions worldwide (Arabaci, 2017; Dursun et al., 2018).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Basis

The term ‘cyberloafing’ was used for the first time by Tony Cummins in 1985 in *New York daily* (Jandaghi et al., 2015). In academic literature, Lim (2002) firstly conceptualized ‘cyberloafing’ as workers’ use of their employers’ internet or, more appropriately, the ‘IT way of idling on the job.’ From 2002–2020, various definitions are cited in the literature; however, all have the same meaning: using the internet during working hours for employees’ gains. Therefore, it is imperative to understand its typologies, antecedents, consequences, controlling mechanisms, and theoretical frameworks to comprehend the issue of cyberslacking thoroughly.

In *typology,* Lim (2002) divided cyberslacking for the first time into two: slacking (for instance, news, shopping, and other online activities) and e-mailing. Thereupon, Mahatanankoon et al. (2004)

classified cyberslacking into three: information-seeking, e-commerce, and communication. In 2008, Blanchard and Henle divided cyberslacking into two: serious cyberslacking (for example, pornography, online gaming, online gambling, online investment et cetera) and minor cyberslacking (for example, e-mailing, texting, calling, updating news, social networking, et cetera). Finally, Ramayah (2010) divided cyberslacking based on personal use into four: personal information, personal communication, personal downloads, and personal e-commerce. Later on, Doorn (2011) categorized cyberslacking into four based on activities: social activity (for example, social networking and blogging); information activity (for example, checking news); leisure activity (for example, watching YouTube); and emotional activity (for example, online shopping).

There are three *antecedents* that influence cyberslacking at the individual, organizational, and situational levels (Jandaghi et al., 2015; Simsek & Simsek, 2019). At the individual level, the most important factors that influence cyberslacking are the perception of the cyberslacker, the cognitive and behavioral pattern of the cyberslacker, habits or addictions of the cyberslacker, and the demographic category of the cyberslacker like gender, age, education, background, and income (Hussain & Parida, 2017; Mamat & Batuqyan, 2019). Moreover, there are many factors affecting cyberslacking at the organizational level, for example, nature of job, job satisfaction, commitment towards work, restriction policy, expected outcome of the internet use, perception of the manager towards cyberslacking, co-workers' cyberslacking behavior, justice to the employee, and attitude towards workplace (Sheikh et al., 2015; Sze et al., 2019). Furthermore, numerous factors affect cyberslacking at the situational level, such as access opportunity, anonymity (namelessness), escape, acceptability, staying extra hours, and uncanny pleasure (Jandaghi et al., 2015; Simsek & Simsek, 2019).

The *consequences* of cyberslacking have been studied extensively, classified into two: negative and positive consequences. The negative consequences of cyberslacking include reduced productivity, work deviation, and non-disciplinary actions (Hartijasti & Fathonah, 2015; Kusumawati & Franksiska, 2018). In addition, it leads to amplified costs, data security, legal issues, malware, and slow network for an organization (El Din & Baddar, 2019; Gokcearslan et al., 2016; Hernández-Castro, 2016). On the other hand, the positive effects of cyberslacking comprise increased performance, stress burst, innovative and creative work behavior, and self-growth (Sen et al., 2016; Varghese & Barber, 2017). This results in efficient technology use, advanced quality of work, motivated and satisfied employees, and cost reduction for an organization (Arshad et al., 2016; Nwakaego & Angela, 2018).

The *controlling mechanisms* of cyberslacking have been debated lengthily in the literature for productivity, security, liability, privacy, and social control for organizations (Rahiminia & Mazidi, 2015; Sheikh et al., 2015). Literature suggests two mechanisms to control cyberslacking in organizations: internet use policy and monitoring strategy. The internet use policy of an organization encompasses internet use guidelines, code of ethics, deterrence mechanisms, and possible consequences. The monitoring strategy of an organization involves proximity, punishment, internet service provider monitoring, KeyStore logging, e-mail monitoring, screen monitoring, and software monitoring (Arshad et al., 2016; Hussain & Parida, 2017; Kasap, 2019).

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the following three theories: Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Capital Theory, and the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior. The *Theory of Planned Behavior* posits that an individual cyberslacks according to his or her attitudes toward internet use, acceptance of the cyberslacking norms, and the controlling mechanisms in an organization (Akbulut et al., 2017; Mamat & Batuqyan, 2019). The *Social Capital Theory* suggests that the community turns out to be developed when its individuals have more shared values and features. When it is applied to cyberslacking at the workplace, employees' recreation through the internet results in increased productivity for the organization in which they work (Kasap, 2019). The *Theory of Interpersonal Behavior* postulates that individuals' behaviors are connected to their attitude, perceived social norms, and professed organizational control. Likewise, cyberslacking studies suggest that an employee's cyberslacking at the workplace is related to his/her attitude, organizational control during working hours, and prevailing norms of acceptance by co-workers (Akbulut et al., 2017; Askew et al., 2014).

## Ethiopian Context

There are an explosion of research on cyberslacking nature, causes, and effects in different parts of the world; however, the issue is little known and not studied in Ethiopia. Internet formally began in Ethiopia in the year 1997. Presently, it ranks 139 out of 144 countries regarding internet penetration rate (Yilma & Abraha, 2015). Unlike before, Ethiopia is currently attempting a broad expansion of access throughout the country. The current penetration rate of the internet in Ethiopia is 15.4% (Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics, 2020). Although the country has the second largest population in Africa, the rate of penetration is prolonged. For instance, the rate of internet penetration in Morocco is (51%), Egypt (37%), Nigeria (28%), Kenya (28%), and Sudan (19%). The average African penetration rate is 15.6%. Of the total internet user base, almost half of the internet users are on the university campuses of Ethiopia. The frequent interruptions in the connectivity, the fluctuations of internet speed, and prolonged network, mostly 2G and 3G (4G in classified places only), are the major barricades of Ethiopian internet (Atnafu, 2014).

While the world is perturbed because of cyberslacking issues like reduced productivity, work deviation, information security, legal issues, and non-disciplinary actions (El Din & Baddar, 2019; Hartijasti & Fathonah, 2015; Kusumawati & Franksiska, 2018), the female secretaries of Ethiopian public universities have been autonomously cyberslacking during their working hours. This study explores how far the cyberslacking of the female secretaries is beneficial both for themselves and their university. This study will help the university authorities critically evaluate the gains and benefits of cyberslacking in the Ethiopian context. If the need arises, cyberslacking policies, ethics, and guidelines can be developed. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What attitudes do the female secretaries have towards cyberslacking at Madda Walabu University?

RQ2: What opportunities do the female secretaries gain through the cyberslacking in Madda Walabu University?

RQ3: How far does cyberslacking change the lives of female secretaries at Madda Walabu University?

RQ4: Do the female secretaries have an addiction to cyberslacking at Madda Walabu University?

## METHODS

This study is based on one of the mixed-method designs called 'sequential explanatory design,' which combines a questionnaire with a retrospective interview (Creswell et al., 2003). The rationale to use this design is that questionnaire data usually reveals very shallow aspects of the issue under investigation but adding a follow-up retrospective interview can remedy the weaknesses. Furthermore, the mixed-method designs have more acceptability and validity in dealing with complex issues, which can greatly help the researcher get patterns, thereby adding flesh to the bones (Dorneyi, 2010).

This study was conducted in Madda Walabu University (MWU), in Robe town, Ethiopia (Figure 1). Robe is one of the fastest-growing towns in the Bale zone of the Oromia regional state in Ethiopia. This town is stretched over a total area of 80,240 km$^2$. This 'B' ranked town is located 430 km towards the South-east of Addis Ababa. Robe is situated between $7^0 7'$ N Latitude and $40^0 0'$ E longitude. The town has four kebeles with a population of more than 500 000. It is a hub of different social, economic, government, and non-government institutions (Hussain & Parida, 2017). Founded in 2006, MWU is one of Ethiopia's fastest-growing public higher education institutions regarding student registration, program expansion, and campuses. Today, the university has 849 academic and 1600 non-academic staff members. At the moment, more than 13,254 students are pursuing their education in 43 undergraduate and 14 postgraduate programs, which are offered in regular, weekend, extension, summer, and in-service modes in five campuses. MWU has produced approximately 11,735 graduates so far (Madda Walabu University, 2021).

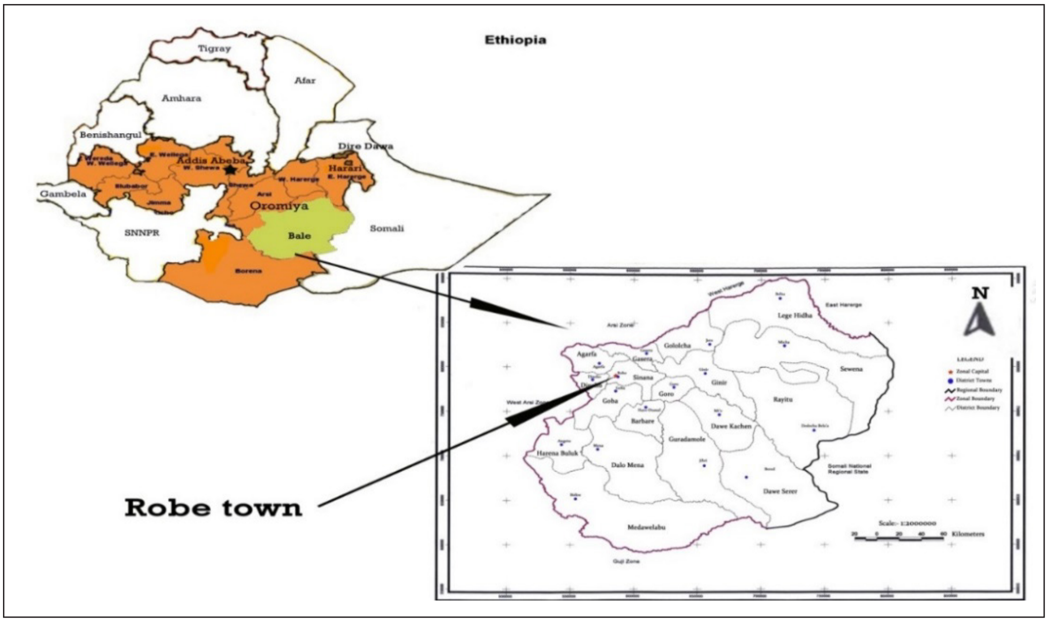

*Figure 1*. Location of Bale-Robe town, Oromia region, Ethiopia

The subjects of this study are those females employed as full-time secretaries of the university and the managers (Table 1), who have internet connectivity in their office computers. The justification for incorporating secretaries in this study is that university employees are glued to an office computer throughout the working hours to serve their managers. There are two tools for this study: questionnaire and interview questions. The questionnaire comprises 18 statements arranged into a five-point Likert scale. These 18 items are made up of four constructs, namely rationales (item 1–5), opportunities (item 6–10), changes in life (11–14), and levels of addiction (15–18). The 'retrospective interview' comprises four focused questions on the same constructs for further reflections about what they meant on those items of the questionnaire, which need more insight into the issue. The language of the data gathering tool was in Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia), which was later translated into English.

The sample size of this study is 45: 29 secretaries for the questionnaire survey and 16 (8 secretaries and 8 managers) for retrospective interviews from the key respondents. The researcher has taken this small sample size because of the limited number of the study population. Therefore, the entire population (29 secretaries) has been considered to collect questionnaire survey data based on the 'total population' sampling technique. The 'total population sampling' is applied when the numbers of units being studied are quite small; consequently, the total population is included in the research (Etikan et al., 2016). Then, the results are analyzed descriptively to find patterns of the issue under investigation.

The retrospective interviews have been conducted based on the snowball sampling technique. First, the respondent who was the best in in-depth forwarding information was the first to interview. After that, the following participants were referred by the previous ones in the chain till the saturation point was achieved. The snowball sampling is justified when a researcher has a list of key respondents who are then asked to recruit further participants in some respect central to the investigation (Dorneyi, 2010). Next, the interview data is analyzed through thematic codes of the responses. Finally, both the quantitative and qualitative data are integrated to triangulate the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Respondent Profile

The respondents' profile is shown in Table 1.

### Rationales for Cyberslacking

The results of secretaries' rationalizing cyberslacking are shown in Table 2 (item 1-5). A review of questionnaire data reveals that most secretaries *agreed* and *strongly agreed* on the rationales for cyberslacking. They regarded cyberslacking as an advanced medium of communication (100%) which is officially allowed (above 86%). In addition, they viewed cyberslacking as an important tool for official communication and work (about 96.5%). Further, they justified that they cyberslack due to less workload and free time (about 86%), and they regard cyberslacking as a refreshing activity during office hours (above 89%).

In the interview of secretaries, seven out of eight respondents rationalized that cyberslacking is justifiable for them. In contrast, two secretaries responded that it was unjustifiable at working place.

One secretary (S4:03/01/2020) highlighted:

> *Frankly, cyberslacking is a stress buster for me during working hours as I text, call, search, listen, and watch my favorites whenever I get free time. I entertain and refresh myself sitting for long*

Table 1
*Respondent profile of secretaries and managers (n=45)*

| Variables | Number of secretaries (For survey) | Number of key secretaries (For interview) | No. of managers (For interview) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | | | |
| 22–28 | 13 | 4 | 2 |
| 29–35 | 13 | 3 | 3 |
| 36 & above | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| **Total** | **29** | **8** | **8** |
| Experience (years) | | | |
| 1–5 | 10 | 3 | 2 |
| 6–10 | 17 | 3 | 3 |
| 11 & above | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| **Total** | **29** | **8** | **8** |

Table 2
*Frequency values of respondents for the 'rationalization' and 'opportunities' of cyberslacking (n= 29)*

| **Statements** | **Responses** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. I use the office internet because it is advanced communication. | 48.3%<br>(14) | 51.7%<br>(15) | - | - | - |
| 2. I use the office internet because it is allowed by my office. | 44.8%<br>(13) | 41.4<br>(12) | 10.3%<br>(3) | 3.5%<br>(1) | - |
| 3. I use the office internet for office communication & work. | 51.7%<br>(15) | 44.8%<br>(13) | - | 3.5%<br>(1) | - |
| 4. I use the office internet because of less workload & free time. | 41.4<br>(12) | 44.8%<br>(13) | - | 6.9%<br>(2) | 6.9%<br>(2) |
| 5. I use the office internet as a refreshing break during work. | 41.4<br>(12) | 48.3%<br>(14) | 10.3%<br>(3) | - | - |
| 6. I use the office internet for accessing & sharing information. | 48.3%<br>(14) | 48.3%<br>(14) | 3.5%<br>(1) | - | - |
| 7. I use the office internet for entertainment as and when time allows through movies, drama serials, etc. | 51.7%<br>(15) | 41.4<br>(12) | - | 3.5%<br>(1) | 3.5%<br>(1) |
| 8. I use the office internet to be in touch with my friends & family. | 37.9%<br>(11) | 44.8%<br>(13) | - | 10.3%<br>(3) | 6.9%<br>(2) |
| 9. I use the office internet for sharing & exchanging ideas. | 41.4<br>(12) | 37.9%<br>(11) | 3.5%<br>(1) | 6.9%<br>(2) | 10.3%<br>(3) |
| 10. I use the office internet to be up-to-the-minute through news & other updates. | 58.6%<br>(17) | 37.9%<br>(11) | 3.5%<br>(1) | - | |

*Note:* 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = Disagree and 5 = Strongly disagree

> *hours on my seat. It makes my life easier, sociable, and stress-free.* (S4:03/01/2020)

In the same fashion, another secretary (S6:14/02/2020) argued:

> *The university has not put any restriction or limitation on cyberslacking because the internet is necessary today for all types of official communication. In this digital era, everything is online, and the postal and courier services are of no use for official communication.* (S6:14/02/2020)

In the managers' interview, six out of eight rationalized that cyberslacking is justifiable at the workplace for the secretaries to date as the university has not formulated any internet use policy. According to one manager (M2:10/01/2020) who highlighted:

> *Today, cyberslacking is a known and inevitable reality. I am not against cyberslacking in free hours in a university context. The secretarial job is a long-sitting job wherein you need some refreshing breaks. It is a better deal and desirable too than hanging out or going for a coffee.* (M2:10/01/2020)

Another manager went further and suggested:

> *Cyberslacking is good as long as it is not a distractor enabling procrastination and delays in office works. I know through my proximity and controlling mechanisms that mostly secretary staffs practice minor cyberslacking, and it is their basic virtual right. Since they don't go for major cyberslacking (online gaming, gambling, investments, pornography, etc.), which can harm productivity, there is no point in being negative.* (M8:10/02/2020)

Similar results were found by Dursun et al. (2018) and Kuschnaroff and Bayma (2014), who concluded in their study that cyberslacking is the communication and socialization needs at the workplace, and employees do it as a resting mechanism. Likewise, Yogun (2015) has reported in his study that a cyberslacker can also do hard work as they are not the one who is physically absent for lunch, rest, or hang out. He also underlined that cyberslacking employees are more information-rich than others, leading to innovative work behavior. El Din and Baddar (2019) highlighted in their study that there was no delay and procrastination by employees in their performance due to cyberslacking. Belanger and Van Slyke (2002) reported in their study that cyberslacking could prompt an enhanced comprehension of extant information.

## Opportunities of Cyberslacking

The results of secretaries' opportunities for cyberslacking are shown in Table 2 (item 6–10). An examination of questionnaire data shows that most of the secretaries were both *agreed* and *strongly agreed* on the opportunities of cyberslacking. They found ample opportunities in cyberslacking for accessing and sharing information (about 97%); for entertainment through movies, drama serials, et cetera (about 93%); for touching base with friends and family (about 93%); for accessing and exchanging ideas (above 79%); and for staying updated with news and other happenings (about 97%).

When asked about opportunities, seven out of eight secretaries responded that they get diverse opportunities due to cyberslacking. According to one respondent who emphasized:

> *To me, cyberslacking has tremendously multiplied the range of my information accessing and sharing. The use of the internet in the office is related to my competitive intelligence and job satisfaction. I don't feel like working in a place where there is no internet.* (S3:20/01/2020)

In the same vein, one of the secretaries (S8:27/02/2020) contended:

> *Internet is the modern and digital medium of communication, and it is important for me to be well connected to the rest of the world. I work in a university, and I shouldn't be like a 'frog in the well.' Cyberslacking helps me work with peace of mind because I stay connected with my family, friends,*

> *and even with my boss. It helps the organization too, where I work.* (S8:27/02/2020)

In the managers' interview, seven out of eight considered that cyberslacking has many positive gains and should be facilitated to the secretaries working under them. According to one manager who highlighted:

> *Cyberslacking in the office provides many benefits both for the employees and the organizations. It depends on the way they use it. The important thing is that it is a big resource for an employee to understand, use and manage for overall well-being. Equally, the internet has empowered organizations also by changing the concept of time, space, and resource in these digital and global workplaces.* (M1:24/01/2020)

One of the managers reasoned as follows:

> *If my secretary and office are well connected to the internet, I am accessible to the world for information and communication. If not, I cannot cope-up with the whole range of work assigned to me by the top management. We are a university, and our scope of operation is not on an island; rather, we exist in the universe.* (M6:24/02/2020)

These findings are in line with Simsek and Simsek (2019), who reported in their study that cyberslacking provided job satisfaction and made life easier and socialized for employees. The study conducted by Rushya and Tolani (2018) suggested that cyberslacking offered a short break for employees because continuously working might create strain and fatigue for them. It helped employees zone out and re-focus on work. Henle and Blanchard (2008) also show that cyberslacking is a coping strategy that supports employees temporarily distancing themselves from job pressure. Eastin et al. (2007), Oravec (2000), and Reinecke (2009) also pointed out in their study that when employees cyberslack, they overcome boredom, task monotony, work stress; and achieve mental renovation and mood upliftment. The findings of Beugre and Kim (2006) are also in line with this study which evidenced that cyberslacking was an opportunity to escape the monotonous organizational tasks, which reduced the anxiety level.

### Changes in Life due to Cyberslacking

The results of 'change in life' due to cyberslacking among secretaries are shown in Table 3 (item 11-15). A review of questionnaire data depicts that most of the secretaries were both *agreed* and *strongly agreed* on the significant life changes emanated from cyberslacking: English language development (about 83%); knowledge enhancement (100%); creativity and innovation (62%); job competence (about 66%); and modernity and trendiness (above 93%).

In the interview of secretaries, six out of

Table 3

*Frequency values of respondents for the 'change in life' and 'addiction' due to cyberslacking (n= 29)*

| Statements | Responses | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Through the office internet, I improve my English language. | 27.6%<br>(8) | 55.2%<br>(16) | 17.2%<br>(5) | - | - |
| 12. Through the office internet, I enhance my knowledge base. | 48.3%<br>(14) | 51.7%<br>(15) | - | - | - |
| 13. Through the office internet, I become creative & innovative. | 31%<br>(9) | 31%<br>(9) | 13.8%<br>(4) | 17.2%<br>(5) | 6.9%<br>(2) |
| 14. Through the office internet, I improve my job competence. | 20.7%<br>(6) | 44.8%<br>(13) | 17.3%<br>(5) | 10.3%<br>(3) | 6.9%<br>(2) |
| 15. Through the office internet, I have become modern & trendy. | 34.5%<br>(10) | 58.6%<br>(17) | 6.9%<br>(2) | - | - |
| 16. When there is no internet, I get boredom. | 27.6%<br>(8) | 20.7%<br>(6) | 10.3%<br>(3) | 20.7%<br>(6) | 20.7%<br>(6) |
| 17. When there is no internet, it affects my off-line working efficiency. | 48.3%<br>(14) | 41.4<br>(12) | - | 10.3%<br>(3) | - |
| 18. Even if there is no internet, I feel normal and contented. | 3.5%<br>(1) | 10.3%<br>(3) | 34.5%<br>(10) | 27.6%<br>(8) | 24.1%<br>(7) |

*Note:* 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree and 5 = Strongly disagree

eight secretaries reported that they received major changes and developments in their lives due to cyberslacking. As one secretary (S1:03/01/2020) reflected:

> *Cyberslacking has completely changed my personality, and now I am a modern and trendy person in all walks of my life, such as thinking, language, education, dressing, cooking, health care, safety, security, and religion.* (S1:03/01/2020)

In the same way, one of the secretaries among the respondents maintained:

> *Cyberslacking increases my knowledge base because the internet is an ocean of knowledge. When I doubt work, either I google or I YouTube, and get a solution. It has also enhanced my competence in computer and other job skills. Moreover, cyberslacking has improved my accuracy, and my boss is satisfied with my performance.* (S5: 07/02/2020)

In the managers' interview, seven out of eight noticed that cyberslacking secretaries are smarter than others regarding productivity, knowledge, learning behavior, language at creativity. As one manager who emphasized:

> *Given a choice between a cyberslacking secretary and a non-cyberslacking one, I will choose the former. The reason behind this is that an internet literate employee is more talented and smarter with improved English*

> *communication skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It gives her an added advantage over others*. (M4:10/02/2020)

Similarly, one more manager underlined:

> *I believe that an employee capable of cyberslacking has an improved understanding of knowledge, positive capacity of learning, enhanced comprehension of creativity, and significant competitive intelligence at the workplace. These altogether contribute to higher productivity for both the employee and the organization.* (M7: 24/01/2020)

The above results support Simsek and Simsek (2019), who found that cyberslacking provides greater chances of change and development while studying the beneficial effects of cyberslacking at the workplace. Keklik et al. (2015) and Belanger and Van Slyke (2002) have also reported in their study that cyberslacking has positive organizational learning capacity, which leads to employees' improved understanding of knowledge. Furthermore, Al-Shuaibi et al. (2013), Henle and Blanchard (2008), Case and Young (2002), Coker (2013), Greenfield and Davis (2002), Lim (2002), and Mills et al. (2001) conclude in their studies that digital employees possessed the ability to work cannier, increase their work speed and consequently their compound productivity. Similar evidence came from Reinecke (2009), Eastin et al. (2007), and Oravec (2002), who inferred in their study that cyberslacking was beneficial for creativity and job satisfaction.

## Addiction to Cyberslacking

The results of addiction to cyberslacking among secretaries are shown in Table 3 (item 16-18). An analysis of questionnaire data represents that approximately half of the respondents revealed their boredom in the absence the of internet and cyberslacking. About 90% of the secretaries agree that it affects even their offline working efficiency when there is no internet. Only 14% of respondents either *strongly agree and agree* that when there is no internet, they feel normal and contented. More than half of the respondents reported that they did not feel normal and contented when there was no internet. Above on-third respondents could not decide whether they felt normal and contented or not in the absence of the internet. Therefore, one can argue here that the level of addiction to cyberslacking is not very severe, and in addiction studies, this situation is called as "prone to be addicted" category.

In the interview, six out of eight secretaries confessed that they either feel lockdown or become blank if they cannot cyberslack for a long interval. According to one secretary respondent:

> *I feel bored at a workplace where I can't check my e-mails, social networking sites, news websites, or videos. I feel uneasy and unfit at working place without the internet*. (S2:15/01/2020)

On the same note, one of the secretaries mirrored:

> *I get irritation if I can't cyberslack in the absence of the internet network. I can't survive at a workplace where I can't cyberslack because it is as necessary as the food and drink. And, it is not one-way; rather, it is good for both the employee and the employer.* (S2:21/02/2020)

In the managers' interview, seven out of eight agreed that secretaries are not addicted to cyberslacking and have not noticed any sign of addiction until now. According to one manager who argued:

> *I feel that secretaries are 'likely to be addicted' but not yet addicted to cyberslacking. If there is an addiction, it is a 'very low' type as they do not show any serious negative psychological behavior. Unlike developed countries, here secretaries are not involved in major cyberslacking that leads to addiction. That is not possible because of the slow and fluctuating network.* (M3:24/02/2020)

In a similar vein, the most experienced manager suggested:

> *First of all, I disagree with the notion that secretaries are addicted to cyberslacking; however, they are habituated to it. There is no "quick fix" to solve the issue of cyberslacking; nevertheless, managers can reduce it through mentoring, constant dialogue, counseling, and proximity. Cyberslacking may also be reduced by increasing workload, assigning varieties of work, classifying offline works, and regulating time.* (M5:10/01/2020)

In a similar qualitative study, Hussain and Parida (2017) reported that about half of the respondents got bored at the workplace without cyberslacking. About a quarter of them managed their working hours without cyberslacking by doing some specifically designed offline works. Again, about 25% of the respondents claimed that it did not matter for them. Likewise, Yogun (2015) has also suggested in his study that banning cyberslacking during working hours is not recommended today as the digital work culture is the key for organizations to survive and develop in the current digitized workplace.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key conclusions and recommendations from this study are presented as follows:

The findings of rationalizing cyberslacking reveal that most respondents regarded cyberslacking as an advanced communication medium, which is officially allowed. They view the cyberslacking skill as an important craft in this digital era, which also helps them for official communication and work. Further, they justify that they cyberslack due to less workload and free time; and they consider cyberslacking a refreshing activity during office hours. Therefore, it is recommended that the managers check whether they are satisfied with their secretaries' work productivity. The performance (working load analysis, efficiency report, target accomplishment, the achievements of the deadlines, behavior with colleagues, et cetera.) can be observed by the concerned manager during working hours. If an individual secretary is competent enough to equilibrium cyberslacking and her work performance, there is no reason to stop her cyberslacking during working hours. However, if a secretary is lagging in her work performance and cyberslacking penetratingly, she should be allowed for it with limited time allocation.

Two, the findings regarding the opportunities of cyberslacking show that most of the respondents found ample opportunities in cyberslacking for accessing and sharing information; for entertainment through movies, drama serials et cetera; for touching base with friends and family; for accessing and exchanging ideas; and for staying updated with news and other happenings. Since both the 'time wasting' and 'time using' opportunities are available on the internet, the managers should motivate secretaries to use e-learning opportunities, advance secretarial training, and communication workshops for their professional growth. Even then, if the secretaries get some additional free time to cyberslack, it should be accepted as the reality of the digital work culture.

Three, the findings regarding the 'changes in life' due to cyberslacking, most secretaries reported remarkable achievements like development in the English language, knowledge enhancement, creativity and innovation, job competence, and modernity and trendiness. Therefore, it is recommended that the manager should reconfirm the claim. If the mode of cyberslacking is mostly positive (informative and educative), there should not be any reason to stop it. However, if the claim is not so, controlling measures (KeyStore logging, screen monitoring, software monitoring, and internet service provider monitoring) must be taken to ensure the organization's productivity.

Four, the findings regarding the cyberslacking addiction showed that in the absence of the internet, about half of the secretaries do not feel bored, and an equal proportion of them feel normal and contented. Moreover, the above one-third of secretaries were still 'undecided' about their behavior without the internet. In cyberslacking studies, it is an initial stage of addiction called the 'prone to be addicted' category, which needs careful attention. Therefore, it is suggested that managers should assign task variety, balanced workload, and some offline works to engage the secretaries properly. Moreover, time regulation, motivation, and counseling are also mechanisms to minimize cyberslacking. The policy decisions about cyberslacking practices must be taken now to avoid losses to the university in the times to come keeping the future in mind. This cyberslacking policy should clearly explain the internet use guidelines, code of ethics, deterrence mechanisms, possible consequences, health and safety concerns, and intellectual property rights.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Cyberslacking is an issue of great attention in the Ethiopian academic setting. Despite a mixed-method design, this study does not stand without limitations. However, the findings of the current study have contributed to some extent to the literature on cyberslacking. Since the research issue is fast-changing, this cross-sectional study should be verified through longitudinal replication studies. This study is positive-oriented. The harmful effects of cyberslacking must be studied systematically to compare the phenomena in the Ethiopian academic setting. This study, due to its affordability, is only limited to the secretaries of MWU. The other communities like students, teachers, and other staff should also be studied thoroughly. The question of generalizability is also fair as the findings of this study were limited to one setting. Hence, in the future, more empirical cyberslacking studies are required in the Ethiopian context based on which the policy on cyberslacking can be formulated.

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# Machinery and Technical Efficiencies in Selected Paddy Areas in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysia’s paddy sector frequently relies on machinery in its activities, from land preparation until harvesting. However, the shortfall of meeting domestic demand, ineffective use of machinery, mismanagement, and technical inefficiency were among the sector’s challenges. This study analyses the socio-economic effect on machinery and technical efficiencies in Malaysia’s Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) and Integrated Agricultural Development Area Barat Laut Selangor (IADA BLS) paddy areas. Qualitative data were collected using a face-to-face interview. The results confirmed that MADA respondents were highly trained, more educated, and more efficient in using machinery in the agriculture sector than IADA BLS. The same goes for MADA’s productivity, energy outputs, machinery efficiency, labour, and technology use, which were higher than IADA BLS. However, inadequate planning and managing farm activities led to poor paddy field conditions, including insufficient water supply system, irregularly shaped paddy field plots, and increasing difficulties in handling paddy diseases and maintaining the machinery. These challenges resulted in a frequent interruption of paddy production activities, incurring additional costs, decreasing profit, and jeopardising the farmers’ financial status. Therefore, it is recommended to use types of machinery that fit a particular purpose in terms of cost and technology and ensure the required services are carried out on time to maximise machinery efficiency. On the other hand, technical efficiency’s main challenges were the high operation cost and increasing fossil fuel use, combined with a lack of government subsidies. Research and development in agricultural energy use, environment, and government subsidies could decrease production costs and improve paddy production.

*Keywords:* Farming efficiency, Malaysia, paddy production, socio-economic characteristics

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## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an important sector in Malaysia. It plays a crucial role in producing agricultural products for domestic consumption and contributes to its national Gross Domestic Products (GDP). According to Selected Agricultural Indicators, Malaysia, 2019, the agricultural sector contributed 7.3% (RM 99.5 billion) to GDP in 2018, with oil palm as the primary contributor (37.9%), followed by other agriculture (25.1%), livestock (14.9%), fishing (12.5%), forestry and logging (6.9%) and rubber (2.8%). The statistics were presented in three primary agriculture sub-sectors, namely crops, livestock, and fisheries. The paddy production saw a 2.7% increase from 2,570 thousand tonnes to 2,639.9 thousand tonnes within the crops sub-sector. On the other hand, the production of natural rubber and oil palm declined 18.5% and 3.3%, respectively, in 2018 (Mahidin, 2019).

Rice is a staple food in Malaysia as Malaysian consumption is estimated at 73.9 kilograms of rice per year. Approximately 63% of 2.4 million MT of rice consumed by Malaysians in 2019 were produced domestically, while the rest was imported. Based on 2019 data, 192,663 farmers in Malaysia produced 2.3 million tonnes (MT) with a paddy planted area of 672,084 hectares (ha). Paddy grains from the harvested paddy were sold to 157 rice millers at a Guaranteed Minimum Price (GMP) of RM 1,200/MT, who processed them into 1.5 million MT of rice and later distributed the rice in 56,746 retail stores through 1,660 wholesalers (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries [MAFI], 2020). This typical flow in paddy production shows that a proper supply chain management system is critical for efficient procurement, manufacturing, distribution, and retailing and thus fulfilling consumer demands without facing a situation of lost sales. Farmers as paddy suppliers, agents, rice millers, distributors, and retailers typically comprise the upstream and downstream stages and traditional rice supply chain management. However, the increase in the nation's population and the decrease in agricultural land and land usage for agro-food crops might pose security concerns. Therefore, to achieve the targeted Self-Sufficiency Level (SSL) each year, the government has formulated relevant agricultural policies (Omar et al., 2019; Dardak, 2019). As a result, the targeted paddy's SSL is set to increase from 73% in 2020 to 75% in 2025 in an attempt to safeguard the country's food security while reducing its dependency on imported foods (The Star, 2019).

The shortfall of meeting domestic demand in rice commodities production is one of the most severe challenges in this sector (Khor, 2008). The lack of supply could increase market prices, adversely affecting consumer welfare (Alam et al., 2010a). 71.4% (1.5 million metric tonnes) of domestic rice production was sourced from 391,104 ha of granary areas. Eight leading agencies are involved in the rice productions in Malaysian granary areas, namely Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) in Kedah, Integrated

Agricultural Development Area (IADA) Sungai Manik and IADA Seberang Perak in Perak, IADA Balik Pulau in Penang, Lembaga Kemajuan Pertanian, Kemubu Agriculture Development Authority (KADA) and IADA Kemasin Semerak in Kelantan, Northern Terengganu Integrated Agricultural Development Area (IADA Ketara) in Terengganu, and IADA Barat Laut Selangor in Selangor (BLS) (Rahmat et al., 2019). Given the differences in their locations because of environmental conditions, farm practices and various paddy production factors, these granary areas have different paddy productivity levels. The current national paddy productivity (average yield) is around 4.0 MT/ha compared to potential yield at 7.0 MT/ha with high performing areas such as IADA BLS and MADA, with yields above 5.0 MT/ha. On the contrary, granaries such as IADA Kemasin Semerak and Ketara have the lowest paddy productivity, with average yields below 3.0 MT/ha (MAFI, 2020).

In Malaysia, the paddy sector frequently relies on machinery in each activity, from land preparation until harvesting. Efficient machinery increases the productivity of paddy. However, high maintenance of machinery, at a high cost, is required for machinery use. Apart from that, the supplier or machinery owners have consequences when poor machinery management is performed. Heavy and oversized machines such as combine harvesters could damage the land. On the other hand, technical efficiency needs to be carried out to find the effectiveness of a given set of inputs when used to produce an output. An organisation is technically efficient if it produces the maximum output from the minimum quantity of inputs, such as labour, capital, fuel, and machinery. Hence, studies on machinery efficiency and technical efficiency are essential to address these issues. MADA and IADA BLS granary areas are used in this study; IADA BLS has higher productivity while MADA has a higher harvested paddy area in Malaysia. This study analyses the socio-economic effect on machinery and technical efficiencies in Malaysia's MADA and IADA BLAS paddy areas. The motivation of the study is aligning with the government's agricultural policies to achieve SSL of paddy production each year due to food security concerns.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mechanisation is the process of shifting from working exclusively or mainly by hand to utilising machinery. It comes with many benefits, including improving labour efficiency, increasing production and the yield of land per unit of area, reducing the number of required labours, lowering the cost of work, units, and production, and bringing improvements in agricultural technique (Pingali, 2007). However, mechanisation also has disadvantages, such as soil compaction by heavy machines and displacement of workers, particularly unskilled labourers (Pryor et al., 2017), a higher cost of maintenance, and environmental concerns (Yu, 2013). Agriculture mechanisation goes into three stages. The first stage enhances agricultural technology's integrated application. The rapid growth of agricultural cooperatives has effectively enhanced agricultural production organisation, facilitated the shift of rural labour-power, and enhanced agricultural technology's integrated implementation. It has facilitated cost reduction, improved efficiency and agricultural scale operation, and improved farm equipment and agronomy integration. The second stage focuses on strengthening Research and Development (R&D) on agricultural mechanisation technology and equipment. Significant signs of progress are seen in extensive horsepower tractor development and rice planting and harvesting machinery equipment. Agricultural machinery is crucial in agricultural production to maintain stable farming land, improve yield, catch season, and prevent disaster, contributing to farmers' continuous food production and income growth. The last stage spotlights the importance of advanced mechanical power. Due to the internationalisation of the domestic market and demand sophistication, locally owned firms would have to compete with large manufacturers of products, particularly in global technology (Garcia, 2008).

### Socio-economic in Paddy Production

Farmers' socio-economic characteristics play a vital role in paddy yields (Alam et al., 2010b). Kedah is Malaysia's most prominent state in terms of the paddy territory contrasted with different states. The government is working on shrinking the socio-economic gaps. Infrastructure improvement is needed in the Muda area's water system territory to increase development efforts, primarily when water management and water resources are utilised proficiently on a continuous premise. Socio-economic patterns of farmers in the Muda have been divided into several groups for gathering that includes paddy ranchers gathering that plays and provides important outputs to policymakers (Hussin & Mat, 2013). Climate changes also may cause severe socio-economic impacts and imperil the future food security of a country. The growth and yield of paddy cultivated in these regions are strongly influenced by either positive or negative rainfall (Alam et al., 2010c). Implementing adaptive measures will significantly help reduce the adverse impacts of climate change, and the farmers will be ready to cope with uncertainties brought about by climate change (Chithranayana & Punyawardena, 2008). The likelihood of using agricultural inputs increases with education, crop production, livestock, and farm incomes. It decreases with the total number of livestock and non-farm income owned by a household. Non-farm income is comprised of average annual income from employment wage and remittance from relatives, while farm income refers to income accrued from crop sales. Age, gender, and marital status of the household head and size of land owned by the household were likely to be influenced.

These variables allow the utilisation of agricultural inputs in paddy production (Boniphace et al., 2015). Man (2009) states that financial, social, and human factors improve farmers' well-being. In Malaysia, about 300,000 rice farmers relied on rice cultivation as their primary income source in 2009. Rice farmers are typically settled around the peninsula in eight main granaries and other small granaries. Poverty is usually synonymous with the farming community, particularly the rice farming community, mainly of Bumiputera. A lack of productive assets, active depending on small-scale farming projects and non-agricultural activities, appears to be among the recognised reasons for poverty afflicting the local rice farming community. The occurrence of hardcore poverty and income inequality among farmers, particularly Bumiputera, has, for decades, attracted policymakers' attention in formulating policies to avoid such incidents that constantly fetter rural communities (Fahmi et al., 2013).

### Machinery Efficiency

Machinery efficiency is the machine's ability to avoid wasting inputs such as fuel and electricity to produce the desired result and maximise the yield. The machine requires energy as an essential input to production. Energy is used to perform crop production processes such as post-harvest, land preparation, planting, and crop management. Energy use depends on the level of mechanisation, energy price, the number of active workers, and the cultivability of land (Baharudin & Arshad, 2014). Noor and Hussein (1986) stated that farmers and contractors are encouraged to update their machinery equipped with new technologies to increase paddy production. They also found no difference between economic, technological, and allocative efficiencies in large-scale or small-scale farmers in Malaysia. Malaysia's paddy industry has generated stable revenues for the country. This generation of income reflected this industry's success. Tewari et al. (2012) found the high ranked paddy productivity in the State of West Bengal large farms because its mechanisation index is the highest. Due to the labour shortage, the state ensured machinery availability, increasing machinery used in paddy transplanters. Farmers were identified as related to the agriculture sector. Income and consumption habits were found to be below average. Major occupations were teaching, fishing, and day-to-day wage earners. Most of the rice farmers were tenants, uneducated, and men usually were taken decisions. Farmers produced their food with their farm products, such as cattle, buffalo, cow, and poultry were the primary lives (Alam et al., 2010b).

### Technical Efficiency

Technical efficiency is the effectiveness with which a given set of inputs, such as labour, capital, and technology, can produce an output. The efficiency measurement in agricultural production determines the efficiency level of input and output in paddy planting activities. Farmers in developing countries do not use all potential technological resources, making inefficient agricultural activities (Khai & Yabe, 2011).

Project theory of change simplified the reconstruction of critical infrastructure to increase productivity and income from agricultural products. For example, some communities have undertaken significant work to repair and rehabilitate existing dams and irrigation schemes. It allows paddy farmers to increase their growing season to generate additional harvests and, hence, higher income and ensure food safety. Additional infrastructure works, including the renovation of key access routes, were designed to improve access to farmers’ markets and suppliers. The project also established large-scale infrastructure works (Livelihoods Outcome Indicator, 2013). Yagi and Hayashi (2020) investigated the technical efficiency of relatively large-scale rice farms in Japan to estimate the organisations’ impact on the number of machines and machine working days. They found that non-family farms were able to utilise machinery efficiency highly with a grander operation scale.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study areas of this research are in two Malaysian states. MADA is in Pendang and Kota Sarang Semut regions in Kedah state. IADA BLS is in Sabak Bernam and Kuala Selangor regions in Selangor state. These two study locations were chosen because MADA has the largest paddy area representing 35.13% of Malaysia’s total paddy areas (MADA, 2019), and IADA BLS has the highest paddy productivity in Malaysia, accounting for more than 5.0 MT/ha (IADA, 2019). This study uses qualitative data sources such as observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The researchers visited the study site and conducted a field study to obtain relevant information and data. This study conducted 12 pilot surveys, and 40 respondents participated from each area (MADA and IADA LBS) in a total of 80 surveys. The respondents of each area were as follows: 21 machinery suppliers, five machinery mechanics, eight farmers, two contractors, and four officers.

Figure 1 presents the research framework. The study framework was formed based on the literature review and various variables selected based on the study area’s suitability. The selection of indicators is based on the objectives of the study. This study analyses the socio-economic effect on machinery and technical efficiencies in Malaysia’s MADA and IADA BLAS paddy areas. The independent variables are a) socio-economic of the paddy machine supplier, b) machinery efficiency, and c) technical efficiency. These three variables affect paddy productivity. First, though, energy efficiency needs to be calculated to obtain machinery efficiency and technical efficiency. Therefore, the model is presented as Y = X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6.

Model 1: Y1 - Socio-economic = X1 – Ages, X2 - Position, X3 - Education level, X4 – Experience, X5 – Training, X6 – Household

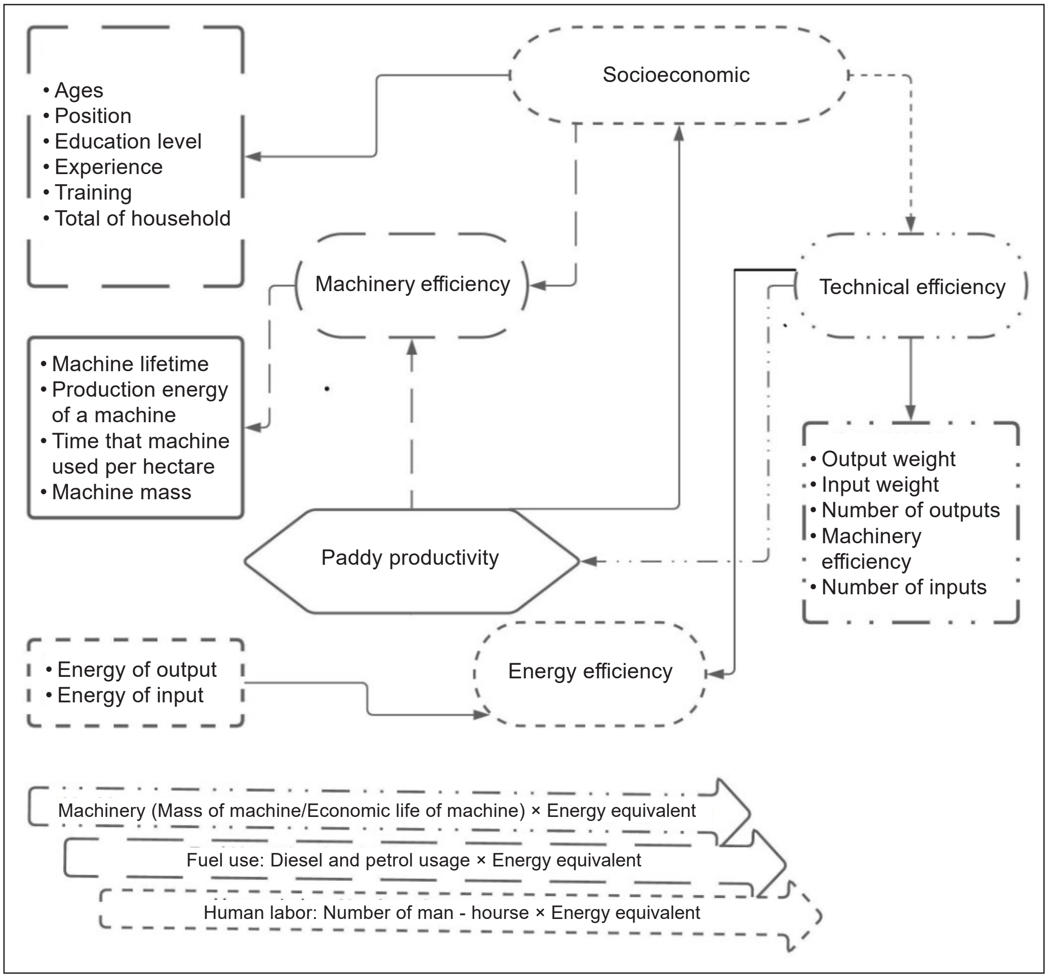

*Figure 1.* Research framework

Model 2: Y2 - Machine efficiency = X1 - Machine Mass, X2 - production energy of a machine, X3 - time that machine used per hectare, X4 - Machine lifetime

Model 3: Y3 - Technical Efficiency = X1 - Energy of Output, X2 - Energy of Input, X3 - Output Weight, X4 - Input Weights, X5 – Machinery Efficiency, X6 - Number of Outputs, X7 - Number of Inputs.

## Data Analysis

The analysis began by discussing the socio-economy of the paddy machine supplier to validate the data. An analysis was followed to determine the differences in machinery and farming efficiencies between MADA and IADA BLS. IBM SPSS statistical software (Version 22.0) was utilised to analyse the data. The quantitative data analysis is divided into three sections, namely, Energy Efficiency (EE), Machinery

Efficiency (ME), and Technical Efficiency (TE); EE is used to calculate ME and TE.

Energy Efficiency: energy efficiency is determined by dividing energy output by energy inputs. Energy output is represented by paddy productivity-energy inputs represented by fuel, labour, and machinery. The measurement unit used is Megajoules/hectare (MJ/ha), as shown in the equation below.

- Energy output ($OE$):

$$OE = (MJ\ ha^{-1}) = Y\ x\ EE$$

where $Y$ = Paddy Yield ($kg\ ha^{-1}$), and $EE$ = Paddy Energy Equivalent ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$)

- Energy input ($IE$):

$$IE = (FE\ EE) + (HL\ \ EE) + (ME\ \ EE)$$

where $IE$ = Energy Input ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$), $FE$ = Fuel Use ($L\ ha^{-1}$), $HL$ = Human Labour Use ($H\ ha^{-1}$), $EE$ = Energy Equivalent for Each Input ($MJ$)

(a) $FE(MJ\ ha^{-1})\ D + G$
where D = *Amount of Diesel Usage* ($L\ ha^{-1}$) × *Energy Equivalent of Diesel* ($MJ\ L^{-1}$), G = *Amount of Gasoline Usage* ($L\ ha^{-1}$) × *Energy Equivalent of Gasoline* ($MJ\ L^{-1}$)

(b) Human Labor ($HL$).
$HL$ ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$) = Number of Man_hours ($h\ ha^{-1}$) × *Energy Equivalent of Human Labour* ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$)

(c) Machinery ($M$).
$M$ ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$) = [*Mass of machine* ($kg$)/ *Economic Life of Machine* ($year$)] × *Energy Equivalent of Machine* ($MJ\ ha^{-1}$)

- Energy efficiency (EE):

$$EE = \frac{Energy\ Output\ (MJ\ ha^{-1})}{Energy\ Input\ \ (MJ\ ha^{-1})}$$

Energy value in paddy production is calculated by multiplying the energy output and input using relevant conversion factors. According to Pishgar-Komleh, Sefeedpari, and Rafiee (2011), paddy as output equals 17 ($MJ\ kg^{-1}$), while input including fuel (diesel 47.80, petrol 46.30 ($MJ\ L^{-1}$) and machinery 6.00-8.00 ($MJ\ kg\_year^{-1}$) and human labour as an input equals 2 ($MJ\ h^{-1}$).

Machinery Efficiency: this study's first objective is to identify and analyse paddy machinery's efficiency in MADA and IADA BLS. In calculating the machinery efficiency, embedded energy is needed, and energy depreciation is assumed to produce the agricultural machinery during its economic lifetime. This study's machine type to determine M is tractor used to prepare the paddy area and harvester in harvesting activities. Machinery efficiency is calculated using the formula:

$$ME = \frac{(G\ M\ t)}{T}$$

where, $G$ = Machine Mass *(kilogram), M*= production energy of a machine ($MJ\ kg^{-1}$) = $\frac{G}{T}\ EE$, $t$= time that machine used per hectare ($h\ ha^{-1}$), and $T$= Machine lifetime *(hour)*

Technical Efficiency: Technical efficiency can be defined as a farmer's ability to produce maximum output given a set of inputs and technology levels. The

TE equation is based on Nassiri and Singh (2009), the TE score in the presence of multiple inputs and output factors can be calculated by the ratio of the sum of weighted outputs y to the sum of weighted inputs x or in a mathematical expression as follows:

$$TE_j = \frac{u_1 y_1 + u_2 y_2 + \cdots + u_n y_n}{v_1 x_1 + v_2 x_2 + \cdots + v_m x_m} = \frac{\sum_{r=1}^{n} u_r y_r}{\sum_{s=1}^{m} v_s x_s}$$

Where, $y$ = Energy of Output, $x$ = Energy of Input, $u$ = Output Weight, $v$ = Input Weights, $u$ / $v$ = ME, $r$ = Number of Outputs, and $s$ = Number of Inputs. The value of technical efficiency varies between zero and one. In this study, inputs were fuel, human labour, and machinery, and paddy production output. The value of inputs and output weights would be calculated during linear programming so that the value of technical efficiency approaches the maximum value.

### Descriptive Analysis

Position, education, and machinery supplier training are directly related to paddy production in this study. The socio-economic status of farmers, machinery suppliers, officers, contractors, and machinery mechanics are related to production; therefore, ages, experiences, and households determine paddy production. Lifetime production energy, time is taken, and machine masses are the determinants for machinery efficiency. In contrast, energy equivalent for input, energy rate of the operation time, and the energy equivalent of output are the determinants for paddy production's technical efficiency (Effiong et al., 2015).

Primary data were obtained through semi-structured observations and in-depth interviews. The selection of respondents was based on the snowball sampling method. For example, the researchers went to each of the study areas and selected the first respondent at the study site and then followed by the next respondent introduced by the first respondent. The survey method aims to obtain observations without being constructed, designed, or discontinued. The descriptive analysis was utilised based on conducting 12 pilot surveys. After ensuring the surveys' quality, 40 respondents participated from each area (MADA and IADA LBS) in a total of 80 surveys. The face-to-face method was utilised in collecting the surveys. The interviews with officers intend to obtain more accurate and detailed information and discuss respondents' issues. Researchers use language that respondents can easily understand during the interview session. The interview method has no specific method of sample size calculation. Hence, a descriptive method was used to obtain the sample size needed (Miles et al., 2019).

## RESULTS

### Socio-economic of Machine Suppliers

Table 1 shows the socio-economic frequencies statistic and Chi-Square Tests of contribution, measurable to paddy production, according to Effiong et al. (2015). Comparison of socio-economic indicator results of machine suppliers showed that in the MADA, 34% of the age of machinery suppliers varied between 25 to 34, 33% varied between 35 to 44, 25% varied between 45 to 54, and 8% were within 55 to 64 years old. Meanwhile, in the IADA BLS, 34 and 33% were within 25 to 44, while 11% were between 55 and 64 years old. In the MADA, the number of educated respondents through diploma, certificates, STPM, PMR, and UPSR were 4, 3, 1, 3, and 1, respectively, while in the IADA BLS, the results were 6,1,1, and 1 respondent, respectively. Some of the IADA BLS respondents managed to continue their studies to a higher level. Hence, all the machinery suppliers had an educational background. Furthermore, half of the MADA machinery suppliers were between

Table 1
*Socio-economic frequencies statistic and chi-square tests*

1. Mean (statistics)

| | | Age | Experience | Households | Education | Position | Training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 41.14 | 16.86 | 4.81 | 4.48 | 4 | 0.19 |
| Median | | 41.00 | 17 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Minimum | | 27 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Maximum | | 59 | 40 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 1 |

2. Age (Chi-Square Tests)

| | Value | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 21[a] | 16 | 0.179 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 20.450 | 16 | 0.201 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.024 | 1 | 0.008 |
| N of Valid Cases | 21 | | |

a. 34 cells (100%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.19.

3. Experience (Chi-Square Tests)

| | Value | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 12.893[a] | 12 | 0.377 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 13.179 | 12 | 0.356 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 5.016 | 1 | 0.025 |
| N of Valid Cases | 21 | | |

a. 26 cells (100%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.19.

4. Households (Chi-Square Tests)

| | Value | df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.875[a] | 7 | 0.344 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 8.117 | 7 | 0.322 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.522 | 1 | 0.470 |
| N of Valid Cases | 21 | | |

a. 15 cells (100%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.19.

1 to 12, and 33% were within 17 to 22, while another 17% were between 30 to 43 years of experience in this industry.

On the other hand, 34% of the machinery supplier from the IADA BLS respondents were between 1 to 12, 33% were between 17 to 22, and 33% were between 30 to 43 years of experience. Furthermore. In the MADA, only 25% of the machinery suppliers trained before entering the industry, compared to only 11% in IADA BLS. Twenty-five percent of the machinery supplier's household numbers that need support in the MADA area had between 1 to 3; 58% had 4 to 6, while only 17% had a range from 7 to 9 members in their family. While 11% from the IADA BLS were between 1 to 3, 67% were between 4 to 6, and another 22% were between 7 to 9 family members. Hence, both MADA and IADA BLS had many households ranging from 4 to 6 family members. These results align with Alam et al. (2010c), suggesting that socio-economic characteristics such as employment side, education level, and technology affect paddy farms' productivity. Land area and land ownership do not affect productivity but affect the cost and profitability of paddy farms. Thus, machinery technology was created to help the crop produce high production and improve rice yields.

Table 2 presents the socio-economic frequency statistic for MADA and IADA BLS, including age, position, education, experience, training, and household. The results showed that the respondent's mean age in MADA was 41 years old; the oldest respondent was 59, while the youngest was 27. In IADA, respondents' mean age was 36; the oldest respondent was 57, while the youngest was 27 years old. The education level, experience, training, and household in MADA mean were 4.65, 17.50, 0.35, and 4.55, respectively. Most of them have their SPM as their education level and experience of about 17 years. While education level,

Table 2
*Socio-economic frequency ftatistic for MADA and IADA BLS*

| Indicator | N | | | | Mean | | Median | | Minimum | | Maximum | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MADA | | IADA BLS | | MADA | IADA BLS | MADA | IADA BLS | MADA | IADA BLS | MADA | IADA BLS |
| | Valid | Missing | Valid | Missing | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 41.95 | 36.85 | 42 | 34.5 | 27 | 27 | 59 | 57 |
| Position | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 3.45 | 3.40 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Education | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 4.65 | 4.15 | 5.50 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 9 |
| Experience | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 17.5 | 14.35 | 17.5 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 43 | 40 |
| Training | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 0.35 | 0.40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Household | 20 | 1 | 20 | 1 | 4.55 | 4.50 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 |

experience, training, and household in IADA BLS means were 4.15, 14.35, 0.40, and 4.5, respectively.

### Analysis of Machinery Efficiency

Machinery characteristic is essential in calculating machinery efficiency. The characteristic of each paddy machinery provides a valuable and different function. Table 3 illustrates the machinery characteristic for each activity, including land preparation, crop management, planting, and harvesting activities. Each machinery characteristic plays a vital role in contributing to each activity of paddy production. Besides, the characteristic of the machinery is needed to identify their efficiency. For land preparation, the capacity for the tractors is about 40 to 80 horsepower. The time taken for a crop for land preparation is about 1 to 2 hours. Even though the tractors are occupied with a high horsepower engine, they only could move slowly at a speed of 10 to 30 km/hour for a crop. Twenty-five percent of the transplanter at MADA has been modified by themselves. These modifications decrease the machinery’s weight, increase the machinery’s speed, and reduce the diesel consumption rate compared to the machinery in IADA BLAS that are not modified.

Table 3
*Machinery characteristics for MADA and IADA BLS*

| 1. Land Preparation activity | | | | 3. Crop Management activity | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) | Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) |
| Type | New | 5 | 60 | Type | New | 100 | 100 |
| | Modified | 90 | 40 | | Modified | 0 | 0 |
| | Both | 5 | 0 | | Both | 0 | 0 |
| Purchase Source | Local | 35 | 60 | Purchase Source | Local | 55 | 75 |
| | Import | 20 | 15 | | Import | 40 | 5 |
| | Middleman | 25 | 25 | | Middleman | 5 | 20 |
| Life Expectancy (Years) | 1-20 | 55 | 45 | Life Expectancy (Years) | Below 5 | 70 | 55 |
| | 21-40 | 20 | 15 | | Above 5 | 30 | 45 |
| | 41-60 | 25 | 40 | Model | Drone | 15 | 0 |
| Model | Machinery Ferguson | 55 | 0 | | Sprayer | 5 | 5 |
| | Ford | 45 | 25 | | Kubota | 80 | 95 |
| | Kubota | 0 | 75 | Horsepower / Capacity | Below 5 | 45 | 90 |
| Weight (kg) | 2000-3000 | 50 | 95 | | Above 5 | 55 | 10 |
| | 3000-4000 | 50 | 5 | Weight (kg) | Below 10 | 50 | 20 |
| Speed (km) | Below 10 | 20 | 65 | | Above 10 | 50 | 80 |
| | Above 10 | 80 | 35 | Time taken (hour) | 0-1 | 100 | 35 |
| Time taken (hour) | 0-1.5 | 10 | 55 | | 1-2 | 0 | 65 |
| | 1.5-3 | 90 | 45 | Total Diesel (litre) | Below 5 | 50 | 100 |
| Horsepower / Capacity | Below 80 | 95 | 75 | | Above 5 | 35 | 0 |
| | Above 80 | 5 | 25 | | Battery | 15 | 0 |
| Total Diesel (litre) | 0-50 | 100 | 65 | | | | |
| | 50-100 | 0 | 35 | | | | |

Table 3 (*continue*)

| 2. Planting activity | | | | 4. Harvesting activity | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) | | Description | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) |
| Type | New | 75 | 95 | Type | New | 0 | 20 |
| | Modified | 25 | 0 | | Modified | 90 | 75 |
| | Both | 0 | 5 | | Both | 10 | 5 |
| Purchase Source | Local | 85 | 70 | Purchase Source | Local | 15 | 35 |
| | Import | 10 | 20 | | Import | 70 | 30 |
| | Middleman | 5 | 10 | | Middleman | 15 | 35 |
| Life Expectancy (Years) | Below 5 | 100 | 40 | Life Expectancy (Years) | Below 10 | 25 | 5 |
| | Above 5 | 0 | 60 | | 10-20 | 5 | 15 |
| Model | Machinery Ferguson | 0 | 0 | | 20-30 | 35 | 75 |
| | Ford | 0 | 0 | | Above 30 | 35 | 5 |
| | Kubota | 100 | 100 | Model | New Holland | 100 | 100 |
| Horsepower / Capacity | Below 20 | 50 | 90 | | Others | 0 | 0 |
| | Above 20 | 50 | 10 | Horsepower / Capacity | Below 500 | 100 | 5 |
| Weight (kg) | Below 10 | 30 | 0 | | Above 500 | 0 | 95 |
| | Below 500 | 70 | 85 | Weight (kg) | Below 10000 | 5 | 10 |
| | Above 500 | 0 | 15 | | Above 10000 | 95 | 90 |
| Speed (km) | Below 10 | 100 | 30 | Speed (km) | 0-15 | 60 | 80 |
| | Above 10 | 0 | 70 | | 15-30 | 40 | 20 |
| Time taken (hour) | Below 1.5 | 100 | 35 | Time taken (hour) | Below 1 | 100 | 30 |
| | Above 1.5 | 0 | 65 | | Above 1 | 0 | 70 |
| Total Diesel (litre) | 0-4 | 50 | 55 | Total Diesel (litre) | 10-20 | 100 | 70 |
| | 4-8 | 0 | 45 | | 20-30 | 0 | 30 |
| | 8-10 | 50 | 0 | | | | |

Table 4 illustrates the frequencies statistic of machinery efficiency for tractor and harvester and machinery efficiency of MADA and IADA BLS. ME for MADA was 72%, and IADA BLS was 61.3%. Therefore, the larger the value of ME, the more efficient the machinery is.

## Analysis of Technical Efficiency

The measurement of technical efficiency in agricultural production determines the efficiency level of production cost and inputs, such as labour, capital, technology, and output of paddy planting activities. Each activity has its own machinery cost. Table 5 presents machinery cost for

Table 4

*Frequencies statistic of machinery for tractor and harvester in MADA and IADA BLS*

| Machinery Efficiency for Tractor | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ME MADA | ME IADA BLS |
| N | Valid | 20 | 20 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 6789.14 | 894.37 |
| Median | | 7179.83 | 948.21 |
| | | ME MADA | ME IADA |
| Machinery Efficiency for Harvester | | | |
| N | Valid | 20 | 20 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 42864.10 | 4090.67 |
| Median | | 20533.33 | 3733.33 |
| Total Machinery Efficiency | | | |
| | | Total | Average |
| MADA | | 993065 | 49653.23 |
| IADA | | 99700.70 | 4985.04 |

Table 5
*Machinery cost for paddy production in MADA and IADA BLS*

| 1. Land Preparation Activity | | | | 3. Crop Management Activity | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) | Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) |
| Service | Below 1000 | 5 | 55 | Service | Below 500 | 50 | 50 |
| | Above 1000 | 95 | 45 | | Above 500 | 40 | 20 |
| Repair | Below 1000 | 10 | 45 | | New | 10 | 30 |
| | Above 1000 | 90 | 55 | Repair | Below 500 | 35 | 60 |
| Wages | 0-150 | 100 | 80 | | Above 500 | 35 | 10 |
| | 150-300 | 0 | 15 | | New | 30 | 30 |
| | Above 300 | 0 | 5 | Wages | 0-150 | 100 | 85 |
| Lubricant Oil | Below 1000 | 70 | 55 | | 150-300 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 1000 | 30 | 45 | | Above 300 | 0 | 10 |
| | | | | Lubricant Oil | Below 350 | 35 | 55 |
| | | | | | 350-700 | 40 | 45 |
| | | | | | Above 700 | 25 | 0 |
| 2. Planting Activity | | | | 4. Harvest Activity | | | |
| Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) | Description | | MADA (%) | IADA BLS (%) |
| Service | Below 500 | 50 | 50 | Service | Below 2500 | 0 | 75 |
| | Above 500 | 40 | 20 | | 2500-5000 | 15 | 15 |
| | New | 10 | 30 | | Above 5000 | 85 | 10 |
| Repair | Below 500 | 35 | 60 | Repair | Below 2500 | 0 | 75 |
| | Above 500 | 35 | 10 | | 2500-5000 | 40 | 15 |
| | New | 30 | 30 | | Above 5000 | 60 | 10 |
| Wages | 0-150 | 100 | 85 | Wages | Below 200 | 100 | 75 |
| | 150-300 | 0 | 5 | | 200-400 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 300 | 0 | 10 | | Above 400 | 0 | 20 |
| Lubricant Oil | Below 350 | 35 | 55 | Lubricant Oil | Below 1000 | 35 | 35 |
| | 350-700 | 40 | 45 | | 1000-2000 | 0 | 65 |
| | Above 700 | 25 | 0 | | Above 2000 | 65 | 0 |

paddy production for land preparation, crop management, planting, and harvest activities. The results show that MADA had higher service costs than IADA BLS. In more detail, MADA recorded higher repair costs in land preparation activity, wages, and lower lubricant oil costs than IADA BLS. Therefore, machinery suppliers seek to minimise the machinery cost in order to maximise their profit. Because machine supplier profit depends on the paddy yield, the percentage’s profits within 20 to 30 from machine rental based on its productivity.

Table 6 shows the average energy output and its frequencies statistic. MADA’s average energy output is 10346.76, while IADA BLS is 9941.85. Thus, MADA has more average energy output than IADA BLS. It is also indicated through MADA and IADA BLS, which are103.47 and 99.42, respectively. Thus, MADA seems to consume more energy compared to IADA BLS.

The results showed that the average energy efficiency for fuel and human labour in MADA and IADA BLS were 6092.953, 2850.535, and 15.27578, 11.44232, respectively. In this study, the inputs are the energy rate of operation time = y and the energy equivalent of input = u. While

Table 6
*Frequencies statistic of energy output and average energy output*

| | | MADA | IADA BLS |
|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 20 | 20 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 103.47 | 99.42 |
| Median | | 97.84 | 105.02 |
| Average Energy Output | Total | 2069.353 | 1988.37 |
| | Average | 103.4676 | 99.41848 |

the outputs are paddy productivity = x and energy equivalent of output = v. In this case, r = 40 because, for input, there are two tractor activities for land preparation and harvesting machines. While s = 20. Hence, TE MADA = 305.52/2069.353 = 0.1476, and TE IADA BLS = 228.85/1988.37 = 0.1151. Whenever the producer is on efficient production, TE = 1. Otherwise, TE < 1. TE is a measure for the practical production level's distance (Juan et al., 2003). The inputs are fuel (petrol and diesel), human labour and machinery (tractor and harvester), while the output is the paddy yield. Overall, MADA seemed to be more efficient than IADA BLS because MADA's technical efficiency is closer to 1 rather than IADA BLS.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

MADA and IADA BLS respondents had an average of 41 years old, while MADA respondents had more experience than IADA BLS. Both areas' households range from 4 to 6 family members. MADA respondents seemed to be highly trained than IADA BLS; hence, MADA respondents had a better knowledge of machinery. It also could be confirmed by their education level, in which MADA respondents were more educated than IADA BLS. Socio-economic is the link between economic activity and a social life that influences people by managing their wealth and income to improve the overall quality of life. Its aspects are fundamental to the development of society. The respondents' background was a determining factor directly related to machinery and productivity in agriculture. MADA's socio-economic respondents' status was slightly better than IADA BLS, increasing their living costs and wages and rent costs in MADA compared to IADA BLS. MADA was more efficient in using machinery in the agriculture sector than IADA BLS, in which IADA BLS had less productivity where it needs to be improved. Human labour and productivity were essential in increasing machinery efficiency. IADA BLS could get a better result in machinery efficiency if they increase labour force and productivity.

The productivity for MADA and IADA BLS showed that MADA's productivity was higher than IADA BLS. The same goes for energy outputs since IADA BLS had fewer energy outputs than MADA. Therefore, their productivity was higher than IADA BLS because they utilised more energy outputs. Besides, the results have shown that MADA machinery was more efficient compared to IADA BLS. Furthermore, MADA respondents used better technology efficiency than IADA BLS because it was higher and near the MADA's TE ratio1. It is because IADA BLS used fewer inputs compared to MADA input. On top of that, MADA used extra human labour and energy inputs compared to IADA BLS. Therefore, the higher inputs utilised, the closer the ratio to 1, where technical efficiency varies between zero and one.

Farmers and machinery suppliers are advised to use the latest machinery model to improve machinery, and technical efficiency since newly renovated machinery will increase productivity. The old model of machinery should be replaced to ease farmers' jobs. Farmers or machinery suppliers can refer to authorities such as MADA authority to update the newly released model. Next is to choose machines that fit a particular purpose. One of the indications to choose suitable machines for fields is the machinery horsepower. For example, a tractor with a power of 100 hp can be used for a large-sized farm, while a tractor with a power of 35 hp is sufficient for small-sized farms. Paddy industry challenges related to paddy machinery and paddy planting activities, including the high cost of new machinery, expensive maintenance cost of old mechanics, hard to finding quality spare parts, challenging weather (soft soil), integrated water supply system, paddy field condition, small-sized/irregularly shaped paddy field plots, and paddy diseases. These factors resulted in an interruption of paddy production activities. They added additional costs that decreased their profit and jeopardised their financial status in paying their machine loans. Therefore, farmers and contractors are advised to use new machinery models equipped with new technologies, maintain their machinery, ensure the required services are carried out on time to maximise their machinery efficiency, improve land consolidation, irrigation drainage infrastructures, and hire experienced workers or farmers with a good background in operation machines.

Furthermore, the biggest challenges for technical efficiency are the high cost and increased use of fossil fuel. Fossil fuels are categorised as input energy needed for all machinery activity, from land preparation to harvesting. Moreover, from the depth interview with farmers and machinery suppliers, they stated they did not receive subsidies or government help on fossil fuels, which raises the production cost. Therefore, research and development in agricultural energy use, environment, and government subsidies could decrease production costs and improve paddy production.

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# Adjustment Experiences of International Graduate Students to Life in the United States

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## ABSTRACT

The adjustment process, also interchangeably referred as a transition or adaptation process, is a stage that every international student went through as part of their study abroad experiences. For international graduate students, their pursuit represents an important milestone in their self-development and personal growth. However, adjusting to a new educational and social environment can be challenging. During this important starting point of their academic journey, what are the key aspects that shaped the adjustment experiences of these international graduate students? This study explored the narratives of international graduate students of their adjustment process to academic life in the United States using the integrated acculturation framework using a naturalistic qualitative inquiry process. Participants' selection includes criterion sampling and maximum variation strategy to elect international students who were at least completing his or second semester in a current graduate program. In total, 9 participants were selected based upon different countries of origins and program majors and having both male and female and doctorate and master level participants in this study. The findings show that these international graduate students experienced varied adjustment experiences, impacted by motivation, personality, coping strategies, and social support received. All the participants also reported having a varying set of growth as a result of the adjustment process. The recommendations include providing more support geared towards academic well-being and creating a supportive culture among faculty and other students on the diversity and difference these international graduate students bring on campus.

*Keywords:* Adaptation, adjustment, graduate students, higher education, international students, students' development

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## INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural adaptation is a long-term process of adjusting and finally feeling comfortable in a new environment (Hall, 2005). Cross-cultural means crossing cultures between two or more cultures. Kim (2001) reports that the phenomenon of cross-cultural adaptations has been widely investigated since the beginning of the 20th century. Every year, there are great numbers of groups and people who move across cultural boundaries. It includes long-term migration groups such as immigrants and refugees. People also move temporarily under various arrangements and purposes like employment opportunities, job attachments, and assuming roles such as diplomats and government agency employees, researchers, visiting professors, military personnel on foreign duties, missionaries carrying out religious service, summer study abroad students, and students seeking a degree in another country. They are also called the sojourners, referring to individuals who travel abroad to attain a particular goal within a specific period (Bocher, 2006). Foreign or international students are a prominent group that belongs to the sojourners' category. Their primary purpose is to study and obtain professional qualifications within a range of time from several months to several years if they attend a university.

Every year, many international students leave their home country to go abroad to pursue formal education. Many seek this opportunity to gain degrees in prestigious higher education, with longstanding motives either to acquire what international students generally perceive as a better education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) or possibly to increase their chances of professional prospects in their host country once they graduate (Trice & Yoo, 2007). One of the top chosen countries for these purposes is the United States. The United States has one of the highest numbers of international students in the world. According to the 2020 Open Doors Report, the number of international students in the U.S in the 2019/2020 academic year was almost 1.1 million students across U.S higher education institutions (Institute of International Education, 2020).

International students contribute to U.S. higher education in various aspects, including educational, cultural, and financial aspects. The majority of international students are self-funded and support their studies through personal and family funds. It was estimated that international students contributed almost $38.7 billion and supported 415,996 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2019-2020 academic year (NAFSA, 2020). Living expenses largely contribute to their economic contribution for themselves and accompanying dependents, and through expenditures on out-of-state tuition fees, books, fees, and other education-related expenses.

Considering the significant number and large contribution of the international student population to the host country, many educators, especially those in the higher education field, have been dedicating their interests and time to studying this population. Therefore, the adjustment process, also referred to as the transition or adaptation process interchangeably is an integral stage for every international student who travels abroad for new educational experiences. However, adjusting to a new educational and social environment can be a challenging process. Considering the cultural differences and misunderstandings of the new and diverse experiences, it is likely that international students will experience feelings of estrangement, anxiety, and depression as a part of their adjustment process (Adler, 1975). In particular, the stress would be most prominent during the initial stage of the adjustment process (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013).

### International Graduate Students' Challenges in Cross-Cultural Settings

For international graduate students, besides being international, they are also transitioning to graduate education, which offers different challenges altogether. Studies have shown that many students perceived difficulty transitioning to doctoral education, mainly becoming independent researchers (Gardner, 2008; Lovitts, 2005). A literature review study conducted by Gao (2021) highlights five international doctoral students' experience domains. The first one is the academic domain, which includes the relationship with the supervisor(s), peer and faculty support, and research challenges. The social domain focuses on family/spousal support and social networking, whereas the cultural domain includes language barriers and cultural adaptation. Meanwhile, two more domains are the psychological domain which identity issues and emotions, and the economic domain, which focuses on financial constraints. According to Gao (2021), these five domains shaped the whole experiences of international doctoral students and mutually influenced their overall cross-cultural experiences.

Gao's (2021) literature review highlights the two most frequent challenges faced by Doctoral international students. The first one is the student's relationship with their supervisor. Supervisors play a very influential role in doctoral students' academic lives. Doctoral students often reported struggles coming from imbalanced power dynamics, pressure, and misaligned expectations in various academic tasks such as research. Meanwhile, language barriers were found to undermine the students' overall experiences in their host country because they affected their communication with supervisors and peers, as well as their ability to undertake academic tasks and develop social networking. It was reported that lack of proficiency in English and different speaking English styles are major stressor that hinders the effectiveness of many international students in their studies (Ahrari et al., 2019; Faiz et al., 2017).

However, issues and challenges alone do not paint the overall picture of the cross-cultural journey as experienced by these international students. Wang (2009) asserts that international students differ greatly in adjusting to their circumstances and studies. Some adjust easily, while others find it very difficult. For example, Bui (2021) provided insight into her intercultural experiences as a doctoral student and described it as a negotiated process between several cultural dichotomies. She reported negotiating several cultural differences, such as adapting from passive to active learners, accepting versus rejection, and transitioning between dependent and independent. In entirety, she also viewed the process as becoming an interculturally competent individual, indicating growth and learning process resulting from the whole Doctoral journey.

Acculturation is a complex process that is not linear (Birman, 1994). According to Berry (1997), varying factors should be considered when carrying out studies on cross-cultural adjustment. In his framework, Berry emphasizes the need for a fairly comprehensive review of variables concerning the group and individual levels, taking into consideration factors such as country of origin and settlement at group level, as well as various moderating and mediating variables at individual levels. Therefore, Berry (1990, 1992) suggested that each individual's acculturation or adjustment process is unique. Their individual experiences are assumed to be shaped by various factors before and during the adjustment process and may lead to different outcomes or changes after the adjustment process. It is the stance which this study wishes to undertake, to explore and present a more holistic representation of adjustment experiences from the perspectives of international students graduate.

## Purpose of Study

The study aimed to explore the adjustment experiences of international students to life in the United States. This study used a naturalistic qualitative inquiry process to empower the narratives as told by these selected individuals to capture the complexity of the international graduate students' adjustment process. In its broadest sense, narrative refers to any spoken or written presentation (Schwandt, 2007) or as prosaic discourse (Polkinghorne, 1995), elicited from selected individuals with personal experiences and stories to share about the phenomenon of interest. In specificity, this study was interested in exploring the adjustment experiences of international graduate students, as guided by the following three research questions:

1. What are the experiences encountered by international graduate students during their adjustment process of life in the United States?
2. How do international graduate students facilitate their adjustment process?
3. How do international graduate students change as a result of the adjustment process?

## Adjustment Process in Cross-Cultural Experiences and Related Terms

There is a broad literature that governs the field of cross-cultural studies. In examining the process of adjustment in a cross-cultural context, literature has reported various terms used in previous studies, such as transition, adaptation, acculturation, and interculturation. According to Kim (2001), the word *adaptation* employs the definition that follows the open-systems perspective of organisms or groups of organisms' responsive change to environmental demand. Thus, adaptation refers to a more inclusive overarching process of cross-cultural change, defined as the dynamic process by which individuals, relocate to new, unfamiliar, or changing cultural environments (Kim, 2001). Meanwhile, major usage of the term acculturation can be found in Berry's (1990, 1997) works. According to him, the concept of acculturation refers to the cultural changes resulting from new group encounters. In Berry's (1992) perspective, adaptation is the term used to refer to both the process that happened during acculturation and its outcome. Finally, the term adjustment, or adjusting, refers to the strategy most often used during adaptation. Changes in the individual are initiated to reduce conflict and increases the congruence or fit with the new environment.

Interculturation is another related concept discovered in French literature with a parallel meaning to acculturation. The concept is defined as "the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct" (Sam, 2006). Hall (2005) synthesizes the work of many authors and refers to acculturation as the cultural and psychological change brought about due to contact with peoples of different cultures. Most recently, Garcia et al. (2020) expanded the construct of the acculturation model to include multiple levels of interaction between psychological, instrumental, contextual, and developmental aspects to form the Integrated Acculturation Model.

## Underpinning Theoretical Framework

This study used the Integrated Acculturation Model (AIM) (Garcia et al., 2020) as the underpinning theory. The AIM model integrates the interactions of four perspectives to explain the acculturation process; from the psychological, instrumental, contextual, and developmental perspectives. For a visual representation of the AIM model, please refer to Figure 1. The psychological perspective explains the affective and cognitive components in the identity development of cross-cultural individuals. This perspective includes seeking or strategizing to achieve a sense of belonging, affirming, developing allegiance, or developing a feeling of salience when forming a new identity during the interculturation process. Meanwhile, the instrumental aspect of acculturation refers to how an individual can perform effectively within each cultural identity, in which acculturation strategies will manifest. The AIM model also takes into account the dynamics of contextual factors in the acculturation process. This contextual perspective can be examined from conceptual factors such as perceived similarity of the origin and host culture and societal climate of the host country. Contextual perspective also consider the domain factors, referring to important life contexts in which acculturation occurs, such as the individual's linguistic, education, work, family, politics/civics, spirituality/religion, values, and social background. The contextual perspective also factor in the process in which the acculturation takes place, comparing the notion between individual and group acculturation, as well as the process for adjusting for permanent or less permanent cultural contact. The fourth perspective of the AIM model is on the development dynamics of the acculturation process. This perspective views acculturation as a non-static process, therefore with continuous exposure to new ways of being, an individual will maintain or amend their cultural expectations and practices. The developmental perspective states that the result of one acculturation process provides the foundation for the beginning of the next, indicating changes and growth over the acculturation or adjustment process as a whole. Using a naturalistic qualitative inquiry process, this study broadly explored the perspectives described in the AIM's model in examining the adjustment process of international graduate students in the U.S. The following section expands the methodology used to conduct this study.

## METHOD

### Design of the Study

Qualitative research is a type of inquiry that encompasses several philosophical orientations and approaches (Merriam, 2009). It stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shaped the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This study employed a naturalistic qualitative inquiry process to elicit the narratives as

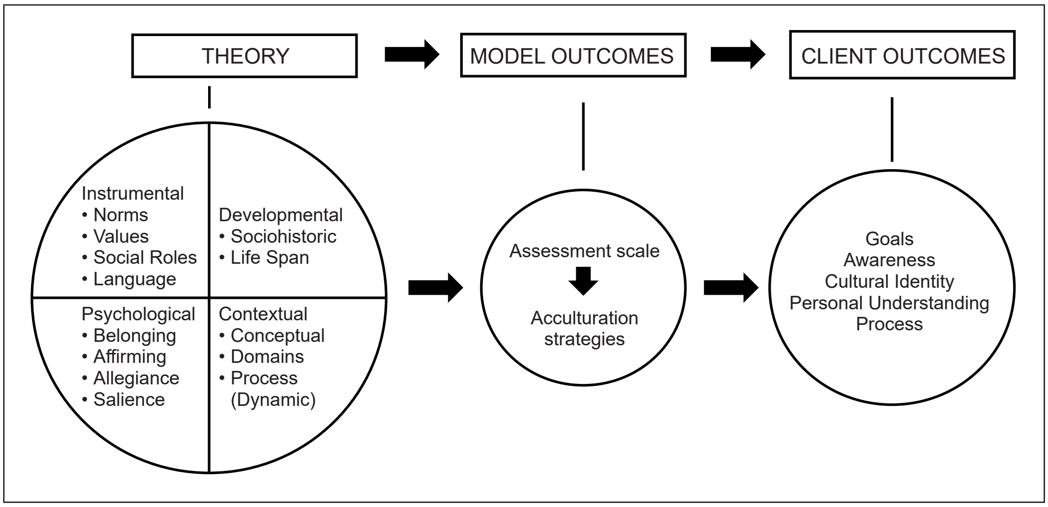

*Figure 1.* The Integrated Acculturation Model (AIM)
*Note.* This is the Integrated Acculturation Model (AIM) proposed by Garcia et al. (2020), illustrating the interactions of four perspectives to explain the acculturation process; from the psychological, instrumental, contextual, and developmental perspectives.

told by these individuals to gain insights into how international graduate students socially construct their experiences of cross-cultural adjustment. This approach was selected based on the argument that Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 18) posit; “Narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a keyway of writing and thinking about it”. By studying the events as they unfold through those who live, we can gain insight into what international students know and how they know and believe are altered or shaped through their experience (Harris, 2003). The storytelling process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) was adapted as a data collection strategy to capture the narratives of the adjustment process, as experienced by these international graduate students.

In identifying the study participants, this study used nonprobability sampling since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research. On behalf of the researcher, an invitation to participate in this study was sent out via email to the mailing list by an international service officer. The email was linked to an electronic flyer describing the study, eligibility criteria for participation, participation compensation, and the researcher’s contact information. Criterion sampling strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used to select participants with the most relevant experiences, including an international student who was at least completing his semester or second semester in a current graduate program at a selected Southwestern university in the U.S. Although 12 international students volunteered to take part in this study, 3 participants had to be excluded because they were cultural exchange students who only stayed in the country for six months. Participants were also recruited using a maximum variation strategy (Patton, 2002) to attain a diverse representation sample of international graduate students. In total, 9 participants were selected based upon different countries of origins and program majors, as well as having both male and female and doctorate and master level participants in this study.

Data were primarily collected via semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured format, although the questions were set beforehand, they are less structured, more flexibly worded, and do not have to be asked in certain orders (Merriam, 2009). It allows room for the researcher to be responsive to the individual’s responses during the interview. In addition, a method called photo-elicitation (Merriam, 2009) was employed to enrich the data collected during the interviews. Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation interviews can enhance the qualitative method and help address some pitfalls in conventional interviews. This method also helped ease rapport between researcher and interview, provide structure for interviews, lessen some of the awkwardness of interviews and help researchers interact better with people they are studying (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). Participants were shown a set of 12 cards that contained various graphics and were asked to choose two cards that best represented them. Discussion followed on how the participants relate themselves to their selected cards, which led to more stories shared by the participants during the adjustment process.

Using an exploratory lens, data were thematically analyzed through the initial open coding process, followed by categories construction and organization of the stories into themes to interpret the larger meaning of the experiences and stories shared by the participants. Finally, to enhance the validity and reliability of this study, a member's check process and data triangulation were conducted, leading to the findings.

## FINDINGS

The findings of this study were categorized into three key themes. The first theme discussed the mosaic nature of the adjustment experiences as shared by the participants. The second theme elaborated on the strategies used by the international graduate students to facilitate their adjustment process. The third theme presented the learning growth experiences as discussed by the participants as a result of their adjustment process. The emerged themes were also analyzed compared to the AIM perspectives for identifying the corresponding elements in the adjustment process reported by the participants against the acculturation framework used in this study. All their names were changed and referenced generically in the following findings to protect all the participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

### Theme 1: The Mosaic Nature of Adjustment Experiences

The first theme reported on the mosaic nature of the participants' adjustment experiences, including the varying degrees of feelings reported during the process. For most of them, being in the United States was the farthest they have ever been from home, and for some, it was their first time being abroad altogether from their home country. Overall, their narratives can be divided into two subcategories, (1) psychological experiences and (2) sociocultural experiences. These two sets of emerged narratives are consistent with the two perspectives outlined by the AIM model, referring to the psychological and contextual perspectives of understanding the acculturation process (Garcia et al., 2020). Psychological experiences focus on the emotional and affective reactions that the participants had described their adjustment process. Feeling homesick, anxious, and experiencing culture shock was reported, in varying degrees, in which some participants experienced it longer and intense than the others. For most of them, the feelings were intense during the first few weeks, and for some, up to several months from their first day of arrival to the U.S. One participant illustrated how he felt:

> *Actually, I arrived at night so I couldn't see around much, but I liked the way the airport was operated.*

> *But the next morning, when I woke up, it was all empty, all over, which was pretty unfamiliar to me, no pedestrian at all as opposed to Dhaka (capital city of Bangladesh)! So yes, like the streets, I felt very empty inside. I felt like, why I came here, leaving my friends and family (behind).* (Bangladeshi Student 1)

A similar theme was echoed by another participant, who compared her life in her hometown to her new surroundings here in the U.S.

> *I mean the life in the U.S. is really not great, not as colorful as my life in China. I have lots of friends in China, we can have lots of fun, but here's very different. I mean, right now is kind of okay. But when I first came (to the U.S.), it was really not okay.* (Chinese Student 1)

Interestingly, for one participant, although it was not her first time in the U.S., moving to yet another new city here in the U.S. triggered the homesick feeling that she did not experience when she first moved to the U.S. from Korea. She noted the unfamiliarity of everything all over again, which caused her to feel homesick, even after years of living in the U.S. previously. She said, *"Actually when I came here, I felt homesick. As if it's my first time here (in the U.S.) After a couple of years, I'm surprise that it came to me. Like I never felt it before, but suddenly now.."* (Korean Student 1). The feeling of homesick and loneliness was mainly attributed to a lack of familiarity with the surroundings or preferred cultural environment compared to what they are used to back in their hometown similar to what Sawir et al. (2008) described as cultural loneliness. Over time, however, the feelings subsided based on several factors, such as increased familiarity with new surroundings, shifted focus and attention to academic goals and processes, and accumulated cultural competence after being in the adjustment process over some time.

The participants also talked about their sociocultural experiences as part of the adjustment process. Adjusting to a new place made them especially observant of the differences between their home countries compared to their new surroundings. Because their migration purpose to the U.S was to attain a graduate degree and gain valuable academic experiences, the lives of participants in this study mostly revolved around their school environments and classes. Therefore, their sociocultural experiences during adjustment were primarily described based on their interactions with faculty members, academic advisers, classmates, and their learning experiences in classes. For example, academic culture difference has been identified as one of the key stressors among international students (Kingston & Forland, 2008). Among the participants, there were reports of different expectations from the U.S. professors compared to how things were back in their home country. For example, one participant pointed out that the U.S. culture emphasizes more on learning than attaining good grades, which she perceived as opposite to the culture in her home country. She explained:

> *I remember like I was really stressed out towards the end [of a chemistry class] because I thought I wasn't going to make an A. At that point, that was the most important thing for me, like getting an A. I was still a little kind of more worried about all the grades. Like here (in the U.S.), they seem more serious about learning, it's more about learning… You have to get at least a B to pass, but as long as you get a B, it doesn't really matter, I mean, it matters, but for them, it's more like "did you learn something?" That was the main focus.* (Korean Student 1)

Another participant shared about the differences he noted in the way exams were asked, as compared to the way he was used to back in his home country, *"In India, they teach a little bit and then scope of the questions can be large, but not really in depth, but you have to look at a lot of things. That what it was there but here it was like, more of going in depth of the portions that are covered in class. I didn't know that"* (Indian Student 1). For these international students, adapting to these different academic norms and expectations was also viewed as part of their adjustment process.

Interactions with peers and classmates were also discussed; some participants had an early opportunity to mingle with local Americans as their classmates, which was seen as an added advantage. Because sociocultural adjustment is geared toward linking individuals effectively into the new context, engaging in cultural learning became a required process. Culture learning is the effort to gain insight into how cultural strangers live (Hess, 1994). It requires individuals to be familiar with the new cultural values that include differences in language, nonverbal cues, rules and conventions, and norms and values (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). However, not all participants reported having the same opportunity for constant intercultural contact; not everyone was comfortable initiating friendship with the locals during the initial adjustment process. Rather, it was a gradual process that was built into their sociocultural experiences over time.

The AIM underlines a similar interaction process during acculturation, highlighting the interplay of important life contexts, such as the individual's linguistic, education, work, family, politics/civics, spirituality/religion, values, and social background, in which acculturation occurs (Garcia et al., 2020). In particular, the international graduate students' adjustment experiences were mostly built around their academic surroundings as the key starting point of their interculturation process.

### Theme 2: Multiple Strategies Used to Facilitate the Adjustment Process

The second theme focused on finding out the strategies international graduate students use to facilitate their adjustment process. This theme is parallel to what the AIM refers to as the instrumental aspects of the acculturation process, referring to the manifestation of the acculturation strategies to ascertain the degree to which individuals can perform effectively in the new cultural setting (Garcia et al., 2020). Three coping strategies were identified; (1) shifting to positive mindsets, (2) concentration on academic-related matters, and (3) establishing key social supports. In the first strategy, participants reported how they realigned their expectations and mindsets to view their adjustment process positively. For example, one participant casually expressed, *"The easiest way is to adjust your mindset and think positively. Don't think about it [the challenges] negatively, but more of, how can I learn from this? Positivity and all.."* (Taiwanese Student 1). For these international students, shifting their locus of control from the external situations such as the hardship faced during adjustment to internal positive thoughts was seen as an empowering way to adapt to the adjustment.

> *At first, I felt like it was overwhelming. Everything is just different. I'm always not sure, like don't know a lot of things. Even you know, as simple as like, buying grocery. But surprisingly, I did quite well on my first test. So I said, look, you can do it. I mean, graduate school is tough, but I did it. So new place, it should not be a problem. Soon, I was okay. Back to normal. Yay!* (Taiwanese Student 1)

As noted by Masgoret and Ward (2006), personal factors such as are internal motivation and self-expectations do affect an individual's cultural learning process; it contributes to the individual's intercultural competence, encompassing a behavior of understanding, satisfaction, and adaptation to function in a differing culture other than one's own.

Secondly, participants also discussed on how their sense of alienation during the adjustment period was mitigated by shifting their concentration on academic-related matters. Their studies became their key motivation and distraction from the unpleasant feelings (such as homesickness and loneliness) during their adjustment period. One participant admitted that he found the adjustment process to be frustrating and difficult at first. However, he also thought his studies helped to distract him from thinking about the difficulty so much. He recalled,

> *I found it (the adjustment) frustrating at first. Actually, more than frustration, it was the toughness of life here that at times got me weary. But with so much homework to do, I barely got a chance to ponder over it, which was good.* (Bangladeshi Student 1)

Because their migration purpose to the U.S. was for gaining academic credentials, these international students anchored their motivation and concentration towards fulfilling this purpose, even as early as during the first few weeks of their arrival. One student shared,

> *I came here two weeks before the semester started. Just to settle*

> *things down. I don't want to get lost and not have stuff before I start class. It's important to be able to focus on my study [after that]. The adjusting period was that two weeks. After that, it was all about the classes. Once I started to focus [on academics], I no longer think [about] adjusting. It's all just [about] studying. That's it!* (Korean Student 2)

Another student spoke about how he kept himself busy with his study; *"Once I started my coursework, I forget. Suddenly I'm not homesick at all, just busy, busy. I stick to my study schedule."* (Indian Student 1). One Chinese student also resonated with the same strategy, *"when I don't want to think about China, I will go to the lab or do my assignments. It can make me forget [about] being homesick for a while*" (Chinese Student 1). Due to these compensating strategies, international students are often academically successful despite facing various social and academic issues during their adjustment (Andrade, 2006).

Coping with the adjustment process also did not happen in isolation. The third key strategy reported was on establishing strong social support. Social support is one of the moderating factors identified in Berry's (1997) acculturation framework. These participants regarded their interactions and socializing with friends and peers, directly and indirectly, helped them go through the adjustment process. Some perceived their friends directly helped during their adjustment because they received temporary housing, transportation, food, furniture, and utensils. While receiving physical assistance was helpful, this help also contributed to their psychological well-being during the adjustment. These students felt like they were being cared for during their time of need. As noted by one student, *"I feel safe like, being less worried because I'm in good hands.."* (Korean Student 2). Receiving psychological support was particularly important to ease and soften the experience of culture shock, defined as the process of initial adjustment to a completely unfamiliar environment (Pederson, 1995). Another student shared why such support was significant to her:

> *A friend I met here [helped me] she's from China. During my first time, she invited me home, and she cooked for me, and then, we became very good friends until now. She's very kind and makes me very comfortable and makes me feel, yeah, I have a friend here....* (Chinese Student 1)

Because the adjustment process was also associated with changes in the sociocultural environment, having frequent interactions with peers and friends was also indirectly perceived as an important strategy during adjustment. The social interactions ease the cultural loneliness or cultural distance these new international students face. One student shared,

> *Surround yourself with high-energy people…I'm surrounded by many*

> *friends who stimulate me, like study more, or so, surrounded myself with high energy people is very important because it focuses on my study and focus on my purpose and so, I think through the transition, it's very important to be friends like that.* (Japanese Student 1)

Making friends with the local students became a focal strategy when these international students wanted to bridge their cultural distance and improve their language competencies. They perceived that the opportunity to make friends with local Americans usually helped them assimilate better with the local culture. Interactions acquired through informal social gatherings such *as "learning about [name of the city] like the locals"* or *"picking up the American accent here and there"* (Chinese Student 2) resulted in increased familiarization of the new surrounding and cultural-linguistic; thus, making these students feel more belonged and less alienated in the new country. Meanwhile, maintaining social engagement with fellow citizens was also deemed helpful from different aspects; in terms of sharing information or resources, and maintaining common connection and cultural familiarity. One participant said, *"Most of the students in our lab are from China. So, it's good, we are all from China so we have the same experience as the college or something, and we can also interact using Chinese language"* (Chinese Student 1).

### Theme 3: Experiencing Learning Growth during Adjustment

According to Kim (2001), adjustment is not just about changing oneself to fit the new environment, but the process also offers many opportunities for new learning and growth. Experiencing learning growth resulting from the adjustment process was a consistent theme among all the study participants. Their reported growth can be divided into two; personal and interpersonal growth.

Personal growth refers to the internal growth of the individuals, either in knowledge, affective, or skills. For example, one student profoundly shared, *"I think overall, all the aspects of me have changed for good"* (Indian Student 1). He shared how he noticed a significant improvement in his confidence, communication skills, and time management. He even associated the improvement as indirectly contributing to his academic skills because:

> *Some of these, it's like life survival skills, you know, it's just as useful to apply even in grad school. Like I don't own a car here, I need to wait for the bus every day, so I learned the value of time [management]. I created a schedule for everything, including my study. It simply works together, which is awesome.* (Indian Student 1)

Because these students anchored their coping strategies by shifting their focus and attention to their studies, they found the efforts were paid off not only in their adjustment but improvement in their academic focus and skills as a whole.

> *Night-time for me is the most lonely [period]. Not like China. Over there, I used to go out with friends. But here, I don't have transport. So that's why I have more time to read the materials given by a teacher. Now I think it's not bad after all. I got good results even when it was just my first semester. Because I have more time to study [laughed]…* (Chinese Student 1)

It was noted that challenges associated with adjustment were most intense upon arrival, yet positive outcomes were also reported as the end-product of the adjustment journey (Brown & Holloway, 2008).

In addition, some participants also believed they have grown and become more mature effectively due to the positive changes in their perceptions during the adjustment. For this one Indian student, he shared his initial challenge was about dealing with his fear of failure. He identified those fears as the first thing he needed to counter to move forward in his adjustment process. He remarked, *"I had a lot of this fear of failure…one thing I remembered is I told myself that I should not have this fear of failure. It stops you from focusing. You just don't worry about the result, you just do your best, and the best thing will happen"* (Indian Student 1). Similarly, one Chinese student shared how she used to be afraid of many things when she first moved to the U.S. She realized this fear deterred her in her adjustment process, so she tried to grow out of that fear. She explained,

> *I tell myself if you're not afraid of anything, you can do it, so I just want to like this, destroy your fear and to do anything you want to do. Yes, even now, maybe sometimes I feel not very good, some problem in my life but I know I can do it, I can just to, I'm not very afraid of things anymore.* (Chinese Student 1)

One student summed up her growth holistically, noting how *"I feel more positive…I feel like I can accomplish more challenging things because I went through many things [during my adjustment]. So I felt more confident being here and live here…"* (Chinese Student 2). For these participants, what started as disoriented feelings eventually resulted in positive growth and newly transformed perspectives (Pederson, 1995). Research conducted by Hashim (2012) also suggests that affective adjustment may lead to psychological well-being.

Meanwhile, interpersonal growth was also reported as part of the observed change noted by the participants. This growth was associated with improvement in social interactions with others. Many of them reported a rise in their confidence in interacting with new people. One of them expressed, *"I feel like I know how to interact with people…"* (Korean Student 2). An Indian student also reported a similar reflection:

> *I feel that I'm now more confident, and I think my soft skills have also improved. I'm not afraid of public talks [anymore], not as much as when I was in India, and I'm just, it's easy for me now to go and meet people and talk, you know.* (Indian Student 2)

Some noticed a shift in their personality, as they became more outgoing than their previous self. A Chinese student explained the differences she noticed about herself:

> *I think that I'm much more, a little bit more aggressive [extrovert] than I was in China, I kind of want to know more people, to make more friends, when I'm in the class, if I don't know the student who sits beside me, I just talk to them but if I was in China, maybe I didn't, I don't want to do that, maybe yes, when I first came here, I didn't do that.* (Chinese Student 2)

Another student felt her social skills were enhanced; she started to smile more at more strangers and easily became accustomed to making new friends, especially locals. *"The more friends I have over here, I realized ohh, I know how to make friends now. It's not that hard actually [laughed]"* (Japanese Student 1). This interpersonal growth can be associated with how these students overcame their social loneliness by establishing their social circle in the new country.

In addition, increased use of a second language in daily lives resulted in improved language competencies that are beneficial for these international students personally and academically. As Wolf and Phung (2019) pointed out, proficiency in writing and listening in English remains a challenge to international students in their studies. One Korean student shared, *"Before I came here, I'm just nervous that my English is not so good. But actually, it wasn't that bad. I learned [English] better here. No choice [laughed]..."* (Korean Student 2). Another Japanese student similarly noted,

> *Everywhere I go here, it's just English English. I only speak my native when I call my parents. A few months after, I started to talk to my teacher, sometimes also in the class, which had never happened before this.* (Japanese Student 1)

Mastering the language is particularly emphasized in culture learning (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). By becoming more well-versed in the host language, the participants noticed how they gradually became more adaptable to their new cultural and social surroundings.

As a whole, what started as adjustment difficulties was later perceived as a learning process that is complex and multifaceted. As noted by Garcia et al. (2020, p. 278), "the acculturation construct might benefit from a greater emphasis on its developmental dynamics." As the participants learned how to adjust to their new surroundings comfortably, the process was inevitably shaped into a rewarding learning process. It is evidenced that the adjustment process has significantly provided important learning experiences to the participants, resulting in their growth from various aspects, from academic to improved social skills.

## DISCUSSION

In essence, this study unveiled three key findings of the adjustment process from the international graduate students' experiences. First, on the mosaic nature of their adjustment experiences, encompassing both psychological and sociocultural experiences. Secondly, the findings discussed the multiple adjustment strategies these international graduate students used, including shifting to positive mindsets, concentrating on academic-related matters, and establishing key social supports. Finally, the third findings focused on the international graduate students experienced due to their adjustment. These three emerging themes can be mapped to the AIM framework for juxtaposing the acculturation process against the narratives of these international graduate students.

Overall, the findings imply a dynamic nature of the adjustment process, bounded on a process that aims to change oneself to fit the environment and offers opportunities for new learning and growth (Kim, 2001). When asked to describe their adjustment experiences, each participant highlighted many different events that they deemed important and memorable. All of the narratives exhibited in the findings are not characterized by rigidly fixed uniformity; instead, they vary in degrees across individuals. During the interviews, participants constantly reported on their engagement with their new cultural context. They reflected their personal stories and connected them to their learning growth all integrated into their adjustment journey. Their responses are consistent with what Kim posits as a life-changing journey, a process of becoming through personal reinvention, transformation, growth, and reaching out beyond the boundaries of one's existence. Their chosen acculturation strategy is what Berry (1997) describes as integration, where there is an interest in maintaining one's original culture and maintaining frequent interactions with the host culture. It is also evidenced that the interplay of psychological, instrumental, contextual, and developmental influences reflected the variations of the adjustment experiences reported by these students. Chen and Ross (2015, p. 177) noted that "there is not one way for students to engage in life and learning," including those life experiences they faced when adjusting during the interculturation process.

Participants in this study also indicated that their adjustment process was primarily geared towards finding fit as a competent graduate student. Their adjustment experiences, coping strategies, and changes were often associated with their identity and academic capabilities to function effectively as graduate students. Because the cost to study internationally is relatively more expensive than pursuing a local education in their home country, international students fly abroad with high expectations and expect to be academically successful by their sponsoring parties, including family members. Most of the participants were also high-achievers in their home countries. Thus, this brought superior expectations on themselves as well. For them, successfully adapting as a graduate student became the utmost important aspect in their adjustment because achieving academic goals is their primary intention of being in the U.S. To them, academic success as an international student yields personal well-being as a whole. As unveiled by Lin and Scherz (2014), the coping strategies employed by international graduate students during adjustment are primarily geared towards instructional and academic strategies while integrating linguistical and cultural strategies to ensure their successful academic experiences.

Kim (2001) posits that cross-cultural adjustment produces problems and growth for all individuals experiencing the process. Thus, the process is perceived as a double-edged process, one that is simultaneously challenging yet enriching. The findings showed how participants viewed the adjustment process from a learning lens, making them very resilient despite dealing with various personal challenges. According to a study conducted by Wang (2009), positive selves and being in focus are the personality variables that are significantly associated with resiliency. In addition, they displayed a willingness to learn and made efforts to gain insights into how culturally different people live by examining their different values and practices (Hess, 1994). Hess also refers to this as cultural learning. Ideally, the process of cultural learning points toward developing intercultural competence. In a broad definition, intercultural competence encompasses a behavior of understanding, developing relationships, satisfaction, effectiveness, appropriateness, and adaptation to function in a differing culture other than oneself (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A key implication of this study is unveiling the strong emphasis of academic success as a key indicator of a successful adjustment process as viewed by these international graduate students. For these international graduate students, their cultural identity is shaped by who they are socioculturally and their identity as graduate students with academic responsibilities and expectations to succeed. Therefore, recommendations to support their adjustment process should include providing assistance that is not only focused on providing physical supports (such as airport transportation and temporary housing upon the first arrival) but also on organizing social events and academics related supports to help them adjust successfully in their studies and academic well-being. In addition, because the international graduate students' adjustment primarily revolves around their academic environment, creating a supportive culture among faculty and other students on campus is also important to highlight the diversity and differences that these international students bring on campus.

Furthermore, orientation or transition programs for international students can be approached from the perspective of transformative learning. Transformative learning is essentially a learning process of making meaning of one's experience (Mezirow, 1991). A beginning of transformative learning often starts with a "disorienting dilemma," which triggers a significant life event such as migrating to a new country. Upon inciting critical reflection of the whole process, new international students can be presented with a prospect of growth, learning, and a change in perspective resulting from the entire journey.

## CONCLUSIONS

The adjustment process is very crucial for international students. It is a compulsory stage that they have to go through once they have decided to migrate to a new country to pursue their education. It is a complex process by itself, with many factors that make the process challenging (Berry, 1997; Searle & Ward, 1990). However, at the same time, many factors are malleable towards a better, more manageable adjustment process that can be examined from psychological, instrumental, contextual, and developmental aspects as a whole. This study highlights all of the important experiences and strategies that are deemed significant in the process, and the growth associated with the adjustment experiences of the international graduate students.

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# Teaching and Learning Aids to Support the Deaf Students Studying Islamic Education

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## ABSTRACT

Islamic Education's formal teaching and learning for deaf students in schools are based on the Special Education Curriculum. In order to improve the achievement in the teaching and learning of deaf students, teachers should utilize teaching aids that are appropriate to the learning content and the students' ability. The objective of this study is to explore the use of teaching aids by teachers teaching Islamic Education subjects to deaf students at the primary school level in Selangor. This study utilized the qualitative approach in the form of case studies by using the interview technique and document analysis to obtain data. Seven teachers from schools offering the Special Education Integration Program (*Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi*) and one teacher from the Special Education School (*Sekolah Pendidikan Khas*) were selected as study respondents. The study respondents were selected based on the purposive sampling technique and had at least five years of teaching experience in Islamic Education subjects to deaf students. The findings showed there were several main types of teaching aids used by the respondents. They were printed materials, the use of Information and Communication Technology and by-product materials. The study also discovered several challenges faced by the respondents when using the teaching aids such as lack of appropriate and limited materials as well as the information and communication technology software was less friendly to deaf students in the learning of Islamic Education. This study contributes in terms of the recommendations of the production of appropriate teaching aids in order to assist teachers in teaching and helping to improve students' achievement in Islamic Education learning.

*Keywords***:** Deaf students, Islamic education, teaching aids, teaching and learning

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## INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, deaf students are identified as having a hearing impairment and confirmed by a physician, audiologist, or psychologist. Some deaf students suffer from other disabilities such as speech, language, and communication (Hidayat et al., 2017). Deaf students are given formal learning facilities in Special Education Schools known as *Sekolah Pendidikan Khas* and in schools that offer the Special Education Integration Program known as *Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi,* especially at the primary school. The Education Act (Federal Government Gazette, 2013) stipulates that if an educational institution has five or more Muslim students, then the students shall be taught Islamic Education subjects by teachers approved by the State Authority. The teaching and learning of Islamic Education subjects in schools involve several fields such as Quran, *Akidah, Ibadah, Adab, Sirah,* and *Jawi* (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004). Islamic Education is very important as a process of filling the soul or spirituality for a Muslim individual. It coincides with the Philosophy of Islamic Education itself, which is to educate students to master the knowledge, practices, and skills in life that have been set so that the subject of Islamic Education can contribute towards the molding of a Muslim who is knowledgeable, faithful, civilized, virtuous, skilled, responsible, charitable, pious and dedicated.

Based on the above, with no exception, every Muslim student, including deaf, is to learn Islamic Education subjects. Among the six fields of Islamic Education subjects, the Quran and the *Akidah* fields are the most difficult to learn by deaf students (Dzulkifli et al., 2020). The Quran requires students to pronounce and recite the Quran, while these are their main problems because they cannot hear and recite without the help of hearing aids. It is difficult to convey to deaf students, especially in the field of *Akidah*, where some abstract matters such as reward, sin, disbelieving in Allah, and others due to their limited vocabulary in the sign language which cause the teachers to lack words to explain some terms (Awang, 2017). Difficulty in understanding the abstracts can cause deaf students to be left behind in learning Islamic Education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Most deaf students have difficulty learning to read and understand the content of learning due to hearing loss. The levels of hearing loss of deaf students are varied (Yasin et al., 2017). According to Ahmad (2012), the various levels of hearing loss of these deaf students are mild, moderate, severe, and profoundly deaf. Students with a mild level of hearing can still hear a little between a distance of one to 1.5 meters, and for the moderate level, the students need a loud voice in conversations while the students with a severe level can hear only loud sounds. In addition, deaf students cannot understand oral speech well if they do not use hearing aids, and only a small number can capture the meaning from lip movements, and they can also understand it through the remaining hearing residue that they still have (Ntinda et al., 2019).

In this regard, teachers face various challenges in delivering lessons to deaf students to accommodate the hearing loss levels. The learning objectives of Islamic Education are difficult to achieve if the teaching methods are channeled to deaf students due to the hearing difficulties they are experiencing. To ensure the teaching and learning process of Islamic Education can be implemented well, teachers should clearly understand the strategies that involve appropriate approaches, methods, and techniques to teach the students. With the combination of various teaching strategies that involve approaches, methods, and techniques, effective teaching can be conducted, and students can be attracted to learning.

Teachers' effective teaching is important in ensuring that students can achieve the learning objectives of a topic. Therefore, teachers need to diversify their teaching strategies to attract students to learn a particular field or subject (Noreen & Rana, 2019). Teaching strategies require planning skills and managing teaching methods and techniques to ensure learning outcomes are achieved (Lom, 2012). Among the teaching strategies that can be used are teacher-centered teaching strategies, student-centered teaching strategies, material-centered teaching strategies, task-centered teaching strategies, and activity-centered strategies. Material-centered teaching strategies involve teachers planning to use various materials such as books, drawings, computers, resource centers, and others to conduct teaching (Abbas et al., 2019). Important material-centered teaching strategies will assist teachers in meeting the learning needs of students with hearing problems.

Through material-centered teaching strategies, teachers can provide several mediums for students to learn based on their abilities, at the right time, and the right location (Adi et al., 2017). Teachers can also use various materials such as books, building blocks, drawing materials, scientific equipment, computers, resource centers, self-access centers, and others to conduct their teaching. Material-centered strategies include a wide range of ways for teachers to guide until those who learn individually can learn. In general, teaching materials can be classified into teaching aids in the form of patterns and non-pattern teaching aids. The main teaching aids in patterns are textbooks, computers, and LCD (*liquid crystal display*). The use of sheet papers, pictures, and reference books are teaching aids that can be categorized as a form of by-product patterns (McGrath et al., 2016). At the same time, non-pattern teaching materials are charts, newspaper cuttings, exercise books, video, audio, real materials, black or whiteboards, and cards. Teaching aids can be categorized into two types, namely electronic and non-electronic. The use of radios, projectors and slides, televisions and computer-based devices are teaching aids of the electronic type. In contrast, magazines, pictures, scan cards, and journals are the non-electronic type (Alias et al., 2016).

The use of teaching aids can attract students' interest in learning a topic or field of learning (Khairuddin et al., 2018). Among the main materials in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education in mainstream schools are textbooks. Teaching aids are very important especially to the students who still have a little ability in hearing and speaking. They can be trained to pronounce the correct words/sounds by using modern technological tools (Seman et al., 2019). Every teacher needs to improve and diversify teaching materials in addition to textbooks in delivering lessons to students. The improvements include the improvement of the quality of more sophisticated learning materials using the use of information and communication technology tools such as the internet, computers, interactive videos and materials in websites (Nor & Sharif, 2014). Therefore, every teacher needs to diversify the use of teaching aids or teaching materials to attract deaf students to study Islamic Education. The role of teachers to produce and provide teaching aids in Islamic Education subjects for deaf students should be given attention. This is because material-centered teaching strategies can help improve students' achievement in learning. The teaching and learning of Islamic Education for deaf students need to grow in line with the development of the current technological tools such as computers, tabs, and laptops, as well as assisted by internet facilities, websites, and compact discs that are suitable for students with hearing impairment (Azzamilli & Bazazoo, 2013).

Hence, this study explores teaching materials teachers used in teaching Islamic Education subjects to deaf students in the national schools. In addition, this study aims to explain the challenges faced by teachers in applying material-centered teaching strategies in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education subjects to deaf students.

## METHODS

This study utilized the qualitative approach in a case study using semi-structured interviews and document analysis to obtain data. Eight respondents were selected based on purposive sampling who had at least five years of experience in teaching Islamic Education to deaf students in primary schools in Selangor, as shown in Table 1 below.

The above data shows that eight teachers who met the criteria were selected after receiving information through the Selangor State Education Department and the headmasters. The document analysis was based on documents related to the teaching and learning for deaf students, such as circulars from the Ministry of Education Malaysia, syllabus, and teaching record books obtained from several respondents to strengthen the interview data further. The choice of the study area in Selangor was based on the most prevalent number of deaf students studying in the said state in Malaysia, as shown in Table 2.

The following semi-structured interview questions were presented to obtain data on teaching aids used by the study respondents:

1. How do you plan the teaching of

Table 1
*Respondents' demographic information*

| Teacher | Sex | Age | Experience in teaching islamic education for deaf students | Type of school |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No.1 | Female | 35 | 5 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.2 | Female | 42 | 21 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.3 | Female | 45 | 12 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.4 | Female | 38 | 12 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.5 | Female | 50 | 7 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.6 | Female | 47 | 5 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.7 | Male | 36 | 7 Years | *PPKI* |
| No.8 | Male | 34 | 8 Years | *SKPK* |

*Note:* PPKI-Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi, SKPK-Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas

Table 2
*Number of deaf students in primary schools by state*

| No | State | Types of School | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *PPKI* | | *SKPK* | |
| | | M | F | M | F |
| i | Johor | 46 | 34 | 41 | 27 |
| ii | Kedah | 13 | 21 | 36 | 44 |
| iii | Kelantan | 30 | 28 | 14 | 11 |
| iv | Melaka | 16 | 9 | 12 | 11 |
| v | Negeri Sembilan | 11 | 5 | 13 | 14 |
| vi | Pahang | 16 | 21 | 15 | 16 |
| vii | Perak | 49 | 45 | 13 | 22 |
| viii | Perlis | - | - | 9 | 9 |
| ix | Pulau Pinang | 16 | 14 | 12 | 16 |
| x | Sabah | 23 | 16 | 38 | 40 |
| xi | Sarawak | 22 | 13 | 34 | 30 |
| **xii** | **Selangor** | **77** | **72** | **29** | **25** |
| xiii | Terengganu | 15 | 12 | 17 | 32 |
| xiv | WP Kuala Lumpur | 14 | 3 | 24 | 29 |
| xv | WP Labuan | 3 | 4 | - | - |
| xvi | WP Putrajaya | 13 | 13 | - | - |
| | Total | 364 | 310 | 307 | 326 |
| | | 674 | | 633 | |

*Source:* Special Education Data Year 2020, Ministry of Education Malaysia
*Note:* DE-Deaf, M-Male, F-Female, PPKI-Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi, SKPK-Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas

Islamic Education to deaf students in your classroom? 2. What teaching materials do you use when teaching Islamic Education subjects to the students in the classroom? 3. What apps or software do you commonly use when teaching Islamic Education subjects to students? 4. What challenges do you face in using the teaching aid materials when teaching Islamic Education subject to the students?

## FINDINGS

The study's findings showed that the respondents had used several teaching materials during Islamic Education teaching and learning sessions to the students. The types of teaching materials used by the respondents were categorized into three types. The first type was the printed teaching materials such as textbooks, pictures, scan cards, and worksheets. The second type was the use of Information and Communication Technology materials such as computers and tabs. The third type was the use of by-products such as the use of clay or plasticine. The types of teaching aids and materials used by teachers during Islamic Education teaching and learning sessions to deaf students are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
*Types of teaching aids during the Islamic education teaching and learning sessions*

| No | Type | Item |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Printed Material | Textbooks<br>Pictures<br>Scan Cards<br>Worksheets |
| 2 | Information and Communication Technology | Desktop Computers<br>Laptop<br>Tab<br>YouTube Channel |
| 3 | By-Product | Clay |

### Textbook

The use of textbooks as teaching aids was obtained through interview data with Teachers No. 3, No.5, No.6, and No.8.

> *Usually, I use textbooks. Because in the textbook, there are already hand gesture pictures. So, students can learn from there.* (Interview: T3)

> *I use textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to teach Islamic Education.* (Interview: T5)

> *If students cannot hear, I teach them by using the methods in the textbook.* (Interview: T6)

> *Usually, I use textbooks as the main teaching materials to teach deaf students.* (Interview: T8)

### Pictures

In addition, the respondents also used pictorial materials such as sample interview data with Teacher No. 4.

> *So far, I have used the method of picture prints of hijaiyyah letters or words from the Quranic verses. I paste the pictures in front of the class. And I will teach them using Sign Language.* (Interview: T4)

### Scan Cards

In addition, the use of scan cards as teaching aids is obtained through interview data with Teachers No.1, No.3, No.5, and No.7.

> *Usually, I use more scan cards such as letter cards and verse cards from the Quran. Because it is easier for students to see, because many of my*

> *students do not hear, so I rarely use video.* (Interview: T1)
>
> *I increase the use of letters and words scan cards because they can attract students' interest.* (Interview: T3)
>
> *I also use other materials such as scan cards.* (Interview: T5)
>
> *I planned lessons by arranging cards in front of the class, especially for the area of the Quran. If the student can speak out, he will recite them little by little. Those who cannot speak will arrange the letters alif and follow the sequence with the letter ba.* (Interview: T7)

### Worksheets

Teacher No.5 uses worksheets as one of the teaching materials.

> *Sometimes I also distribute worksheets. In the worksheets, there are matching and pairing activities, connecting letters and even words.* (Interview: T5)

In addition to printed materials, the respondents also used visual materials or Information and Communication Technology tools during Islamic Education teaching and learning sessions in the classroom. Most deaf students cannot hear well, so the visual learning approach is very suitable for them. The use of Information and Communication Technology tools can attract the interest of deaf students to study Islamic Education subjects.

### Desktop Computers

Among the respondents' use of Information and Communication Technology tools were using computers as examples of interview data with Teachers No.1, No.2, and No.6.

> *I also use desktop computers in teaching. Sometimes I tell students to learn to type on the computer.* (Interview: T1)
>
> *Usually, in a week, there are three meetings, and the least, I use the computer during teaching.* (Interview: T2)
>
> *My first strategy is to use teaching aids through computers. I first show the learning content to the students, and then I start the teaching session.* (Interview: T6)

### Laptop

The use of desktop computers may be less popular with some respondents for the desktops require suitable computer space to be connected to monitors, keyboards, and mouse. Hence, some respondents used laptops or tabs as alternatives in teaching Islamic Education in the classroom. In addition, laptops and tabs are smaller than desktops with built-in monitors, keyboards, and mouse. These make the laptop and tab lighter and easier to carry anywhere for teachers to use. Hence, some respondents use computer laptops. These were obtained through interview data from Teacher No.4.

> *I only use laptops because there are not many students in the class. So, all students can focus on one laptop only.* (Interview: G4)

### Tab

Teachers also use tabs as alternative tools during the teaching and learning activities as acquired from interview data from Teacher No. 5.

> *I use tabs to show the learning content through a video display. These students really like watching videos.* (Interview: T5)

Visual learning is synonymous with deaf students because they cannot hear well. Therefore, some respondents chose visual materials that can attract students' interest to learn Islamic Education subjects as obtained from the interview data with Teacher No.2, No.4, and No.8.

> *If we only use textbooks, these students would not be attracted. With computers, I showed them stories related to Islamic history, morals, and others.* (Interview: G2)

> *Deaf students are learning more visually as they are visual learners. So, I teach them more through visual materials because it can attract their interests.* (Interview: G4)

> *Usually, deaf students' understanding is based on visuals because they cannot hear. For the area of the Quran, I include a video on the recitation of the Quran using Sign Language.* (Interview: G8)

### YouTube Channel

To optimize the use of Information and Communication Technology, some respondents opened YouTube channels, videos, or used power points in teaching. It was obtained from interview data with Teachers No.3, No.5, and No.6.

> *I switched on videos on YouTube. I directed them to certain verses for the learning of the Quran using hijaiyyah letters. Although they cannot hear, indirectly, they can also learn the hijaiyah letters.* (Interview: T3)

> *I switched on the video from the YouTube channel. However, videos teaching Islamic Education using sign language are not many.* (Interview: T5)

> *Usually, I will switch on a video on a verse from the Quran. At times, I switch on cartoons that recite/read certain verses on the YouTube channel.* (Interview: T6)

### By-product Materials (Plasticine)

Some respondents used by-product materials Plasticine (clay) as teaching materials in the area of the Quran. The use of the materials was to introduce the *Hijaiyyah* letters to deaf students. These findings were obtained through joint interview data with Teacher No.4.

> *Usually, I use power points and pictures in teaching. But if the students are level one or year one, I give them plasticine for them to learn to form letters and words from the Al-Quran.* (Interview: T4)

The use of Information and Communication Technology should be emphasized in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education for deaf students. The use of Information and Communication Technology in schools is a learning element stated in the content of the Special Education Primary School Standard Curriculum. It was supported by the analysis of the Special Education Primary School Standard Curriculum (Hearing Impairment) document for Islamic Education 2017, which states:

> Cross-Curriculum Elements are value-added elements inculcated in the teaching and learning process (T&L) in addition to those specified in the standard content. These elements are inculcated with the aim of strengthening the desired human capital skills and competencies as desired well as being able to address current and future challenges. The elements in Cross-Curriculum Elements are as follows:
>
> Information and Communication Technology
>
> - The inculcation of ICT elements in T&L ensures that students can apply and strengthen the basic knowledge and skills of ICT learned.
> - The application of ICT not only encourages students to be creative but also makes T&L more interesting and fun and, at the same time, improves the quality of learning.
> - ICT is integrated according to the suitability of the topic to be taught and as an enabler to further enhance students' understanding of the subject content.

Material-centered teaching obtained through interviews with respondents to teach Islamic Education subjects to deaf students was supported by the analysis of the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 document as follows:

Implementation of Special Education

(1) For the purpose of implementing Special Education -

(a) any person involved in the implementation of Special Education shall use the Special Education Curriculum;
(b) a teacher must use the Individual Education Plan: and
(c) a teacher may make modifications to -
(i) teaching or learning methods or techniques;
(ii) the time allotted for each activity;
(iii) arrangement of activities; and
(iv) teaching aids.

(2) Any modifications made under paragraph (l) (c) shall be in accordance with the Special Education Curriculum.

*Source:* Special Needs Student Education Code of Practice, Special

Education Division Ministry of Education Malaysia 2014

As a result of this study, almost all respondents had used appropriate teaching materials as per the stipulations stated in the Special Education Regulations 2013. Among the teaching materials inculcated by teachers in teaching the students was through the Information and Communication Technology tools. For example, using a display on a computer screen helped the students understand more clearly by using their vision since they had a hearing impairment. In addition, the use of computers and the internet through Information and Communication Technology was used for drills, training, and games in learning. Other than that, slides or power points could help deaf students speed up their understanding more easily. The use of pictures, maps, and charts was able to attract the students' interests and helped them understand a learning topic well.

However, some teachers face some challenges in using the Islamic Education teaching and learning materials for deaf students because their hearing ability is not the same as typical students studying in mainstream schools. Therefore, teachers should provide teaching materials appropriate to the learning objectives, time, and ability of students and improve students' understanding of learning. Among the challenges faced by teachers in applying material-centered teaching in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education to deaf students are as follows:

### Limited Teaching Material Resources

Material resources that are suitable teaching materials for deaf students to study Islamic Education subjects are difficult to find and limited. Most of the existing teaching aids are more suitable for typical students at mainstream schools. It was obtained from the following interview data.

> *Resources for Teaching Aids are limited. Most that are available are for typical students. So, I have to use sources from textbooks and edit certain pictures for Teaching Aids.* (Interview: T7)

> *The pictures of hijaiyyah letters in textbooks are too small and not very clear. It is difficult for me to teach using the textbooks. These students also find it difficult to see those pictures.* (Interview: T5)

> *I found there was a lack of existing teaching aids suitable for deaf students in learning Islamic Education, especially in the field of the Quran.* (Interview: T8)

### Limited Time

Teaching and learning Islamic Education is limited because teachers must also teach other fields such as the *Akidah, Ibadah*, *Sirah*, *Adab,* and *Jawi,* besides the Quran. Therefore, limited teaching time slightly affects the quality of teaching by teachers who are utilizing teaching aids. It is obtained through the following interview data:

> *Deaf students often rely on pictures and simulations by teachers to master their skills, especially in the field of the Quran, because they cannot listen. Since time is limited, it is quite difficult to use Teaching Aids completely because, at the same time, we have to teach them the other fields using sign language and teach them by speaking.* (Interview: T7)

### Various Characteristics of Deaf Students

As there are some deaf students with different characteristics such as learning problems, Islamic Education teachers face challenges in delivering teacher-centered teaching aids during the teaching and learning sessions. It also affects the teaching session, which is based on teaching aids for other students as well. This situation was obtained through the following interview data:

> *My students definitely cannot hear, but there are also those with autism and hyperactive. I have to think and produce Teaching Aid Materials that suit the various characteristics of the students.* (Interview: T1)

> *But if the students are deaf, we have to focus one by one. Even though there are only four students in the class, it is like teaching 40 students. Because some of them have learning difficulties.* (Interview: T4)

> *Some of my students have other problems, such as learning problems. They forget previous learning a lot. So, to use Teaching Aid Materials that can be used for all students with such diversity at one time is quite difficult.* (Interview: T5)

**Unfriendly Applications for Deaf Students.** Although Information and Communication Technology facilities have expanded, there are still some Information and Communication Technology-based learning applications that are less friendly with deaf students. It is obtained from the following interview data.

> *It is difficult to find Islamic Education learning software that is suitable for deaf students. If there is suitable and interesting software, it can definitely facilitate the teachers' task. Students will also find it fun to learn.* (Interview: T3)

> *It is difficult to find materials in digital form. So, I have to diversify the preparation of the teaching materials, which are more friendly with students so that they can be easily understood.* (Interview: T4)

From the interview findings and document analysis above, teachers who teach Islamic Education can use and diversify the teaching methods to deaf students, including various teaching aids. However, teaching aids such as the suitability to students' ability, resource limitations, the diversity of student characteristics, and digital software that is less friendly to deaf students are among the challenges teachers face in applying material-centered teaching.

## DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the use of teaching aids used by teachers in teaching Islamic Education subjects to deaf students at the primary school level in Selangor. There are three main types of teaching aids used by teachers to teach Islamic Education to deaf students: the use of printed materials, the use of Information and Communication Technology, and the use of by-product materials. The use of printed teaching materials is picture textbooks, scan cards, and worksheets. The use of Information and Communication Technology materials are computers, tabs, and YouTube channels. The use of by-products is like clay or plasticine. Each individual or student has his/her style and way of learning. Therefore, teachers need to identify students' learning styles so they can learn better. By understanding students' learning styles, teachers can apply various teaching strategies or approaches that can attract students' interest in learning certain topics (Musyoka et al., 2016). By knowing the learning style of each student, teachers can help to predict what is the appropriate teaching approach to be applied by students who practice the learning style and formulate appropriate teaching strategies. One of the learning styles that can attract students' interest to learn is using teaching aid materials (Ghani & Ahmad, 2013).

Material-centered teaching is also important to help teachers meet the diverse needs of students. Through material-centered learning, teachers can provide a variety of ways for students to learn at their own pace, at any time, and in locations that do not complicate them (Nor et al., 2016). One of the main materials provided for students to learn Islamic Education in schools is textbooks. However, teachers also need to think of teaching aid materials in addition to textbooks that can help students who do not attend class on school days (Elhoshi et al., 2017). Recently, there has been an increase in the use of media and technology in material-centered teaching and learning. Such improvements include learning materials, learning guides, textbook guides, workbooks, videos, and learning packages. The more sophisticated materials are computer-based learning packages, computer conferences, compact disc, multimedia, computer discussion groups, interactive videos, in-site materials, teleconferences, video conferencing, and telematics. Therefore, it is very appropriate for every teacher to use teaching materials or teaching aids to attract deaf students' interest studying Islamic Education subjects either at school or home.

Since most deaf students do not hear well, the visual-based teaching and learning approach is very suitable. The use of image photos or photographs is one of the most important materials in communication that has been used in various events, including teaching (Alias et al., 2016). Image photography has become plenty of material for researchers and educators, especially those who interact with the hearing impaired (Yusof et al., 2014). The learning approach of deaf students is more inclined to visual learning. According to Alias et al. (2016), deaf students are more likely to use stationary visual and moving visual images as one approach in teaching and learning. According to him, although teachers use Sign Language while teaching in the classroom, deaf students need clear visual images to be applied to the teaching and learning process. In this case, teachers need to be wise in choosing the appropriate teaching materials so that the learning content delivery to the students will be more interesting (Ajmain et al., 2019). Several factors need to be considered before teachers can successfully select and implement material-centered teaching. Among the factors that influence the selection of teaching aids include teaching objectives, teaching time, teaching materials, students' background, and the number and arrangement of students (Apak & Taat, 2018). It is important to ensure the use of teaching aids used by teachers in assisting the teaching and learning process of Islamic Education as well as able to benefit the teachers and deaf students.

The teaching and learning process also involves aspects of listening by using audio applications to obtain information. It is one of the reasons for the use of audio in Islamic Education subjects during the teaching and learning process in the field of the Quran. Students need to use their auditory senses to imitate the sounds of pronunciation and reading taught by teachers (Dzulkifli et al., 2020). Since deaf students cannot hear well due to their hearing impairment, teachers need to apply ICT as best as possible as teaching aids as appropriate to the hearing impairment of deaf students. The use of ICT can increase the interest of deaf students to learn either inside or outside the classroom. The use of ICT through computers, videos, pictures, and slides is very synonymous with the learning style of deaf students because they are not able to listen well (Azzamilli & Bazazoo, 2013). Visual images displayed, such as the use of pictures, must be relevant to the learning content. The use of appropriate visual images in teaching and learning must have benefits to aid students' understanding as well as to ensure they truly understand its content (Kelly et al., 2019). In this case, teachers need to wisely choose pictures that have the meaning of the content of the pictures that can be easily understood. The pictures should also have a clear meaning to the students (Cooper et al., 2013).

Islamic Education teachers need to use materials or teaching aids appropriate to students (Abdullah et al., 2014). Among the things that need to be considered in determining teaching aid materials are age, gender, and the achievement level or the students' ability (Gremmen et al., 2016). It is very important because the teaching and learning of Islamic Education for deaf students are different from teaching the typical students in the mainstream. In order to produce suitable teaching materials, several basic things need to be given attention when producing Islamic Education teaching materials for deaf students. The use of colors, movements, examples, clear pictures, simple expressions, and appropriate images should be produced as teaching aids in Islamic Education subjects. The selection of appropriate teaching aids is also important in teaching to deliver the learning content (Caner & Tertemiz, 2015). For example, if the lesson content is in the form of skills such as listening and speaking in Al-Quran, teachers should choose the appropriate teaching aid materials to practice these skills.

The integration of information and communication technology is one of the added values included in 21st-century teaching. Furthermore, integrating technology into teaching can promote student learning and teacher productivity (Aldunate & Nussbaum, 2013). There are still research reports stating that teaching aids are still not enough, especially those involving the latest Information and Communication Technology (Yasin et al., 2013). The use of Information and Communication Technology is a way to improve the achievement and success of deaf students because without teaching aids, the teaching process will have less quality and ineffective that can affect the academic achievement of deaf students.

Older teachers or experienced teachers need to apply the use of Information and Communication Technology in line with the development of the digital world today in the teaching of Islamic Education to deaf students. Some older teachers do not want to change towards the integration of information and communication technology in schools compared to new teachers who are more information technology friendly (Seman et al., 2019). It shows that young people are more exposed to new technologies. It is due to some old teachers who are not ready for the new curriculum changes in using Information and Communication Technology applications in implementing teaching (Majid et al., 2017). The attitude of teachers who do not care for the latest teaching developments, causing some teachers to be not ready to provide and use teaching aids in teaching and learning in schools. By learning and adapting to the latest teaching developments such as mobile learning containing education and entertainment (Yusof et al., 2014), the teaching and learning of Islamic Education will be more effective for deaf students. In addition, teachers should strive to provide or produce teaching materials as teaching aids for Islamic Education, deepening the content to be taught and knowing how to teach Islamic Education learning to deaf students.

## CONCLUSION

Material-centered teaching strategies are one of the teaching strategies used by teachers in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education. Teaching aids that are appropriate with the development of technology and communication can attract deaf students' interest to learn Islamic

Education. However, every material or tool used in the teaching and learning of Islamic Education should be used as best as possible so that all the privileges and advantages of the materials can benefit the students. Most deaf students have different levels of hearing impairment; in fact, some even have other characteristics such as learning difficulties. Therefore, Islamic Education teachers must use teaching materials appropriate to the student's ability and level of disability. As deaf students' learning styles are more focused on visual forms, teachers need to take advantage of technological facilities in producing quality teaching aids. Therefore, various teaching materials can be used by teachers to convey the learning content of Islamic Education to deaf students. Several factors that influence the selection of teaching methods and techniques should also be emphasized, such as the various characteristics of the students, loss of hearing level, and speaking ability among deaf students. In other words, effective teaching depends on the teachers' own ability to teach well that can motivate students to continue learning. Teachers need to delve into the learning content and know-how to teach certain learning content. However, teachers need to provide teaching aids that are appropriate to the field found in the subject of Islamic Education. Teachers who teach deaf students should also be given training and related courses in producing teaching aid materials as appropriate to the area found in the subject of Islamic Education. The production of appropriate teaching materials can help the teachers' tasks in delivering the learning content and help to improve deaf students' achievement in learning Islamic Education.

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# The Moderating Effect of Food Safety Knowledge on Organic Food Purchase Intention in a New Normal

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## ABSTRACT

The emergence of a 'new normal' life caused by pandemic Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) leads to consumer perception and business practices changes. However, there is limited data on the current market demand and condition on consumer purchase intention of organic food associated with food safety knowledge. Thus, this study aimed to examine consumer perception toward organic food in a new normal life. A total of 330 valid responses were received for analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and PROCESS. The data were collected in Malaysia using an online questionnaire mainly because of physical distances and Movement Control Order (MCO). The finding revealed that personal attitude, perceived social pressure, and perceived autonomy influence organic food purchase intention in a new normal life. However, it is not perceived as green trust. Besides, food safety knowledge significantly moderates the relationship between personal attitudes toward organic food purchase intention. The finding is valuable for current producers, marketers, and the government body to understand the changes in consumer purchase intention in a new normal life and assist future planning and operationalising to protect, develop and maintain the organic food industry.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, food safety, individual green consideration, Malaysia, organic food, purchase intention

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 was declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a global pandemic. The pandemic affects the business and society's life, which leads to the emergence of a new normal life to break the chain of infection. However, the new normal life simultaneously causes changes in consumer purchase intention, decision and business practices due to safety reasons, as the virus can be transmitted between humans and other surfaces (Sajed & Amgain, 2020). Thus, addressing consumer perception in a new normal life is crucial to access the latest market condition and demand. Indeed, the study is fruitful for market development and planning among the market players.

Consumers perceive organic food as safe, clean, and healthy compared to conventional food (Latip et al., 2020a; Somasundram et al., 2016). However, previous studies mainly focus on environmental sustainability and consumer intention to purchase organic food. Therefore, a limited study was conducted to understand consumer perception and response to the COVID-19 pandemic concerning organic food purchase. The intersecting link for carrying the present study is a new normal life is because of concern on the food safety and health during the pandemic as the virus can be easily transmitted between humans and other surfaces (Latip et al., 2020b; Sajed & Amgain, 2020). Indeed, the present study is critical for developing and future planning of the local organic market as people adjust to the new normal life and limited finding available leading to a new gap. Moreover, uncertainty perceived by the consumer on the factors affecting consumer intention to purchase organic food in new normal life is undeniable (Latip et al., 2020b). Thus, hindrance an effective communication and segmenting consumers in the market to tailor with the new normal life of COVID-19.

Previous studies highlighted consumer concern for a safe food supply, especially in a country with food safety issues and health that are potentially caused by safety incidents and food-related diseases (Latip et al., 2020b; Prentice et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). Moreover, food safety becomes a concern expressed largely by Asian countries' (Latip et al., 2020b; Putten & Nair, 2019). Given the current global health crisis of COVID-19 that impact every aspect of life, including food safety concern, key players in the organic food industry should understand factors that influence consumers intention to purchase organic food. COVID-19 has influenced consumers' perception of health and risk that impact and boost their belief towards food organic consumption (Hassen et al., 2020). According to Latip et al. (2020b), consumers' attitudes and trust towards organic food relate to safety, hygiene and health during worldwide health crises affected by food safety knowledge.

Furthermore, a recent study acknowledges the food safety knowledge relationship towards consumer perceived social pressure and autonomy that can influence individual decision making in organic food purchase intention (Latip et al., 2021). Adawiyah et al. (2021) further elaborate that relevant knowledge related to organic food can enhance consumers' preferences and awareness of organic food choices. Accordingly, through knowledge and trust, food safety can be minimised and potentially influences consumer purchase intention and decision (Ha et al., 2018). In addition, Sajed and Amgain (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic affects consumers' perception of the importance of physical health and minimises the risk of the disease. Thus, the previous studies profoundly address how knowledge may potentially affect consumer purchase intention (Adawiyah et al., 2021; Latip et al., 2020b, 2021). Henceforth, this study will emphasise the moderating effect of food safety knowledge towards organic food purchase intention in a new normal during pandemic COVID-19, as when health-related issues such as COVID-19 arise, the consumer will be very selective on their food consumption to maintain good health (Latip et al., 2020b). Indeed, a recent study estimated that two out of the third proportion of consumers had increased their intention to purchase green food due to the health concern towards COVID-19 (Qi et al., 2020) and to increase their immune system during the time of COVID-19 (Chaturvedi et al., 2021). Therefore, a recent study in a new normal life is essential as consumers' perception, judgement and decision of organic food and food safety could change. However, there are limited findings available in a local setting to assist the market players in planning and strategising the business.

Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute both from a theoretical and practical perspective. From a theoretical perspective, the finding can provide a better explanation and understanding to scholarly researchers on what factors in a new normal life can potentially affect consumer purchase intention and decision, which lead to new research direction. Furthermore, the study's outcome is expected to benefit government agencies and business entities from a practical perspective. It can be used to plan and operationalise strategies to govern and develop the organic food market.

Moreover, the finding is critical to respond to the agriculture industry's challenges locally. It is important to address as the organic market in Malaysia estimation is valued only at 2.5 million dollars, representing 0.0221% of the total Asian market value (Euromonitor International, 2017, as cited in Jaafar et al., 2020). However, the agriculture and the organic sector are predicted to contribute significantly to the country's GDP, as mentioned by the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister of Malaysia (Babulal & Krishnan, 2020). Thus, study related to organic food purchase from a consumer perspective is critical to be conducted regularly to understand the consumer intention and demand. Moreover, the gaps between consumer perception and product delivery can be decreased based on current market conditions and demand. Simultaneously, flourish the organic food market and the local economy overall. Thus, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Will the new normal life of pandemic COVID-19 influence consumer purchase intention towards organic food?
2. Will the knowledge of food safety moderate consumer purchase intention towards organic food?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Underline Theory and Model

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is considered the most relevant conceptual construct model used to predict a human purpose to carry out different types of action. TPB focused on explaining and exploring the three exogenous variables, namely attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behaviour control (PBC), as fundamental in predicting the food product behaviour (Latip et al., 2020b). Moreover, the TPB applies a philosophy of behavioural nature to foresee and explain human behaviour in terms of external forces (social pressure), available opportunities, and obstacles, to justify the possible effects of the action to be performed (Ajzen, 1991; Latip et al., 2020b). Thus, this behaviour can be predicted through intention with more accuracy when it is influenced by other factors (Ajzen, 1991).

Furthermore, the model could be extended by including the domain factors to enhance the TPB model in organic food studies (Latip et al., 2020a). Thus, perceived green trust and food safety knowledge were added in this study. Food safety has rising concern among consumers influenced by other environmental and health issues; hence, this factor potentially influences intention to purchase, which will affect a real (Latip et al., 2021; Putten & Nair, 2019).

### Relationship of Personal Attitude, Perceived Social Pressure, Perceived Green Trust, and Perceived Autonomy

**Personal Attitude.** TPB's attitude acts as a significant antecedent to behavioural intention, defined as the degree of favourable or unfavourable consideration of the behavioural studied (Ajzen, 1991). Few factors help shape the personal attitude, including personal values, personalities, experience, knowledge, and awareness (Xie et al., 2015). Indeed, with a restriction of information and understanding of organic food, the intention to purchase organic food is decreased, with several factors influencing consumers' preferences and attitudes (Xie et al., 2015). However, a positive attitude towards a certain action increases the desire to carry out that particular behaviour or action (Ajzen, 1991). The finding agrees with those other researchers whereby consumers' positive attitude significantly impacts the purchase intention of organic food products (Bai et al., 2019; Ham et al., 2018; Lian, 2017). However, due to the global health pandemic, consumers are very concerned about their health and food choices (Latip et al., 2020b; Xie et al., 2020). Indeed, a recent study highlighted the potential effect of personal consumer attitude toward a health-related crisis that influences consumer decision and trust in organic food purchase intention due to underline personal perception risk (Latip et al., 2020b). Thus, studying the impact of new normal life in shaping the individual attitude towards organic food products' purchase intention is crucial.

**Perceived Social Pressure.** Perceived social pressure describe as personal feelings influenced by the pressure from the surroundings, including the society, which may affect their judgement to engage or not to engage in that particular action (Latip et al., 2020a; Madden et al., 1992). The previous study reported that social pressure influences individual purchase intention on organic food and directly influences the purchase attitude (Scalco et al., 2017). This result indicates the impact of perceived social pressure appeared to be overwhelmed by the personal attitude or consideration (Ajzen, 1991). Bai et al. (2019) and Latip et al. (2020b) found a significant relationship between subjective norms and intention to buy organic food. Besides, further investigation of perceived social pressure is critical as it is correlated in shaping purchase attitude and purchase behaviour as the pandemic affects society overall (Latip et al., 2020b). Thus, in this study, the existence of COVID-19 and new life practising in the community were investigated.

**Perceived Autonomy.** Perceived autonomy is closely related to psychological behaviour that explains individuals' ability to decide and manage their own lives. This behavioural control plays a vital role in self-determinant that makes them feel that they have control to perform or not perform that particular action. The earlier study by Ajzen (1991) states that this behaviour is shaped by various factors, including experience and knowledge of organic food. Ham et al. (2018) discuss the two elements involved in influencing individual behaviour control in intention to purchase organic food, which is an intrinsic factor (individual judgement on knowledge and capacity to perform specific behaviour) and extrinsic factors (the degree to which individuals interpret with external forces including time and income). Therefore, the higher behaviour control individuals have, the more likely they are to purchase organic food. Aertsens et al. (2009) review stated that the environmental problem plays an important role in strengthening individual behaviour. It may be relevant organic food consumption since the price premium people confront may be a purchase barrier and clash with their desire to buy environmentally friendly products.

Moreover, previous studies have pointed out that perceived autonomy significantly influences intention to purchase organic food, especially during conflict and world pandemics (Latip et al., 2020b, 2021). In this study, a new norm practice has affected consumer behaviour and changed their perception of organic food. The researchers also looked into the new normal life in assisting individual autonomy to buy organic food. Different forces surround the consumer due to Movement Control Order (MCO), leading to the slowdown of economic growth.

**Perceived Green Trust.** Trust is an individual's tendency to be a direct precursor that influences purchase attitude and intention towards organic food (Bai et al., 2019). As Latip et al. (2020a) proposed in this current study green personal trust focuses primarily on the individual viewpoint rather than system trust (suppliers' external aspect of trust, marketers' organisations). Green personal trust describes an individual's willingness to rely on the product or service based on confidence in its experience, reputation, efficiency and environmental protection capability (Bai et al., 2019; Latip et al., 2020a). The study in China found a direct relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention of organic food. However, there is no influence on purchase attitude and behaviour (Bai et al., 2019). This scenario may influence by food safety issues, food authenticity issues, food scandal issues, and other critical issues. Besides, health and risk considerations, especially during the pandemic of COVID-19, might give a different insight because the consumer theoretically has a high tendency to look for a safe and healthy product to consume in a new normal life based on perceived personal trust (Latip  et al., 2020b; Xie et al., 2020) Trust, therefore, plays an important role in shaping consumer purchase attitude and purchase intention. Thus, it is essential to investigate the perceived green trust in the context of this study to understand better the consumer's underlying decision in a new normal life. The proposed hypothesis is as follow:

H1: Personal attitude influences organic food purchase intention in a new normal life
H2: Perceived social pressure influences organic food purchase intention in a new normal life
H3: Perceived green trust influences organic food purchase intention in a new normal life
H4: Perceived autonomy influences organic food purchase intention in a new normal life

## Organic Food Purchase Intention

The surge demands of customers towards organic food have been steadily increasing due to the growing awareness regarding the benefits of organic food consumption. Consumers' positive attitude regarding organic food consumption has significantly influenced their intention to purchase them (Latip et al., 2020b). Moreover, further reasons such as increasing knowledge among consumers pertaining to health concerns have driven them to choose organic food. The dissemination of news through social media and other media platforms on food scandals and warning the dangers of conventional foods have influenced consumers to consider organic food (Rieger et al., 2016).

On top of that, social pressure and the degree of individual autonomy also initiated consumers' intention to purchase organic food. Social pressure happens when individuals want to positively impact their social identity to appear socially desirable to society (Latip et al., 2020b). Subsequently, this shapes the behavioural intention of an individual (Yzer, 2017), as previous studies found a significant relationship between social pressure and subjective norm toward buying intention of organic food (Ham et al., 2018; Qi & Ploeger, 2019). The higher degree of autonomy an individual has to decide, the more likely they will have the intention to purchase organic food (Latip et al., 2020b) because intention starts with the individual's willingness to buy organic foods.

Besides that, consumers' trust towards green products can influence consumers' intention to purchase organic food. According to  Giampietri et al. (2018), trust plays an important role in consumers' decision-making on food purchases. The positive attitude derived from trust leads to the positive impact of consumer purchase decisions on green products (Baktash & Talib, 2019).

### Moderating Effect of Food Safety Knowledge

Food safety has become a key factor in the food industry, as consumers are now looking for safer and healthier food to eat. According to Fraser (2001), one of the main factors that influence consumers is that consumers are more concerned about their health and safety (Shaw, 2004). Subsequently, this has raised awareness amongst consumers to get more knowledge on food safety. Teng et al. (2011) stated that consumers are more concerned about getting information and knowledge regarding a chemical used in food production. The researchers also suggested that this factor should determine the consumers' intention to purchase organic or green food. It is parallel with the recent study whereby the information consumers get through media platforms regarding food scandals and dangers of conventional food influenced them to choose organic food (Rieger et al., 2016).

Indeed, when a person knows food safety, they have more control over their decision-making, especially during the pandemic (Latip et al., 2020b).

Furthermore, food safety knowledge significantly influences personal attitude, social pressure, and autonomy, potentially influencing individual decisions regarding organic food purchase intention (Latip et al., 2021). It is also supported by the previous study as knowledge related to the product can enhance consumer preferences and awareness towards product choices (Adawiyah et al., 2021). Thus, knowledge potentially strengthens or weakens the relationship toward the organic food purchase intention as concern on food safety can be minimised, potentially influencing purchase decision through knowledge (Ha et al., 2018). Thus, the potential moderating effect of food safety knowledge regard to organic food purchase intention is worth being investigated as organic food is perceived to be safe and healthy, which important indicator in the pandemic COVID-19 scenario to ensure a fit and healthy body to reduce potential infection (Latip et al., 2021; Sajed & Amgain, 2020).

Indeed, as the pandemic COVID-19 is associated with individual health and safety, food safety knowledge significantly influences individual green consideration regarding organic food, including attitude, social pressure, autonomy, and green trust (Latip et al., 2020b). Consequently, this study explores the roles of knowledge from a food safety perspective as a moderating variable towards consumers purchase intention of organic food. Therefore, the hypothesis was postulated as follows:

H5: The positive effect of personal attitude and organic food purchase intention is stronger with food safety knowledge

H6: The positive effect of perceived social pressure and organic food purchase intention is stronger with food safety knowledge

H7: The positive effect of perceived green trust and organic food purchase intention is stronger with food safety knowledge

H8: The positive effect of perceived autonomy and organic food purchase intention is stronger with food safety knowledge

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative study that uses primary data through an administered questionnaire because of the large population and to achieve the research objective—the causal study applied through a non-contrived approach and a cross-sectional method. The data were collected in a new normal life of COVID-19. The study's target population is Malaysian residence aged 15 years and above with no other controlled demographic profile of respondents. The study aims to identify factors influencing organic food purchase intention; thus, the respondents can be organic or non-organic users. All respondents were agreed to participate in the survey voluntarily. For Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis, on each 1 item, tested ten numbers of respondents were

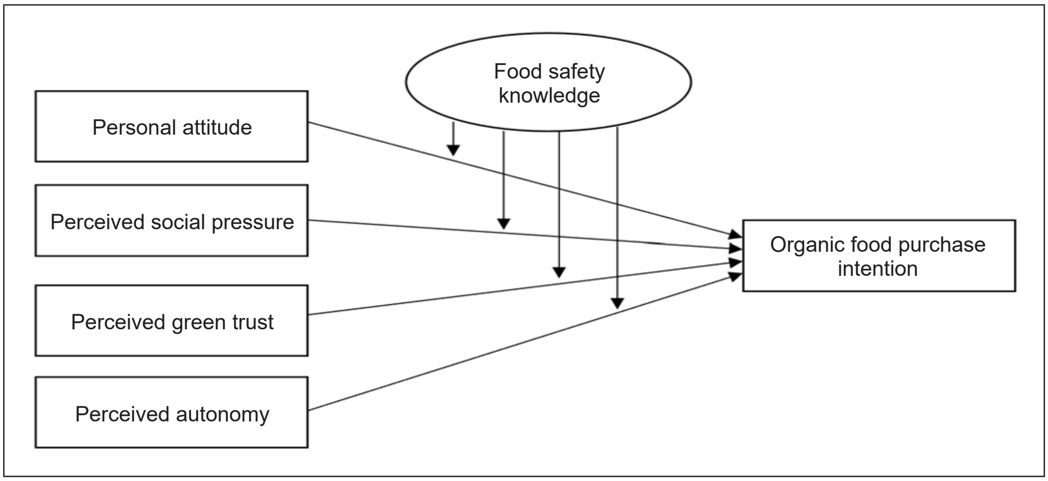

*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework

needed (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, as the study instrument consists of 24 items, a total of 240 minimum samples is required. The instruments were adopted and adapted from previous empirical studies related to a green purchase (Correa et al., 2017; Junior et al., 2019; Lian & Yoong, 2019; Putten & Nair, 2019). It is also supported by Latip et al. (2020b).

Moreover, five Likert scale measurement was used in the study because the respondents will be incapable of defining themselves on the scale if the scale is divided into too many or too few points (Briggs et al., 2012). Finally, the research instrument was distributed in the English language.

The data were collected using convenience sampling using an online platform because of the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distance concerns (Sajed & Amgain, 2020). Thus, direct contact needs to be avoided. The survey was shared and sent to online groups through social platforms, mainly WhatsApp. There was a total of 330 valid responses after removing outliers to ensure an accurate finding. Thus, a minimum sample size required by the study is achieved.

The Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS), Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), and PROCESS by Andrew F. Hayes analysis was used for data analysis (Hayes, 2013). Data had been screened and cleaned to ensure clean data through minimum and maximum analysis. Notably, the normality of data was confirmed as the skewness and kurtosis presented in table 2 scored between +1 and -1 (Hair et al., 2017), and necessary outliers were removed to ensure a good and reliable finding.

Common method bias was performed using Herman's Single Factor test, and the total variance for one-factor scores was 46.004. Therefore, it confirmed no issue of method bias as the variance score is less than 50.00 (Eichhorn, 2014).

### Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of respondents' demographic profiles shows that female respondents (67.3%) outnumbered male respondents (32.7%). Meanwhile, most of the respondents were aged between 21 to 30 years old (58.5%), followed by 21.8% aged between 31 to 40 years old. Furthermore, based on the respondent's academic background, 45.5% of respondents with academic background of bachelor's degrees, followed by a master's degree (30.0%) and 19.7% with diploma certificates. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the respondents have a good educational background and knowledge. Meanwhile, most of the respondents had an income level below RM1,000 (33.6%), followed by 17.3% with a monthly income of RM2,001 to RM3,000), and lastly, 14.2% of respondents earn a monthly income of RM5,000 and above.

The descriptive analysis of the research instrument was conducted and presented in Table 1. Based on the average mean score, it can be concluded that the respondent has good food safety knowledge (M=3.90), personal attitude (M=3.64), perceived autonomy (M=3.51), and perceived green trust (M=3.78). Meanwhile, respondents

Table 1
*Descriptive analysis of research instruments*

| No | Items | Mean | Average mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| K1 | Knowledgeable about food safety | 4.05 | 3.90 |
| K2 | Knowledgeable on food safety certificates | 3.67 | |
| K3 | Knowledgeable on food selection to reduce potential foodborne illness | 3.90 | |
| K4 | Good food safety knowledge | 3.96 | |
| A1 | Organic food purchase is important | 3.73 | 3.64 |
| A2 | Organic food purchase is beneficial | 3.76 | |
| A3 | Purchase organic food is a wise decision | 3.68 | |
| A4 | Organic food consumption is important for everyone | 3.71 | |
| A5 | Organic food consumption reduces the potential risk of infection | 3.31 | |
| A6 | Organic food is a better choice during the pandemic | 3.62 | |
| S1 | Family influence during the pandemic | 3.25 | 3.19 |
| S2 | Friends influence during the pandemic | 3.15 | |
| S3 | Influence of important people to individual | 3.24 | |
| S4 | Influences from social media connections | 3.10 | |
| AU1 | Have time to purchase organic food | 3.50 | 3.51 |
| AU2 | Willingness to purchase organic food | 3.52 | |
| AU3 | Have autonomy to purchase organic food | 3.50 | |
| T1 | Reliable food safety reputation of organic food | 3.81 | 3.78 |
| T2 | Trustworthy claims of organic food | 3.78 | |
| T3 | Food safety expectation of organic food | 3.79 | |
| T4 | Food safety promises of organic food | 3.76 | |
| T5 | Trust on food producers claim | 3.74 | |
| I1 | Will buy organic food for family safety | 3.35 | 3.38 |
| I2 | Intention to purchase organic food | 3.40 | |

have a moderate influence of the social pressure (M=3.19) and moderate to high intention to purchase organic food during in new normal life COVID-19 (M=3.38).

## Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to measure the model to verify each item's psychometric characteristics in the instrument.

The CFA results are shown in Figure 2. The analysis shows that all loading factors of the items scored 0.60 and above, indicating an excellent psychometric characteristic for each item (Awang et al., 2018). The model fitness indicates the scored CMIN/DF (the minimum discrepancy) of 2.212. Meanwhile, the comparative fix index CFI score of 0.957 is considered a good fit for the model. The model score of 0.061 with a confidence interval of the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) indicates a good fitness of the model because it shows a close fit of the model with the level of

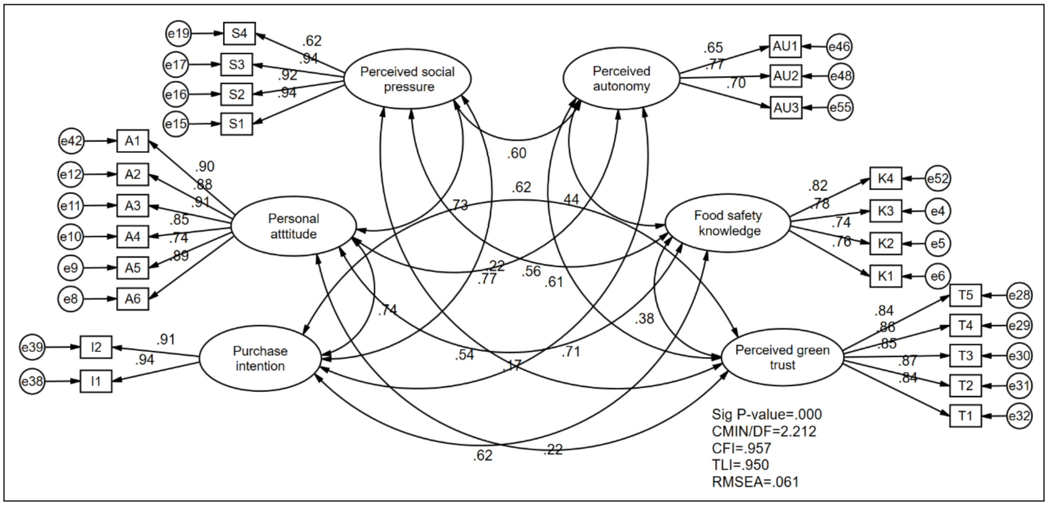

*Figure 2.* CFA analysis

freedom (Awang et al., 2018). Thus, the model achieved good model fitness.

### Reliability and Validity Analysis

The composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) in Table 2 were used to measure the construct's reliability and validation. As shown in Table 2, all CR scored above 0.60, and AVE scored above 0.50. The figures indicate the data achieved a good convergent validity as over half of the item variances can be represented by the construct (Awang et al., 2018).

The discriminant validity analysis can be accessed in Table 3. The diagonal value of AVE's diagonal square root is higher than the value of its correlation (Awang et al., 2018). Therefore, discriminant validity is achieved.

## FINDING

### The Direct Hypothesis Testing

The formative analysis of the research model in Table 4 revealed that only three are statistically significant out of four relationships tested. When personal attitude

Table 2

*The skewness, kurtosis, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) result*

| Contructs | Skewness | Kurtosis | CR | AVE | MSV |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Food safety knowledge (FS) | -0.582 | 0.222 | 0.860 | 0.605 | 0.196 |
| Personal attitude (AT) | -0.601 | 0.087 | 0.946 | 0.746 | 0.553 |
| Perceived social pressure (SP) | -0.12 | -0.51 | 0.921 | 0.75 | 0.592 |
| Perceived autonomy (AU) | -0.346 | 0.459 | 0.751 | 0.502 | 0.497 |
| Perceived green trust (GT) | 0.536 | 0.59 | 0.929 | 0.722 | 0.390 |
| Purchase intention (PI) | 0.459 | 0.075 | 0.922 | 0.856 | 0.592 |

Table 3
*Result of diagonal value and squared correlations of each construct*

| Construct | FS | AT | SP | AU | GT | PI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FS** | **0.778** | | | | | |
| **AT** | 0.173** | **0.864** | | | | |
| **SP** | 0.221*** | 0.733*** | **0.866** | | | |
| **AU** | 0.443*** | 0.556*** | 0.605*** | **0.709** | | |
| **GT** | 0.383*** | 0.615*** | 0.538*** | 0.615*** | **0.850** | |
| **PI** | 0.222*** | 0.744*** | 0.769*** | 0.705*** | 0.624*** | **0.925** |

*Note:* ***=p<0.001;**=p<0.010* =p <0.050

Table 4
*Result of a direct relationship tested*

| Direct relationship | | | Std.Est. | C.R. | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal attitude | > | Purchase intention | .274 | 4.557 | *** |
| Perceived social pressure | > | Purchase intention | .344 | 5.707 | *** |
| Perceived green trust | > | Purchase intention | .095 | 1.754 | .079 |
| Perceived autonomy | > | Purchase intention | .286 | 4.350 | *** |

*Note:* ***=p<0.001;**=p<0.010* =p <0.050

goes up by 1, organic food purchase intention in a 'new normal' goes up by .274 with a p-value score of 0.001. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the H1 is accepted. Besides, H2 of the study is also accepted as the p-value score of less than 0.05. When perceived social pressure increase by 1, organic food intention in a new normal increase by .344.

However, there is no statistically significant between perceived green trust and organic food purchase intention in a new normal as the p-value score is more than the p-value. Thus, H3 is not supported. Lastly, H4 is accepted because analyses indicate a p-value score of 0.05 and below when the perceived autonomy goes up by 1, organic food's purchase intention in a new normal increase by .286.

### The Hypothesis Testing of the Moderation Effect

Moderation implied an interaction effect, where introducing a moderating variable changes the direction or magnitude of the relationship between two variables. Based on the finding in Table 4, H3 is not supported as there is no statistically significant relationship between perceived green trust and purchase intention of organic food in a new normal life. Thus no further moderating analysis is needed.

The summary outcome of the moderating analysis can be accessed in Table 5. Based on the finding, the only personal attitude had a moderating effect as the p-value of the interaction effect is less than 0.05. Thus, H5 is supported (The positive effect of personal attitude and organic food purchase intention is stronger with food safety knowledge)

Meanwhile, food safety knowledge does not moderate the relationship between perceived social pressure and perceived autonomy toward purchase intention. The p-value score on the interaction effect is more than 0.05. Therefore, H6 and H8 are not supported.

Examining the interaction plot of food safety knowledge on the relationship between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention showed an enhancing effect (Figure 3). At low personal attitude toward organic food, purchase intention is much higher for an individual with low food safety knowledge than those with high food safety knowledge. However, at moderate

Table 5
*Summary of moderating analysis*

| | Interaction effect of Moderating Analysis | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Personal attitude** | Coeff. | LLCI | ULCI | p-value |
| | 0.014 | 0.004 | 0.024 | 0.005 |
| **Perceived social pressure** | Coeff. | LLCI | ULCI | p-value |
| | 0.005 | -0.008 | 0.018 | .422* |
| **Perceived autonomy** | Coeff. | LLCI | ULCI | p-value |
| | 0.020 | -0.002 | 0.042 | 0.080* |

*Note:* *The p-value of interaction effect is more than 0.05, thus no moderation effect

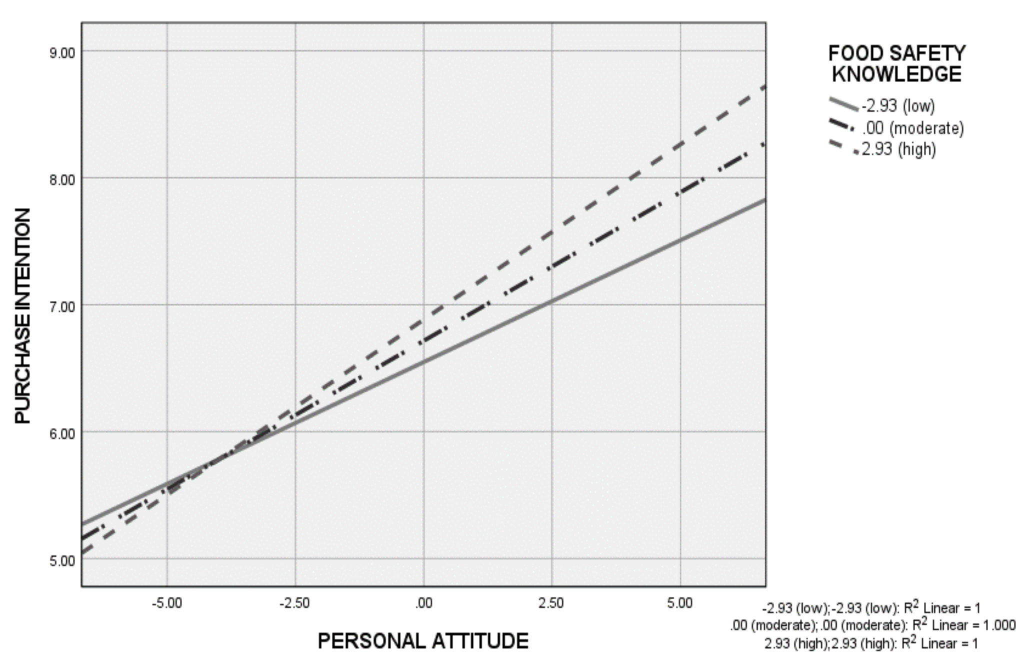

*Figure 3.* Interaction plot of moderating analysis between intention and personal attitude

and high personal attitudes, the purchase intention increases according to the level of food safety knowledge. Furthermore, a high level of food safety knowledge increases organic food's purchase intention at a high personal attitude. Thus, when the individual has a positive high personal attitude toward organic food, the purchase intention similarly tends to be higher if they have high food safety knowledge.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses executed, organic food purchase intention was significant statistically towards three variables inspected: personal attitudes, perceived social pressure, and perceived autonomy in a new normal life of COVID-19. On the other hand, perceived green trust is not significant towards organic food purchase intention statistically in a new normal life of COVID-19. However, food safety knowledge was found to moderate personal attitude and organic food purchase significantly.

The significant influence of personal attitudes on organic purchase intention in a new normal life (H1) theoretically clarifies how a positive attitude on organic food impacts the purchase intention in a new normal life. According to Ajzen (1991), the desire to carry out a particular action may increase with a positive attitude towards a certain action. Besides, another researcher also supported that the purchase intention of organic food products is significantly impacted by consumer's positive attitudes (Bai et al., 2019; Ham et al., 2018; Latip et al., 2020b). The findings explained that individuals' aptitude to purchase organic food is influenced by the strength of the individuals' control factors. Moreover, due to the pandemic COVID-19 individual perception and concern about the infection theoretically shape their attitude on minimising the potential risk of infection by consuming healthy food and ensuring maximum body health. It is supported by a recent study as consumers are undeniably concerned about their health (Latip et al., 2020b). Moreover, a consumer may emphasise more belief in personal judgment than social influence as it builds up self-confidence and personal belief.

Furthermore, the significant influence of perceived social pressure on organic purchase intention in a new normal life (H2) hypothetically clarifies how social pressure from surrounding govern the organic purchase intention in a new normal life. According to Latip et al. (2020b), the social weight that individuals encounter may influence their decision whether to perform or not to perform specific behaviour in mind. The relationship between social pressure and intention to purchase organic food becomes stronger when both factors, which are internal (individuals) and external (social pressure), are positive towards particular matters. Indeed, as COVID-19 affects the whole world, the pressure to comply with a social norm and expectation to break the chain of infection is even sturdier. The impact is even stronger in a collectivist country.

The significant influence of perceived autonomy towards organic food purchase intention in a new normal life (H4) supported the finding of a previous scholar by Bai et al. (2019), Ham et al. (2018), and Lian (2017), which found a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control (autonomy) and intention to purchase organic food. The inclination for individuals to have the intention to purchase organic food influenced by how high is their behaviour control. In the new normal life of COVID-19, few restrictions have to be obeyed by the consumer as regulated by the government. Therefore, it theoretically justifies the significant relationship between the more autonomy individuals perceived and the stronger intention to perform a specific action.

Nonetheless, there was no significant influence between perceived green trust and intention to purchase organic food in a new normal life (H3). It is supported by the previous scholar Latip et al. (2021), as green trust does not influence organic food purchase intention. Indeed, trustworthiness does not influence the purchase attitude of organic food (Bai et al., 2019). Furthermore, the trust in the greener aspect of organic food does not significantly influence consumers when the resources are limited. However, due to the pandemic COVID-19, some resources may be limited, and scarcity of particular organic food. Besides, in a critical time of health crisis like pandemic COVID-19, food safety is more critical than a real green aspect. Thus, green trust in organic food is not an essential issue that influences the consumer purchase decision.

On the other hand, the study found that food safety knowledge has a significant moderating effect between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention (H5). Knowledge leads to stronger individuals' beliefs and contributes to buying organic food products among consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Purchase intention and individuals' perception of the products may be shifted when they possess adequate knowledge about the product (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019). Besides, consumers' health knowledge has increased their tendency to choose organic foods, especially during pandemic COVID-19 (Latip et al., 2020b). As the attitude and personal belief on organic food safety exist, the relationship is sturdier with food safety knowledge. Meanwhile, food safety knowledge does not moderate the relationship between perceived social pressure and purchase intention because of the contradiction of external forces (norm) and personal knowledge. Thereby potentially explaining the finding attained.

### Limitation and Future Research

Although the study's findings have highlighted the insightful significance, the study encountered a few limitations. The first limitation is that the study was only conducted on a particular area intended to be measured. On the grounds, the whole world is still facing a current pandemic situation. This study fully utilises the online survey to generate the samples to comply with social distancing directives. The pandemic COVID-19 has abrupted the lifestyle changes over social distancing and concern about health, affecting social life and economics (Latip et al., 2020b). Besides, this study applied the quantitative approach, which restricted information gathering only based on answers and question options created by researchers. As a result, there is some phenomenon unable to be measured by figures. Hence, future researchers need to test different constructs to broaden the study's findings on organic food consumer behaviours in a new normal life. Future studies may consider applying the mixed-method approach, providing more in-depth information on the construct examination. Besides, elements of communication, greenwashing and diet habits should be incorporated.

## Recommendation and Implication

The study is anticipated to add an advanced dimension related to organic food studies. It is investigated in a new normal life of pandemic COVID-19, a very peculiar situation for the world. Besides, there is a need for the study to expedite, especially for Asian countries, which the organic food industry is still at the initial stage as the scarcity of information on green food purchase behaviour and consumer perception leads to market attractiveness disruption arises concerning business risk, profitability and sustainability aspects (Latip et al., 2020b). Thus, this study highlighted several crucial findings that may differ from previous research as the construct is also contra. During this post MCO period, the purchasing power of consumers may decrease as a continuous trend expected based on the retrenchment figure at the end of March, which involved about 70% from the B40 and 28% from M40 (Kana, 2020).

Moreover, the study further extends the theory of planned behaviour by including related predictors that specifically measure green consumerism, namely perceived green trust and food safety knowledge. The original predictors of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control were included in the study, which referred to personal attitude, perceived social pressure and perceived autonomy that carry the same underline factor as supported by (Latip et al., 2020a). The expanded model will enlighten green consumerism study, especially in Asia, as it is relatively new and more studies are needed to understand the consumer perspective better.

The study is useful for the industry, comprehending the changes that new normal brought towards their business and revamping their marketing strategy to align with the current market situation. The finding also calls for the industry to further educate and publicise the food safety knowledge aspect of organic food to consumers to generate public interest and awareness, as the food safety knowledge significantly moderate consumer attitude toward purchase intention. Moreover, the government-related body such as the Department of Agriculture should collaborate with other related agriculture-based bodies and organic food producers to disseminate the benefits of consuming organic food and highlight organic food's safety and health features to the public. For example, a poster or other form of communication can be displayed through a campaign or other marketing initiatives to increase consumer awareness and receptivity toward the organic food product at the grocery store. When consumer awareness and familiarity with organic food increases, it somehow influences consumers to purchase the product, increase the national GDP and open for a massive export opportunity as the myOrganic of Malaysia scheme is recognised globally. In return, the consumer will have better access to a variety of organic food products free from pesticides and safe to be consumed.

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# Impact of Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract Approach with Collaborative Lesson Research on Year Four Pupils' Proficiency in Perimeter

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the concrete-pictorial-abstract (CPA) approach developed based on the Collaborative Lesson Research (CLR) cycles can positively impact Year Four pupils' proficiency in perimeter. Counterbalanced design was used with pre- and post-test in every CLR cycle. The participants involved were three groups of pupils totaling 115 pupils and a group of three teachers. The sampling used was cluster random sampling. A paired-samples t test was used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pre- and post-test for each CLR cycle while a one-way ANOVA test was used to analyze if there is an increase in proficiency from the first, second and third CLR cycles. The results indicated that there was an increase in the mean post-test scores compared to the mean of pre-test scores and the mean difference between the first, second and third CLR cycles. In conclusion, the CLR cycle carried out helped teachers in developing better teaching plans based on the CPA approach as well as enhancing pupils' proficiency in the perimeter.

*Keywords:* Concrete-picture-abstract approach, collaborative lesson research, ten-year-old pupils' proficiency in perimeter

## INTRODUCTION

Perimeter is a topic that needs to be studied by pupils in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. An introduction to perimeter begins with recognizing two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes before being introduced to the meaning of perimeter. Learning perimeter can be considered something difficult to understand, especially

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for primary school pupils. Machaba (2016) stated that among the problems faced by pupils is a lack of understanding of the concept of perimeter and failure to use the correct formula while solving perimeter questions. Various problems are also faced by teachers, especially when teaching in the classroom.

To solve the problems pupils and teachers face in learning and teaching perimeter, CLR is recommended because it has organized steps and is an improvement of the Lesson Study. For example, Sutherland et al. (2020) stated that if pupils fail to understand measurement vocabulary, pupils will have difficulty engaging in measurement activities (e.g., measuring the height and width of objects), do not understand teacher instructions (e.g., estimating whiteboard length in meters), and use the correct procedural strategy to measure (for example, measuring from the starting point to the endpoint). Through the CLR, pupils symbol problems and difficulties in understanding and measuring geometry can be examined and improved using an appropriate teaching approach in the classroom.

Lesson Study has been practiced in Japan for a long time ago because of its effectiveness in improving the teachers' teaching and learning methods in the classrooms based on studies conducted (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; Lewis, 2002). Fernandez and Yoshida (2004) describe six basic steps of conducting a Lesson Study, namely: (a) designing a lesson plan collaboratively, (b) making real observations in the classroom when the daily lesson plan is implemented, (c) discussing the lesson plan that has been run in the next class to reflect on it, d) review the lesson plan based on observations and reflections made with group members, (e) re-teach the revised lesson plan, and (f) discuss again the lesson plan which has been implemented further by sharing.

The benefits of Lesson Study practices have been shown by international studies (e.g., Akiba et al., 2019) and local studies (e.g. Aini & Zanaton, 2018; Lim et al., 2018). Several recent studies related to CLR have been conducted in America by Takahashi and McDougal (2018) and in Qatar by Watanabe et al. (2019). Watanabe et al. (2019) conducted CLR in Qatar through problem-solving with the improvements that have been mentioned in Takahashi and McDougal (2016) as well as Takahashi and McDougal (2018). Watanabe et al. (2019) conducted a professional development project to expand and enhance the mathematics teaching capacity of primary school teachers and preparation in Qatar using CLR. Takahashi and McDougal (2019) discussed the results of Takahashi and McDougal (2018) as well as Watanabe et al. (2019) in relation to the results obtained after the CLR had been implemented along with the steps that need to be taken to improve its effectiveness.

The significance of the study is that CLR, CPA approach, and proficiency have a wide range of interest to pupils and teachers indirectly. CPA approach, for example, can be used as one of the teaching methods in the classroom if appropriate, while the CLR can enhance the professionalism of teachers. The CPA approach through the CLR setup can provide ideas to teachers in finding better teaching methods. The CLR can also improve teachers' teaching techniques and pupils' performance in the targeted subjects. In addition, proficiency can be used as a guide in assessing pupils' performance and achievement in the classroom (Takahashi & McDougal, 2016, 2019).

## Collaborative Lesson Research (CLR)

CLR is an updated version of Lesson Study practice introduced by Takahashi and McDougal (2016). Takahashi and McDougal (2016) have improved Lesson Study practices by introducing Collaborative Lesson Research (CLR) to increase efficiency to the maximum level by revising the steps that have been introduced in Lesson Study. CLR was selected in the research based on modifications made by Takahashi and McDougal (2016) in the Lesson Study steps. Among the changes implemented was to define clearer goals in the first step before designing a daily lesson plan and revising it. The main goal of the study was to improve pupils' proficiency in perimeter through the CLR. The six steps in CLR aimed to build on and transform the existing CPA approach to a more effective teaching approach. The goals, teaching approach, and teaching aids were determined collaboratively through discussions among the members of the CLR group. The components in the CLR are as follows (Takahashi & McDougal, 2016):

a. The purpose of the research is clear: Before starting the research, the purpose should be clearly stated in terms of the problem encountered. The content should also be accurate, and specific and not general.
b. Kyouzai Kenkyuu: Kyouzai Kenkyuu refers to the comprehensive study of the literature on the topic or problem encountered.
c. Written research proposal: The written proposal should be clear and relevant to the content due to Kyouzai Kenkyuu and help build ideas about the research to be conducted.
d. Actual teaching in the classroom and discussion: Teaching in the classroom is direct and requires views and comments from all the participants involved in the research.
e. Knowledgeable outside observers: Outside observers who can provide independent comments and suggestions before and after the lesson is conducted.
f. Sharing results together: Sharing information obtained from the research is important in ensuring that the effectiveness of CLR can be achieved.

The six components mentioned above are important in ensuring that the main goals are achieved when CLR is carried out in solving the problems encountered, especially in the topic of the perimeter. Takahashi and McDougal (2016) assert that these six components are necessary for ensuring the effective implementation of the CLR cycle. Furthermore, the latest studies (Takahashi & McDougal, 2018, 2019; Watanabe et al., 2019) in CLR showed positive feedback and impact for the teachers and students.

## CPA Approach

The CPA approach comprises three main steps, namely concrete, pictorial, and abstract, which adapt to Bruner's (1966) three modes of representation. Bruner (1966) states that the three modes of representation are enactive, iconic, and symbolic. Enactive representation means learning is through motor responses or actions, iconic representation means learning is through the perception of images or pictures, while symbolic representation means learning is through symbols or notations (Bruner, 1964). Thus, through the three modes of representation described by Bruner (1966), the CPA approach has been represented by the concrete step in enactive representation, the pictorial step in iconic representation, and the abstract step in symbolic representation.

Many studies (e.g., Bouck et al., 2018; Flores, 2018; Flores & Hinton, 2019; Flores et al., 2019; Hinton & Flores, 2019; Isip, 2018; Purwadi et al., 2019; Salingay & Tan, 2018) had shown significant improvement in student's performance in mathematics when the CPA approach was implemented in the classrooms. Most teachers only use existing tools in the classroom without realizing whether the tools can be used meaningfully or not to pupils. The construction of lesson plans and tools for the CPA approach was through discussion between CLR group members. Each group member in the CLR will detect deficiencies in the methods and tools available at each live teaching session that occurs before making changes in the next session. The CPA approach also allows for the construction of teaching aids that are more concrete and meaningful. The difficulties when learning geometry and measurement can be reduced if teachers' and pupils' correct use of teaching aids occurs during teaching and learning. Zhang (2021) stated that pupils who face problems in geometry are pupils who have low achievement in other domains of mathematics. Zhang's (2021) findings indicate that learning or difficulty in basic geometry is due to the absence of a visual representation. The absence of a visual representation is one of the things attempted in the CPA approach through the concrete and pictorial steps.

## Mathematical Proficiency

The National Research Council (2001) defines the Mathematical Proficiency framework proposed by Kilpatrick et al. (2001) as consisting of five interrelated components, namely: (i) Conceptual understanding - the understanding of the concept of operations and mathematical relationships; (ii) Procedural fluency – the skills in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately; (iii) Strategic competence - the ability to design, represent and solve mathematical problems; (iv) Adaptive reasoning - the ability for logical thinking, reflection, explanation and justification; and (v) Productive disposition - the tendency to view mathematics as meaningful, useful and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in perseverance and self-efficacy. Based on the framework, pupils who are proficient in the perimeter have acquired all the five components in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles.

### Perimeter

The perimeter has been defined as a measure of the length of a boundary within an area (Ma, 1999), while Danielson (2005) states that a perimeter is the length of a boundary within range. Previous studies (e.g., Machaba, 2016; Van de Walle et al., 2014) reported that most pupils and adults had the misconception that figures with the same perimeter must have the same area. Van de Walle et al. (2014) suggest that it is perhaps because both area and perimeter involve measurements, or because pupils are taught formulae for both concepts at about the same time, that they tend to get the formulae confused.

### Statement of the Problem

However, based on the above literature review, there is yet a study to date that examines the impact of the CPA approach with CLR on Year Four pupils' proficiency in perimeter. Hence, this study aimed to fill the research gap by examining whether the CPA approach developed based on the CLR cycle can have a positive impact on Year Four pupils' proficiency in the perimeter.

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study consists of Bruner's (1966) three modes of representation, Takahashi and McDougal's (2016) CLR and Kilpatrick et al.'s (2001) Mathematical Proficiency framework for the CPA approach, 3 CLR cycles, and proficiency in perimeter, respectively. Based on the study's aims, the study's conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows whether the CPA approach developed based on the 3 CLR cycles could positively impact Year Four pupils' proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Based on the study's aims, the research design of this study was a counterbalanced experimental design so that all treatments for each group of participants involved

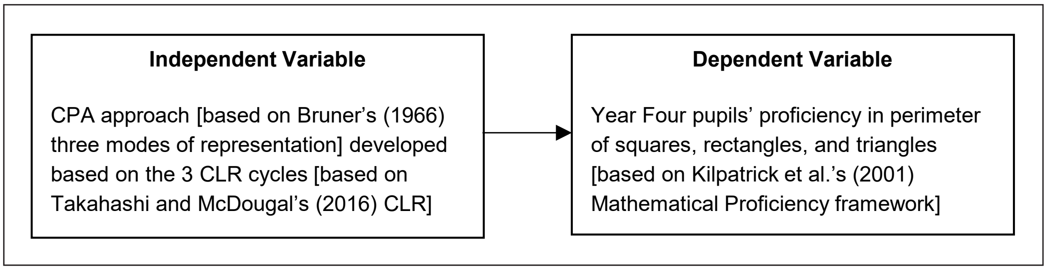
Independent Variable
CPA approach [based on Bruner's (1966) three modes of representation] developed based on the 3 CLR cycles [based on Takahashi and McDougal's (2016) CLR]
Dependent Variable
Year Four pupils' proficiency in perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles [based on Kilpatrick et al.'s (2001) Mathematical Proficiency framework]

*Figure 1.* Theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

are tested equally. The design consisted of three different groups of participants with three treatments applied to each group. Each group went through the pre-test, followed by the treatment, and ended with the post-test. The analysis was conducted quantitatively through pre-and post-tests to determine any significant difference in the pupils' proficiency in perimeter among the three groups. The research design is as shown in Table 1.

## Variables

The independent variable for this study was the CPA approach with CLR. Effect or outcome (i.e., changes or differences in behavior or characteristics) is the dependent variable (Gay et al., 2011). The dependent variable was proficiency in the perimeter. The dependent variable has a relation with the independent variable. The characteristics of a dependent variable depend on or are influenced by the independent variable (Creswell, 2005).

## Population and Sampling

The accessible population of this study consisted of all Year Four pupils studying at four National Schools in one of the districts of Penang, Malaysia. Cluster random sampling was used to select one school from the study population to obtain an intact group of population members with similar characteristics as the study sample (Gay et al., 2011). Sampling errors can be avoided because the sample is large, and the study's cost is effective. In addition, research with a higher sample size may yield less sampling error than simple random sampling with a smaller sample size (Daniel, 2012).

Next, three classes of Year Four pupils (with 115 pupils) and their mathematics teachers were randomly selected. The three teachers were of the same gender and had almost similar years of teaching experience. Knowledgeable outside observers of this study consisted of the Head of the Mathematics Committee, one Excellent Mathematics teacher, and one School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+). The CLR group designed the three lesson plans for teaching perimeter based on the CPA approach, which focused on squares, rectangles, and triangles, respectively. The learning standards for perimeter are to determine the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles. The time taken to

Table 1
*Research Design*

| Topic | Square | | | Rectangle | | | Triangle | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cycle | C1 | C2 | C3 | C1 | C2 | C3 | C1 | C2 | C3 |
| Lesson Plan | | First | | | Second | | | Third | |
| Group Rotation | G1 | G2 | G3 | G2 | G3 | G1 | G3 | G1 | G2 |
| Teacher | T1 | T2 | T3 | T2 | T3 | T1 | T3 | T1 | T2 |

*Notes*: C1 = First Cycle; C2 = Second Cycle; C3 = Third Cycle
G1 = Group One; G2 = Group Two; G3 = Group Three
T1 = Group One Teacher; T2 = Group Two Teacher; T3 = Group Three Teacher

carry out the teaching and learning process based on the lesson plans was 60 minutes each.

### Research Instrument

Proficiency Test in Perimeter was used in this study. This test was constructed based on the framework that has been put forward by Kilpatrick et al. (2001). The test consisted of 15 open-ended questions with five questions for measuring proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles, respectively, designed based on the five components of the Mathematical Proficiency framework. The five components were conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition. The test was validated by a panel of three Year Four Mathematics teachers with at least ten years of teaching experience. In addition, the test was pilot tested to determine its reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The value of Cronbach's Alpha obtained was 0.91 for the perimeter of squares, 0.89 for rectangles, and 0.89 for the perimeter of triangles. Thus, the test was reliable for the actual study. The Cronbach's Alpha value is a statistical standard for assessing scale reliability and internal consistency by examining internal relationships between items. An alpha value of 0.700 or more generally indicates reliability (Creswell, 2005).

### Data Analysis

The paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in proficiency in perimeter between pre-and post-test scores of pupils in Group One, Group Two, and Group Three. In addition, the one-way ANOVA test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference among the three groups. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 24.0 was used to analyze the data.

## RESULTS

Table 2 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) difference between pre-and post-test scores for the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles by CLR cycle.

The mean difference between the pre- and post-test scores for the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles showed an increasing trend from the first cycle to the second cycle and from the second cycle to the third cycle, that is from 3.00 to 3.77 and from 3.77 to 5.16 for the perimeter of

Table 2
*Mean and standard deviation difference of pre- and post-test scores for perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles by CLR cycle*

| Cycles / Results | Squares | | Rectangles | | Triangles | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| First Cycle | 3.00 | 0.19 | 3.56 | 0.21 | 1.72 | 0.62 |
| Second Cycle | 3.77 | 0.27 | 3.79 | 0.63 | 3.24 | 0.82 |
| Third Cycle | 5.16 | 1.29 | 4.40 | 0.69 | 7.03 | 1.01 |

squares, from 3.56 to 3.79 and from 3.79 to 4.40 for the perimeter of squares and from 1.72 to 3.24 and from 3.24 to 7.03 for the perimeter of triangles, respectively.

### Paired-Samples t-Tests

Table 3 shows the results of the paired-samples t-test for the first, second, and third cycle of CLR for the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles. The results indicated a significant difference between the pre-and post-test mean scores for the first cycle of CLR, the second cycle of CLR, and the third cycle of CLR with p<.05. In addition, the results of the paired-samples t-tests for the three CLR cycles for the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre-and post-test mean scores for each CLR cycle with the post-test mean scores higher than the pre-test mean scores in all the three cycles.

### One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Test

Table 4 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA test for the first, second, and third cycles of CLR for proficiency in perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles. The

Table 3
*Paired-samples t-test for the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles for the first, second, and third cycle of CLR*

| Cycles / Results | Squares | | | Rectangles | | | Triangles | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| First Cycle (pretest-posttest) | -8.68 | 37 | 0.00 | -13.61 | 38 | 0.00 | -3.92 | 37 | 0.00 |
| Second Cycle (pretest-posttest) | -11.89 | 38 | 0.00 | -12.74 | 37 | 0.00 | -8.56 | 37 | 0.00 |
| Third Cycle (pretest-posttest) | -10.83 | 37 | 0.00 | -11.62 | 37 | 0.00 | -20.33 | 38 | 0.00 |

Table 4
*One-way ANOVA tests for first, second, and third cycles of CLR for perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles*

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Squares | Between Groups | 139.64 | 2 | 69.82 | 17.17 | 0.00 |
| | Within Groups | 455.41 | 112 | 4.07 | | |
| | Total | 595.04 | 114 | | | |
| Rectangles | Between Groups | 278.35 | 2 | 139.55 | 19.54 | 0.00 |
| | Within Groups | 301.88 | 112 | 4.07 | | |
| | Total | 7464.00 | 114 | | | |
| Triangles | Between Groups | 712.34 | 2 | 356.17 | 91.37 | 0.00 |
| | Within Groups | 436.58 | 112 | 3.90 | | |
| | Total | 1148.92 | 114 | | | |

results indicated a significant difference in the proficiency in the perimeter of squares rectangles, and triangles among the three cycles of CLR with $p<.05$.

Results for the Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test and the Levene's Test indicated that the post-test scores of the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles and triangles for the first, second, and third cycles of CLR were normally distributed for each cycle and were assumed to have the same variance because $p>.05$.

Results for the Tukey Post Hoc also indicated that there was a significant difference in the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles between the first, and the second cycles, the first and the third cycles, and the second and the third cycles of CLR as well at the significance level of .05.

## DISCUSSION

The first step of the CPA approach began with the concrete step, followed by the pictorial step for improving the pupils' conceptual understanding and procedural fluency and ended with the abstract step for improving the pupils' strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition. The activities available in each step consisted of individual activities and group activities. The CLR members designed the lesson plans for the first cycle of CLR. Group One learned the perimeter of squares in the first cycle, followed by Group Two in the second cycle, and Group Three in the third cycle of the CLR. Then, Group Two learned the perimeter of rectangles in the first cycle, followed by Group Three in the second cycle, and Group One in the third cycle of the CLR. Finally, Group Three learned the perimeter of triangles in the first cycle, Group One in the second cycle, and Group Two in the third cycle of the CLR.

The lesson plan for the third cycle of the CLR would have gone through two revisions: firstly, after the first cycle, and secondly, after the second cycle of the CLR. The first revision would be based on the actual teaching and observation in the classroom in the first cycle of the CLR. The second revision would be based on the actual teaching and observation in the classroom in the second cycle of the CLR. In addition, knowledgeable outside observers consisting of the Head of the Mathematics Committee, Excellent Mathematics teacher, and School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+) were involved in each revision of the lesson plans by providing their comments and suggestions for the improvement of the lesson plans.

It was supported by the results of the paired-samples t-tests for the three CLR cycles for the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles which indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre-and post-test mean scores for each CLR cycle with the post-test mean scores higher than the pre-test mean scores in all the three cycles. In addition, a comparison of the mean difference between the pre-and post-test scores for the proficiency in the perimeter of squares showed that Group Three obtained the highest mean difference ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.29$) because Group Three learned the perimeter of squares in the third cycle of the CLR while Group One obtained the lowest mean difference (M = 3.00, SD = 0.19) because Group One learned the perimeter of squares in the first cycle of the CLR. Likewise, a comparison of the mean difference between the pre-and post-test scores for the proficiency in the perimeter of rectangles showed that Group One obtained the highest mean difference (M = 4.40, SD = 0.69) because Group One learned the perimeter of rectangles in the third cycle of the CLR while Group Two obtained the lowest mean difference (M = 3.56, SD = 0.21) because Group Two learned the perimeter of rectangles in the first cycle of the CLR. Similarly, comparing the mean difference between the pre-and post-test scores for the proficiency in the perimeter of triangles showed that Group Two obtained the highest mean difference (M = 7.03, SD = 1.01) because Group Two learned the perimeter of triangles in the third cycle of the CLR. In contrast, Group Three obtained the lowest mean difference (M = 1.72, SD = 0.62) because Group Three learned the perimeter of triangles in the first cycle of the CLR.

It was also supported by the results of the one-way ANOVA tests for the first, second, and third cycles of CLR for proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles which indicated that there was a significant difference in the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles and triangles among the three cycles of CLR, respectively. In addition, the Tukey Post Hoc tests indicated that there was a significant difference in the proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles between the first and the second cycles, the first and the third cycles, and the second and the third cycles of CLR as well at the significance level of 0.05. The results indicated that the lesson plan for the third cycle of the CLR produced the highest post-test mean score for proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles, respectively.

The results of this study are in agreement with the positive results of various past studies involving Lesson Study (e.g., Aini & Zanaton, 2018; Akiba et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2018) in Malaysia and other countries to strengthen the professionalism of teachers and educators from various levels. The results of the study also concurred with the positive results of past studies on the CPA (or CRA) approach (e.g., Bouck et al., 2018; Flores, 2018; Flores & Hinton, 2019; Flores et al., 2019; Hinton & Flores, 2019; Isip, 2018; Purwadi et al., 2019; Salingay & Tan, 2018). CLR is a new approach to distinguish it from Lesson Study and was introduced by Takahashi and McDougal (2016). Although no study has ever been done using CLR and CPA approach in Malaysia, the findings of this study supported the hypothesis that the lesson plan for the third cycle of the CLR would produce the highest post-test mean score for proficiency in the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles, respectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, CLR played an important role in ensuring that the CPA approach could be implemented in each study cycle. The benefits obtained through CLR in this study are as follows: (a) Teachers are actively involved in each CLR cycle. Therefore, teachers can provide insights before, during, and after the actual teaching was conducted. These activities would increase teachers' confidence; (b) Provide opportunities for teachers to observe the teaching and learning process as it happened in the real classroom. Based on the situation in the classroom, teachers would focus on discussions related to the methods of planning, implementation, and observation. Teachers could also develop an understanding of the concepts and skills that pupils should acquire, and (c) Teachers can find out whether the activities and materials provided such as exercises, textbooks, and activity books were appropriate or not in giving maximum benefits to the pupils. Further, each CLR cycle involved six important steps. The first step was to state a clear purpose: to solve the problems teachers face in improving the teaching and learning of perimeter and to solve the problems pupils face, such as understanding the concepts of the perimeter of squares, rectangles, and triangles. Next, the CLR group would carry out a literature review on the problems that have been identified in the first step.

The literature review covered past studies related to perimeter problems at the school, district, and state levels, and larger studies involving a larger sample at the university and national levels. The third step was the proposed lesson plan by the CLR group, and the revisions made after each CLR cycle based on the observations in the classroom, discussions among members of the CLR group before, during, and after the lesson plan was implemented in the classroom as well as the comments and suggestions from the knowledgeable outside observers. When revisions were made, various aspects were considered, especially involving the pupils' responses in the classroom based on the activities, teaching methods, and constraints encountered during the teaching and learning process. The fourth step was the actual teaching in the classroom, along with a discussion based on its implementation in the classroom. Knowledgeable outside observers were present in each CLR cycle to ensure that the learning objectives could be achieved. The final step of sharing the results was the presentation of the final findings based on the results of the proficiency test in perimeter and observations by the CLR group.

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# People in Recovery from Substance Use Disorders: What Motivates Them to Enter Addiction Treatment Agencies as Counselors?

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to understand the motivations of people recovering from substance use disorders (SUDs) to work in addiction treatment agencies as counselors. A purposive and snowball sampling technique was used to recruit 18 recovering counselors from Long Island, New York. Most of the participants self-identified as Caucasian, and a third identified as African American. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The results indicate that want to give back, perceived self-efficacy to work with SUD clients, and previous experiences with addiction treatment services motivated people in recovery from SUD to become counselors. The respondents also reported the role of intrinsic rewards, such as witnessing clients' progress over time and the opportunity to sustain their recovery, which influenced their decision to continue working in the addiction treatment field. Understanding work motivations has significant implications for assessing the staffing needs and professional development of SUD treatment programs, including recruitment, retention, and the overall size and capacity of the addiction treatment workforce.

*Keywords:* Addiction, counselors, motivations, qualitative, recovery, substance use disorders, SUD

## INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study aimed to understand the motivations of people recovering from substance use disorders (SUDs) to work in addiction treatment agencies as counselors. Addiction to alcohol and drugs has long been recognized as a chronic disease and is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the United States (Prom-Wormley et al.,

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2017; Ruhm, 2018). Fatal drug overdose rates increased from 6.1 % deaths in 1997 to 21.7% in 2017—an increase of 250% (Ruhm, 2018). From 1999 to 2016, a total of 351,630 U.S. residents died from opioid-related causes (Kiang et al., 2019), and 33,091 opioid overdose cases were reported in 2015 (Madras, 2017). Furthermore, Monnat et al. (2019) reported high drug mortality rates and higher rates of opioid prescription in counties with economic disadvantages. In 2018, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) revealed that 23.02 million adults aged 18 or older had a SUD. Among them, 14.06 million (75.2%) struggled with alcohol use, 6.81 million (36.4%) struggled with illicit drugs, and 2.15 million (11.5%) struggled with both illicit drugs and alcohol. Despite the growing crisis of SUDs, a systematic review of 415 scientific studies of recovery outcomes by Kelly et al. (2019) indicated the number of individuals who reported having resolved a SUD ranged from 5.3% to 15.3%.

The SUD treatment workforce plays a significant role in facilitating effective prevention and treatment. This workforce of practitioners includes counselors, medical professionals, and social workers who provide treatment to SUD clients (Bouchery & Dey, 2018). The National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services reported that 197,559 counselors were employed in SUD treatment agencies (SAMSHA, 2018). Historically, counselors with SUD history who have maintained recovery have dominated the addiction treatment field (Nurse, 2020). Although precise data are lacking, researchers have estimated that approximately 40%–70% of people in recovery from SUD work in addiction treatment agencies as counselors (Fialk, 2018; Simons et al., 2017). Despite these high percentages, few qualitative studies have explored counselor's motivations, specifically those in recovery from SUD who decided to work in addiction treatment.

Even with the significant percentage of counselors in recovery from SUDs working in the addiction treatment field, studies related to people's motivation in recovery from SUD working in the field are still limited (Fialk, 2018; Shannon, 2017). Instead, existing studies on motivation and career determinants have mostly focused on counselors without a history of SUD entering the counseling profession (Cheung, 2016; Corey & Corey, 2020; Hill et al., 2013; Kaslow, 2005; Mahrer, 2005; McCullough, 2000; Norcross & Farber, 2005; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Poon et al., 2020). Findings from these studies have identified several motivations of individuals to enter the service field as counselors, including the desire to help others overcome stressful situations (McCullough, 2000), the influence from supportive mentors (Mahrer, 2005; Norcross & Farber, 2005), personal characteristics that fit the helping profession (Kaslow, 2005; McCullough, 2000; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005), personal experiences with therapy (Linington, 2016), and anticipated career satisfaction from the profession such as enhanced feelings of self-value and improvements in psychosocial adjustment (Mahrer, 2005). According to Norcross and Farber (2005), a common first impetus behind many helping professionals entering the field is wanting to help others—a conscious, socially desirable, and professionally acceptable career determinant.

Other recent studies by Cheung (2016), Corey and Corey (2020), Danes (2016), and Poon et al. (2020) reported the intention to help others as a common motivation for becoming a counselor. For example, Corey and Corey (2020) listed eight types of motivation for becoming a counselor, including making an impact and caring for others. Likewise, Poon et al. (2020) reported social contribution as motivation for choosing a counselor as a profession. Further, Cheung (2016) found four significant motivations for becoming a counselor: wanting to help others, having previous experiences with counseling, achieving life stability, and having expertise in the counseling field. Similarly, Hill et al. (2013) reported wanting to help others, perceived counseling skills, and competency as motivations for becoming a counselor.

Another motivation is related to the role of chance encounters that shape people's lives, for example, an inadvertent meeting with someone who later becomes a valued mentor or role model, or a moment that could propel or shape one's direction in life, including career choice (Brown, 2017; Chien, 2020; Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017). Brown (2017) and Foss-Kelly and Protivnak (2017) reported that a supportive relationship with a mentor helps create positive experiences among graduate students pursuing careers in the counseling field. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) examined the role of mentors who could portray curiosity, encourage learning, and postulate intellectual conversation. Expectations regarding the rewards of becoming a therapist, including intellectual stimulation and self-growth, have been reported by many as their greatest influences for entering the counseling field (Bilgin, 2015; McMillan et al., 2016; Renard & Snelgar, 2016). Bilgin (2015) also reported that the work values of sense of achievement and independence motivate students to pursue careers in counseling. Financial rewards also may serve as encouragement for those who want to pursue counseling as their career (McMillan et al., 2016). Farber et al. (2005) concluded that a helping profession that allows people to feel agentic and communal, have an enhanced sense of identity and intimacy, and work in the service of themselves and others serves as powerful motivation to work in this field. Other researchers (Farber et al., 2005; Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004) have revealed that individuals' motivation to become therapists is related to anticipated career satisfaction, especially when they can help others in trouble and develop a meaningful relationship with clients.

However, studies pertaining to people in recovery from SUD who enter the addiction treatment field as counselors are limited and outdated. Ottenberg (1977) found that those in recovery from SUD decided to enter the addiction treatment field because of their familiarity with and understanding of addiction issues, including the challenges of avoiding relapse and the complexities of sustaining recovery. A more recent study by Doukas and Cullen (2010) identified that key factors such as the desire to help other SUD clients overcome their drug dependency and give back to the community—served as motivators for people in recovery to become counselors in the addiction treatment field. In addition, Shannon (2017) reported wanting to help SUD users overcome their dependency and wanting to give back to the community as motivations for recovering practitioners to work in addiction counseling and strengthen their recovery. Nielson (2016) reported that counselors' recovery strengthened when they could give back by helping others. Previous experiences with substance abuse and knowledge related to the devastating impact of addiction led counselors in recovery to become passionate about and dedicated to helping others (Doukas, 2015). In addition, personal characteristics like empathy, positive attitude, and compassion were identified as reasons for those in recovery to work in the addiction treatment field (Nurse, 2020).

The present work is among the first qualitative studies to explore the motivations of individuals in recovery from a SUD to work as counselors in the substance use treatment field. In addition, this qualitative research study aims to explore the experiences of recovering counselors, specifically those working in the addiction treatment field, using a narrative inquiry method.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Recovery from SUD

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5, SUD encompasses the excessive use of 10 different drugs, including alcohol, cannabis, opioids, sedatives, hypnotics, and anxiolytics (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). SUD is characterized by the presence of a cluster of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms, including taking substances in larger amounts or over a longer period than was originally intended and continuing to use substances despite them causing recurrent interpersonal problems and craving or having an intense urge to use drugs (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Several studies have investigated the factors contributing to SUD recoveries (DuPont et al., 2015; Goodman et al., 2020), such as readiness and motivation to stop using drugs, social support, and social capital (Best et al., 2016). Moreover, factors such an active engagement in the community and support from spouse or family members will lead to a better quality of life and the ability to maintain recovery (Gueta et al., 2020; Raynor et al., 2017). In addition, the use of a social network such as peer support or self-help group (Bathish et al., 2017; Best et al., 2016, 2018; Bliuc et al., 2017) is crucial to sustaining SUD recovery. Research has also indicated different types of therapies available to help individuals in SUD recovery, such as dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan & Wilks, 2015) and methadone maintenance treatment (Calcaterra et al., 2019; Fei et al., 2016). In addition to studies on contributing factors and therapies, there are empirical studies on the use of specific models, such as the Acculturation Model that was developed based on the ecological framework, the Addicted-Self Model, the Social Model, the Medical Model, Disease Model (Volkow et al., 2016), and the Transtheoretical Model (Dugdale et al., 2016), which helps guide SUD counselors to understand the influence of environment and culture on SUD recovery.

### Recovering SUD Counselors

The employment of individuals recovering from SUD as counselors originated among 12-step-program members who had become sober and wanted to help others (Nielson, 2016; White, 2006). The 12-step model that emphasized sharing SUD recovery stories with other group members was introduced by William "Bill" Griffith Wilson in 1935 (White, 2006). Studies related to using the 12-step program found that participation created a sense of belonging, increased feelings of self-value, and reinforced strategies to sustain recovery (Dermatis & Galanter, 2016). Furthermore, 12-step group members perceived helping others as personally empowering, rewarding, and therapeutic (von Greiff & Skogens, 2021). In addition, interpersonal rewards for supporting and helping other people recover from SUD increased recovery lengths of (Beraldo et al., 2019; Chick, 2015) and led to significant improvements in psychosocial adjustment and social competence (DeLucia et al., 2015).

In addition, recovering SUD counselors face multiple challenges during their work with substance-abuse clients, including burnout, high risks of relapse, and unethical dual relationships due to several factors, including occupational stress, SUD histories, and psychiatric distress (Greene et al., 2019). Additionally, a lack of support and overcommitted to work have increased the chances of relapse for counselors in SUD recovery (Doukas & Cullen, 2010; Tracy & Wallace, 2016). Finally, the development of unethical dual relationships between recovering counselors and SUD clients due to participation in the same 12-step meetings outside the agencies was highlighted as a significant past research challenge (Reamer, 2020).

Another related area that past research examined was recovering counselors' seeking and receiving social support to cope with challenges in the workplace. Participation in self-help groups (Doukas & Cullen, 2010), recovery-focused clinical supervisions (Bathish et al., 2017; Deane et al., 2019), and in-house training on self-care and organizational structures (Wile & Jenkins, 2013) were found to be essential for recovering counselors to cope with job-related stress. However, studies found that many recovering counselors were reluctant to attend support groups and were less likely to use recovery-focused supervision because they perceived that their participation might interfere with their credibility as counselors (Robinson, 2018; Warren et al., 2011).

## Theoretical Framework

This study used self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) to understand people's motivations in recovery from SUD to become counselors. Based on this theory, people who have fulfilled the basic needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy will feel inspired to pursue their life goals and work on personal development and generativity (Gaine et al., 2021). The decision to pursue life goals is based on the two types of motivations. Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's behavior or acts influenced by their internal drive, satisfaction, or sense of fulfillment, whereas extrinsic motivation is an act or behavior driven by external rewards, including fame (Bunce, 2019). In addition, Vroom (1964) introduced expectancy theory to explain motivations and rewards regarding why people choose their occupations, the quality of their work performance, and the satisfaction or rewards they expect and derive from their work. Vroom (1964) posited that people have expectations about the outcomes or rewards of their work behaviors, and they will be motivated to choose work behaviors that will help them achieve their desired outcomes.

Self-determination and expectancy theories focus on examining human motivation to pursue desired life goals. Self-determination theory maintains that people are motivated to lead a meaningful life once they have achieved a sense of fulfillment, a sense of relatedness with others, and self-autonomy. Self-determination theory, in particular, is relevant to this qualitative study because it explains the human capacity to experience active growth once they overcome roadblocks—in this study, addiction. Expectancy theory also focuses on motivation. However, this theory adds that in trying to establish a better life situation, people choose specific behaviors based on their expectations about what will lead to meaningful outcomes and valuable rewards to improve their lives. In this study, people in recovery from SUD are motivated to become counselors because they expect that this career will allow them to help others while sustaining their recovery at the same time.

## Background and Demographics of Participants

**Sampling and Sample.** Both purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. These sampling strategies were used to recruit participants from a non-profit organization in Long Island, New York. As illustrated in Table 1, the sample in the current study comprised of 18 counselors recovering from SUD, the majority of whom had a Master of Arts (MA; n = 2) or Master of Social Work (MSW; n = 10) as their highest academic qualification and had earned professional licensing—Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)—to provide counseling services to clients. In addition, six of the 18 participants reported completing high school (n = 3), Bachelor of Arts (n =1), and Bachelor of Social Work (n = 2) and had achieved the status of Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC), certifying

Table 1
*Participant demographics*

| Demographic trait | Number (N = 18) |
|---|---|
| Gender | |
| Female | 6 |
| Male | 12 |
| Ethnicity | |
| Caucasian | 10 |
| African American | 6 |
| Hispanic | 1 |
| Native American | 1 |
| Highest level of education | |
| High school | 3 |
| Bachelor of Arts (BA) | 1 |
| Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) | 2 |
| Master of Arts (MA) | 2 |
| Master of Social Work (MSW) | 10 |
| Professional licensure / credential | |
| LMSW | 6 |
| LCSW | 6 |
| CASAC | 6 |
| Type of SUD agencies | |
| Outpatient treatment | 9 |
| Inpatient treatment | 7 |
| Peer-run clinic | 2 |
| Currently attending 12-step program | |
| Yes | 13 |
| No | 5 |

them to work as counselors in the addiction treatment field. Of the 18 respondents, ten were Caucasian, six were African American, one was Hispanic, and one was Native American. Twelve were male, and six were female. Their ages ranged from 35 to 66, with a mean age of 53.6. The time spent in SUD recovery ranged from five to 38 years, with a mean of 22 years and five months, but most participants (n = 16) reported being in SUD recovery for over ten years. Twelve participants worked in the addiction treatment field for more than ten years, with tenures ranging from one to 36 years.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design

A qualitative research design provides participants with the opportunity to share their stories and use their voices and allows participants to construct their stories through their interpretation (Creswell, 2007). This study employs the research methodology of narrative inquiry to explore the motivations of people in recovery from SUD to become counselors. Because narrative inquiry views social phenomena in a broader context by focusing on the subjective meanings of participants' reality and contexts in their naturalistic settings (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), it allows study participants to construct their stories about their motivations to become SUD counselors in addiction treatment agencies through their interpretation.

### Eligibility Criteria

The sample in this study comprised counselors who had a history of SUD prior to working as counselors in addiction treatment services. The specific eligibility criteria were as follows:

1. Must be 18 years old or above and be able to understand and speak fluent English
2. Must have had a history of SUD before entering the addiction treatment field
3. Must have been in recovery from SUD for at least two years
4. Must have been working full-time for at least one year as a counselor in an addiction treatment agency

The following individuals were excluded from the sample:

1. A counselor who had relapsed in the month preceding the interview
2. Those in recovery from nicotine and/or caffeine as their primary drug of choice

### Recruitment Procedures

The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for this study for the following reasons, respectively. First, a purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants from a not-for-profit agency in Long Island, New York. This organization is well known for its active collaboration with other government agencies, treatment providers, and the public to support people in SUD recovery. Prior to recruitment, the researcher contacted the organization's executive director via email to explain the study, its goals, and objectives. The executive director, who was one of the participants in the sample, provided written formal permission for the researcher to attend the organization's monthly meetings and explain the goal and specific objectives of the study to the non-profit staff members. Interested individuals then contacted the researcher directly via email or phone to screen the potential participants to ensure they met the eligibility criteria. Those who met the criteria were asked to interview at their preferred time, date, and location. Second, the snowball sampling technique was used, wherein the researcher asked respondents who completed the interview to refer other individuals outside the non-profit agency who fit the inclusion criteria may be interested in participating in the study.

### Data Collection and Management

The researcher collected data through one in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interview with each participant. Prior to the interview, each respondent was asked to complete a short sociodemographic questionnaire. On average, the interviews lasted 72 minutes, the longest being 88 minutes. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol comprising open-ended questions to explore the motivations of recovering counselors to work in the field.

### Rigor and Triangulation of Data Sources

The peer review process was employed to assess whether the findings were consistent with the data and comported with the data to verify the credibility of the findings. The researcher presented the themes and subthemes to colleagues working as counselors in the field of substance use treatment and discussed them. All counselors confirmed that the findings were consistent with their knowledge of the field and the population. Member checking was also used to assess the validity of the findings and to provide an opportunity for participants to further elaborate upon their interview (Patsiopoulos & Buchanan, 2011). All 18 participants were contacted, and the researcher explained the member checking process. Of the 18 interviewees, six agreed to review the summary of subthemes and themes, and all six confirmed their accuracy. Transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other contexts (Nowell & Albrecht, 2019) and confirmability or the neutrality of the data, where the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by researchers' bias or interest. Transferability and confirmability of findings were maintained via triangulation of data. As suggested by Lietz et al. (2006), data were triangulated via 18 audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, as well as the researcher's reflective journal. Audio recording and the use of semi-structured interview techniques enabled the researcher to capture laughter, sighs, and sarcasm—aural aspects that could not be capture in a transcription alone. Use of a reflective journal also allowed the researcher to make observation notes and record interviewees' concerns that were expressed outside the context of the interview. A reflective journal, which records researcher's biases, values, and perspectives, can also be used to gauge the confirmability of a study (Yao & Vital, 2018).

### Data Analysis

The researcher audio-recorded all interviews with the participants' written permission, transcribed them verbatim, and then analyzed the content based on the thematic analysis (TA) method. Braun and Clarke (2014) provided six phases of TA; familiarizing yourself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing potential themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report that allows qualitative researchers to identify the participants' answers relevant to answering a particular research question (Braun & Clarke, 2014). First, the researcher read the interview transcripts to understand the data and start to think about the meanings or values that emerged from the participants' conversations. The researcher then listened and re-listened to the recorded interviews to analyze and determine the participants' meanings when answering the interview questions. In the next phase, the researchers categorized the transcribed information into codes or patterns based on the research questions. Finally, the researcher combined the identified themes to create in-depth stories about the motivations of people in recovery from SUD to work as counselors in addiction treatment agencies.

## RESULTS

After recovering from addiction to substance use, the decision to embark upon a career as an addiction counselor was significant for all study participants. Their reasons for this decision ranged from a desire to give something back to a feeling that they possessed the skills to work with substance-using populations and their own experiences with addiction staff members. The respondents also reported the role of intrinsic rewards, such as witnessing clients' progress over time and the opportunity to sustain their recovery, which influenced their decision to continue working in the addiction treatment field.

### Desire to Give Back

The majority of respondents in this study participated in a 12-step program, a mutual aid group, where members support one another to achieve and maintain recovery from SUD. These participants described experiencing a strong desire to "give back" to others seeking treatment for addiction as their primary motivation for entering the field of addiction treatment. For most study participants, the sentiment of "giving back" to those seeking recovery stemmed from the 12-step program, which emphasizes spirituality and sharing personal recovery stories to help others find their path to recovery. As a result, they felt obligated to support those in similar need, as described in the following quotation:

> *"I never [would have] got to where I am now by myself. It's because somebody else from the 12-step came along and let me know that there is life after recovery. So, they tell me you can't keep recovery unless you give it away. And now, I have an opportunity to work in [an] environment, which allows me to share my story, to give them some hope. They were doing something good for me, and now it's my obligation to give back to others."* (15 years in recovery, 14 years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

A desire to give back to help those seeking SUD recovery was also influenced by the 12-step programs' philosophy of "reaching out and helping others." As a result, participants viewed giving back as an obligation to fulfill.

A third of the study participants stressed that their determination to give back emerged from their sense of gratitude toward their recovery. They expressed manifesting their appreciation for God's work in their life by becoming counselors in the addiction treatment field to help others still struggling with addiction:

> *"So, I know why I'm here, and I am clear about that. What motivates me to work in this field is that God gave me an ability to help people. And that is how I am connecting [with] and paying back God."* (26 years in recovery, six years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

### Having the Knowledge and Skills to Become a SUD Counselor

Several respondents were pushed to think critically about the gaps in access to treatment for substance-using populations, which was the chief motivator to pursue careers as addiction counselors. One participant explained his decision:

> *"Growing up, I was involved in gangs, and I never had guidance because my father died when I was 16 years old. I never had somebody telling me, "No, you can't do that." I had to learn on my own. So, I felt that I needed to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. And part of the solution is to become a counselor*

> *and help other individuals deal with their addiction."* (29 years in recovery, 20 years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

Having gone through rigorous treatment and faced challenges to recovery and the threat of relapse, most participants strongly believed in their abilities to guide others struggling with SUD. Furthermore, they believed in their competence, skills, and insights to work as counselors helping SUD clients in the addiction treatment field. Participants' narrations also revealed that they perceived their journeys and their abilities to understand the tough battles of recovery substantively, empathize, and exhibit compassion as essential for working with SUD clients.

### Experiences with Addiction Staff Members

Positive experiences with previous addiction practitioners while receiving SUD treatment also emerged as an important motivator that had inspired five study participants to enter the addiction treatment field as counselors. For these participants, their direct-care practitioners had served as role models and vital enablers of their recovery process. As the result, they ultimately became a significant motivator to pursue a similar career, as evidenced below:

> *"One of the counselors there, I've really admired what she's done for me, and I thought it was awesome. She got me into a halfway house, and I ended up receiving a lot of support that I [had] never had for a long period. I learned so much from her, and I give her all the credit. I feel that kind of lit the fire for me to be here because I just learned so much from her."* (12 years in recovery, two years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

However, one participant described a negative encounter with a SUD counselor he perceived as "authoritative" in treatment. He felt the staff member negatively impacted his sense of hope that recovery was achievable. This negative experience served as a motivating factor for the participant to become a competent and empathic SUD treatment counselor, as depicted in the following quotation:

> *"The motivating factor for me was the way that I was treated by the counselor during treatment. The counselor yelled and screamed at me and reminded me of past life events. And it created a poor rapport between the counselor and me. So, I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't treat people the way that I was treated."* (4 years of recovery, two years of working in addiction [the] treatment field).

### Gaining Intrinsic Rewards as a SUD Counselor

All participants spoke about the intrinsic rewards of working as a counselor in the addiction treatment field. In addition, all participants described reaping emotional rewards and the happiness of witnessing their clients' progress over time, which deepened their motivation to continue working in addiction treatment agencies. The following quotation serves as an example of these feelings:

> *"I got to see the process and the progress of somebody who came in here. They were homeless and using [drugs]. And now, they c[a] me back, and they were all clean. So, you get to see all the work you do here and the people you help get better, you know? I mean, how could that not be a motivation?"* (24 years of recovery, 22 years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

Importantly, many participants reported that working in the SUD treatment field to assist clients with addiction issues provided them with another significant reward: sustaining their recovery. Working continuously with SUD clients, advising them, and helping them in their recovery process reinforced many of the participants' recoveries:

> *"I think the career anchors me in some ways because I feel like I have an obligation. This is not like another field where you could just go out and get high, and then the next day comes to work and pretend like everything is okay. That's [being] a hypocrite. I have accountability and responsibility for people. You have to practice what you preach, so to speak."* (13 years in recovery, 12 years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

Finally, many respondents stated that a significant perceived benefit was their contribution to creating better and healthier communities. Therefore, it was vital in keeping them motivated to continue their work as counselors in the substance abuse treatment field, as one respondent stated emphatically:

> *"It's the clients who come to the door that need[s] help: the next inmate who's being released from jail and has nowhere to go, the person who says he's committing a crime because his medication isn't working right. That gives me [the] motivation to get up every day and do the work to the best of my ability. And the work would never be done until we have no need for places like this anymore."* (15 years in recovery, 14 years of working in [the] addiction treatment field).

The findings revealed that people in SUD recovery are motivated to work in the addiction treatment field because of the feeling of wanting to give back, perceived self-efficacy, and prior experiences with SUD counselors that have inspired them to pursue a career in the same field. In addition, intrinsic rewards such as witnessing their clients' progress over time while providing treatment services to SUD clients influenced their decision to stay in the field.

## DISCUSSION

The findings revealed varied motivations for individuals in recovery from SUD to work as counselors in addiction treatment. A deeply ingrained desire to give back by helping others who struggle with addiction emerged as a significant motivator for many respondents in this study. Recovering SUD counselors reported that giving back was associated with altruism and self-healing from previous struggles with addiction, encouraging them to help others who are suffering. This finding aligns with the findings of other studies on the career determinants of entering the helping profession (Norcross & Farber, 2005; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005). These studies reported wanting to give back as a desirable and socially and professionally conscious motivation to enter the helping profession. The study was limited to therapists without substance abuse history; however, these therapists highlighted that the profession allowed them to embrace the altruistic motive of helping others, which was a powerful motivator to enter a mental health profession (Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017; Robinson, 2018). The present study added a new perspective by looking at counselors recovering from SUD.

The findings also highlighted the intent of those in recovery to address gaps in treatment for the SUD population as motivations to work as counselors in the addiction treatment field. These gaps comprised some people's inability to receive appropriate care due to difficulties in accessing quality SUD treatment services integrated medical care, and continued support after discharge (Gueta et al., 2020). The experiences of being marginalized and disempowered former drug users inspired the participants to empower others, consistent with a study by Farber et al. (2005).

Confidence in one's ability to guide others who struggle with addiction issues was found to be another impetus for pursuing a career in the substance abuse treatment field. In addition, participants indicated that completing rigorous addiction treatment and overcoming barriers to recovery renewed their sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their work with SUD clients. This finding echoed those of many studies (DeLucia et al., 2015; DuPont et al., 2015; Linington, 2016) that reported that people who had undergone addiction treatment and achieved long-term recovery from a SUD had high self-esteem and exhibited compassion and empathy for those who still struggled with addiction.

Finally, the therapeutic relationship respondents developed with their addiction treatment counselors served as a key motivator to follow the same career path. The present study found that previous addiction counselors served as role models and provided a sense of encouragement that recovery was possible and validation that those in recovery had the skills and potential to improve their quality of life. It was consistent with the findings of other studies on the influence of mentors or role models in the helping profession (Kern, 2014; Zosky, 2013).

Another noteworthy finding related to the motivation to pursue a career in this profession was having had negative experiences with previous SUD counselors. It aligns with prior studies that reported that, at times, unhelpful aspects influence treatment outcomes, including unskilled addiction counselors who exhibit a lack of empathy, adhere strictly to only one type of treatment, have limited knowledge regarding current drug treatments, and lack professional boundaries while treating their SUD clients (Pietkiewicz & Skowrońska-Włoch, 2017). Respondents in the current study who had prior negative experiences were determined to provide better experiences and outcomes for their clients.

## CONCLUSION

### Implications for Practice

In the context of low retention rates for SUD counselors (Hatch-Maillette et al., 2019), a better understanding of the motivations of individuals for entering the addiction treatment field as counselors will improve recruitment and retention rates among SUD counselors. In this study, most participants described the want to give back and perceived self-efficacy at helping others as motivations to become counselors. This study identifies ways to recruit future SUD counselors by explaining current counselors' motivations and rationales for choosing this profession. This field must retain counselors already in the field. Identifying the rewards of SUD counselors might also encourage others to join the field regardless of their recovery status.

### Implications for Policy

This study examines an important element for developing the SUD workforce: motivations for becoming a counselor. In the United States, workforce development is a key factor in providing quality SUD treatment services to SUD clients and their families (SAMSHA, 2018). Hiring qualified and skillful SUD counselors to address the severe impact of addiction nationwide must be a priority, especially when fatal overdose numbers in the United States surpassed those of motor-vehicle crashes (Tiesman et al., 2019). The present study found that perceived competency (i.e., knowledge and skills related to SUD) motivates people to become SUD counselors. Continuous communication between policymakers, stakeholders, counselors, and SUD researchers is needed to address the standardization of SUD counselors' credentials, licensing, and training, all of which have an influence on the development of SUD counselors' competency.

### Theoretical Implications

The self-determination theory posited that people are active beings and can grow by exploring their sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In the present study, self-determination theory was supported by respondents' decisions to work as counselors due to pursuing meaningful lives to give back and help others and to utilize their skills in and knowledge of working with the SUD population based on their prior experiences. Furthermore, the expectancy theory was supported by respondents' decision to work as counselors. They expected that the profession would allow them to help others and use their skills in and knowledge in working with the SUD population based on prior experiences.

### Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative research presents several possibilities for future explorations in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Future quantitative research can measure and explore associations between work motivation and other variables like treatment outcomes, rewards, and retention. Future research should also examine the motivations of recovering individuals who are not counselors, like nurses, physicians, and support staff, working in addiction treatment. This study found nuanced motivators, such as insights related to addiction and recovery based on previous experiences, whether positive or negative. These might offer clues about countertransference, ways to address and overcome vicarious trauma, and empathy among recovering individuals working in this field. In addition, cross-sectional and longitudinal quantitative research might be useful for measuring the features of recovering counselors' narratives, like the impact of motivation at different points in their careers. For example, suppose they are motivated to help others. In that case, it is important to investigate whether time, experience, or other potential factors such as rewards or challenges altered their motivation to continue working as addiction practitioners. Future macro-level studies can be conducted on staff recruitment and retention, staff schedules, and service hours to address heavy workloads. The importance of social support and self-care to avoid relapse must also be examined.

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# Gender and Sexual Identity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*: A Cixousian Analysis of Hijra's Resistance and Remaking of the Self

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## ABSTRACT

Hijra is a distinctive South Asia known for their gender and sexual difference and associated with their transgender and intersex identities. Otherwise known as transwomen, they are traditionally subjected to prejudices and embedded within narratives of exclusion, discrimination, and the subculture. As a result, Hijras are typically perceived as isolated, abject, and passive victims who remain social and economic peripheries. Concerning the stereotypical image of hijras, this study explores Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) to examine the novel's problematization of hijras in India. In this novel, sexual and gender non-conformity are addressed within characters desiring to be neither a man nor a woman. Drawing on Hélène Cixous's theories of inherent bisexuality and *ecriture féminine*, this study examines characters' contestations and alterations of existing definitions of sex and gender. This framework allows for a manifestation of gender flexibility and feminine writing as a tool for self-emancipation. Both protagonists Anjum and Tilo, illustrate that hijras are not predetermined but are formulated in a complex process of a conscious rewriting of the self. While the former character resists heteropatriarchal normativity through her conscious alterations of the phallogocentric structure of her Urdu language, the latter defies societal conventions of family and marriage with unorthodox views and actions that are materialized in the writing of her story.

*Keywords: Écriture féminine*, hijra, identity formation, inherent bisexuality, resistance

## INTRODUCTION

Hijra is a distinctive South Asia known for their gender and sexual difference and associated with their transgender and intersex identities. Despite recent socio-

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cultural developments in legal recognition and public reception of the community as the third gender, hijras or transwomen remain on the fringes of Indian society. Historically, hijrahood is associated with discourses of exclusion, discrimination, and the subculture, traditionally subjected to various prejudices and intolerance. The identity of a hijra is thus perceived to be that of an isolated, abject, and passive victim who is excluded from mainstream social and economic life. Over the past two decades, the growing number of ethnographic studies about hijras in India have reinforced the stereotypical image of the community (Hossain, 2012; Iesar, 2019; Islam, 2020; Lau & Mendes, 2019; Mendes & Lau, 2020; Menozzi, 2019). Relatively scant attention has been given to the active struggles of individual members of this community in realizing self and elevating their social status.

The present study focuses on the literary representation of hijras to underline individual and collective ways in which the community members redefine self by liberating themselves from the shackles of phallogocentrism of language. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017; hereafter, *TMOUH*) problematizes the heteropatriarchal definitions of sex and gender through the two leading characters of Anjum and Tilo. Both characters react against the dominant perception of gender and sexual difference by rejecting patriarchy and struggling to redefine and reassert their identities. To pursue the argument, this study employs the poststructuralist feminist Hélène Cixous's notions of inherent bisexuality and *écriture féminine* that uplift feminine subjectivity as a necessary component in understanding the subtle nuances of identity politics as depicted in the novel.

Cixous (1976) describes "other bisexuality" as having the qualities of "the feminine" and "the other" constituent elements. "The feminine" and "the other" allow for a manifestation of gender flexibility by rejecting the universalized and objectified discourse of a masculine-feminine dichotomy (Blades, 2009). Moreover, *écriture féminine* or feminine writing serves to release and materialize "the feminine" and "the other" into consciousness. It celebrates sexual difference by deconstructing and reconstructing the markings of women as negative and absent "and bring[ing] out a positiveness which might be called the living other" (Cixous, 1981, p. 50). The notion of *écriture féminine* encourages women's writing of the body and of their personal story as a strategy to legitimize their existence against the traditional male-centric writing (Hoctor, 2013). From a Cixousian perspective, the potential to embody "the feminine" and "the other" with inherent bisexuality catalyze the emergence of feminine writing as a tool for self-emancipation where such potential can be realized through the practice of feminine writing.

By analyzing the dynamics of identity formation in Roy's novel, this article contributes to the feminist critique (Asl, 2021; Butler, 2004; Mohanty, 2003; West

& Zimmerman, 2009) that calls attention to the micropolitics of subjectivity and struggle, as well as an understanding of gender as an attained attribute of situated conduct (Asl, 2018, 2019). In this sense, gender is perceived as "an accomplishment" rather than prescribed psychological and behavioral categories with biological criteria. According to West and Zimmerman, gender is conceived "as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (1987, p. 126). These divisions function as a restriction to tie socially constructed gender with biological criteria as it does to the two leading characters in the novel, both, of whom are in pursuit of freeing themselves from such restrictions and reconstructing their identity. Hence, the significance of a Cixousian framework is twofold: On the one hand, the notion of inherent bisexuality works as a fundamental concept that encourages the redefinition and reconstruction of socially assigned prescriptions of sex and gender, and on the other, the notion of *écriture féminine* functions as a platform to reflect on the micro-workings of resistance through inherent bisexuality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Contextual Background: Hijra and its Literary Representation

Hijra is a unique term used in the Indian subcontinent to refer to the third gender, intersex, and transgender community. Although hijras have mixed-gender identities, they usually adopt feminine gender roles and adorn themselves with feminine attires. Hence, the word hijra has become an exclusive marker of the identity of transgender women and not of transgender men (Kalra, 2011). The word hijra has thus been embedded specifically into the Indian culture and does not have an equivalent in the Western context, where the term transgender is employed. Although both words have similar meanings, they are underscored by "conflicting readings of transgender identity in India – between third-gendered/hijra [where gender and sex binaries are seen as belonging to an unfamiliar western, Christian framework], and those who identify under the LGBTQ umbrella on the Other" (Mendes & Lau, 2020, pp. 75-76). The Western definition leans towards the notion of transgenderism as being an individual born as the 'wrong' gender that can be 'fixed' by embodying one particular gender.

In comparison, the notion of hijra represents a new being that is neither a woman nor a man (Dutta & Roy, 2014; Mount, 2020). Although hijras have always been part and parcel of the social fabric in India, they construct a distinctive subculture that deviates from the mainstream heteronormative culture of Indian society (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2014; Asl, 2020; Hadi & Asl, 2021). Ethnographical studies (Parikh-Chopra, 2018; Rao, 2017; Sibsankar, 2018) reveal that unfavorable social, cultural, and political conditions have pushed this community to the margins producing victims of social stigma and discrimination that exacerbate their poverty and illiteracy and restrict employment opportunities.

Hijras' life experiences and the complexity of their identity formation have been translated into literary works. However, the extent of their literary appearances is mostly exclusive to works within the circle of the intended genre. Ramos (2018) states that hijra literature, which delves into the narratives of hijra's experience, is a recent and evolving literary genre in India that focuses on breaking the stereotypical perception of the group. In terms of literary representation, Newport (2018) notes that the traditional works that feature hijra characters have often contextualized their lewd and aggressive representations against economic poverty and hardship. He states that in recent studies on hijra literature, the emphasis has shifted to illustrating the state of transformation between the old and the new ways by implying the inevitable death of traditions that subjugate hijras and placing the hijra community at the center of it. Contemporary portrayals of hijra accentuate the common and personal experiences where such values are embedded into the contextual place and time. Similarly, in Arundhati Roy's *TMOUH*, individual and collective experiences are interdependent in the identity construction of hijra characters (Mendes & Lau, 2020; Menozzi, 2019). In this regard, Cixous's subjective explorations of other bisexuality and *écriture féminine* allow for a more comprehensive understanding of gender identity and self-definition, particularly in making possible the deconstruction of binaries and rewriting of one's destiny. In other words, reconstruction of binaries becomes a process through which the rewriting of self becomes the site of reworking of their life.

## The Conceptual Background: Cixous's Inherent Bisexuality and *Écriture Féminine*

At the crux of the Cixousian framework is a rejection of biological and essentialist interpretations of sex and gender that allows for a simultaneous embodiment of the masculine and the feminine. As a poststructuralist feminist influenced by psychoanalysis, the primary goal of Cixous is to rewrite heteropatriarchal normativity and dichotomies and underline the existence of subjective "masculine" and "feminine" within selves. In pursuing this focal aim, Cixous has developed the notion of "inherent bisexuality," which provides the basis for the materialization of "*écriture féminine*" or female writing.

Cixous (1976) defines inherent bisexuality as an abstraction of the self, infused with the production of a desire for permission to embody the masculine and the feminine simultaneously. The term is developed to work as an unorthodox means to unveil the possibilities of gender beyond the liability of physical aspects. Through this concept, the physical attributes are pushed aside to a secondary level as the sexual difference is not measured at "the level of possession or absence of the penis/phallus, but at the level of *jouissance*" (Shiach, 1991, p. 23) or sexual pleasure. Similar to Cixous' concept of inherent bisexuality through which it is an abstraction, jouissance is the "irrepresentable 'other' within the body" (Baitinger, 2019, p. 14), and the unpredictable. As Cixous (1976) explains, inherent bisexuality can be understood as,

> variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or one sex and, from this 'self-permission,' multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body. (p. 884)

Due to the ambiguous nature of this idea, an individual may facilitate the implications of the masculine and the feminine within themselves and abolish the conventional hierarchy of sexual difference. Cixous does not simplify inherent bisexuality as a "reversal of the binary terms -- by valorising feminine sexuality over the phallic" (Bagchi, 2015, p. 81). Instead, her notion suggests the potential to navigate the two existing sides and to embrace them as one. Thus, rather than being about the neutrality of gender (neither masculine nor feminine), bisexuality implies a simultaneous existence of both masculine and feminine behavioral traits within a self. According to Cixous, every human being contains the elements of masculine and feminine traits, and that the ability to maintain co-presence within the self is regarded as feminine capacity (Hall, 2003; Hewson, 2001; Kirkley, 2013; Spanfelner, 2007). In her introduction to bisexuality, Cixous clarifies that this disparity is because male sexuality is hyper-emphasized to almost excluding the female body and desire. She continues that it is rare for men to be able to "exceeds phallic authority, and where the subjectivity inscribing its effects becomes feminine" (2003, p. 43). However, gaining equilibrium of masculinity and femininity is achievable through "self-permission" by resisting phallogocentric language and connecting to the feminine self in the site of writing, regardless of one's sex or/and gender. This variation of the state of bisexuality demonstrates the potential breakthrough of an individual from the binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine, which are help analyze the characters in Roy's novel.

Additionally, Cixous elaborates that what she calls "'feminine' and 'masculine' is the relationship to pleasure, the relationship to spending, because we are born into language, and I cannot do otherwise than to find myself before words; we cannot get rid of them, they are there" (2003, p. 132). Therefore, one can only uncover the layers of possibilities of language through deconstruction and reconstruction by exhausting its potentials and using them to one's advantage. Through writing, language becomes a tool by which discovery and recovery of sexual difference for transgression or/and transformation can be accomplished. Cixous asserts that "writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me" (1986,

p. 85). Therefore, the practice of writing is vital as it allows for the realization of the feminine through a redefinition of language. Generally, the purpose of *écriture féminine* is to invent a feminine way of writing, a language, where patriarchal binary schemes are subverted (Ramshaw, 2003) as writing is predominantly a male tradition imbued with patriarchal ideology.

As Cixous clarifies, *écriture féminine*'s deconstructive role elevates the manifestation of the darker side of the human psyche as a positive force: "her art of living her abysses, of loving them, of making them sing, change, resounding their air with the rhythms of her earth tongues" (2003, p. 59). From Lacanian perspective, the term implies the invalidation of "the idea of desire as negative, founded on lack, separation and death" (p. 22). In other words, *écriture féminine* views desire as a positive response that brings changes through the valorization of these suppressed elements by validating them as part of the self. It becomes an avenue that honors and glorifies the feminine by creating a space where the multiplication of subjective feminine desires can dismantle patriarchal values and reconnect with the feminine. Cixous's *écriture féminine* is an approach to writing that highlights fearlessness, unpredictability, and transformation. It comes forth as "'living water', ever-growing and spreading; fearless: for how can the sea be afraid of the land it is blanketing, enveloping?" (Ramshaw, 2003, p. 25). In other words, *écriture féminine* is a style of writing that is ever-spreading and ever-continuous in its movement, just like 'living water', persistently challenging the limit with its adaptability and flexibility. It ascertains a space that is ever-expansive and can also be associated with the maternal aspects of feminine excess (Farahbakhsh & Bozorgi, 2013). Cixous stresses that *écriture féminine* equates feminine subjectivity and abundance to a metaphorical mother, always giving and not barren: "no need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother" (1986, p. 64). In this quote, the father that Cixous refers to is the physical father, and not the concept of the man with his "authority" and "his torment, his desire to be (at) origin" (pp. 64-65). Following this, the rewriting of identity of the characters in the novel can be made possible through their fearlessness to embrace the essence of the m(other), for it is possible regardless of sex and gender. The characteristic strength of *écriture féminine* lies in its ability to dismantle patriarchal language and redefine the subjective notions of sex and gender.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to interrogate the oversimplified representations of hijras as subjugated victims of heteropatriarchal normativity and underline the individuals' active engagement in redefining the established prescriptions of gender and sex instead. Two key objectives are to be pursued in the present study of the selected novel to achieve this focal aim: first, to explore the ways hijra characters challenge and resist heteropatriarchal prescriptions of sex and gender; second, to examine the various acts of rewriting, redefining and reasserting the self. The two objectives will help better understand the importance of deconstructing heteropatriarchal prescriptions of sex and gender and reconstructing the self through individual experiences.

### Methodology

The study employs a Cixousian theoretical approach—a poststructuralist feminist perspective—to analyze the novel *TMOUH*. First, a close reading of the novel examines the fictional representations of hijras' everyday practices of dismantling and reconstructing definitions of self. Hence, the primary method of data collection will be a textual analysis of the novel and the focus of the analysis will be on the two leading characters Anjum and Tilo. The main arguments will be supported with evidence extracted from the novel in accordance to Cixous' theories for a comprehensive analysis of the text-based study.

### Material

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) recommends itself for this study as its subject matter revolves around sexual and gender non-conformity of characters who want to be neither an "ordinary" man nor an "ordinary woman" (Roy, 2017, p. 18). The novel is widely accepted as a significant contribution to the rising interest in the "hyper (in) visibility" of hijras in India that seek to antagonize the dominant perception of the community as an object of curiosity and underline the normality of their ontological existence instead. It means that for hijras, the state of being, in reality, is not different at a fundamental level but at the very experience that shapes their place within the country. Furthermore, a defining feature of the novel is that even though it is a fictional representation of the community, the characters are "entangled in real, contemporary historical events" (Menozzi, 2019, p. 23). It encompasses the events in Delhi to Kashmir where India and Pakistan wage war for Line of Control, which makes the study's findings rooted in actual historical circumstances.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion focuses on the two characters Anjum and Tilo. It interprets their idiosyncratic approaches in deconstructing and reconstructing prescribed notions of gender and identity through Cixous' inherent bisexuality and *écriture féminine*.

### Resisting Heteropatriarchal Normativities

Anjum's physical circumstance and her socially prescribed identity as a hijra is a tangible manifestation of the Cixousian notion of inherent bisexuality or other bisexuality. The inherent bisexuality refers to the co-existence of the masculine and the feminine as the necessary condition of Cixous' bisexual model (Cixous, 1976). Anjum can be read as a character that corresponds to both the concept's physical and abstract representations. She is explained at the beginning as "a rare example of a Hermaphrodite, with both male and female characteristics, though outwardly, the male characteristics appeared to be more dominant" (Roy, 2017, p. 27). Anjum's appearance leans more towards the male in her youth, but her substantial femaleness may be more apparent in other aspects besides her exterior self. It can be seen through her interest in singing, which is traditionally associated with femininity: "[s]he had a sweet, true singing voice and could pick up a tune after hearing it just once" (p. 19), and she never missed the singing class. For this reason, the expression of her desires can be demonstrated to the real world, not in the singular forms of male/female and masculine/feminine, but the form of hers alone. Anjum belongs to a world outside of humankind's order and hence cannot be subjected to patriarchal normativity by being in this position.

Anjum's biological condition as having both male and female sexual parts makes her a perfect example of the inherent bisexuality. Even though the concept of sexual difference that Cixous reflects on is not of anatomical differences but morphological ones, she acknowledges that limiting thinking through sexual difference (i.e. 'man' and 'woman') is inevitable (Farahbakhsh & Bozorgi, 2013). Because of this, Anjum's exclusion from the categorization serves as an advantage from Cixous' standpoint. As a Cixousian bisexual, her identity is shaped through her corporeal experience, which is unique to herself and not generalizable to any sex and/or gender. However, due to the growing need to attain a female exterior, the presence of her male genitalia creates a conflict in her character. It was largely an issue of the physical aspect of which she is aware from the beginning—i.e., when she was still called by her male birth name, Aftab, and she sees a hijra from the balcony of his home, which attracts her interest. Anjum decides to follow her for she is the closest to whom Anjum desires to be: "The woman Aftab followed could only dress as she was dressed and walk the way she did because she was not a woman. Whatever she was, Aftab wanted to be her" (Roy, 2017, p. 30). Here, Anjum demonstrates a contradiction to her acknowledgment of a 'woman' by viewing the stranger as a woman who is not a woman, but a person, someone who dresses as a woman the way Anjum herself desires to become. While the existence of such persona is not aligned with the conventions of gender and sex as being neither men nor women, it helps to clarify Anjum's interpretation of identity.

Anjum expresses fear for a male body and a longing for a body that is not a male but close to anything a woman can be. In other words, she desires to embrace a new identity as a hijra and forsake the male identity she was born with. The reality of puberty is complicated for Anjum for "he developed an Adam's apple that bobbed up and down [...] his voice broke. A deep, powerful man's voice appeared in place of his sweet, high voice" (Roy, 2017, p. 38). Feeling betrayed by her own body, "he grew quiet, and would speak only as a last resort [...] he stopped singing" (p. 38). Later, after she transitioned from a male to a hijra, while her voice "frightened other people […] it did not frighten its owner in the way her God-given one had" (p. 46). To subdue the turmoil that she experiences, Anjum starts grooming herself with feminine attire to accentuate her handsome features and "[her] outrageous kind of femininity" (p. 42) once she begins living as a hijra at Khwabgah. By embodying the other bisexuality, "she does not annihilate differences but cheers them on, pursues them" (Cixous, 1986, p. 85). As emphasized in the novel, it is the inherent femaleness that she wants to transcribe into her body and not merely her "girl-part that was just an appendage" (p. 31). Hence, her girl-part serves only as an attribute that connects to the more predominant accumulated feminine desires inside her to embody the feminine.

However, the novel's issues of sex and gender arise mainly due to a pattern of established binaries. The novel initiates a prominent conflict about Anjum's gender identity from the beginning when her mother, Jahanara Begum, named her Aftab, later dreadfully realizing that Anjum owns both the boy-part and the girl-part. Jahanara's inability to consider sex and gender outside the language barrier is the root of this problem. Cixous states that we could impose changes to the language, but it "would become just as closed, just as immobile and petrifying as the words 'masculine' and 'feminine' and would lay down the law to us" (2003, p. 132). During the earlier phase of her life, Anjum's identity is constructed within the limitation of language used by the people around her. When she is born, the midwife states that Anjum is a male baby. Driven by logocentrism, this fear develops because the only language Jahanara knows—i.e., Urdu—abides by the rule that "all things, not just living things…carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments…[have] a gender" (Roy, 2017, p. 13).

Even though there are words to describe Anjum—Hijra, and Kinnar [the term for hijras in north India], for example—she deduces that "two words do not make a language" (Roy, 2017, p. 14). In this case, Urdu limits Jahanara's perception of the world and denies her the potentials that can be realized outside of the language. Because of this, she fails to detach her situation from the language, which affects Anjum's childhood. Hence, the existing binaries in language are more likely to be detrimental as she cannot adapt to these standards of sex and gender. Failure to resist this condition results in the formation of a self that is continually confined by patriarchal reasoning. Anjum's biological father, Mulaqat Ali, is an example of a community constrained by the traditional structure of language, which is embedded within him that he fails to liberate himself. Hence, while Mulaqat Ali's dependence on language may provide strength, it can also disrupt any means to extract and emancipate oneself. The main reason for Mulaqat Ali's shortcoming is his belief that "everything that happened had happened before. That it had already been written, sung, commented upon and entered into history's inventory.

That nothing new was possible" (p. 25). As a result, he remains a conventional character ruled by patriarchy molded by the law of language, which cannot open himself to Cixous's concept of other bisexuality.

In contrast to her parents, Anjum can liberate herself from the heteronormative fetters of language and reconcile with her masculine and feminine self. As she materializes the feminine through conscious efforts of resisting the patriarchal structure of language, Anjum can be regarded as a bisexual model from the Cixousian perspective. For instance, when she hears the love story of Laila and Majnun, she says, "I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing" (p. 8). Here, when she disregards the existing rules by challenging the relationship between language and herself, she asserts a self-assurance by blurring the boundary of fixed meanings in language—i.e., being 'everybody and nobody' and 'everything and nothing'. Anjum adheres to Cixous' emphasis that because one cannot get rid of language, the only thing one can do is to use and exhaust it to benefit one's position (Kimmey, 2003). In this relation, Anjum does not subscribe to phallogocentrism but affirms a novel and authentic pleasure of what Cixous calls 'spending' the language or using language in whichever way she sees fit. Anjum places herself at the heart of it and makes it hers, and in so doing, emancipates herself from phallogocentrism of language.

Another central character who resists heteropatriarchal discourses is a woman named Tilo, who similarly embodies Cixous's ideal of inherent bisexuality. Cixous states that bisexuality is "a fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference insofar as this is perceived as the mark of a mythical separation" (1986, p. 84). This "fantasy of a complete being," is then manifested into reality, through which the state of bisexuality is successfully embodied. When Tilo is introduced in the novel through her male friend Biplap's narration, she is depicted as neither a woman nor a man. As we are told, Tilo "wore no make-up and did nothing---none of those delightful things girls do [...] she had a way of standing, with her weight on the balls of her feet, her shoulders squared, that was almost masculine, and yet wasn't" (Roy, 2017, p. 232). Even her way of dressing and mannerism reflect her essentially peculiar self. On different occasions, she wears "a printed, oversized man's shirt that didn't seem to belong to her" (p. 233), or "a purple sari and a black-and-white-checked blouse, a shirt actually [...] her hair…short enough for it to look spiky" (p. 285). In terms of her mannerism, there is "complete absence of a desire to please, or to put someone at ease" (p. 234). She has a "haughtiness" that "had to do with the way she lived, in the country of her own skin" (p. 327).

In addition, Tilo embodies a presence that is free of the rules and the laws of the world, a self that is not bound by the existing patriarchal structure but is existing within the realm of reality at the same time. It became evident when "she gave the impression that she had somehow slipped off her leash. As though she was taking herself for a walk while the rest of us were being walked—like pets" (Roy, 2017, p. 234). These instances show Tilo's high confidence and certainty, typical of a liberated self that does not align with patriarchal standards. Ultimately, the image created from these various traits is novel, making Tilo a character who cannot be pinned down to stereotypical feminine and masculine characters. Hence, she manifests Cixous's inherent bisexuality with the ambiguity in representing herself to others.

In addition, Tilo is depicted as a highly independent woman unaffected by the norms and in a state of rewriting her life, which adheres to Cixous's *écriture féminine*. The theory emphasizes a place, somewhere else, where there is an escape from the doomed repetition of patriarchal binaries and where writing enables dreams and the creation of new worlds (Cixous, 1986). From this perspective, Tilo is a typical Cixousian woman as she construes living not through the lens of the existing world but one that is hers alone. Among the most prominent examples are her personal views about family and marriage. From early on, and while she has a mother, Tilo's life prevents her from belonging to the ordinary family as she is "a girl who didn't seem to have a past, a family, a community, a people, or even a home" (Roy, 2017, p. 236). It is most likely due to the peculiar nature of her relationship with her mother, between whom abandonment has become the first tangible relation. It is revealed that "her mother was indeed her real mother, but had first abandoned her and then adopted her" (p. 235).

However, because she is not attached to the traditional idea of a family, Tilo favors finding and inventing a distinctive approach to connect to different people outside of the norms. It is also due to the lack of knowledge of her roots that result in Tilo's "individuality, her quirkiness and unusualness" (Roy, 2017, p. 362). She remains single as "she wanted to be free to die irresponsibly, without notice and for no reason" (p. 242). Here, Tilo displays her strong desire not to be tied to marital laws and regulations in shaping her life's destiny. Following this, her decision for abortion when she becomes pregnant is driven by the primal desire to avoid inflicting her recklessness by birthing her child into the time of war and into a time when she cannot provide for the child. She disassociates the decision from the men in her life—Naga, her husband, and Musa, the father of the aborted child—as it "had nothing to do with her feelings for Naga or her love for Musa" but because "she did not wish to inflict herself on a child. And she did not wish to inflict a replication of herself on the world" (p. 584) as did her mother, Maryam, to her. This action is customarily viewed as taboo, but Tilo has used it to enable her to establish control in the face of predetermined destiny. In this way, Tilo rewrites her fate by defying the societal conventions of family and marriage with her views and actions. In remaining indifferent to patriarchy and true to herself, she materializes the writing of her story.

### Redefinition of the Self

Having rejected heteropatriarchal values, both Anjum and Tilo attempt to forge a new truth for their selves by writing an alternate progression of their stories. For Anjum, her search begins when she meets other hijras living at Khwabgah or the House of Dreams. Initially, she did not know of the existence of hijras. During this phase of her life, when she learns about the community, she is given a chance to question and embrace the term as part of her authentic self. Because she is restricted within her own space at home, she finds solace in the space of Khwabgah, where she feels most validated by the existence of other people similar to herself: "it was the only place in his world where he felt the air made way for him" (Roy, 2017, p. 31). Despite the condition of the house that is "ordinary, broken-down," Anjum experiences it "as though he were walking through the gates of paradise" (p. 32). When Anjum frequents this place, she is already at the start of her journey of rewriting her life to realize a potential fulfillment of the self. Subsequently, the body modification that follows later comes as a requirement to verify this desire. In other words, Anjum can rewrite her predestined fate by altering the body given to her to come closer to finding her true self.

Additionally, Cixous's *écriture féminine* can be deeply utilized in understanding and interpreting Anjum's biggest desire and motivation in *TMOUH* to be a mother. Cixous (1991) speaks of the nurture and kindness of a mother to an all-encompassing form of love. From her perspective, a mother has always been associated with "the other," m(other): "she who kills no one in herself, she who gives (herself) her own lives: a woman, is always in a certain way ''mother'' for herself and the Other" (Cixous, 1991, p. 50). Being a mother may be regarded as the pinnacle of Anjum's happiness in life, the final and conclusive condition that would perhaps complete and set herself at peace. She has first established this when she welcomes Zainab, a foster child, into her life: "she wanted to be a mother, to wake up in her own home, dress Zainab in a school uniform…" (Roy, 2017, p. 47). She has also loved Zainab strongly as any mother does her child: "Zainab was Anjum's only love" (p. 47). Cixous' *écriture féminine* is an approach that emphasizes the abundance of feminine desires and validates them as positive forces (Farahbakhsh & Bozorgi, 2013). Based on this, Anjum's decision can be viewed as a result of accumulation and acceptance of her desires to own her identity as a woman and a mother. The presence of the child appeases the war within Anjum that an inhabitant of Khwabgah, Nimmo Gorakhpuri, has referred to as the war 'Indo-Pak' and triggers Anjum's instinctual feminine capacity: "... the tiny creature subdued (for a moment at least) what Nimmo Gorakhpuri had so astutely and so long ago called Indo-Pak [...] Her body felt like a generous host instead of a battlefield" (Roy, 2017, p. 48).

Here, the initial doubts and conflicts of self have washed away the moment Anjum is given the smallest experience of something inherently motherly.

Furthermore, along the process of 'becoming' a mother, Anjum rewrites the stories of her life in the name of love. Her love and desire can be translated through the Cixousian notion of *écriture féminine* as a style that is ever-spreading as much as it is fearless and whimsical (Ramshaw, 2003). Anjum demonstrates a state of certainty and capacity for love towards Zainab: "she was caught unawares by the fact that it was possible for one human being to love another so much and so completely" (Roy, 2017, p. 50). She then instills the act of rewriting in the stories that she tells Zainab as a bedtime story which involves transforming them in the process for the sincerity and pleasure of love for another being. The novel illustrates that "in order to please Zainab, Anjum began to rewrite a simpler, happier life for herself. The rewriting, in turn, began to make Anjum a simpler, happier person" (p. 54). While the rewriting of her life that Anjum incorporated is tempered to make the bedtime stories childproofed, there is an element of truth. Anjum's storytelling is grounded with the need to "transfuse herself into Zainab's memory and consciousness, to reveal herself without artifice, so that they could belong to each other completely" (p. 51). This narration adheres to the very idea of *écriture féminine* that acknowledges feminine capacity as inexhaustible, all-encompassing, and all-consuming. Hence, the writing and rewriting of Anjum's life in her stories correlate with the motherly love for a child that she intends to translate as being an essence of her self-imbued into her child.

In addition, it is necessary to highlight Anjum's perseverance in finding and establishing a self or identity through feminine writing. As stated, the condition for Anjum to possibly reach her ultimate destiny is by becoming a mother, a state that completes the identity and self she fights for. It is exhibited by the utter faith in her and her destined fate: "I was born to be a mother [...] Just watch. One day Allah Mian will give me my own child. That much I know" (Roy, 2017, p. 130). In this relation, *écriture féminine* is used to redefine the subjective notions of sex and gender by dismantling patriarchal language and infusing one's truth (Ramshaw, 2003). The word mother, which is traditionally associated with woman is subverted by Anjum's insistence on the nuance it carries, which in turn creates a new avenue for embodying the genuine essence of 'mother.' For instance, it becomes apparent in a later incident through an abandoned child that Anjum's definition of mother is not predetermined by its constructed meaning, but is characterized by an instinctive sense of fierce love and protectiveness. In exchange, those feelings serve to solidify Anjum's true purpose: "there was something unleashed about her, something uncalibrated and yet absolutely certain---a sense of destiny perhaps," and to tame her: "she's a gift from God. Give her to me. I can give her the love she needs" (pp. 183-184). While the child has awakened Anjum's ferocious desire to fight for instinctual love, the child also settles into Anjum's life as a physical form of solace and fulfillment of her destiny. Therefore, the rewriting of Anjum's self is made possible by the persistence to establish her identity.

Similarly, Tilo weaves her story through the metaphorical act of rewriting her identity as a mother. In contrast to Anjum, Tilo's journey to realize her identity as a mother is a deliberate process. While she decides to have an abortion when she finds her unwanted pregnancy as a hindrance to her current situation, she later reclaims and embodies the identity of a woman and a mother by adopting a child that is not her own. As we are told, "she had no idea why she of all people, who never wanted children, had picked up the baby and run" (Roy, 2017, p. 388). The instinctive act of taking a parentless baby under her care just after the voluntary termination of her pregnancy can be translated into an act of rewriting her life. As suggested in the narration, "her part in the story had been written. But not by her […] Someone" (p. 388). It implies a shift in her and her destiny. Regardless of how or by whom Tilo's story is rewritten, it's implication adheres to Cixous's *écriture féminine* that honors the overflowing of love in all of its unpredictability and fearlessness. Change is necessarily an element that brings forth her new destiny and reshapes her story based on her love for a child. The statement that comes after is a reflection of this event, "If you like, you can change every inch of me. I'm just a story" (p. 388). It alludes to the nature of a self that is always changeable as a story is. In other words, it means to place Tilo's life as the site of writing and rewriting of the self in a sense that resembles the writing and rewriting of a story and that the liberty of the act is dependent upon anyone and anything. Here, Tilo's situation resonates with what Cixous emphasizes as the possibility that "the crucial scene had been set up [for me] in a previous story, outside [me], outside the room. Thus, [what I took for] the beginning was nothing but the final revelation" (Cixous, 2003, p. 73). It can be equated as a metaphorical representation of Tilo's rewriting of destiny to re-characterize her identity as a mother, through which her story is rewritten upon the arrival of the parentless baby.

The act of writing in Tilo's life sanctions the formulation of identity as a mother and a daughter. *Écriture Féminine* has always been associated with a woman's relationship to "motherhood" (Cixous, 1991), of the generosity of love she instills into her child. Since the beginning, Tilo has had a problematic relationship with her mother, Maryam Ipe, due to the latter's refusal to acknowledge Tilo as her real daughter publicly. From an outsider perspective like her husband's, Maryam has made a reasonable decision, because "for a young woman who belonged to a traditional community to have chosen a life of independence, chosen to eschew marriage in order to claim a child born to her out of wedlock […] was an act of immense love" (Roy, 2017, p. 361). However, Tilo remains unforgiving until after Maryam's death and when Tilo has her adopted daughter. Near the end of the novel, Tilo brings forth her late mother's ashes in a small pot to be buried in the graveyard: "The church had refused to bury her mother, so any prayers would do" (p. 615). It is a way of parting between a daughter and a mother she has grown to resent but has now been forgiven and put to rest. That the realization dawns on her come at the cost of embracing her own rewritten identity as a woman and a mother in the time of war. The war, which can be a literal and/or metaphorical representation, has reshaped and instilled into Tilo a newly fathomed expression of self and identity. As highlighted, "she had never understood why her mother […] loved this manly, soldierly, warlike passage. But she had. When Tilo opened her eyes […] she was weeping" (p. 617). This realization marks the loss as the birth of a new self where the barest essence of feminine desire is understood, forging an intimate connection where a profound understanding is reached between a woman and another woman. Thus, it subverts the association of desire with separation and death found in a Lacanian perspective. Meanwhile, it elevates Cixous's *écriture féminine* that outlines it as perhaps the most "violently real" and "faithfully natural" force (Ramshaw, 2003, p. 26). In this manner, the redefinition of Tilo's self and identity is achieved through the comprehension and rewriting of the meaning of a daughter and a mother, to see that being a mother is not selfish but an immense act of courage and love.

## CONCLUSION

This study employed Hélène Cixous's notions of other bisexuality and *écriture féminine* to examine the complex nuances of hijras or intersexes' identity formation in Arundhati Roy's *TMOUH.* The analysis focused on Anjum and Tilo's individual struggles to interrogate heteropatriarchal prescriptions and reconstruct a new definition of the self. Both characters resist against the existing sex and gender binaries in the Indian culture. Anjum liberates herself from the restricting and excluding binaries in Urdu language and exploits it to her own advantage. In a like manner, Tilo's embracing of feminine desires allows her to reassess and reconstruct her identity without being subjected to the imposed static binaries. In this regard, the rewriting of self and identity is made possible through a conscious realization of the subjective feminine experiences. Anjum's and Tilo's individual struggles against established norms provides unique insight into the more subjective and personalized experiences that come with experiences of loss, separation, and death. While these notions are often characterized as negative, they permit the realization of the barest desires and reassign them as positive and essential forces in reconstructing one's sense of self. In embracing their identity as a hijra/woman and a mother, both characters go through a continuous process of writing and rewriting. The identity shifts are justified through Cixous's *écriture féminine* which considers the transformations as the necessary condition to the feminine excess as well as to their liberation of their selves from a fixed condition of socially construct gender identity. In spite of predetermined fate, the alternatives that are writing and rewriting of destiny taken to respond to it form the characters' identity. Though Anjum does not have the biological criteria to become a mother, she defines her identity through a capacity of fierce and protective love for children. Likewise, Tilo's identity as a woman and a mother is achieved through understanding, acceptance, and compensation of motherly love. In this manner, both Anjum and Tilo illustrate that the identity of a hijra/woman and a mother is not predetermined by sex and gender but is formulated in a complex process of conscious rewriting of the self.

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# Gender Norms and Gender Inequality in Unpaid Domestic Work among Malay Couples in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores how gender norms rooted in culture and religion influence gender inequality among Malay couples in Malaysia. Studies on the unbalanced division of unpaid domestic work are pivotal because they negatively affect women's economic status, well-being and life. Many studies have indicated that gender inequality in the division of household labour persists even after accounting for paid work time and resources, suggesting that gender norms lead to the unequal division in unpaid domestic work. By using gender perspective as the theoretical perspective, this study explores how men and women behave according to cultural and religious defined gender roles and are expected to behave as such. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Malay couples in Malaysia. The study suggests that women shoulder a disproportionate amount of housework and childcare due to the cultural and religious gender norms that foster the prescribed roles, emphasising men's role as the primary breadwinners and women's role as the homemakers. This study highlights that gender norms rooted in culture and religion plays vital roles in creating gender inequality among Malay couples. Moreover, this study adds support to the gender perspective that not only gender role ideology matter, but also highlights that religiosity matters when accounting for gender norms in Malay society. This study implies that recognising the importance of cultural and religious gender norms around domestic work as women's work is crucial in narrowing the gender gap in unpaid domestic work.

*Keywords:* Gender inequality, gender norms, Malaysia, unpaid domestic work

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, unpaid domestic work, including housework and childcare, has been shouldered by women rather than men in Malaysia despite increases in

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women's educational attainment and labour force participation (Choong et al., 2019; Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the United Nations, 2014). Studies on housework in Malaysia have generally found that women are responsible for most of the housework, whereas men spend less time on it (Boo, 2018; Choong et al., 2019; Jamil et al., 2018). Studies on childcare in Malaysian families have generally suggested that mothers spend significantly more time on childcare than fathers (Boo, 2018; Choong et al., 2019; Juhari et al., 2013). Hence, these conclusions suggest that gender inequality in unpaid domestic work, where the proportion of time spent is disaggregated by gender, exists in Malaysian families. In this study, gender inequality refers to the social process by which individuals experience unequal treatment or perceptions based on their gender (Adams, 2017; Wood, 2014). In this context, gender inequality means women are experiencing unequal treatment in their households because of their gender despite their educational attainment and labour force participation.

Studies on unpaid domestic work are pivotal because the unequal division of household labour negatively affects women's economic status, well-being and life in general. For example, women who devote more time to unpaid domestic work are more likely to earn lower incomes than men (Choong et al., 2019). In addition, performing housework and childcare is a burden, especially for married working women, because they often must work a 'second shift' (Choong et al., 2019). Women are expected to perform housework and childcare at home after completing paid employment (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Moreover, women who struggle to balance work and family responsibilities are more likely to experience negative well-being (N. N. A. Aziz et al., 2016, 2018). Due to the burden and difficulties of balancing work and family responsibilities, most women chose family responsibilities as the main reason as to why they were unemployed (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019).

Studies in Malaysia have suggested that women's paid work hours and income are two critical factors in narrowing the gender gap in the division of household labour among heterosexual couples (Boo, 2018). It means that husbands increase their share of housework and childcare when their wives spend more time engaging in paid work and have higher incomes than they do. In addition, Choong et al. (2019) suggested that income classes influence women's time spent on unpaid domestic work, i.e. women in higher-income classes spent less time on unpaid domestic work than women in lower-income classes (Choong et al., 2019).

Even after accounting for paid work hours and income, gender inequality persists in Malaysian households (Boo, 2018). Very few studies suggest that gender inequality at home may be related to gender norms in Malaysia (Juhari et al., 2013) and globally (Ferrant et al., 2014; Kaufman, 2014; Stratton, 2020; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] & Promundo, 2018) which could explain why gender inequality in households remains. In this study, gender norms are the expectations that determine and regulate appropriate behaviour for women and men in societies (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). For example, women are the homemakers and do unpaid domestic work; whereas, men are the breadwinners and do not do unpaid domestic work. Norms allow men not to do housework and childcare. For men, being responsible for unpaid domestic work is not socially acceptable in many societies and is considered against the norms (UNFPA & Promundo, 2018), which places women in a disadvantaged position in families and reinforces gender inequality in the households over generations.

In the context of the Malay family structure in Malaysia, such gender norms are often emphasised in Malay culture and also embedded in Islamic teachings that men are the primary providers, protectors and heads of families (Ismail & Hamjah, 2012; Osman, 2013; Sukri & Shasrini, 2020) and women are responsible for the husband, children and housework. Thus, employed Malay women are supposed to put family first and work second, even when they make a financial contribution to the household (Abdullah et al., 2008; Noor, 1999). As a result, women and men are socialised into socially and culturally defined roles: women are expected to perform most unpaid work. Men are expected to play the backup role because their primary role is being the breadwinners. Hence, because of the prescribed backup role defined by gender norms, men only engage in unpaid work when they have free time or when requested by their spouses. In short, gender norms become a barrier to achieving gender equality in households if women and men behave according to culture and religion prescribed roles (Kaufman, 2014; UNFPA & Promundo, 2018). It should be highlighted that prescribed roles embedded in the cultural gender norms, with the traditional model of the man as breadwinner and women as a homemaker, are similar to the prescribed roles in religious gender norms embedded in the Islamic teachings: women's duties in unpaid domestic work and men's duties in providing for and protecting their families. Both cultural and religious gender norms encourage women and men to take on different roles based on their gender.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Three theoretical perspectives dominate the empirical literature on unpaid domestic work: (1) time availability, (2) relative resources and (3) gender perspectives. The time availability perspective argues that the gender division of household labour is based on a rational decision of who has more time for household work (Coverman, 1985). This perspective suggests that paid work hours reduce the time available for unpaid domestic work. One spouse will perform more unpaid domestic work than the other spouse if the latter does not have time to perform unpaid domestic work, regardless of gender. Most studies have found that women reduce their time spent in housework and childcare when they engage in paid employment (Bianchi et al., 2000; Boo, 2018; Craig & Brown, 2017).

Next, the relative resources perspective argues that the division of household labour is a rational process leading to a 'fair' exchange between couples (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). This perspective suggests that power dynamics shape the division of household labour between partners based on the relative resources that each brings into the household. Studies have demonstrated a positive association between income resources and time spent on household work (Boo, 2018; Carlson & Lynch, 2017).

However, even after accounting for paid work time and income resources in the division of household labour, full-time working women report that they perform more unpaid work than their spouses do (Bittman et al., 2003; Sayer, 2016). Scholars have argued that gender matters most in explaining the unequal division of household labour (Bianchi et al., 2000; Coltrane, 2000). The gender perspective argues that men and women are socialised into male and female gender roles through socialisation and are expected to behave based on the gender norms (Cunningham, 2001; Epstein & Ward, 2011).

In addition to the socialisation of gender norms, the gender perspective argues that individuals' gender role ideology also matters in the division of unpaid domestic work. Gender role ideology defines an individual's attitudes to how women and men play their roles are shaped by their sex (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2016). Gender role ideology is situated on a continuum that ranges from traditional (i.e., the male-breadwinner and female-homemaker model) to egalitarian (i.e., a shared responsibility between spouses). The gender perspective predicts that women who hold a more traditional gender ideology will perform more unpaid domestic work than women who hold a more egalitarian gender ideology; by contrast, men who hold a more traditional gender ideology will perform less unpaid domestic work than men who hold a more egalitarian gender ideology (Coltrane, 2000; Knudsen & Wærness, 2008). Overall, the gender perspective argues that the power of gender norms and gender role ideology may explain gender inequality in unpaid domestic labour.

The research gap includes very few topics related to gender norms that have been explored in unpaid domestic work, which emphasises the traditional male-breadwinner and female-homemaker model (Juhari et al., 2013; Kaufman, 2014; UNFPA & Promundo, 2018). Second, the persistence of gender inequality in Malaysian households shows the importance of using gender perspective as the theoretical perspective in the Malaysian context to understand unpaid domestic work among couples through a qualitative approach. Therefore, to fill the research gap, this study used the gender perspective to examine how gender norms rooted in culture and religion influence gender inequality among Malay couples in Malaysia. In general, this study supports the gender perspective that unequal division of household labour is related to the prescribed role emphasised in the gender norms. This study contributes to the gender perspective that gender norms rooted in culture and religion play vital roles in creating gender inequality in households. In addition, this study contributes to the gender perspective that not only does gender role ideology matter but also highlights that religiosity matters when accounting for gender norms in Malay society.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the qualitative approach to examine women's and men's roles and who should perform the unpaid domestic work among nine Malay couples in Malaysia. A semi-structured interview tool was used to collect data. The interview questions include women's and men's roles and responsibilities and the reasons for doing housework and childcare.

The respondents' inclusion criteria, using purposive sampling, were Malay married couples living with children under 12. The sample of respondents was selected based on their criteria and interests to take part in this study via social media. This study protocol was approved by the University of New South Wales Human Ethics Board (Approval number: HC11272). The couples were interviewed face-to-face for 60 to 90 minutes in their homes. In addition, each spouse was interviewed separately to capture their perceptions and experiences without the influence of the other. The interviews were tape-recorded upon the consent provided by the interviewees. A voucher was given to interviewees for their time in participating in this research. The names of respondents were replaced with pseudonyms. The interview data were analysed using a thematic approach. First, interviews data was reviewed according to codes to find themes. Then, all the themes were reviewed and named accordingly to address the research issues.

All interviewees were in their thirties. The typical household comprised a spouse (one male and one female) and one or two children. Most of the interviewees had at least a bachelor's degree. All the couples lived in urban areas. All the male interviewees worked full-time outside the home. Of the nine female interviewees, three worked full-time outside the home, three worked part-time outside the home, and three worked full-time for their households. Most women perceived themselves as very religious among all interviewees, and about half of the men perceived themselves as very religious. In this study, religiosity (strength of religious beliefs) is self-defined by respondents based on their frequency of prayers, frequency of going to the mosque and religiosity piety. For example, respondents who go to mosque and pray frequently and follow most religious practices are considered themselves as very religious. In contrast, those who do not go to the mosque and pray frequently and do not follow most religious practices are considered less religious.

## FINDINGS

This study collected data from interviews of nine married Malay couples. The findings suggest a primary theme: cultural gender norms that champion the traditional male-breadwinner and female-homemaker model causes unequal division of housework and childcare among couples. In addition to the cultural gender norms, religious gender expectations embedded in Islamic teachings also restrict couples from sharing unpaid domestic work equally. However, the experience varies between men and women. For example, more religious women tend to have a traditional gender role ideology; hence, they perform a disproportionate unpaid work. In contrast, more religious men tend to have an egalitarian gender role ideology and are willing to share the burden, whereas, less religious men tend to have a traditional gender ideology to play a backup role.

### Cultural Gender Norms: Traditional Male-Breadwinner and Female-Homemaker Model

The data from the interviews demonstrated that women are expected to perform most of the housework and childcare and support their families through unpaid labour. In contrast, men are expected to be employed and support their families financially.

> *"I think in Malay families, men go to work and women stay at home to look after the children."*— Nana, part-time employment, very religious.

> *"I think it has become a norm in our society that a husband should work to support the family and a wife should take care of the household work."* — Aisha, full-time employment, very religious.

> *"Malay [culture] says that it is the wife's responsibility to do housework and we have to do it sincerely."* — Fatimah, part-time employment, somewhat religious.

The quotes of Nana and Aisha suggest that women and men hold different family roles, which are aligned with cultural gender norms in Malay society. This finding was further illustrated by Fatimah's quote describing that her responsibility as a wife is to perform housework 'sincerely'. The word 'sincerely' suggests that because she is obliged by Malay cultural gender norms to perform housework, she must be genuine in doing so and may not question its rightness. Thus, this example portrays how gendered expectations among Malay families may influence Malay women to perform more household labour than men.

Similar descriptions were provided by most of the Malay men in the study. They stated that men are responsible for earning money and that women are responsible for household work. These men had consistent views on gender roles irrespective of the strength of their religious beliefs.

> *"This is Malay custom. When we are married, the husband needs to work outside and the wife needs to handle the household work. It is my responsibility to work, not her responsibility to work. This practice remains unchanged."* — Keri, full-time employment, very religious.

> *"It is my responsibility to work. My wife does not need to work because I can afford the family*

> *expenditures."* — Nazri, full-time employment, less religious."

> *"As a wife, she has to be good in doing housework and managing household matters. A wife has her own responsibility at home,"* — Tramizi, full-time employment, very religious.

The quotes illustrate higher expectations that men will be the breadwinner and lower expectations that they will be involved in housework. Men will likely play a backup role in performing housework if they are not expected to be mainly responsible for the unpaid work. In addition, the quotes reveal the gender expectations that women will be full-time homemakers and mothers rather than be employed. The link between paid and unpaid work that may cause the unequal division of housework and childcare can also be observed in how Malay men have the final authority over whether their wife is employed. Most interview quotes show how Malay husbands use their authority to influence whether their wife is employed. Azizah talking about her husband, Keri, is an example:

> *"I discussed with my husband whether I should work or not. He prefers me to stay at home and look after the children and him. When he gets home, I have already prepared the meals and drinks for him. He prefers me to take care of them instead of working outside."* — Azizah, full-time homemaker, very religious.

Azizah followed her husband's decision to not engage in employment but spend time preparing meals for the family and taking care of the children. Her description of her husband's authority is consistent with what her husband, Keri, said:

> *"I made the final decision. I wanted her to stay at home and not work after we got married. It is my responsibility to earn income, not her responsibility. I really do not encourage my wife to engage in any employment. I prefer her to stay at home, look after the children, and look after our food and drinks."* — Keri, full-time employment, very religious.

Azizah had not been employed since graduating from high school. She became a full-time mother because her husband, Keri, preferred her not to work outside the home. They believed that taking care of the housework and children were responsibilities for women, not men. From how Azizah described her responsibilities, it is not surprising that she performed more housework and childcare than her husband, Keri. Notably, their lifestyle was not luxurious; however, Keri thought the family could live modestly on one income (i.e. MYR 2250 per month). This choice implies they preferred to follow cultural gender norms that emphasise the traditional male-breadwinner and female-homemaker model.

Reinforcing the male-breadwinner and female-homemaker pattern, most Malay women interviewed planned to stop working when they felt their husbands could support their families.

> *"Malay people say that no matter how clever a wife is, her place is still in the kitchen. If a wife is not good at doing kitchen work, the family will have problems. If a wife cannot cook for the family, what is the point to marry a wife? I wanted to get married, so my wife had to cook for me. A wife needs to clean the house so that it is tidy and well-organised."* — Tramizi, full-time employment, very religious."

The quote from Tramizi suggests that in Malay society, Malay men expect women to perform housework. Malay men perceive that a woman's place remains in the kitchen, regardless of her intellect. Tramizi explained that 'clever' refers to a woman's educational level. He implies that Malay women may not opt-out of housework tasks even if they have high education. Tramizi's quote suggests that Malay culture places less value on women's education and more value on their performing housework. Tramizi's description of women's role alligns with the Malay traditional cultural norm, "women, no matter how highly educated they are, their place is still in the kitchen." (Abdullah et al., 2008, p. 14; Hamdan, 2009, p. 196).

Similar to Tramizi, Shila stated that Malay women are responsible for taking care of the children in Malay families regardless of how successful they are in their careers.

> *"I think it is common in Malay families that no matter how high position a woman in workplace, her responsibility is still as a wife to take care of the children."* — Shila, full-time employment, very religious.*"*

Shila reported that she did more housework and childcare than her husband despite having a doctoral degree and working as a university lecturer. She was restricted by the Malay cultural norms that strongly endorse women's household responsibilities despite their qualifications and careers. Shila's description of how Malay cultural norms affected her engagement in housework is similar to Tramizi.

Thus far, the findings suggest that Malay cultural gender norms strongly endorse that women stop working and become full-time homemakers and mothers when their husbands can support the family. In addition, Malay men expressed strong preferences that women should not engage in employment and that men should have the final authority in making that decision. This finding suggests that women are not expected to be the sole or co-provider but should stop working because a wife performing her role in housework and childcare is more highly valued by Malay society than achieving higher educational levels and pursuing a career.

These findings demonstrate that Malay women believe that their primary role is taking care of the housework and children at home; men's primary role is earning money in the labour force; these findings support those in the literature (Abdullah et al., 2008; Noor, 1999). In addition, Malay husbands' preference for their wives' employment in this study is similar to that found in the literature (A. Aziz, 2011; Noor, 1999). Thus, although the qualitative results on cultural gender norms and practices of this study cannot be generalised to the whole population, they are consistent with those of studies of Malaysia.

### Religious Gender Norms: Women's Duties in Unpaid Domestic Work

Most of the Malay women interviewees described religion as very important to them in the division of housework. All of the Malay women considered themselves very religious Muslims. They claimed that religion is very important in their personal lives and lived according to Islamic religious teachings. Perhaps the best quotes to show that Islamic religious teachings are the guiding principles in everyday life for Malay women were from Sazlina and Aisha.

> *"I think for Muslims, your religion is your way of living so it involves all aspects of life. We not only pray and talk about religious teachings daily, how we behave is based on the religious teachings." —* Sazlina, full-time homemaker, very religious.*"*

> *"I think it influences me. We have our responsibility as stated in the religion. When I die, I will face Allah and answer him." —* Aisha, full-time employment, very religious."

These quotes suggest Islamic religious teachings are the guiding principles for Malay women's daily lives. Aisha's quote also suggests that the women believe their daily behaviour influences their afterlife; further, they will be rewarded by Allah if they fulfil their responsibility as stated in their religion (Tajmazinani, 2021). Almost all the Malay women who considered themselves very religious claimed that they do more housework than their spouse because, according to Islamic religious teachings, they are responsible for it as a wife.

> *"In Islam, it is the wife's responsibility to do housework. If the husband wants to help, it is his willingness to help. It really depends on his willingness." —* Azizah, full-time homemaker, very religious.

> *"I think it is because my religion says that I have to be a good wife means I have to make my husband happy. Entertaining a husband means doing something that will make him happy. I think that performing housework and making sure that the house is clean and a nice place to live is a way to make him happy. I think this is the reason why I do housework more."* — Shila, full-time employment, very religious.

The way Azizah and Shila described that their religion expected them to do more housework as a good wife and put less emphasis on their spouse helping with housework suggests that gendered expectations in religious teachings play a greater role in influencing women's than men's contribution to housework.

The gendered expectations regarding housework are consistent, with most Malay women claiming that they did more housework than their spouses. Since all the Malay women in this qualitative study considered themselves very religious in their perceptions and religious activities in their daily lives, it is not clear how less religious Malay women believe that religion influences their division of household chores. However, this phenomenon can be understood through Malay men's experiences.

Malay men were divided evenly between those who considered themselves very religious and those who considered themselves less religious. Comparing the responses of these two groups suggests that they held different attitudes on how religion influences their personal lives and household labour. For example, Ahmad, who reported himself to be very religious, said:

> *"As a Muslim, I follow the religious teachings completely. I go to mosque regularly and discuss it frequently with my wife."* — Ahmad, full-time employment, very religious.

Two Malay men who considered themselves less religious, Jamal and Nazri, said:

> *"I am not religious. There are a lot of things I do not follow. I do not think I can consider myself religious just by praying."* — Jamal, full-time employment, less religious.

> *"I have some religious knowledge, but I do not practise all of them. I do not go to mosque frequently."* — Nazri, full-time employment, less religious.

These quotes suggest different practices from Malay men of differing religiosity. Ahmad, very religious, follows the Islamic religious teachings closely and discusses them with his wife. It reinforces the quotes above from Malay women who are very religious. In contrast with Ahmad, the less religious men, Jamal and Nazri, did not perceive religious teachings as their guiding principles but believed in their right to be flexible in following the teachings based on their preferences.

The interviewees who described themselves as less religious considered chores to be non-compulsory and helping with housework as optional. They were selective in performing housework and did not follow the religious teachings closely.

> *"Islam mentions about shared responsibility. If I can help (in housework), I just help."* — Ali, full-time employment, less religious.

> *If I see plates in the sink, I will wait till the afternoon, hoping that my wife will wash them. If she does*

> *not wash them, I will wash them then. I am lazy, so I hope that she will do it."* — Jamal, full-time employment, less religious.

> *"When I know she is free I will ask her to wash the dishes and mop the table because I have something else to do."* — Jamal, full-time employment, less religious.

These quotes suggest that Ali and Jamal have similar attitudes in managing housework: they attempted to avoid performing it if possible. Ali used the word *'if'*, which implies that his involvement in housework is subject to his time availability or mood despite the religious teachings that encourage men to share the responsibility (Tajmazinani, 2021). Similarly, Jamal mentioned his responsibility in performing housework according to the religious teachings, but his attitude was more inclined to him having a backup role than a co-sharing role. Their attitudes suggest that these less religious men support a traditional gender role ideology that men should play a backup role in housework, which aligns with the cultural gender norms.

In contrast, those who self-reported as very religious displayed a more egalitarian attitude towards housework. Perhaps the best quote was from Tramizi.

> *"I take over the dish washing and sweeping floors tasks when she has visitors or incoming calls from friends. We have to tolerate and help each other in housework. I have to help her in doing housework."* — full-time employment, very religious.

The way Tramizi engaged in housework may mean that he takes more initiative in performing housework than his wife. Additionally, Tramizi used the word *'have'*, which may mean that he sees housework as compulsory work that he needs to do. He reported that based on Islamic religious teachings, his inner self is clean by helping his wife maintain a clean house. This finding suggests that fastidiously performing housework may influence his religious identity, creating a stronger sense of himself as a devoted Muslim. The relationship between religiosity and housework may be mutually reinforcing, not unidirectional.

How men's religiosity influences their attitudes towards housework is illustrated by Ali (less religious), Jamal (less religious) and Tramizi (very religious) and supported by their wives. In the example of Ali (less religious), who seems to have less inclination to share the housework, his wife Aisha described her husband's attitude.

> *"I have an allergic problem when I use dishwashing liquid to wash dishes. He did not help at all."*

> *"He left the clothes to get wet during rainy days when I was not at home. He will not do it."*

Aisha's statement implies that her husband was not helpful. Ali responded that his wife's allergy was inconsistent with his claim that religious teachings encourage shared responsibility. It differs from how

Tramizi, who considered himself very religious, responded to Nana's backache.

> *"My husband helps me in housework because I have backache issue. He cleans the house when he is back from work."* — Nana, part-time employment, very religious.

Ali, Jamal, Tramizi, Aisha and Nana suggest a link between the strength of religiosity and housework responsibility. This finding is similar to that of research in Xinjiang in urban China (Zang, 2012) and supports findings in Malaysia (Boo, 2018). Focusing on Islam, Boo (2018) and Zang (2012) have argued that males' religiosity is related to their contribution to household labour and that those who have higher religiosity are more likely to engage in housework and less likely to practice traditional household division than those who have lower religiosity.

Consistent with the results for housework, all Malay women and men reported that Islamic religious teachings encourage them to share in taking care of children. However, again, their behaviour depends on the strength of their religiosity. Perhaps the best example was Keri, who self-reported as a very religious Muslim.

> *"My religion says that both father and mother have to share the childcare work. Although I am busy working, I still help in childcare because this is my responsibility to take care of them."*

> *"Sometimes my wife is invited by friends to attend banquet, I will encourage her to go and I will look after the children. This is not a problem for me. I think it is fun to take care of my children."*

These quotes show that Keri has a positive attitude towards sharing childcare with his wife. This finding was consistent with what his wife Azizah said about him. In the interviews, she mentioned that Keri was willing to take care of the children when he was home from work. Azizah was happy because not all husbands were willing to do this. She believed that Islam encourages parents to help each other in childcare to achieve a close relationship and that the husband is blessed if he engages in childcare as he will accumulate good deeds.

By contrast, Ali and Jamal, who considered themselves less religious, had less positive attitudes towards childcare.

> *"I will ask my wife to handle it when the children wet their pants. I am lazy to do it. If my wife is in the midst of praying, I will do it. If not, I will ask her to do it."* — Ali, full-time employment, less religious.

> *"When my children want to pee or go to potty, I will ask my wife to clean them. Additionally, I will ask my wife to feed them when the children are hungry."* — Jamal, full-time employment, less religious.

How Ali and Jamal engaged in childcare is consistent with how they engaged in housework. Each man relied more on their wife to take care of their children than Keri did. It may also be connected to the strength of their religious beliefs. That Ali did not follow the religious teachings in sharing the childcare is consistent with what his wife, Aisha, reported,

> *"When I have to attend seminars and he does not have to work on that day, I asked him to look after the children. He refused to do it. Sometimes he just wanted me to bring the children along."*

Aisha's statements suggest that Ali did not follow Islamic religious teachings. He refused to look after the children despite having time available at home. This behaviour was against his claim that religious teachings encourage shared responsibility between couples in taking care of children. In contrast with Ali, Aisha considered herself very religious, and she shouldered the responsibility of teaching children because she believed strongly in the religious teachings on an afterlife.

> *"I think it [religious teachings] just influenced me. It is my responsibility to teach children. When I die, I will face Allah and answer him. If my husband does not want to fulfil his responsibility in teaching children, he will face Allah when he dies."*

Throughout the interviews, the quotes suggest a link between the strength of religiosity and childcare responsibility. This finding seems similar to that of research on Malay families in Malaysia in which Malay men's religiosity is positively associated with fathers' amount and share of childcare time (Boo, 2018).

## DISCUSSION

Unpaid domestic work is a contemporary social issue that affects women's lives (N. N. A. Aziz et al., 2018; Choong et al., 2019). A semi-structured interview with nine Malay couples was used to explore how cultural and religious gender norms have led to gender inequality in the division of housework and childcare in Malaysian families. The interview findings support the gender perspective that women and men act according to defined roles based on gender norms. In this study, gender norms embedded in the Malay culture and Islamic teachings reinforce the traditional model of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker and result in women doing most of the unpaid housework, which is an important factor that prevents women and men from sharing housework equally. In addition to the gender norms, this article highlights that men's share of housework and childcare is related to the strength of their religiosity and gender role ideology.

One main finding is that the division of housework and childcare is underscored by traditional cultural and religious gender norms that produce and reproduce gender inequality in households. In practice, women generally acknowledged that they are responsible for performing housework and childcare because of the gender role expectations in their culture and religion. Women illustrated that 'their place is in the kitchen' implies that culture places less value on women's education and career but more value on performing unpaid domestic work (Abdullah et al., 2008; Hamdan, 2009). Women's role is emphasised by cultural gender norms, making them responsible for most of the domestic work despite their educational attainment and labour force participation (Choong et al., 2019; Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the United Nations, 2014). Therefore, this affects women's lives (Choong et al., 2019). As a result, they experience gender inequality at home and are restricted from entering the labour force, as illustrated by the women in this study. These findings provide insights into why family responsibility was cited as the main reason women were outside the labour force (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019).

As for the men's behaviour, men generally acknowledged that their role is as a family provider and not mainly responsible for housework and childcare. However, regarding religiosity and gender role ideology, some religious men are taking more initiative and are inclined to share the housework and childcare than the less religious men. These findings suggest that religiosity is related to men's gender role ideology and thus influences their share in household labour. This finding is similar to those in other studies in Malaysia (Boo, 2018) and China (Zang, 2012), which suggest that a higher level of religiosity could be an enabler for men to perform more unpaid work.

Notably, gender norms have led to gender inequality in households. The strong emphasis on gender expectations based on cultural and religious gender norms prevents an equal division of household labour despite Malay women having attained higher education qualifications. Thus, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5.4, which emphasises the importance of sharing household responsibilities, seems difficult.

This study has limitations. The main limitation of the qualitative method used is the small number of respondents. Another limitation is the non-representativeness of the men because the male respondents were invited by their spouses to participate. This limitation excluded male respondents who fulfilled the selection criteria but did not have the opportunity to participate in the interviews. Although the sample of male interviewees was not representative of the Malaysian population, their perceptions and experiences are important and valuable. It would have been very difficult to understand men's behaviours and attitudes towards housework and childcare from their perspectives if the qualitative method had not been adopted.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this article provides insights into the influence of cultural and religious gender norms in the division of household labour among some Malay couples. The interview findings highlight that cultural and religious gender norms prevent achieving an equal division of household labour among some Malay couples.

## CONCLUSION

Studies on unpaid domestic work are pivotal because the unequal division of household labour affects women's economic status, well-being and life in general. This study's findings suggest that men's and women's roles in unpaid domestic work are shaped by gender norms entrenched in Malay culture and Islamic teachings, which have led to gender inequality occurring among Malay couples. Because of the expected responsibilities defined in cultural and religious gender norms, Malay women perform a disproportional amount of unpaid domestic work. Likewise, men tend to do less unpaid domestic work than women because of their expected roles defined in the cultural and religious gender norms. This study supports the gender perspective that not only does gender role ideology matter but also highlights that religiosity matters when accounting for gender norms in Malay society.

Hence, recognising the importance of cultural and religious gender norms around domestic work as women's work is crucial in narrowing the gender gap in unpaid domestic work. Furthermore, this demonstrates the need for policymakers to understand how gender norms shape the unequal division of household labour and improve gender equality in household labour and economic outcomes and women's well-being. Further research on this issue in the Malaysian context is necessary. Researchers could extend this research by investigating couples' experiences of cultural and religious gender norms uncovered during the qualitative interviews. Researchers could also include the other ethnic groups in Malaysia to provide a detailed view of factors that lead to the unequal division of household labour among Malaysian couples.

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# Covid-19 and Collective Memory Among Malaysians: Does Generation Matter?

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aims to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the collective memory among Malaysian generational cohorts. Our research draws on a nationwide survey conducted from July-September 2020 during the second pandemic wave in Malaysia. Respondents were asked to report "the national or world events or changes over the past 60 years" that seemed to them especially important and explain the reasons for their choices. As expected, the result indicated Covid-19 as the most frequently mentioned event. Despite the primacy and recency of the event, we found significant cohort effects on the collective memory of Covid-19, with lower recall recorded among the older generation as compared to the younger generation, which provided stronger support to the Critical Years Hypothesis. Interesting cohort experiences emerge in the meaning attached to Covid-19 across different generational cohorts through open-ended follow-up questions.

*Keywords:* Collective memory, Covid-19, Critical Years Hypothesis, generational cohort

## INTRODUCTION

Dramatic and highly emotional historical events often left a significant imprint on generational memory. War, natural disasters, and many life-threatening events normally evoke traumatic and painful experiences. Hence, those would be more likely to be remembered collectively by a generation. World War II, for example, one of the world's biggest global conflicts, arouses the greatest fear and horror among

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the older generation. Likewise, tsunami, one of the world's most dramatic natural disasters, evokes a strong essence of major devastation and loss. So much so it remains strong and vivid in the memory of those who experienced this natural catastrophe.

In addition to war and natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics spread over many countries and regions often left momentous consequences and emotional impacts to specific generational cohorts. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Ebola, for example, may vary in their impact continuum according to respective affected regions. Consequently, they have different recollection effects on different generations. Similar to SARS and Ebola and many other epidemics faced by previous generations, the current generation is now battling Covid-19, the deadliest pandemic in world history. Will Covid-19 become part of collective memory among Malaysians? Do we now collectively recall the hassle of wearing a face mask, sanitizing our hands, and checking our body temperature at various public areas? Will our recall of the series of nationwide lockdowns and localized lockdowns remain vivid in memory? How do different generations of Malaysia remember Covid-19, and how salient is the memory across generations?

This paper is the first empirical paper that aims to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the collective memory of Malaysians. Our research draws on a nationwide survey conducted from July-September 2020 to understand whether Covid-19 plays a role in the collective memory of different generational cohorts in Malaysia. In addition, we critically explore reasons for indicating Covid-19 as the most momentous events of their lives through open-ended follow-up questions.

## Collective Memory and Critical Year Hypothesis

Collective memory refers to "recollection of events shared by a group" (Roediger & Abel, 2015, p. 359). According to Wertsch and Roediger III, "collective memory is a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group" (2008, p. 318). According to Schuman and Scott (1989), collective memory is a widely shared knowledge of past social events that may not have been personally experienced but are collectively experienced through communicative social function. In simple words, collective memory refers to how groups remember their past.

Collective memory shares several core elements. Firstly, it can be connected to a specific event (Schuman & Corning, 2012), such as the Vietnam war, the Tsunami, or the Independence Day of Malaysia. Second, it can be a historical change that spans time, such as the social media revolution. Finally, some historic changes unique to Malaysians are the reformation movement led by Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, spanning two decades from 1998 until 2018.

Secondly, collective memory varies by its intensity. The collective memory of an event may evoke different intensities across various generational cohorts. Schuman and Corning (2017) found strong collective memory of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States, especially among 11–30 years in 2001. Scott and Zac (1993), in a survey of British and American households, found striking similarities in collective historical memories between the two nations, with World War II recording the highest mention, especially among the older generation aged 50 years and above. However, the two nations differ in their interpretation and meaning attached to the same event. Interestingly the Americans associated WWII with prosperity and fortune gained after that. The detailed narratives and stories reflecting fear, tragedy and horror among the British remained dominant as the war occurred close to their homeland.

Central to the concept of collective memory is the Critical Years Hypothesis. The Critical Years Hypothesis posits that the shared memory of momentous events during the "coming of age" years would remain strong and relatively unchanged throughout life (Schewe & Meredith, 2004). It is suggested that formative years generally begin at about age 17 and end by age 25 (Schewe & Meredith, 2004), while Schuman and Rieger (1992) roughly identified 13–25 years as the formative years. The lower and the upper age boundary is rather arbitrary.

Despite some discrepancy on the formative years' lower and upper age boundary, it is generally believed that historical events occurring during the formative years would be vividly remembered as it is during the period, distinctive personal characteristics and personality of a person begin to emerge. With social interaction during childhood limited to parents and immediate family members, historical events experienced during infancy and early childhood will not be remembered clearly. According to Griffin (2004), historical events occurring during formative years are most impactful because, during these periods, a person gains knowledge of social realities outside of their personal and private environment during childhood. Schuman and Scott (1989) further noted that people would be intellectually mature enough to understand the social, political, and economic realms surrounding them during adolescent and early adulthood. They would be fascinated and immersed with their first encounter with social or political events, hence reminiscing the experience during later life. According to Corning and Schuman (2015), national and world events that occur during the critical years should have a lasting impact on individuals because they are usually the first major national or world event experienced and serve as a baseline against which later events are compared.

Empirical supports to the "Critical Years Hypothesis" have been widely documented in many studies in Western countries (see Schuman & Corning, 2012; Schuman & Corning; 2017; Scott & Zac, 1993; Schuman & Scott, 1989). In Asia, for example, Lee and Chan (2018), several studies found that the Tiananmen incident and the transfer of sovereignty in 1997 were deeply rooted in their collective memory among Hong Kong people. However, the collective memory among Beijing youth born between 1984 and 1992 was evident in Constantin's (2013) study. The study found that the Beijing youth recalled the Olympic Games in 2008 and the Sichuan earthquake in the same year. Both events took place during their formative years. Budiawan (2017) discussed the collective memory, termed explicitly as popular memory of the "Konfrontasi Malaysia-Indonesian or Ganyang Malaysia" in Indonesia. The meanings attached to this event do not change significantly over the years as it is transmitted over generations through mostly historical textbooks and class discussions.

In Malaysia, empirical evidence of collective memory across generations is scarce and inconclusive. In most studies, evidence of collective memory was recorded among the older generation involving dramatic historical events such as the Japanese Occupation. For example, Blackburn (2009) and Tay (2015) found that the Japanese Occupation was collectively recalled as a traumatic period in the lives of people now over seventy years old in Malaysia and Singapore. Ting et al. (2017) also uncovered strong collective memory, especially about the Japanese Occupation amongst those born during the 1930s. On the other hand, the generational cohorts born from 1943-1961 recalled mostly on the communist insurgency, British colonization, and the formation of Malaysia as they struggled to secure or maintain good lives during the said era. The same study also found that Malaysian Generation Z tended to remember mostly social media and technological advancements. At the same time, Generation Y recalled mainly on introducing Goods and Service Tax (GST) introduced in 2015.

## Covid-19 and Collective Memory

The outbreak of various diseases such as SARS in 2002, H1N1 in 2009, and Ebola in 2013 have caused enormous negative impact upon individuals and, to a certain extent, led to structural changes in the economic, social, and cultural landscape of the international community (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Compared to the previous outbreaks, the ongoing Covid-19 is the largest or perhaps the deadliest outbreak after the Spanish Flu of 1918, killing more than 50 million people worldwide (Douglas et al., 2019). As of March 7, 2021, Covid-19, earlier known as the Coronavirus, has affected more than 116 million people in more than 213 countries globally. Officially declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on March 11, 2020, the virus has killed more than two million people worldwide (WHO, 2020). The highest number of fatalities were recorded in the USA at 500,000, followed by Brazil at 263,000 and India at 158,000 as of March 7, 2021.

Three waves of the pandemic have been hit Malaysia. The first wave began when the pandemic was first detected on January 25, 2020, involving three tourists from China who came to Malaysia via Johor Bharu from Singapore. The first wave lasted from January 25 to February 16, 2020, with small numbers of cases. The second wave started on February 27, 2020, and lasted until September 30, 2020, in response to the rising trend of infections (Rampal & Liew, 2021). On March 18, 2020, the Malaysian government enforced the Movement Control Order (MCO). It had led to a total closure of schools, universities, government offices, and private premises; a total ban of any mass gathering for any religious, social, or cultural purposes; and a complete restriction for all inbound and outbound travel. The partial lockdown was extended several times with greater relaxation of the restrictions following a gradual decrease in Malaysia's confirmed cases. The flat epidemical curve remained before the third wave began on September 8, 2020, and further rose in October 2020 until March 2021 due to the sudden surge of cases mainly due to a state's election campaigning and lobbying activities. Malaysia has recorded more than 310,000 infections, with 1159 deaths as of 7, March 2021.

Covid-19 is undoubtedly the most life-changing event of the 21st century. First detected in Wuhan, China, the virus spread rapidly across the continents resulting in major disruption to the global economic activities. The introduction of emergency lockdowns, partial lockdowns, international and inter-state travel restrictions, limitations imposed on public gatherings, and total closure of business, social, and education institutions in various countries have caused direct, indirect, and spill-over effects upon the world economy (Baldwin & Di Mauro, 2020). The pandemic has also caused major social and cultural changes in almost every aspect of human life, leading to new norms such as social distancing, health practices and limitation of persons at public gatherings, and the uptrend in online activities. In addition, social media advancement has caused the greatest coverage of the pandemic worldwide.

Covid-19 provides a new testing ground for the concept of collective memory and the "Critical Years Hypothesis." It is very life-changing and impactful locally and internationally. It has brought about major structural changes in society. In Malaysia, the pandemic has led to a series of partial lockdowns, total closures of all business and social activities, and restrictions on travel. How do different generational cohorts in Malaysia remember the pandemic? To what extent, the "Critical Years Hypothesis" hold in the case of Covid-19? Will those at the formative years aged between 18-30 in 2020 mention Covid-19 more frequently than the older cohorts of Malaysians?

## METHOD

### Research Design

A quantitative research approach was adopted to investigate the extent of recall of historical events among the Malaysian population. A set of questionnaires was distributed through online platforms to targeted respondents from five regions in Malaysia. Thus, a link was created and shared with enumerators, mainly university students residing in the country's five regions. The survey was conducted during the recovery period of the pandemic from July–September 2020, which saw a relaxation of restrictions with the reopening of schools, institutes of higher learning, and local businesses.

### Population and Sampling Procedure

The total number of respondents required for the survey was calculated based on the total Malaysian population aged 18 and above. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, in 2020, the total Malaysian population was approximately 32.6 million, and 70% were aged 18–64 years old. As for the group of 65 years old and above there are 7% of the total population. Using Yamane's (1967) sample size calculation, around 1500 respondents were selected and divided into twelve age groups.

A clustered sampling technique was used to identify suitable respondents. First the states were divided according to region, namely North, South, East, West, and East Malaysia, to ease the process of sampling. Then, a specific state was randomly selected within each region, and people living and working in the particular state were considered respondents. Since it is quite impossible to source respondents from every state in Malaysia, the present study deliberately sampled four states to represent each region in Malaysia, i.e., Selangor/ Kuala Lumpur for the central region, Penang for the northern region, Kelantan for the eastern region, Johor for the southern region and Sarawak for East Malaysia. Afterward, the purposive sampling method was used to recruit samples for each age cohort. Purposive sampling or judgment sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are selected based on the researcher's judgment that they meet the requirements of the study (Hair et al., 2009). In this study, the most important requirement is the age cohort. There are generally twelve age cohorts in the study, namely 18–20 years old, 21–25 years old, 26–30 years old, 31–35 years old, 36–40 years old, 41–45 years old, 46-50 years old, 51–55 years old, 56–60 years old, 61–65 years old, 66-70 years old and 71+ years and above.

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed based on the research conducted by Schuman and Rodgers (2004) and Schuman and Corning (2017). First, the respondents were asked the following, "There have been a lot of national, world events and media/musical/ political/ technological changes over the past 70 years say, from about 1930 right up until today. What historical events/changes from the past that you remember the most?" Next, the respondents were asked to indicate two historic events in their lives and rate their recall further based on a 5-point Likert scale with 0 indicating not remember at all and five as vividly remember. Finally, following methods by Scott and Zac (1993), Schuman and Scott (1989), and Harold and Fong (2017), the questionnaire included an open-ended question that asked respondents the reason for their choices to qualitatively explore the different meanings that people have of the mentioned events.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic details involving 1526 respondents of this study based on twelve age groups. Females make up the majority of respondents. Most

Table 1
*Respondents demographic background*

| Variable | Variable items | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 659 | 43.4 |
| | Female | 860 | 56.6 |
| Age-group | 18-20 | 163 | 10.7 |
| | 21-25 | 203 | 13.3 |
| | 26-30 | 150 | 9.8 |
| | 31-35 | 144 | 9.4 |
| | 36-40 | 114 | 7.5 |
| | 41-45 | 136 | 8.9 |
| | 46-50 | 123 | 8.1 |
| | 51-55 | 115 | 7.5 |
| | 56-60 | 104 | 6.8 |
| | 61-65 | 86 | 5.6 |
| | 66-70 | 105 | 6.9 |
| | >71++ | 83 | 5.4 |
| Education level | None | 35 | 2.3 |
| | Primary school | 116 | 7.6 |
| | Secondary school | 477 | 31.4 |
| | Diploma | 405 | 26.6 |
| | Bachelor degree | 374 | 24.6 |
| | Master degree | 75 | 4.9 |
| | PhD | 19 | 1.2 |
| | Others | 20 | 1.3 |
| Income | <RM1000 | 493 | 42.4 |
| | RM1100-RM2000 | 300 | 25.8 |
| | RM2100-RM3000 | 166 | 14.3 |
| | RM3100-RM4000 | 96 | 8.2 |
| | RM4100-RM5000 | 46 | 4.0 |
| | >RM5100 | 63 | 5.4 |

respondents were educated at diploma and bachelor degree levels and earned an average of less than RM2000 a month.

In drawing our inferences, we are guided by three analyses; 1) descriptive analysis and graphic presentations of recall of historical events by age, 2) logistic regression analyses using age and two other stratification variables, namely educational level and gender for purposes of control and comparison and 3) Thematic analysis of reasons for choosing Covid-19 as the most important historical event, which can help us see more clearly the different perspectives on the past that people have.

Firstly, Table 2 indicates the frequency for the most repeatedly mentioned events and changes in Malaysia. The descriptive analysis presented using tables and diagrams was used to show the trend between the age groups. Altogether there were 26 major historical events mentioned. From the list of 26 events mentioned, Covid-19 recorded the highest recall percentage by respondents for both the first and second mention by 40.7% and 29.6%, respectively. Tsunami 2004 was also frequently mentioned, with 9.6% for the first mention and 8.9% for the second mention. The 14th General Election in 2018 was also in the top three mentioned events, with 8.3% for the first mention and 16.3% for the second mention.

The plotted graph in Figure 1 below further shows how each age group recalled each particular event. Furthermore, it can be seen that although a majority of

Table 2
*Ten most frequently mentioned events and changes in Malaysia*

| Historical events | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| COVID 19 | 621 | 40.7 |
| Tsunami 2004 | 141 | 9.2 |
| Independence of Malaysia 1957 | 128 | 8.4 |
| Malaysia 14th General Election (2018) | 120 | 7.9 |
| Introduction of GST 2015 | 86 | 5.6 |
| 13 May 1969 incident | 53 | 3.5 |
| Economic crisis 97/98 | 33 | 2.2 |
| The collapsed of Highland Tower 1993 | 29 | 1.9 |
| Sporting events (i.e. Thomas Cup) | 25 | 1.6 |
| P. Ramlee’s music/film 1960an | 22 | 1.4 |
| Total | 1526 | 100.0 |

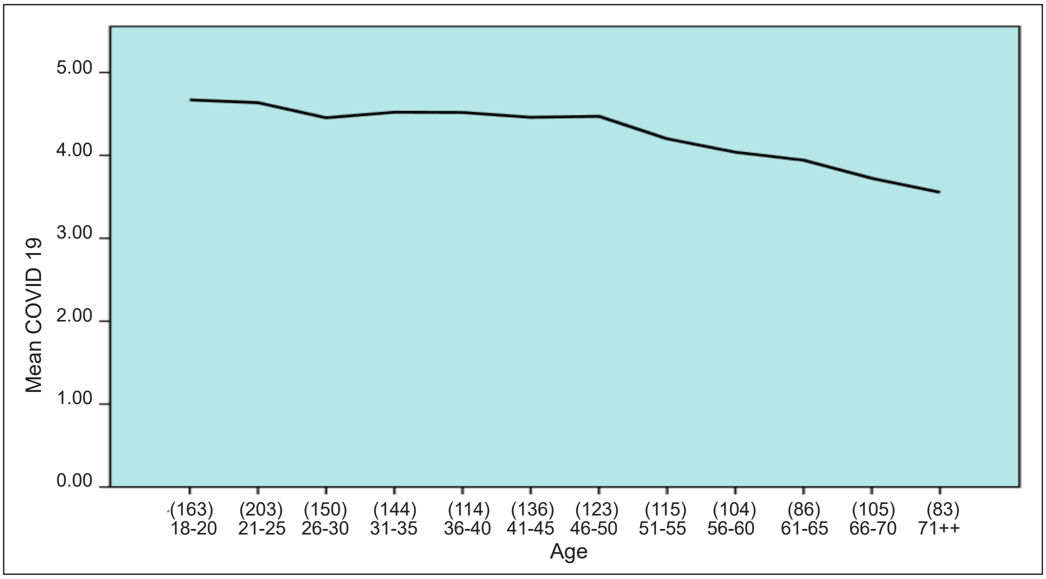

*Figure 1*. Mention of COVID19

Malaysians mentioned COVID-19 as the most memorable event in their lifetime, the frequency differs across generations. It can be seen that the mentions of Covid-19 drop steadily with age. A substantial declining slope can be seen for respondents aged 46 years and above.

Table 3 shows the mean for mentions according to different age-range. As can be seen, more younger generations rated Covid-19 as the most memorable event for them than the older generations. The highest mean is 4.67 by those in the age range of 18-20 years old, while the lowest mean is 3.55 by those aged 71 years old and above despite the prevalence of the pandemic impacting every individual in the society.

Secondly, logistic regression was further conducted to test the effect of age, income, and education level on each historical event remembered. In Table 4, we show the results of a logit analysis on mentions of important events and changes by the level of education, age, and income. It can be seen that age is by far the strongest predictor of at least four historical events, namely Covid-19, the Independence of Malaysia in 1957, the historic 14th General Election in 2018, and the sporting event (Thomas Cup 1992), while income has no significant impact on the recall of any historical events in Malaysia. On the other hand, the level of education is the best predictor for recall of the economic crisis in 1997. A strong cohort effect is discernible in the sample, especially in the context of Covid-19.

Thirdly, following recall of important historical events, the respondents were then asked to give the reason of their choice. Thus, in the analysis, our total N is reduced to 513 people who cited Covid-19 as the most important defining moment of their lives. Generally, we use an exploratory approach to thematic analysis in analyzing the data with no specific pre-determined themes identified earlier (Guest

Table 3
*Distribution of mentions of COVID19 by age range*

| Age group | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18-20 | 4.6687 | 163 | 0.72907 |
| 21-25 | 4.6355 | 203 | 0.78672 |
| 26-30 | 4.4533 | 150 | 0.77361 |
| 31-35 | 4.5208 | 144 | 0.83598 |
| 36-40 | 4.5175 | 114 | 0.85427 |
| 41-45 | 4.4593 | 135 | 0.92044 |
| 46-50 | 4.4711 | 121 | 0.78607 |
| 51-55 | 4.2000 | 115 | 0.93846 |
| 56-60 | 4.0385 | 104 | 0.94430 |
| 61-65 | 3.9419 | 86 | 0.94998 |
| 66-70 | 3.7238 | 105 | 1.24418 |
| >71++ | 3.5542 | 83 | 1.48368 |
| Total | 4.3381 | 1523 | 0.97500 |

et al., 2019). However, we are guided by several themes derived from past studies on Covid-19 experiences, such as missing social contact, changes in daily life and lack of understanding of the preventive measures (Embregts et al., 2020), and perceived severity, especially among the elderly (Luo et al., 2021). Table 5 shows the percentage of responses for the observed main and sub-themes for mentioning Covid19 as the impactful historical event. Specifically, three sub-themes emerged across different age ranges: the overall changes due to the pandemic on lives and families, the economic impact, and the health impact of the pandemic.

Table 4

*Logistic regression on the effect of education, income, and age to important events or changes in Malaysia*

| | Education Odds ratio (OR) | Age Odds ratio (OR) | Income Odds ratio (OR) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. COVID 19 | … | 0.76*** | … |
| 2. Tsunami 2004 | … | … | … |
| 3. Independence of Malaysia 1957 | … | - 1.18* | … |
| 4. 14th General Election (2018) | … | 1.46* | … |
| 5. Introduction of GST 2015 | … | … | … |
| 6.13 May 1969 incident | … | … | … |
| 7. Economic crisis 97/98 | - 2.12*** | … | … |
| 8. The collapse of Highland Tower 1993 | … | … | .. |
| 9. Sporting event i.e Thomas Cup) | … | - 2.62* | … |
| 11. P. Ramlee's music/film 1960an | … | … | … |

*Note.* Based on logistic analysis of each event or changes using three predictors: education, income and age. The cell figures are statistically significant odds ratio (coefficient/standard error); *$p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Table 5

*Percentage of responses given by age-group for reasons for choosing Covid-19 as an impactful historical event*

| Main Theme | Sub-theme | | Age categories (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | 18-30 | 31-50 | 51++ |
| Ongoing changes | Ongoing crisis | 123 | 8.8 | 3.6 | 4.6 |
| | New norm (social distancing etc) | 46 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 4.9 |
| | Changing life pattern | 27 | 3.1 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| | Movement control order (MCO) | 53 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 4.3 |
| Health impact | Dangerous virus | 49 | 2.1 | 1.4 | 6.0 |
| | Deadly pandemic | 74 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 5.8 |
| | Increasing number of death | 42 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 6.9 |
| Economic impact | Losing job and source of income | 31 | 0.7 | 4.1 | 3.1 |
| | Effect on people's livelihood | 37 | 2.3 | 4.1 | 1.8 |
| | Economic crisis | 29 | 1.6 | 3.4 | 2.8 |
| | N | | 154 | 145 | 214 |

Generally, for those between 18-30 years old, many mentioned Covid-19 to be most memorable as it is impacting their lives. However, many respondents have mentioned that this pandemic has huge implications for everyone. Lifestyle changes and adaptations to new norms are consistently mentioned. Below are some excerpts from respondents:

> *"because I am going through it. Covid-19 is the current case and I am 22 right now, so the impact is quite big in my life. Because our country is facing it right now."*

> *"Because it is happening now and we don't know when it's going to end. Besides, it brings a great impact to whole world."*

One respondent mentioned that COVID-19 is the most memorable as it happens while he/she is within her/his critical years by saying, "because it is happening while I am growing up."

Those from the 30–50 age group show another pattern. Their focus and importance are more directed towards financial issues due to the closure of business and loss of the source of income. They also have to overcome many obstacles while thinking of their family's livelihood. Changes have to be made in their lifestyle to adjust to the financial hardships caused by the pandemic. Below are some quotes by the respondents:

> *"My family was affected so much by Covid-19. We are being tested with various circumstances. It's affected the financial stability of people and their families."*

> *"It changed the way my family and myself living our lives financially. It changed the whole routine of my life, my family and even the world."*

The respondents from this age range also frequently mentioned the financial impact of the pandemic on their businesses. Business owners and freelancers are especially impacted. Below are some of the excerpts from the respondents:

> *"Covid-19 affected the sales in my clothing shop. "It gives economic impact, especially to business owners like me. My husband lost his source of income for months."*

As for those who are 50 and above, many stated that they chose Covid-19 as the most memorable event because of the danger it poses to their health. Many realized that the disease could be fatal to them due to age and health conditions. Some mentioned that they are stressed and afraid of the current situation. Below are quotes from respondents aged 50 years and above:

> *"I am worried because it is dangerous and deadly. "I'm afraid of this situation right now. The virus is spreading everywhere. I am 62 years old."*

> *"Covid-19 is dangerous to diabetic patients like me. I am worried for my health. The older generation should avoid any social gathering."*

## DISCUSSION

How do different generational cohorts in Malaysia remember the pandemic? To what extent, the "Critical Years Hypothesis" hold in the case of Covid-19? Will young adults mention Covid-19 more frequently than the older generations?

Overall, the findings provide stronger empirical evidence on the role of dramatic historical events in constructing collective memory among Malaysians. Due to its intensity and enormous impact, Covid-19 was collectively recalled and remembered by most Malaysian adults. It could be due to its recency effect as the data collection was conducted in the second wave of the pandemic in Malaysia. Many Malaysians were still grappling with the pandemic. The recency effect has been evident in various other studies. For example, Roediger and DeSoto (2014) found higher recall of recent Presidents of America, and this memory declined linearly over time. The primacy effect would have been driven higher recall of Covid-19 . With the pandemic directly impacting every individual at different age-group and socio-economic statuses, the consistent recall of this major health crisis is highly predictable. A study by Schuman and Corning (2012) in three US surveys from 2001–2010 recorded empirical evidence on the primacy effect of the September 11 incident during the critical years of the respondents. According to Schuman and Corning (2013), personal experience of a major historical event would create a long-lasting memory, compared to those gained via media or through narrations from others.

However, despite its widespread memory of the event, lesser recalls were evident from the older generations aged 46 and above. The present study's findings further provide more conclusive evidence on the theoretical importance of pre-adulthood experience with major historical events. The nomination of Covid-19 was found to be higher among the young adults (aged from 18–50 years) who are generally at their formative years compared to the older generations.

However, we found the recall of Covid-19 in the present study is noticeably wider, namely from those between 18–46 years old. With the pandemic still running rampant, the recall of the event could be readily available in the memory across different generational cohorts. Intense media coverage with daily case updates in the traditional media and live news streaming and breaking news in the digital media would contribute to this effect. With the event still unfolding, it may be too early to speculate on the precise age range for the critical period. A follow-up retrospective study thus is necessary to authenticate this further. We have two speculations here. The first speculation could be that this large cohort found in the present study will break into at least two when those who are now 18–25 will show a stronger recall in the future than the rest of the group due to the critical period effect. The second speculation is the much wider age range for the critical period impacted by Covid-19. According to Schuman and Corning (2012), the arbitrary range of the critical years could be wider or start at a much younger age due to repeated media coverage and intense discussion at school and among peers. The lower and the upper end of the critical period may vary depending on the nature of events. In the case of Covid-19, the age range could be wider due to the recency and primacy of the incident.

This age range is generally wider than those found in previous studies, ranging from 17–25 (Mannheim, 1952) and 12–29 (Schuman & Rodgers, 2004).

Results of the Logistic Regression clearly showed the significant effect of the generational cohort in the recall of Covid-19. Furthermore, the same analysis also supported the significant effect of the generational cohort in most of the historical events mentioned, namely the Independence of Malaysia in 1957, the 14th General Election in 2018, and various sporting events such as the Thomas Cup and Commonwealth Games, a which each generational cohort was found to exhibit higher recall of significant historical events during their formative years.

It is also striking to note that different meanings were attached to Covid-19, with young adults reflecting on the impact of the pandemic on their lifestyles and livelihood while the older generation, who are currently in their 50s, recounting their worries on health implications. Not every reason given by the respondents fits this conclusion precisely It may be quite premature to conclude the age structuring on meanings attached to Covid-19 as the pandemic is still unfolding. However, the findings from the present study may share a significant insight on the different meanings attached to Covid-19 across generational cohorts with higher perceived severity on health was recorded among the older generation. According to Chirwa (1997), collective memory would undergo a process of deconstruction and reconstruction over time due to the influence of various factors such as social group influence. Furthermore, according to Weldon (2000), recalling and interpretation historical events are socially constructed. Therefore, a person's memory and interpretation of a specific historical event would depend on one's mental engagement with his or her social group at a particular point in time. Frequent conversation and interaction within the same social group of the same generational cohort would influence the meanings attached to the pandemic, as observed in the present study.

No doubt, Covid-19 will create a long-lasting impact on our collective memory compared to other pandemics and other historical events. With every development of the pandemic story mentioned by the mass media through conventional and digital channels, the impact of the pandemic will create a lasting impact on the creation of global memory as a whole (Erll, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the result of the present study has provided important support for the Critical Years Hypothesis. As expected, the mention of Covid-19 decreases with age, with a poorer recall of Covid-19 pandemic crisis among those aged 46 and above despite the recency and primacy of the event. Furthermore, based on Logistic Regression analysis, the present study provided stronger empirical evidence on the cohort effect on constructing a collective memory of major events in Malaysia, including Covid-19.

The study is significant as it examines the collective memory of a significant global event while the event unfolds. Previous studies on collective memory have been carried out in retrospect at the end of the event from a distant point in time. Studies on the collective memory of ongoing events are severely lacking except for a few studies by Twyman et al. (2017), who explored collaboration and collective memory of Black Lives Matter in Wikipedia. Results indicated intensified documentation, dynamic re-appraisal, and content curation on BLM in Wikipedia over time, reflecting the important role of "Wikipedia as a depository of collective memory" using revision history and pageview data (Luyt, 2015, p. 1956). Ferron and Massa (2011) explored the collective memory formation concerning the Egyptian revolution in 2011 in Wikipedia as the event unfolded. Results indicated progressive construction and reconstruction of collective memory with many contributions and editing participation on the English, Arabic, German, and Egyptian-Arabic Wikipedia websites. Kosciejew highlighted the importance of capturing the collective memory on Covid-19 as it occurs in real-time to ensure that "we can look to these contemporary (and eventually these past) experiences to move forward in any possible future global health crisis" (2021, p. 1). Theoretically, the present study offers stronger empirical evidence on the connection between collective memory and the Critical Year Hypothesis during an ongoing global pandemic.

Despite valuable findings, it is also important to also address some limitations of the present study. Firstly, the study was conducted during the second wave of the pandemic in Malaysia. Therefore, the high recall of the pandemic could be because the pandemic was still prevalent in the country. Furthermore, the present study provides significant insights into how people collectively remember Covid-19 while the pandemic is still ongoing and impacting every single individual worldwide. The high mention of the ongoing pandemic, especially among the younger people and lower among the older generations, further provides more empirical support for the "Critical Years Hypothesis." The findings tell us more about how the critical years-effects is formed and how it developed, especially among those in their formative years as they carry on with their lives through the pandemic. Future studies could be conducted to measure the cohort effect on the intensity of the collective memory on Covid-19 over time.

Secondly, the study sample aged 75 and above, except for the younger generation, was limited. It is due to the difficulties in accessing them due to restricted mobility during the partial lockdown period and the challenges in managing the survey session with them, largely due to their limited physical capabilities and health conditions.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study offers interesting findings on the impact of major defining global crisis on the collective memory of various generational cohorts of Malaysia. Confirming the age effect on the collective memory of Covid-19, the study further unearthed different narratives on Covid-19 recorded across different age groups.

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# Cost-Utility Analysis of Malaysian Elderlies Living in Public Long-Term Care Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This research compares the quality of life of Malaysian elderlies living in public formal long-term care institutions, including residential care and nursing home care. It provides evidence of the cost-effectiveness of both programs. The sample of Malaysian elderlies aged 60 years and above was collected from the World Health Survey, including five dimensions of health status: mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain and discomfort, and anxiety and depression. Each of the dimensions has three levels, including 1 ("no problems"), 2 ("some problems") and 3 ("major problem"). The quality-adjusted life-years (QALYs) of elderlies living in both institutions are estimated using a generic health-related measurement method, EQ-5D. In addition, cost-utility analysis is adopted to compare the effectiveness of programs in allocating resources. The QALY of those living in nursing home care is reasonably lower than those in residential care due to their worse chronic health conditions. The majority are categorised as severely disabled. The cost-effectiveness evaluation of each public long-term care model suggests that the residential care program is cost-effective, with the cost per QALY being MYR22 945. At the same time, a nursing home for disabled people is not effective as the cost per QALY is MYR57 822, falls outside the willingness to pay (WTP) range between (MYR 19,929–MYR 28,470).

*Keywords:* Cost-utility analysis, EQ5D, long term care, population ageing, quality-adjusted-life-years

## INTRODUCTION

As the Malaysian population ages, issues surrounding long-term care, particularly institutional or nursing home care, are coming more into focus (Mohd Tobi et al., 2017). These issues have yet to be

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recognised in policy, which encourages children or family members to provide informal caregiving to elderly parents. Although family members have long practised informal care, this tradition weakens over time due to a falling number of children, urbanisation, and higher labour force participation among women (Mafauzy, 2000). Commentators suggest there is a degree of urgency for policy change or reform from informal care to formal institutional care (Ambigga et al., 2011; Forsyth & Chia, 2009; Goh & Lai, 2013; Li & Khan, 2012).

A comprehensive assessment of elderlies' quality of life living in long-term care institutions is essential to understand the ageing process in different residential settings that may impact elderlies' wellness and eventually provide evidence to support care programs implemented by the government. For example, a study conducted in Brazil reported that the quality of life (QoL) of older persons living in long-term care facilities is lower than those living in the community because they were older and experienced worse socioeconomic and health conditions (Vitorino et al., 2013). Similarly, Kiik and Nuwa (2020) research indicated that Indonesian elderlies living in community-dwelling experience higher QoL than those residing in welfare institutions. Moreover, Su and Wang (2019) found that elderlies residing in community-based home care in Guangzhou city generally showed better QoL than institutional care. These findings suggest that the support from the community is significant and leads to a greater sense of belonging, and positively influences the wellness of elderlies.

In contrast, a study conducted in rural India showed that the QoL of elderlies from nursing homes is higher with better physical health than those elderlies in the community due to regular, timely food intake and less physical activity exertion (Kumar et al., 2016). Nevertheless, no research has been done thus far that estimates the QoL of elderlies living in the community or formal institutional long-term care, particularly those offered by the Malaysian government. This information is necessary to evaluate how effective the modes of institutional long-term care are in Malaysia.

Malaysia's public long-term care program is a safety net program that provides welfare for destitute older people. These public programs include both formal and informal care. The formal care programs included residential homes (*Rumah Sri Kenangan*) and nursing homes (*Rumah Ehsan*). Residents of these formal care homes are elderlies aged 60 and above, who do not have family members or caregivers to provide care. While residential homes accept only independent enough to take care of themselves, nursing homes provide care intensively around the clock to more severely disabled older adults. For informal care, monthly cash payments are given to caregivers or family members of the poor and disabled elderly. In addition, day-care centres are available within the community to provide temporary care services for elderly parents while their children are at work ("Warga Emas", 2021).

Up until today, there has been no formal funding for Malaysian long-term care. Nevertheless, the costs of receiving care from these public institutions are fully subsidised by the government. This study focuses on formal care as the costs of these institutional long-term care are expensive given that the long-term care costs are not only related to professional care for disabled elderly who are in need care and could not perform their daily activities but also comprised the costs for doctor visits, medical expenses, beds, and other facilities. Due to the high costs incurred for these programs, estimating how effectively the government allocated resources is crucial. Inadequate management of long-term care programs is likely to result in poor quality of life among elderlies (Nikmat et al., 2011). It imposes a substantial economic burden on the government in the form of increased long-term care costs.

The most common program effectiveness evaluation method is cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) which compares standard care with alternative care costs and effects (Drummond et al., 2005). Results are not expressed in monetary terms as in cost-benefit analysis (CBA), but forms such as life-years gained. Cost-utility analysis (CUA) is another approach that measures the benefits gained in terms of improved health or quality of life. As such, it is a narrower approach than CEA. CUA results are typically expressed in costs per quality-adjusted life-year (QALY) gained by taking one program instead of another. Alternatively, the costs per QALY of one program can be compared with societal willingness to pay (WTP) for healthcare interventions. One program or intervention is considered effective if the cost for a QALY falls within the WTP range (Shafie et al., 2014).

According to Makai (2014), QALYs are arrived at by adjusting the length of time affected by the health outcome with a health-related quality of life (HRQoL) or health utility index, ranging from 0 to 1. This HRQoL index can be measured using a generic measuring preference instrument based on individuals' health attributes, such as EQ-5D. Bulamu et al. (2015) suggest that the EQ-5D is the most applied generic instrument in community and residential care among older adults. The EQ-5D instrument is available for many countries, including Yusof et al. (2012) have developed the EQ-5D value set for Malaysia. Thus, this paper will adopt the EQ-5D instrument to measure the HRQoL index of the Malaysian elderly and eventually estimate the CUA of public residential care and nursing home care.

According to Dahlan et al. (2010), older adults living in institutions experience adverse effects on health and well-being as the institutional environment creates dependency and offers less privacy. This paper will use a generic health-related measurement method, EQ-5D, to measure the quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) of the Malaysian elderly living in both institutions: residential homes and nursing homes. Although the transition of elderlies receiving care from residential dwellings to the nursing home is often a function of the disability stage, there is currently no evidence showing that living in residential homes provides a higher quality of life than nursing homes. In addition to QALYs, we measure the cost-utility analysis as it is essential to identify how efficient current programs are in improving the quality of life of the elderly.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Next, we describe data used to perform the economic evaluation of public long-term care programs. This paper adopts cost-utility analysis, which measures costs per QALY. The cost data were obtained from the budget announced by the Minister of Women, Family and Community, Datuk Heng Kai See, in 2012, that the government spent MYR 26.79 million for public residential care and MYR 5.8 million for public nursing home care in a year (Bernama, 2012).

In addition, to calculate QALY, we use the World Health Survey (WHS, 2012) survey, which was carried out in many countries, including Malaysia. The sample for Malaysia consists of 6,037 people over the age of 18, of which 796 of them were elderly aged 60 and above. This research includes only those aged 60 years and above to reflect the minimum entry age to public long-term care institutions. There are nine main sections in the survey. However, we gather specific data from the Section 2 to be consistent with the EQ-5D instrument, referring to the individual's health state description. Data were extracted using the *R* program.

### The EQ-5D Instrument

The EQ-5D is a generic measurement of health status that is widely used as a key component for cost-utility analysis. The EQ-5D was originally developed in Europe by The EuroQol Group (1990) and published the updated recently (EuroQol, 2019). The EQ-5D instrument includes five dimensions of health assessment which are: i. mobility, ii. self-care, iii. usual activities, iv. pain and discomfort and v. anxiety and depression. This study used the WHS (2012) survey and chose the respective survey questions that represent the five dimensions of EQ-5D as below:

- 2010: "Overall in the last 30 days, how much difficulty did you have with moving around?" (First dimension: mobility),
- q2020: "Overall in the last 30 days, how much difficulty did you have with self-care, such as washing or dressing yourself?" (Second dimension: self-care),
- q2060: "Overall in the last 30 days, how much difficulty did you have with personal relationship or participation in the community?" (Third dimension: usual activities),
- q2030: "Overall in the last 30 days, how much bodily aches or pains did you have?" (Fourth dimension: pain and discomfort),
- q2090: "Overall in the last 30 days, how much of a problem did you have with feeling sad, low or depressed?" (Fifth dimension: anxiety and depression).

Each of the five dimensions has three levels, including 1 ("no problems"), 2 ("some problems") and 3 ("major problem"). Each of 796 Malaysian elderlies answered the five chosen questions combined to get an individual's EQ-5D health state. The three levels in each of the five dimensions yield $3^5 = 243$ possible health states, identified by a five-digit code. For example, the EQ-5D state 21111 would represent an individual having some problems with mobility and no problem with self-care, usual activities, pain, and depression. A person with state 21111 is experiencing worse health than a person with state 11111 because the first has some problem with his mobility, whereas the second is in perfect health. Nonetheless, it is sometimes difficult to evaluate the health status between two different states. For instance, it is hard to say that 21111 state is better than 12111, or vice-versa because the latter has some difficulties in self-care instead of mobility. Therefore, an index is required to represent the overall level of health of an individual.

The five-dimensional health states can be summarised and represented by a single summary number or an index value, which reflects how good or bad a health state is according to the preferences of the general population of a country. This index value is referred to as the health-related quality of life (HRQoL) or health utility score, obtained from the elicitation of the EQ-5D health states. The EQ-5D elicitation procedure has been undertaken by many countries worldwide. Most EQ-5D elicitation value sets have been obtained from a standardised valuation exercise, in which a representative sample of the general population in a country (EuroQol, 2019). This protocol is based on the time trade-off (TTO) valuation technique. Three methods are frequently used for eliciting the index from the EQ-5D five-digit health state, namely a visual analogue scale (VAS), a standard gamble (SG) or time trade-off (TTO). We chose the EQ-5D value set elicited using the TTO approach, as Yusof et al. (2012). The TTO elicitation equation developed by Yusof et al. (2012) was based on a Malaysian sample and is defined in Equation 1:

$$HRQoL = 0.863 - 0.039(Mobility\ Level\ 2) - 0.08(Mobility\ Level 3) - 0.061(Selfcare\ Level\ 2) - 0.083(Selfcare\ Level\ 3) - 0.03(Usual\ activites\ Level\ 3) - 0.09(Pain\ Level\ 2) - 0.14(Pain\ Level\ 3) - 0.051(Depression\ Level\ 2) - 0.043(Depression\ Level\ 3) - 0.13N3 \quad (1)$$

The regression equation above was estimated using levels 2 and 3 in each of the EQ-5D dimensions as a dummy variable, taking the value of one if they exist and 0 otherwise. The $N3$ variable takes the value 1 if the health state consists of level 3 in any dimension. For example, if the health state of an elderly is 11213, this would translate to $0.083 - 0.03 - 0.043 - 0.13 = 0.66$. This HRQoL index value ranges from 0 (the worst health status) to 1 (the best health status).

We did not directly conduct an EQ-5D survey to obtain the five-digit health state of the elderly living in public institutional long-term care as this would involve a large survey study. Instead, we employed the WHS (2012) survey data, choosing questions relevant to the EQ-5D and assuming these responses were representative of those residing in the government-sponsored long term care facilities. We subdivided the elderlies into two groupings and calculated each of the elderly's HRQoL. In the mobility question, the elderlies who responded to "major problem" (Level 3) are assumed to have some chronic condition and difficulties moving around. They are categorised as dependent elderlies and are likely to need care in a nursing home that provides care round the clock. Based on the samples, thirty elderlies fell under this severe category. This assumption meets the admissions criteria of the public nursing home (*Rumah Ehsan*), which cannot take care of oneself. The remaining elderlies are considered independent as they responded to "no problem" or "minor problem" (level 1 or level 2) in the mobility question. These independent elderlies represent those living in residential care because they meet the residential care (*Rumah Sri Kenanga*) admission criteria, which can take care of themselves. The HRQoL index values will facilitate the calculation of quality-adjusted life-years (QALYs) used to inform economic evaluations of healthcare interventions.

### Cost-Utility Analysis

The cost-effectiveness evaluations of the two different types of institutional care are performed to identify the effectiveness of the programs in improving the quality of life of residents. We use a cost-utility analysis (CUA) approach to achieve this objective as follows:

$$CUA = \frac{Costs}{QALY} \tag{2}$$

where $Costs$ is the average yearly government expenditure for a stay in either residential care or nursing home care. The government fully funds these public long-term care institutions with the average annual costs of the programs, including beds, medicines, food, the activity of daily living assistance, and much more. The denominator of the formula, QALY represents the average quality-adjusted life-year, a preference-based health measure comprising both length and health-related quality of life (HRQoL). Specifically, QALY, is defined as

$$QALY = Life\ time\ spent\ in\ current\ health\ status \times HRQoL \tag{3}$$

Since the $QALY's$ of the elderly living in the institutions is measured during their stay in a year, the $Life\ time\ spent\ in\ current\ health\ status$ for each individual $i$ is set to one year, reducing the formula of QALY to just the HRQoL. The QALY is an index, a single number representing the overall level of an individual's health. This index ranges from 0 (the worst health status) to 1 (perfect health status). Therefore, we estimate the average value of HRQoL from the two groupings represents the mean score of the EQ-5D, the QALY for the groupings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As a result of population ageing, the costs of Malaysian public long-term care are projected to increase in the future. Hence, it is important to measure how effective these programs are. Shiroiwa et al. (2013) suggested that costs per QALY are a good measurement for cost-effectiveness in an economic evaluation. Therefore, we used the same measurement to examine the cost effectiveness of the Malaysian public residential care and nursing home programs.

The Malaysian public long-term care is a fully-funded government program consisting of residential care and nursing home care. Residential care provides care and services only for those elderly who are independent and require low levels of care. In contrast, nursing home care is for the severely disabled and dependent on professional care most of the time.

The percentage of the elderly population entitled to the Malaysian public long-term care programs was tiny. The report from the Operational Assistant Director of Social Welfare Department in 2012 indicated 2,084 older adults were living in public institutions in total which 1,847 of them were living in residential care and 237 were living in nursing home care. Of the 2,084 elderlies, 1,247 were males, and the remaining 837 were females ("Dimana silapnya", 2012). Out of these recipients, approximately 60% were males, and 40% were females. As calculated in Table 1, these reported numbers have resulted in a small percentage of coverage for Malaysia's public institutional care programs, 0.082% of the aged for residential care and 0.010% for nursing home care.

Table 1
*The percentage of elderly living in public residential care and nursing home care in year 2012*

| | Residential care | Nursing home |
|---|---|---|
| Number of elderlies living in institutions | 1, 847 | 237 |
| Malaysian total elderly estimates from DoSM | 2,262,800 | 2,262,800 |
| Percentage of coverage under the institutions (%) | 0.082 | 0.010 |

We use the reported total government spending on the public long-term care programs in 2012. MYR 32.59 million, in which MYR 26.79 million were spent on residential care and MYR 5.80 million on nursing home care. Hence, in 2012, the average annual costs per person for residential and nursing home care were MYR 14 504 and MYR 24, 472 per person, respectively. The average costs for nursing home care are significantly higher than residential care due to the greater intensity of care needed by those living in nursing home care compared to residential care. Furthermore, most of those living in nursing home care suffer chronic illnesses, requiring extra medical care and assistance in daily living.

Next, we estimated the QALY based on an elderly's responses to the WHS (2012). There were 796 elderlies, with 429 (54%) males and 367 (46%) females. The respondents' age distribution is shown in Figure 1—most elderlies aged 75 years and below and only a small number of them aged 75 and above. We selected questions that are related to the five dimensions of the EQ-5D—mobility (q2010), self-care (q2020), usual activities (q2060), pain or discomfort (q2030) and depression (q2090) and then the five-digit code of an individual's health status were collected. Figure 2 shows the number of elderlies by five dimensions and three levels of health status. Most elderlies reported no problem in mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain and discomfort and depression, and only a few have major problems in all five dimensions.

Using the time-trade-off regression model from Yusof et al. (2012), the five-digit code was reduced to a single index known as an HRQoL index. The HRQoL index is usually normalised to lie between 0 (death) and 1 (representing total health). Next, we calculated each of the elderly's HRQoL indices and estimated the average value from the two groupings represents the mean score of the EQ-5D, which is the QALY for the groupings, and the results are shown in Table 2.

From Table 2, the estimated QALY of those living in residential care and nursing home care were 0.632 and 0.423, respectively. The QALY of those living in nursing home care is, reasonably, lower than those in residential care due to their worse chronic health conditions, with the majority being categorised as severely disabled. As a result, the cost-effectiveness of the residential care program is MYR 22,948 per QALY, lower than the cost-effectiveness of nursing home care MYR 57,822 per QALY. These results reflect positively on the residential care program

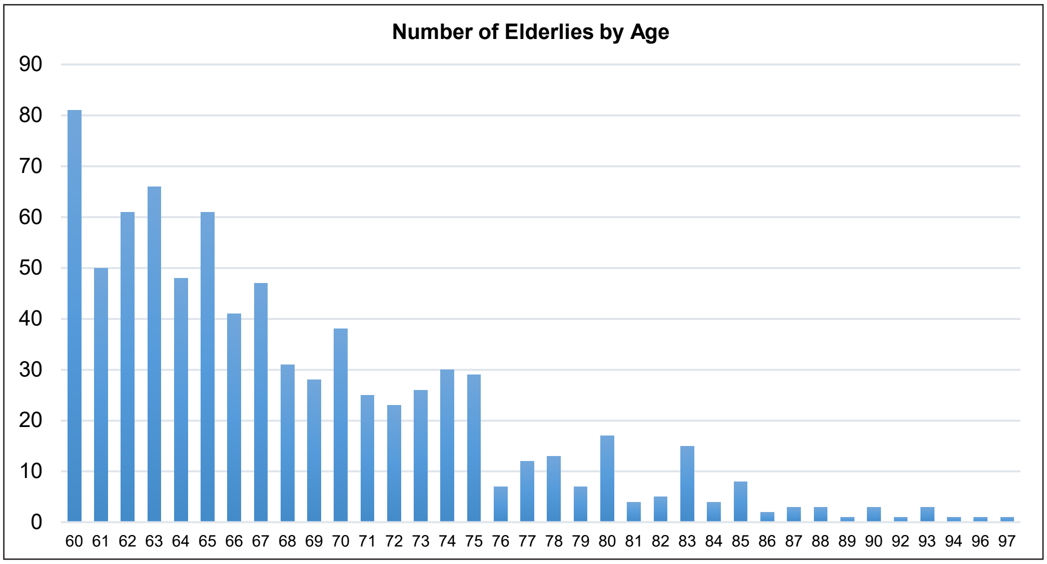

*Figure 1*. Number of Malaysian elderlies from WHS (2012) by age

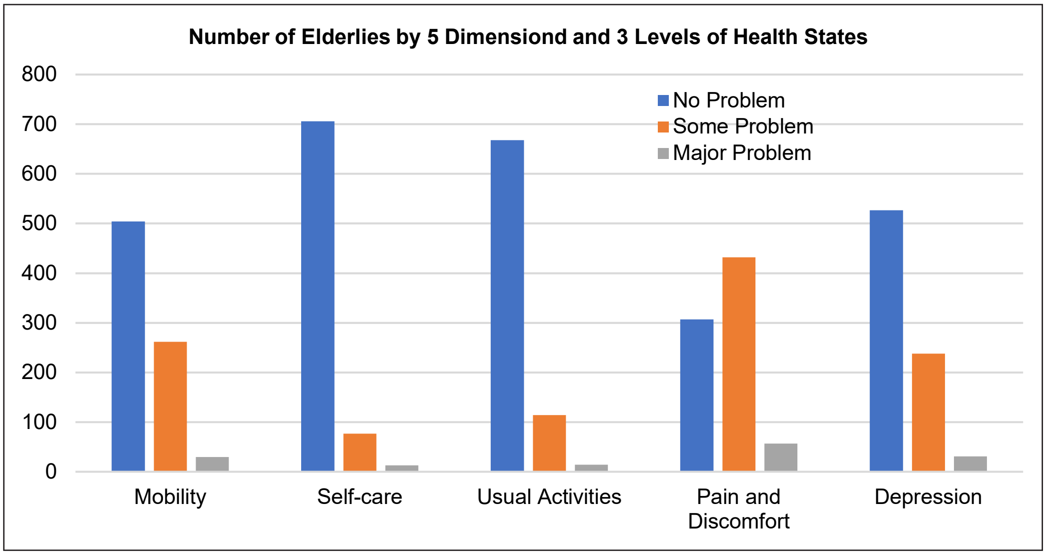

*Figure 2.* Number of Malaysian elderlies from WHS (2012) according to five dimensions and three levels of health states

Table 2

*Quality-adjusted life year of elderlies living in Malaysian public long-term care institutions and the Cost-utility analysis of both institutions*

| | Residential care | Nursing home |
|---|---|---|
| Average costs per person (MYR) | 14,504 | 24, 472 |
| QALY | 0.63 | 0.42 |
| Cost/QALY (MYR) | 22, 948 | 57, 822 |
| WTP/ QALY (MYR) | (19,929 - 28,470) | |
| Effectiveness of the program | Effective | Not Effective |

as it has the best (lowest) cost-effectiveness ratio compared to nursing home care. It takes MYR 22,948 to generate an additional QALY in the residential care program. For nursing home care, an additional QALY will cost MYR 57,822, which is more than double residential care costs.

For further analysis of these programs' cost-effectiveness, the costs per QALY of each program were compared with Malaysian's willingness to pay (WTP) for a quality-adjusted life-year (QALY). World Health Organization recommended that any intervention in a country would be considered cost-effective if it were below the recommended value of three times the GDP per capita threshold. This threshold value remains arbitrary and may not be entirely relevant because it depends only on the estimation of the regional GDP per capita—a nation's average wealth does not necessarily indicate the state of wealth of every member of society. Few countries have explicitly estimated their WTP threshold. For example, the United Kingdom has a threshold value of between

GBP 20,000 and GBP 30,000 per QALY gained, whereas Ireland's threshold is Euro 20,000 per QALY gained (Shafie et al., 2014). Thus, research from Shafie et al. (2014) attempted to estimate Malaysia's WTP per QALY threshold and found that any intervention below MYR 29,080 is considered cost-effective. However, this threshold is based on the health status of the Penang population only in which the demographic composition does not entirely represent Malaysia population—Chinese is the majority in Penang, which is inconsistent with the fact that Malay is the majority of the Malaysian population. Lim et al. (2017) estimated the cost-effectiveness threshold of health care intervention programs based on Malaysian population health status description using a Malaysian population survey conducted between December 1, 2012, and December 31, 2014. The study found that the WTP for the Malaysian population is between MYR 19,929 and MYR 28,470.

Compared to the WTP per QALY threshold from Lim et al. (2017), Malaysian residential care is cost-effective, as the cost per QALY value falls within the willingness to pay threshold. On the other hand, results show that nursing home care in Malaysia is ineffective due to the costs per QALY values lying outside the WTP range. One reason for this outcome is that the costs associated with nursing home care are far more expensive than residential care, which are double in Malaysia. The high costs of nursing home care reflect the extensive care and medical attention needed to treat the severely disabled elderly. Hence, residential care is effective, whereas the nursing home program is ineffective for Malaysian long-term care. In this context, further research is needed to develop both rigorous QALY values for Malaysian long-term care programs and the WTP per QALY threshold.

## CONCLUSIONS

Population ageing is a topical issue in Malaysia. The proportion of older people has increased rapidly, resulting in a greater demand for long term care. The sustainability of current long-term care models in the country has been debated by researchers, together with suggestions for change and reform. Nonetheless, none provide quantifiable research about the quality of life of elderlies living in a formal long-term care institution. Therefore, this paper seeks to contribute to this area of research and perform the economic evaluation for public long term care institutions provided by the government. Results suggest that the residential care program is cost-effective, while nursing home care for severely disabled people is ineffective. The findings of this research may contribute to the development of long-term care policy in Malaysia particularly, to plan for the cost-effective long term care program for the elderlies.

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# After Over a Year of Pandemic: Mental Well-being and Life Satisfaction of Filipino College Students

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has been there for over a year and may substantially negatively impact student's mental well-being. This study aimed to assess the subjective mental well-being and satisfaction with life of Filipino college students. This cross-sectional study involved the analysis of 1,141 college students in the Philippines. The data were collected using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Results indicated that while 52.8% reported high satisfaction with life, 40.2% had poor mental well-being. Self-reported health status ($\beta$=1.899, p=.000), age ($\beta$=0.179, p=.000), and year level ($\beta$=0.306, p=.000) predicted mental well-being. On the other hand, subjective mental well-being ($\beta$=0.736, p=.000), self-reported health status ($\beta$=0.967, p=.000), and age ($\beta$=0.691, p=.025) predicted life satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has likely affected students' mental health and well-being. Interventions should be initiated to address the mental health needs of the students during this pandemic and even beyond the health crisis.

*Keywords:* COVID-19 pandemic, life satisfaction, mental health, Philippines, students

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## INTRODUCTION

The rise of mental and psychological health problems is an area of concern arising during pandemics. Soon after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic in March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020), authorities and scholars have warned about the possible impact of the public health crisis on mental health and the rise of mental health issues (United Nations, 2020). The result of studies

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on the immediate impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on psychological well-being revealed poor and negative mental health outcomes (Kecojevic et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020a, 2021b). Moreover, a cross-country comparison disclosed that the Philippines were the two countries with the highest stress, anxiety, and depression (Wang et al., 2021a). Apart from the fear of getting infected by the virus are the new realities of home-schooling and significant changes to everyday lives as movements are restricted to reduce and contain viral transmission (Oducado & Estoque, 2021; Rodríguez-Rey et al., 2020). Lockdown restrictions and social distancing measures hurt economic well-being, psychological health, and quality of life (Le et al., 2020; Ren et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020). Despite the developments of vaccines to protect against the disease, the number of cases in some parts of the world and the Philippines continues to rise. As of July 7, 2021, there are 184,324,026 confirmed cases and 3,992,680 deaths of COVID-19 worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021) and 1,450,110 infected and 25,459 deaths in the country (Philippine Department of Health, 2021).

Continuously monitoring the developments of the pandemic and its likely effect on mental health is necessary as the pandemic appears to remain for some time. A systematic review found that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the population's mental health (Xiong et al., 2020). In another study, younger groups and students' psychological health are more affected by the pandemic (Tee et al., 2020). The COVID-19 crisis is fuelling a mental health crisis as the pandemic wears on to upset the lives of young people across the globe (Dodson, 2020). Pre-pandemic statistics of the World Health Organization (2020) show that 16 percent of people aged 10 to 19 years old worldwide live with mental health conditions, and suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for 15 and 19 years old. A study involving 30 countries reported a 10.8 percent lifetime prevalence of depression (Lim et al., 2018). University students are particularly vulnerable as there is an increased likelihood of experiencing common psychological problems throughout adolescence and are peaking in early adulthood (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020). Unfortunately, many students never used mental health services despite having moderate or severe mental health symptoms during the pandemic (Lee et al., 2021).

As the global health crisis continues in the Philippines, Asia, and many parts of the world, experts anticipate a long-term impact of the pandemic on people's mental health (Joseph, 2021), and scholars speculate that a bigger wave of a mental health crisis can be expected in the aftermath of the pandemic (Rabacal et al., 2020; Repišti et al., 2020). While there had been many studies on the psychological impact of the pandemic on the population and students, most of the studies were done at the early onset of the pandemic (e.g., Kecojevic et al., 2020; Labrague et al., 2021; Superio et al., 2021; Tee et al., 2020). Moreover, previous studies commonly used various outcome variables for possible psychopathologies, such as stress, depression, and anxiety (e.g., Hamaideh et al., 2021; Le et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Ren et al., 2021; Simegn et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021a, 2021b), however, few looked into the subjective mental well-being and life satisfaction being arguably indicators or possible predictors of current or future mental health outcomes. Moreover, qualitative evidence suggests that due to quarantine restrictions and campus closures, Filipino college students have failed to experience developmental milestones such as in-person co-learning and recreational activities with peers, engagement in internships and practicums in their desired industries, and preparations to launch themselves into the productive workforce (Cleofas, 2020). These pandemic-induced life interruptions may lead to poorer well-being, quality of life, and sentiments about the future among these emerging adults.

Since the conduct of studies in the country and elsewhere found in the literature (e.g., Lee et al., 2021; Superio et al., 2021; Tee et al., 2020), the students may have been continually exposed to pandemic-induced stressors for more than a year. There is a need to revisit the mental health conditions of these students to determine whether current policies and interventions need to be adjusted to address their needs. Thus, this study aimed to examine the subjective mental well-being and satisfaction with life of Filipino college students.

## METHODS

### Research Design, Sample, and Data Collection

It was a cross-sectional study. The sample of this study consisted of college students in one government-funded college in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. The sample size was computed using the Raosoft sample size calculator. A sample of 364 was required for a population of 6,893 with a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5%, and a response distribution of 50%. More than the required sample size for this study responded to the first wave of the web-based survey administered on July 1, 2021. However, we included only 1,141 responses in the analysis. In addition, we excluded five respondents who reported high-income status because of the very few numbers (less than 1 percent of the total sample) of respondents in the category. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Administrative clearance for the sound and ethical conduct of the study was obtained from the Public University where the study was conducted. The online survey (Google Forms) was posted in the school's official social media groups and chat groups. Students were asked to proceed with the survey only upon consenting to participate in the study.

### Instruments

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were the main research instruments utilized in the study. The SWEMWS of the NHS Health

Scotland, University of Warwick, and University of Edinburgh (2008) consisted of seven items that measured subjective mental well-being in this study. The scores in the SWEMWBS were first summed up for each of the seven items (total score is from 7 to 35), using a 5-point scale that ranges from "1-None of the time" to "All of the time-5." After which, the transformation of the total raw scores into metric scores was done using a conversion table (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009). The scores were interpreted as 7 to 20 are low or poor (17 or less for probable depression, 18–20 for possible depression), 28 to 35 are high, and between 20 and 28 are average mental well-being (Trabelsi et al., 2021). The SWLS of Diener et al. (1985) measured global cognitive judgment of life satisfaction. The SWLS was scored by summing the scores for each of the five items, which are scored from "1-Strongly disagree" to "7-Strongly agree," and the total score is from five to 35. Scores were interpreted as 5 to 14 are dissatisfied (5 to 9 for extremely dissatisfied, 10 to 14 for dissatisfied), 25 to 35 are highly satisfied (25 to 29 are satisfied, 30 to 35 are highly satisfied), and between 14 to 25 are moderate life satisfaction (15 to 19 are slightly below average in life satisfaction, 20 to 24 are average life satisfaction; Pavot & Diener, 2013). While tool developers reported acceptable internal consistency of the SWEMWBS and SWLS, both scales had a Cronbach's alpha of .87 when used among Filipino samples (Cleofas & Oducado, 2021). Self-reported health status was determined using a one-item scale with responses ranging from "Poor-1" to "Excellent-5" (Haddock et al., 2006; Oducado et al., 2021). The respondents were also asked if they suffer from any chronic illness or comorbidities, answerable by "Yes-1, "No-2", and "Don't know-3." The socio-demographic information of the respondents was also collected in the first part of the survey.

### Statistical Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS software version 23. For description purposes, frequency, percentage, standard deviation (SD), and mean were utilized. A one-way Analysis of Variance with Scheffe's procedure was used to compare means of more than two groups. In comparison, a t-test for independent samples was employed to compare the means of two independent groups. Correlates and predictors were identified using Pearson's r and multiple linear regression analysis using the step-wise method. Alpha level of significance was set at .05.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the profile of 1,141 respondents. The average age and self-reported health of the respondents were 21.78+3.28 and 4.06+.21, respectively. The majority were females (74.6%), single (96.7%), junior level (37.7%), low-income status (67.7%), not working or full-time students (77.9%), with residence located in the city (55.4%), are living with their family (94.8%), and do not have any chronic illness or comorbidities (78.8%).

Table 2 shows that 40.2% and 42.3% had poor and average subjective mental well-being, respectively. On the other hand, 52.8% were highly satisfied with life.

Table 3 shows the Pearson's r result revealing that age (r=.131, p=.000) and self-reported health (r=.267, p=.005) were significantly related to mental well-being. Also, t-test for independent samples and one-way ANOVA revealed that mental well-being significantly differed according to marital status (t=-2.514, p=.012), academic year level (F=4.053, p=.007), and if the student suffers from chronic illness (F=9.508, p=.000). Post hoc analysis revealed that the subjective mental well-being of juniors (p=.020) and seniors (p=.028) were significantly higher than that of freshmen college students. In addition, those who do not suffer from any chronic illness had significantly higher (p=.000) mental well-being than those who do not know if they have chronic illness or comorbidities.

Table 1
*Profile of college students*

| Profile | Mean | SD | f | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 21.78 | 3.28 | | |
| Self-reported health status | 4.06 | 0.71 | | |
| Sex | | | | |
| Male | | | 29 | 25.4 |
| Female | | | 851 | 74.6 |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Single | | | 1103 | 96.7 |
| Married | | | 38 | 3.3 |
| Family income status | | | | |
| Low income | | | 772 | 67.7 |
| Middle income | | | 369 | 32.2 |
| Work status | | | | |
| Yes | | | 252 | 22.1 |
| No | | | 889 | 77.9 |
| Location of residence | | | | |
| City | | | 632 | 55.4 |
| Town | | | 509 | 44.6 |
| Family living arrangement | | | | |
| Yes | | | 1082 | 94.8 |
| No | | | 59 | 5.2 |
| Year level | | | | |
| Freshman | | | 197 | 17.3 |
| Sophomore | | | 331 | 29.0 |
| Junior | | | 430 | 37.7 |
| Senior | | | 183 | 16.1 |
| Presence of chronic illness or comorbidities | | | | |
| Yes | | | 59 | 5.2 |
| No | | | 899 | 78.8 |
| Don't know | | | 183 | 16.0 |

The Pearson's r result in Table 4 shows that mental well-being (r=.636, p=.000), age (r=.064, r=.030), and self-reported general health status (r=.271, p=.000) were significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Additionally, the result of the t-test for independent samples and one-way ANOVA revealed that satisfaction with life significantly differed based on marital status

Table 2
*Level of mental well-being and life satisfaction of college students*

| Level of mental well-being and life satisfaction | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| Mental well-being (M = 23.16, SD = 5.10) | | |
| High (28 to 35) | 199 | 17.4 |
| Average (21 to 27) | 483 | 42.3 |
| Low (7 to 20) | 459 | 40.2 |
| Life satisfaction (M = 24.30, SD = 6.29) | | |
| Highly satisfied (25 to 35) | 603 | 52.8 |
| Moderately satisfied (15 to 24) | 451 | 39.5 |
| Dissatisfied (5 to 14) | 87 | 7.6 |

Table 3

*Correlates of subjective mental well-being among college students*

| Variables | M | SD | Test statistics | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age† | | | .131* | .000 |
| Self-reported health status† | | | .267* | .005 |
| Sex‡ | | | 0.709 | .479 |
| Male | 23.35 | 5.33 | | |
| Female | 23.10 | 5.01 | | |
| Marital status‡ | | | -2.514* | .012 |
| Single | 23.09 | 5.11 | | |
| Married | 25.06 | 4.54 | | |
| Family income status‡ | | | -0.521 | .602 |
| Low income | 23.11 | 5.13 | | |
| Middle income | 23.28 | 5.04 | | |
| Work status‡ | | | 1.816 | .070 |
| Yes | 23.68 | 5.40 | | |
| No | 23.02 | 5.00 | | |
| Location of residence‡ | | | 0.365 | .589 |
| City | 23.09 | 5.03 | | |
| Town | 23.26 | 5.18 | | |
| Family living arrangement‡ | | | 1.675 | .094 |
| Yes | 23.22 | 5.12 | | |
| No | 22.08 | 4.70 | | |
| Year level§ | | | 4.053* | .007 |
| Freshman | 22.11 | 4.88 | | |
| Sophomore | 23.09 | 4.81 | | |
| Junior | 23.48 | 5.38 | | |
| Senior | 23.69 | 5.05 | | |
| Presence of chronic illness or comorbidities§ | | | 9.508* | .000 |
| Yes | 22.18 | 4.95 | | |
| No | 23.50 | 5.13 | | |
| Don't know | 21.85 | 4.74 | | |

*Note:* †Pearson r correlation, ‡t-test for independent group, §Analysis of Variance *p < .05

Table 4

*Correlates of life satisfaction among college students*

| Variables | M | SD | Test statistics | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mental well-being† | | | .626* | .000 |
| Age† | | | .064* | .030 |
| Self-reported health status† | | | .271* | .000 |
| Sex‡ | | | 0.152 | .879 |
| Male | 24.35 | 6.29 | | |
| Female | 24.28 | 6.30 | | |
| Marital status‡ | | | -4.211* | .000 |
| Single | 24.22 | 6.36 | | |

Table 4 (*continue*)

| Variables | M | SD | Test statistics | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 26.58 | 3.24 | | |
| Family income status‡ | | | -2.260* | .024 |
| Low income | 24.01 | 6.43 | | |
| Middle income | 24.91 | 5.97 | | |
| Are you a working student‡ | | | 0.674 | .500 |
| Yes | 24.54 | 6.41 | | |
| No | 24.23 | 6.26 | | |
| Location of residence‡ | | | 1.207 | .228 |
| City | 24.50 | 6.06 | | |
| Town | 24.05 | 6.57 | | |
| Family living arrangement‡ | | | 2.441* | .015 |
| Yes | 24.41 | 6.27 | | |
| No | 22.36 | 6.45 | | |
| Year level§ | | | 1.481 | .218 |
| Freshman | 23.49 | 6.14 | | |
| Sophomore | 24.52 | 6.16 | | |
| Junior | 24.33 | 6.61 | | |
| Senior | 24.72 | 5.92 | | |
| Presence of chronic illness or comorbidities§ | | | 12.335* | .000 |
| Yes | 23.24 | 5.96 | | |
| No | 24.77 | 6.20 | | |
| Don't know | 22.25 | 6.47 | | |

*Note:* †Pearson r correlation, ‡t-test for independent group, §Analysis of Variance *p < .05

Table 5

*Regression analysis of predictors of mental well-being among college students*

| Independent variables | β | t | *p*-value | 95% CI for β |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 10.771 | 8.45 | .000 | 8.27 to 13.28 |
| Self-reported health status | 1.899 | 9.32 | .000 | 1.50 to 2.30 |
| Age | 0.179 | 3.95 | .000 | 0.090 to 0.268 |
| Year level | 0.306 | 1.97 | .000 | 0.001 to 0.611 |

*Note.* R = .301; $R^2$ = .091; Std. Error of the Estimate = 4.87; F = 37.87; p = .000

(t=-4.211, p=.000), family income status (t=-2.260, p=.024), those living with family (t=2.441, p=.015), and presence or absence of any chronic illness or comorbidities (F=12.335, p=.000). Post hoc analysis unveiled that those who do not suffer from chronic illness have significantly higher (p=.000) life satisfaction compared to those who do not know if they have any chronic illness or comorbidities.

Presented in Table 5 are the predictors of mental well-being. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that self-reported health status (β=1.899, p=.000), age (β=0.179, p=.000), and year level (β=0.306, p=.000) were significant

Table 6

*Regression analysis of predictors of life satisfaction*

| Independent variables | β | t | *p*-value | 95% CI for β |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 2.403 | 2.36 | .018 | 0.409 to 4.396 |
| Mental well-being | 0.736 | 25.17 | .000 | 0.679 to 0.794 |
| Self-reported health status | 0.967 | 4.58 | .000 | 0.553 to 1.381 |
| Age | 0.691 | 2.25 | .025 | 0.087 to 1.295 |

*Note.* R = .638; $R^2$ = .407; Std. error of the estimate = 4.85; F = 259.76; p = .000

predictors of mental well-being. In addition, the regression model explained 9.1% of the variances of subjective mental well-being (F=37.87, p=.000).

The regression model (Table 6) explained 40.7% of the variances of the satisfaction with life (F=259.76, p=.000). Subjective mental well-being (β=0.736, p=.000), self-reported health status (β=0.967, p=.000), and age (β=0.691, p=.025) were significant predictors of life satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated college students' mental well-being and satisfaction after over a year of the pandemic health crisis. After almost sixteen months since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we found a relatively significant number of college students reporting poor mental well-being suggesting possible or probable psychopathology. A systematic review of the effects of COVID-19 on psychological outcomes found that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted people's mental health (Xiong et al., 2020). Studies conducted during the lockdown period and early parts of the pandemic in the Philippines have shown that college students experience fear (Superio et al., 2021), anxiety (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021), lockdown fatigue (Labrague et al., 2021), loneliness (Labrague & Ballad, 2020), and were moderately or severely affected by the pandemic (Tee et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the literature and our findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an undesirable impact on students' mental health. The proportion of students having poor mental well-being in our study after more than a year of the pandemic is disturbing and is an area of concern. Poor psychological or mental well-being is linked with depression, stress, and anxiety (Malone & Wachholtz, 2018; Ceri & Cicek, 2021; Wąsowicz et al., 2021). Additionally, our result also has important implications for the early implementation of suicide prevention strategies. Depression or poor mental health is a risk factor for suicidal behaviors before and during the pandemic (Brådvik, 2018; Elbogen et al., 2021). Although a longitudinal survey found no significant changes in the respondents' stress, anxiety, and depression levels during the initial phase and four weeks later of the COVID-19 outbreak (Wang et al., 2020b), there is also evidence showing that suicidal ideation was found to increase over time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mamun, 2021).

A pre-pandemic meta-analysis also revealed a higher prevalence of self-harm, non-suicidal self-injury, and suicidal behaviors among children and adolescents in low and middle-income, non-Western countries (Lim et al., 2019). And while the central focus of public health initiatives during outbreaks usually revolves around the physical and biological effects of the epidemic, the increasing mental health burden calls for enhanced mental health support (Ho et al., 2020a). Well-being initiatives and other positive psychological measures such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Soh et al., 2020; Zhang & Ho, 2017) may be undertaken to address the potentially growing number of psychological problems during the global health crisis. Nevertheless, it may also be valuable not only to attribute students' poor mental well-being to the effect of the pandemic. Issues in mental and psychological health may also be due to other factors like the altered learning landscape and academic difficulties (Burns et al., 2020; Oducado & Estoque, 2021).

Also, in this study, higher self-reported health predicts higher mental well-being and greater life satisfaction. Although it is not a significant predictor, students without chronic disease or comorbidities have higher well-being and life satisfaction scores in the bivariate analysis. Correspondingly, perception of good health status is associated with lower levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and the psychological impact of the pandemic (Browning et al., 2021; Oducado et al., 2021; Rogowska et al., 2020; Tee et al., 2020). On the other hand, chronic conditions were associated with lower health-related quality of life (Tran et al., 2020). Our finding suggests that the general health status of students should be given focus at this time of health catastrophe. Likewise, students should be made aware of their current health status and the possible presence of comorbidities that might increase their risk of severe COVID-19 illness (Guillasper et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, this study also found that younger students have poor mental well-being and life satisfaction. Thus, younger age groups and students are particularly at risk of experiencing the pandemic's negative mental and psychological impact (Browning et al., 2021; Cleofas & Rocha, 2021; Tee et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021b). Perhaps, younger students are more likely to be worried about their future education (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Browning et al., 2021) but are less likely to use positive coping strategies, making them more vulnerable to psychopathologies or negative mental states during the pandemic (Labrague et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to proactively reach out to students who are likely to experience mental health issues and provide them with accessible mental health care (Lee et al., 2021).

On the brighter side, this study found that a little over half of the students are highly satisfied with their life. On the other hand, studies elsewhere noted a decline in life satisfaction related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Duong, 2021; Pretorius & Padmanabhanunni, 2021; Von Soest et al., 2020). The varying times the studies were conducted, the use of different tools to assess a similar construct, and the different scoring and interpretation procedures of various scholars may have influenced the results. Moreover, while mental well-being, self-reported health, and age can explain 40.7% of the variances of the satisfaction with life, there may be other factors contributing to college students' life satisfaction. Other factors found in the literature that are linked with life satisfaction are satisfaction with family life (Schnettler et al., 2017), stress and ego-resilience (Kim & Koh, 2016), and academic performance, and physical activities (Slavinski et al., 2021), among others. Future researchers may consider these variables when studying life satisfaction in the current or similar context.

Finally, we also demonstrated in this study that students' mental well-being predicts their satisfaction with life. Our finding is consistent with the results of studies conducted elsewhere, like in Canada (Lombardo et al., 2018) and China (Bieda et al., 2019). Therefore, the promotion of mental well-being is necessary to enhance life satisfaction among college students.

Nonetheless, our study has the following limitations. First, it must be noted that our outcome measures (subjective mental well-being and life satisfaction) are dependent on students' self-report and not meant to diagnose any psychopathology. Functional neuroimaging and structured clinical interviews are the gold standards for establishing the psychiatric diagnosis (Husain et al., 2020, Ho et al., 2020b). Moreover, our study is limited to its cross-sectional nature and our single-site sample, which decreases its generalizability and ability to establish causality among variables. There may be other factors that could contribute to students' mental outcomes not included in the study. Future researchers may investigate if vaccination could improve mental health and may follow the design of studies found in the literature (e.g., Chew et al., 2021). Nevertheless, our findings enrich the literature on the mental and psychological outcomes of the pandemic among college students. We provide up-to-date evidence on students' mental well-being and life satisfaction after over a year of the inception of the COVID-19 crisis.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the mental health aspect of college students should be given priority during the pandemic. Our study suggests that the rather long-term presence of the COVID-19 pandemic has likely affected college students' mental well-being and psychological health resulting in a looming mental health crisis. Also, students' mental well-being is a valuable resource that contributes to their life satisfaction. Moreover, this research found that younger students with lower general self-reported health status tend to have poor subjective mental well-being and life satisfaction. Therefore, attention should be given to the cohort of students at risk of mental health issues and are likely to report lower mental well-being. Some students may need professional help dealing with the pandemic, and mental health care should be made accessible and available to them. Preventive strategies and mental health promotion interventions may be initiated to respond to the growing mental health needs of the students during this pandemic and as the long-term effects of the pandemic continue to unfold.

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# The Tragedy of Sex Trafficking: A Study of Vietnamese Women Trafficked into Malaysia for Sex Purposes

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## ABSTRACT

Sex trafficking is an abhorrent crime in our contemporary times. Malaysia is currently both a transit and destination country, where women from different countries are trafficked in and out of Malaysia for sex purposes. This article focuses specifically on the trafficking of Vietnamese women into Malaysia. We, the researchers of this paper, interviewed a group of 10 Vietnamese women who were caught in a single police raid at an illegal 'gambling center' and placed in a women's shelter in Kuala Lumpur. While this article explores the tragedy of sex trafficking and the plight of trafficked victims, it also focuses on the politics of the body of the trafficked woman, discussing how the female body has been abused and condemned through manipulation and oppression. This article also reveals how systems of oppression, namely patriarchal cultural practices and gendered discrimination, have helped form a prejudice and suppression of Vietnamese women. Ketu Katrak and Elleke Boehmer's discussions on the politics of the female body construct the basis of this article's theoretical framework. At the same time, the literary approach of 'lived narratives' offers a unique blend of multiple disciplines of study, including literature, sociology, gender, and politics, to discuss sex trafficking in Malaysia. Overall, this article provides a glimpse into the complex dynamics of sex trafficking in Malaysia.

*Keywords:* Gendered discrimination, patriarchy, police raid, politics of the body, sex trafficking in Malaysia, trafficking of Vietnamese women, transit and destination country

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## INTRODUCTION

Questions on the female body and gendered inequalities are often at the forefront of academic and feminist debates. Within the context of sex trafficking, this focus becomes more pronounced as female subjectivities are often abused and disempowered. This paper discusses the female body of Vietnamese victims who are trafficked into Malaysia for sex purposes. It proposes an approach to understanding this situation through lived experiences of sex-trafficked women. These experiences are recorded narratives from interviewed victims, read as forms of literature, and understood by using particular literary lenses. These lived stories merge various contexts and hence enable the application of multiple disciplines to study them, including literature, sociology, gender, and politics, to discuss sex trafficking in Malaysia. Malaysia is both a transit and destination country for sex trafficking, and it is on Tier 3 on The US Embassy Trafficking in Persons Report of 2021, where women from different countries—Vietnam, Africa, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, among others—are brought into Malaysia and forced to work as sex slaves. For the purpose of this paper, we limit our focus to Vietnamese women trafficked into Malaysia. We hope to provide a holistic understanding of these women's experiences. Furthermore, Vietnamese women compose a large percentage of foreign women trafficked into Malaysia.

In order to research and analyze sex trafficking from a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive perspective, we first need to locate and contextualize our discussion. Many assume that slavery ended with the abolition, but in reality, it continued to persist, evolving and taking on different forms and faces over the years. There are millions of people enslaved in the world today. In our contemporary times, one form of slavery which charts a high record of incarcerating women and children is forced sex slavery or what is referred to as sex trafficking. Sex trafficking involves forcing individuals to perform sex work for the profit of their traffickers. Sex slavery does not include those who perform sex work by choice but rather focuses on those who are enslaved as a result of incarceration, coercion, or debt bondage, among other reasons (Murphy, 2014).

The transnational business of modern slavery is a vital concern all over the world, including Malaysia. Evidently, by being placed in the second-tier watch list of the trafficking in persons list, the growing number of women and children (approximately 142,000 sex-trafficked victims, out of which 8,000 to 10,000 are located in Kuala Lumpur[1]) trafficked into the country and then moved out of Malaysia for the purpose of sex slavery is alarming, a clear indication that Malaysia is a destination country for human traffickers, reporting high and increasing numbers of sex trafficking slaves.

Siddharth Kara, an eminent scholar and researcher in the field of sex trafficking, states that "the global magnitude of victimization of young women … is staggering" (Kara, 2009, p. 3). However, despite this shocking victimization of women and children, "every minute of every day, the most vulnerable women and children in the world are raped for profit with impunity, yet efforts to combat sex trafficking remain woefully inadequate and misdirected" (p. 3). There are a few pertinent reasons why the business of selling

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[1] These figures are not final as many victims are undocumented and remain incarcerated.

women and children flourish, and literature in modern times is being used on varied platforms to address the growing concerns of society and the world. It certainly can be used to discuss sex trafficking (Katrak, 2006). Likewise, literature too can aid in the abolitionist movement of modern-day human trafficking by lending a discourse that "[values] the voice of the powerless and [honors] those who suffer" (Murphy, 2014, p. 10).

In Malaysia, as argued by Hazreeen Begum Hamid, "there is scant literature on sex trafficking in Malaysia that is based on systematic qualitative data" (Hamid, 2019, p. 136). She also aptly posits that when approaching, perceiving, and dealing with victims of trafficking, most instances reflect "how government institutions have effectively denied women's agency through its anti-trafficking laws, and highlights the continuum of harm experienced by women throughout the trafficking and post-trafficking stage" (Hamid, 2019, p. 135). Mahalingam and Sidhu, in their article, "Inside the Crime of Sex Trafficking in Sabah, Malaysia," express similar ideas within the context of sex trafficking in Sabah where,

> while the main motive of sex traffickers and corrupt enforcement is to earn quick and easy money, the victim's desire for better-paying jobs in Sabah places them in a vulnerable position which in turn leads to their being exploited in the commercial sex market. (2020, p. 14).

This article gives a more focused discussion on the context of sex trafficking in Sabah while articulating at the same time "a range of crime prevention possibilities" (Mahalingam & Sidhu, 2020, p. 15). In a recent book on human trafficking, Sheila Michael discusses the repercussions of human trafficking on individuals where "the physical, mental and emotional abuse of the victims is traumatic and has long lasting effects that stay with them for a long time" (2019, p. 108). However, while Michael's discussion gives an overview of the condition of human trafficking in Malaysia, our paper discusses the specific experience of Vietnamese women within the context of sex trafficking in Malaysia, offering fresh, new, and focused insights on the experiences of a particular group of women. Nevertheless, Michael is apt in stating that "human trafficking [as a whole] causes human insecurity due to exploitation by the perpetrators of their victims for long term profit" (p. 88). Thus "the illegal movement of people across borders poses threats to national security, and when it involves the exploitation of innocent and vulnerable people including women and children, it also affects the security of the people" (p. 88). While a 2014 newspaper article written in the Star newspaper states that "sex is not an industry in Malaysia, the term 'sex activities' is more accurate" (Cheng, 2014, para. 5), the same cannot be said for the context of contemporary Malaysia in 2021 as Malaysia is now not only a transit country but also a destination country. Given this, it is vital for us to understand the conditions as well as the experiences of women trafficked into Malaysia for sex purposes.

We, the researchers, felt the approach of recording the stories was important because it allowed these trafficked women to speak for themselves about their experiences which were brutal, violent, and terrifying. Their individual stories reveal a collective plight on the ways in which women's bodies have been abused and mutilated for commercial profit. The use of the narrative genre in our article reveals lived truths about slavery that expose this inhumane commerce and, conversely, offers these women an avenue to 'tell' their stories. In this way, we do not 'generalize' all narratives and experiences of trafficking as similar, and we pay attention to the individual's specific story (however similar it may be).

In researching survivor testimonies, it became increasingly apparent that 'freedom' is a word that is only common to individuals who live a life of freedom and, as a result of that, are able to speak freely as well. The atrocious lived-truths these trafficked victims experience remove their freedom not only when they are trafficked but even after they are rescued as they continuously live in fear of their traffickers. Many misunderstand the issue of trafficking in contemporary times (especially within the context of Malaysia), assuming that women willingly enter the sex trade. Some of these assumptions are based on the victim's refusal to speak about their traffickers or their experiences, suggesting that these women consciously participate in the trade. Others stem from the fact that society does not see the brutality inflicted on these women, and this is often masked by the volume of trafficked women that enter a country. It indeed reflects the complexity of trafficking.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is part of an FRGS (Fundamental Research Grant) project dealing with the phenomenon of sex trafficking in Malaysia. The methods and materials used are qualitative. The data used in this study was collected from primary and secondary sources. In order to read lived experiences as forms of literature, we use the interviews from sex trafficking victims to understand the experience of being trafficked or re-trafficked into Malaysia. To discuss the condition of sex trafficking in Malaysia for this paper, we interviewed a group of 10 Vietnamese women[2] caught in a single police raid at an illegal 'gambling center'[3] and placed in a women's shelter in Kuala Lumpur. We were permitted by the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development to carry out interviews at this women's shelter, which allowed us to speak to some of these victims from this gambling center raid. The selection of respondents was based on purposive and snowballing sampling techniques,

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[2] Some of the information in this paper has been adjusted due to security reasons. Thus, the number of women caught in the raid, the location of the shelter as well as the names of the trafficked women have been altered.

[3] In our research on sex trafficking, we discovered that gambling centers are often a front for brothels. While gambling activity is involved, the main business comes from selling sex services at the center.

which according to Merriam (1997), are appropriate techniques that glean quality information for exploratory research such as ours. The Vietnamese women (respondents) were selected based on the women shelter's case worker's recommendations as well as these women's involvement in the sex trade.

The respondents were given semi-structured, open-ended questions for the interview process, and the same set of questions were given to each respondent. These interview questions were first piloted, and based on the piloted responses, were redefined to meet the needs of this said research. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and they gave their consent to be interviewed. For the purpose of security, vital in this circumstance, we were not allowed to record our interviews but had to take careful notes during our sessions. A few strategies were used to address issues of reliability and validity of the interview data, including the willingness of individuals to share their experiences for this study (Kilinc & Firat 2017), speaking to respondents individually to garner more in-depth insights into their individual experiences of trafficking as well as an attempt to build rapport with respondents to create a more comfortable and welcoming conversation. The primary data is supported by other sources: local Malaysian authorities, NGOs, newspaper articles, academic books, and journal articles.

For this article, we use a few theoretical ideas to frame our discussion. Scholarship argues that trafficking is a form of gender-based violence and "that intervention to address trafficking should be located within this context" (Watson & Silkstone, 2006, p. 110). Thus, locating our discussion within the overarching idea of gender-based violence, as well as the historical bias of women's inferior position, abuse and vulnerability, we use two prominent literary and feminist theorists (who can be read through the lenses of gender-based violence) to theorize the position and condition of trafficked women's bodies. Elleke Boehmer's theorization on woman's positioning in nation and society is particularly relevant for this discourse on lived experiences of sex trafficking. It not only reveals the ways in which women are often excluded from the mainstream narrative but are also marginalized and subjugated to the margins of society. In her book *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Boehmer posits that "women writers have questioned, cut across, upended or refused entirely the dominant … they have placed their own subjectivities, sexualities, maternal duties, private stories and intimate pleasures in tension with conventional roles transmitted by national and other traditional narratives" (Boehmer, 2005, p. 6). She argues that this was necessary because "nationalist movements led by men, especially those of a nativist brand, have promoted homogeneity and feminized traditions" (p. 6), where women are oppressed under male-dominant strictures. This trope of seeing "women as the *bearers* of national culture" (p. 4) is in effect an oppressive tool. Furthermore, in discussing the exclusion of women from these positions of power and agency, Boehmer outlines the conditions of subjugation faced by women. An extension of this is also the subversion of the female body, which is often seen in a superficial light, deemed unworthy and insignificant. In considering "masculine patterns of authority" (p. 14), the female subject is placed in a "differential position against men in relation to the nation-state" (p. 8).

Within the context of research in sex trafficking, critics have often discussed the socio-economic and political implications that have allowed trafficking syndicates and activities to burgeon. We further posit that the objectification of trafficked women finds its roots in the historically biased perception and oppression of women, as argued by Elleke Boehmer. In this context of masculine authority and differential positioning, Vietnamese women trafficked into Malaysia are dominated by their traffickers and are placed in vulnerable positions requiring them to provide sex services. It is also important to recognize that Vietnamese culture is patriarchal, a point asserted by Lynellyn D. Long, who states that "the sexual exchange of girls and women embodies deep cultural practices and is historically embedded in many family and kinship systems … [encouraging] and [rationalizing] sexual trafficking girls and young women in times of stress [famine, unemployment] and dislocation" (Long, 2004, p. 8). This idea fits in well with Boehmer's theorization of the gendered nature of women's narratives.

To further cement our exploration on the politics of the female body, Ketu Katrak's *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World* is instructive in understanding what constitutes the broad strokes surrounding the construction of the female body within patriarchal discourse. Katrak engages insightfully in an exploration of "the exilic conditions of the female body" (2006, pp. 3-4), which includes "socialization involving layers and levels of ideological influences, sociocultural and religious, that impose knowledge or ignorance of female bodies and construct woman as a gendered subject or object" (p. 9). Furthermore, she argues that the "sociocultural parameters of womanhood...are grounded within economic, political, and cultural norms that consciously and unconsciously constitute an ideological framework that controls women's bodies" (p. 9). We find this framework particularly useful in theorizing the sex trafficking of Vietnamese women in Malaysia because it brings to light the ways in which a trafficked subject is actually an object which can be controlled and sold repeatedly for profit. Thus, for these Vietnamese women, their trafficked experience reflects "domination [that is] gender-specific and rooted in the control of female sexuality throughout [their lives]" (p. 9). It is indeed reflective of the realities of their lives as many of the women interviewed reported that they were in Malaysia for the second or third time when caught in the raids, reflecting the cyclical nature of their oppression and the inability to free themselves from their oppressors (traffickers).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the following research questions, which are; 1. Why are Vietnamese women lured into sex work in Malaysia? 2. How are these Vietnamese women caught up in the cycle of exploitation and commodification of their bodies? 3. What happens to these women after they are rescued during police raids, i.e., what realities do they face? Thus, the following discussion is multifarious, and the ideas discussed anchor on the three pertinent research questions raised.

Sex slavery is a violation of the human body. This compels us to articulate the injustices attached to the gravity of this situation, focusing on the horrific experiences expressed by the Vietnamese women we encountered at the women's shelter in Kuala Lumpur. It is important to note that before delving into our discussion on the trafficking of Vietnamese women in Malaysia, we must first understand the context and history of trafficking in Vietnam. The contemporary trafficking of Vietnamese women and children is rooted in a historical precedent. Vietnamese women and children have been trafficked as early as the colonial period, where they were "often kidnapped, stolen, or tricked into a life of servitude as they were forcibly removed from their families, homes, and villages" (Lessard, 2015, p. xiii). Women and children were always seen as "a product of trade" (p. xv) which also reveals the gendered ways in which Vietnamese society looked at "childhood and about the status of women" (p. xv). Even as early as the French colonial period in Vietnam, the flourishing of this trafficking trade was a reflection of the "undeniable proprietary attitude toward women and children" (p. xv), an anathema of sorts, which continues till today in contemporary Vietnam. As an extension of this idea, anthropologist Lynellynn D. Long states that "in addition to specific cultural practices, periods of famine, depression, and social economic transition place girls and women at risk of being trafficked" (2004, p. 13), which is the context in which contemporary Vietnamese women and children in our research find themselves in - extreme poverty and desperation which leads to their trafficking (Lessard, 2015). For the Vietnamese women we spoke to in our interviews, it was clear that "poverty, family obligations and personal opportunism are among a range of factors that contribute to the creation of sites of vulnerability" (Yea, 2005, p. 88). Thus, "located in [this] cultural rhetoric" (p. 88), Vietnamese women and children's vulnerability are a product of their cultural and economic circumstances, firmly embedded within a historical reality. Undoubtedly, "it is clear that the intersections of various political and economic factors with gendered norms of a society make women doubly vulnerable to trafficking" (Ray, 2015, p. 317). This is also "an indicator of the lack of agency and control that women have on their lives" (p. 317).

The narratives we discuss in this article further establish the "gendered vulnerabilities" (Ray, 2015, p. 316) of contemporary Vietnamese women and children. Amongst the women we interviewed, it was quite apparent that poverty was one of the root causes of their 'vulnerability.' Many of these women came from poorer or smaller regions in Vietnam like Tay Ninh province, Soc Trang province, and An Giang province. They also mostly came from larger families where either one or both parents were farmers. Thi's story is similar to most of the stories told to us by the Vietnamese women we interviewed. Thi came from the Tay Ninh province, a smaller, poorer provincial city, 90 kilometers away from Ho Chi Minh. She recounts her life in Vietnam and speaks animatedly about her family:

> *There are six of us in my family. My mother and father are paddy farmers. I have four brothers and sisters, and I am the second child in the family. In Vietnam, I worked in a shoe factory, and I made shoes. All my other brothers and sisters are also working.*

Another woman we interviewed, Tram, came from Ho Chi Minh city. In the interview, she tells us:

> *I am 25 years old, and there are four of us in the family. My mother is a housewife, and my brother works in the cooking gas line. My younger sister is ten years old, she is still in school. I don't know where my father is. He left the family years ago. I didn't have a job in Vietnam. My boyfriend gave me money. He fixes cars and motorbikes.*

The above narratives throw light on the socio-economic and political context to which trafficked Vietnamese victims belong. The similarity in their individual stories of plight gestures towards poverty and scarcity as the root cause of their trafficking. With their families either being small-scale farmers or earning a minimum daily wage, it is clear that these women come from families that are not able to sustain themselves. In the case of Tram, her non-existent father and housewife mother were not even able to provide the bare necessities for their children, leaving Tram and her siblings to either depend on their older siblings or, at times, even fend for themselves. In the absence of constant and sustainable income, women like Thi and Tram have no choice and find themselves pushed into sex trafficking. Marred by these circumstances, their 'bodies' are the ones that are made vulnerable, as they find themselves participating in sex work.

According to Samwya Ray, "traffickers use soft tactics of luring the girl … bringing them into their circle of trust, and then removing the girl from her zone of security" (Ray, 2015, p. 311). Thus, after being "duped and lured into sex trade … force is used after the woman is brought out of her familiar environment" (p. 310). In the context of the women we interviewed, they were not as forthcoming in disclosing their trafficking experiences. The truth was only elicited when we discussed their stories with their caseworker, who also happened to be the head of the women's shelter. It was here that we were able to gather information on these women's circumstances and how they were involved in sex trafficking at a 'gambling den'/brothel. All of the women we interviewed were very animated when they spoke about their families and experiences. However, as soon as we asked them questions about how they ended up in Malaysia or whom they lived with when they were here, their answers became what we referred to as a 'generic narrative.' In our interview with Tran, she tells us:

> *I came to Malaysia to visit an old friend. I came by aeroplane, probably Vietnam airlines. I am not sure. I do not know where my friend lives. I came to Malaysia for a holiday.*

We were given a similar story by Hue:

> *I came alone to Malaysia by aeroplane. I do not know which airlines. I came to meet my friend, who is also Vietnamese.*

Clearly, both their stories are similar. When prodded further to tell us about their 'friend' in Malaysia whom they visited and stayed with, their responses were equally vague and similar. Tran told us:

> *My friend told me it is ok to visit her, but now I am scared of Malaysia. I enjoyed myself when I first came to Malaysia. I knew my friend from Vietnam, we were childhood friends. I don't know what my friend's husband does, he goes out to work and comes back late.*

On the other hand, Hue said:

> *I came for a holiday in Malaysia. I came to meet a friend. She is also Vietnamese. But I don't know her very well.*

The women never tell us anything concrete about the nature of their 'visit' to Malaysia or their relationship with the 'friend' they visit in Malaysia. Despite these unclear answers, it can be surmised in the above contexts that these women were in fact recruited into the sex trafficking trade. The women who pose as their 'friends' are actually female traffickers who prey on the vulnerabilities of these women by offering them false promises of good employment. As argued by eminent scholar and activist Laura T. Murphy, "in so many of the cases of modern-day slavery that we encounter, the only lure a trafficker needs to convince someone to walk into enslavement is the simple offer of a job" (2014, p. 24). Furthermore, the caseworker at the shelter home in Kuala Lumpur reiterates a similar stance, that women who have worked in Malaysia in the sex trade often pull their relatives and friends into the same work in Malaysia, hence making Malaysia now a destination country as well as a transit country for sex trafficking.

Furthermore, a representative from a well-known Vietnamese NGO[4] that

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[4] The details of the social worker and the NGO this individual worked for remain anonymous for security and safety reasons as they work very closely to rehabilitate Vietnamese victims of sex trafficking in Malaysia. Furthermore, social workers who work for NGOs combating sex trafficking often receive death threats from traffickers and take extra measures

works closely with Vietnamese women at Malaysian shelters told us that sometimes the women are not as forthcoming because they too might be in cahoots with their traffickers for many different reasons. The most predominant reason for this secrecy is that they fear the traffickers themselves. Extending on the idea of the pervasiveness of violence against women's bodies, traffickers are even more brutal and merciless towards trafficked women who divulge information about them. Also, women do not easily speak against their traffickers because invariably, there is a huge feeling of indebtedness to their traffickers, who are also seen as their providers and source of income. Alongside offering them the means to make money, they constantly entice them with material goods like expensive handphones. In their ability to provide these luxuries, traffickers often convince victims that there is nothing wrong with 'selling sex' and that they can make money with their bodies. Thus, these women are often resigned to this type of circumstances and reality. It was hardly surprising then that some of the women we spoke to are repeat offenders who have been caught in raids once or twice before and keep returning to Malaysia for sex work because the money is good as the exchange rate between the ringgit and the dong is profitable. According to the caseworker at the shelter home in KL, many of the women who repeatedly return to Malaysia after being deported are, in fact, 'ibu ayams' who are not only recruiters but influencers who control the lives and conduct of the other trafficked women.

A common denominator we discovered in our discussions with trafficked Vietnamese women was that they often mentioned the presence of a 'friend' in Malaysia but were never able to elaborate further about this said 'friend.' In fact, interestingly enough, this 'friend' is always absent during the raid these women were caught in. They often have just stepped out to go for a walk or even to buy food. This 'friend' always leaves them during a police raid, once again reflecting these women's vulnerable state as well as their 'victimization' and abandonment. Thi states:

> *I am now scared of Malaysia and the police who caught me in the gambling shop. I went there to gamble with my friend. My friend gave me money to play. My friend went out for a walk. Suddenly, the police came to catch us in the gambling shop. I don't know where my friend is now.*

On the other hand, Tram tells us that:

> *I came to Malaysia for a week. My friend brought me to the gambling shop to play games. Suddenly, the police came and caught me. They caught many other men and women in the gambling shop. I don't know why they caught me. I don't know where my friend was when the police came. She left earlier before the police came. I don't know where the gambling place is. I don't like it here in Malaysia, and I want to go home.*

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and precautions to ensure their safety and those of their loved ones.

The significant gaps in the narratives by the women who were caught are demonstrative of their differential positioning. As trafficked women, they are completely unaware of significant details, especially the location of their dubious 'friend'[5]. They are deserted by their traffickers, easily disposed of, and replaced as 'merchandise.' As trafficked subjects, their bodies are not only objects for sale but 'merchandise' that is easily disregarded specifically within the context of a raid where they are abandoned and left to fend for themselves by their traffickers. Despite this, their lives are still deeply intertwined with their trafficker. They refuse to disclose any information that might incriminate or reveal their trafficker's identities but are expected to remain in muted and silenced spaces in the face of incarceration with the police and the legal system set in place. Thus, in the construction of their female bodies and personhood, traffickers have control over these women beyond the brothel, as these women wait for their court trial and deportation.

Many assume that women who are caught and rescued in raids have begun their process towards freedom. However, this is far from true. In actuality, these women spend many months isolated in shelter homes, living in liminal spaces, not knowing when they will be deported back home. While their bodies may be physically free from their traffickers, they not only live in fear of their traffickers but also live in fear of the future as they no longer have a source of income and money to send back home to Vietnam. Furthermore, many months may pass as they remain in the shelter home awaiting questioning and trial. It again keeps them helpless since they desperately want to go home and earn a living for themselves and their families. Some of these older Vietnamese women also have children they long to see and need to take care of financially. This is Linh's story:

> *This is my second time in Malaysia. My friends asked me to come to Malaysia to work. I won't come back again to Malaysia after I go back to Vietnam. I don't like Malaysia. I don't know why the police caught me. I have a child in Vietnam. I miss my child very much. I used to work in a hair salon in Vietnam. I will go back and work there. Please, when can I go home, miss?*

Tram tells us tearfully:

> *I don't want to work in Malaysia. I don't like it here, and I want to go home. I don't want to come back to Malaysia when I go home to Vietnam. Please, I want to go back home fast. Can you please help me? Please help me go home.*

For Thi, she is very emotional by the end of the interview. She starts crying, telling us

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[5] In our discussions with the shelter home caseworker and NGO representatives, the 'friend' often referred to by trafficked women are usually their recruiters and traffickers, who are never at the scene whenever there is a raid. These women are told to say that their friend left them for a short while, and because of the raid, they do not know what has happened to said friend.

> *Please, I want to go back. I miss home. Please, when can I go back?*

It became somewhat obvious that local Malaysian enforcement on these women failed to assist them sufficiently. In their gendered vulnerabilities, they are the ones severely affected in this situation. Most traffickers go unpunished, unlike these Vietnamese women, who seem to be continuously placed in helpless positions due to their gendered circumstances. In our research on the sex trafficking of Vietnamese women in Malaysia, many of these women have come back to Malaysia for the second or third time, despite being deported before. The return to Malaysia indicated in their case files depict for us the true nature of their circumstances, where these women are never truly free from the flesh trade and return to work in Malaysia out of desperation. Their desperation is also reflected in the conversations above as they express their ardent wish to return home to Vietnam. Perhaps what is unspoken in this plea of desperation is also their need to return to Malaysia to work as sex workers because selling their bodies is the only option readily available to them, further complicating the discourse surrounding the politics of the body.

The dynamics surrounding the sex trafficking trade are complex, where freedom is often a contested site. While these women should be free from their traffickers and the flesh trade they initially find themselves trapped in, reality looks very different as they are held captive by this situation. Laura Murphy provides a succinct description of the condition of modern slavery and freedom, positing that modern-day slaves have a false sense of freedom where

> "though they may be held captive in rooms with unlocked doors, though they may know their captors quite intimately, though they may have the ability to go to the store or on errands without accompaniment, though they may come in contact with kind strangers and even police during their daily lives, they are just as enslaved as a black woman on an antebellum plantation in North Carolina." (2014, p. 91)

As articulated in the earlier paragraph, this idea even extends to when these women are in police custody or even when they are deported back home to Vietnam, as "freedom was not merely a status ... but an understanding of [self] as an independent and self-determining citizen" which these women lack and do not see themselves as independent and self-determining, once again reflecting the vulnerability of the female body within this gendered, patriarchal discourse (Murphy, 2014, p. 94). Hence, when these women "are out of slavery, few alternatives are available to them other than exploitative labor, and so they end up enslaved or exploited once again" (p. 94). Julius Trajano, in *Combatting Human Trafficking in East Asia: Mind the Gap*s, notes that "the lack of sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration programs for returning irregular migrants, including rescued trafficking victims" contributes towards women's re-trafficking (Trajano, 2018, p. 12). While NGOs in Vietnam try their best to rehabilitate rescued victims, most women find themselves returning to the trade "due to the absence of sustainable full-time employment and livelihood assistance," which makes them "more susceptible to be victimized again" (p. 12). Indeed, within such cyclical and continuous enslavement, it "makes it difficult for people to imagine themselves as free," which is why many of these Vietnamese women we spoke to keep returning to Malaysia for sex work, seen in the fact that they have been deported out of Malaysia before, like Linh in the above narrative (Murphy, 2014, p. 94). Arguably then, "freedom is [indeed] a fragile concept. Simply leaving the site of enslavement does not necessarily free a person from the slaveholder's power", clearly reflecting the context of these Vietnamese women in our research (p. 95).

## CONCLUSION

Our research observations reveal the difficulties and intricacies involved in deciphering the realities of sex trafficking in Malaysia. Our interviews lay bare the conflicting layers of understanding required in looking at the body of the trafficked woman. While they are commoditized and victimized for the sexual functions of their bodies, these women are also inextricably linked to this abhorrent trade due to their harrowing socio-economic circumstances. Linked further to gendered norms within patriarchal discourse, this places Vietnamese women at a double disadvantage. In the context of Vietnamese women and their return to Malaysia into the sex trade, they may not fit into our "normative expectations of what victims look like, how they act, or what they need," however this does not mean that they are any less vulnerable or victimized because they have been betrayed by systems like patriarchy and political economy that legitimize their oppression (Trajano, 2018, p. 11). Within these disparities of power and control, these women's sexual exploitation can also be seen as a representation of all women who live in increasingly commodified bodies.

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*Review article*

# Low-Carbon Tourism Approach as an Alternative Form for Tourism Development: A Review for Model Development

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## ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is a major contributor to the gross domestic product of several countries, including Malaysia. However, recent tourism growth has led to increase the industry's carbon dioxide ($CO_2$). Low-carbon tourism, therefore, needs to be introduced to the sector to help curb global climate change. A comprehensive understanding of low-carbon tourism needs to be developed to achieve this goal. This article looks at the relevant studies in the literature using content analysis. By adopting a qualitative methodology, the article collected and assessed measurements of tourism's carbon emissions and examined the effects of implementing a low-carbon tourism programme. Some of the low-carbon strategies were listed by going through the entire implementation process of low-carbon tourism as an alternative form of tourism development. The discussion also focuses on how Covid-19 can influence low-carbon tourism development. A blueprint for a low-carbon recovery proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is also presented at the end of the paper. The results of this study can be used as a basis for policy

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development and further research on low-carbon tourism in industry sub-sectors worldwide.

*Keywords:* Blueprint, carbon dioxide, climate change, Covid-19, emissions, low-carbon tourism

## INTRODUCTION

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010) has highlighted several challenges for the tourism industry by considering the factors that will affect its long-term development. These include globalisation and market change, the impact of tourism across the economy, climate change and sustainability, the knowledge economy, human resources and productivity, and competitiveness. According to Tang et al. (2018), the rapid growth in the tourism industry may increase the carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions that cause climate change. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from various tourism activities have already harmed the natural environment. GHG is a major cause of global warming; it originates in the large amounts of energy consumed in urban areas that carry out various intensive economic activities (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Japan [MLITTJ], 2011). One of the major contributors of GHG emissions is $CO_2$, which is produced when fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas are burned and when there is a change in land use, such as deforestation (Sunlu, 2003). Therefore, the increasing use of electricity and transportation in tourism contributes to the uncontrolled release of $CO_2$, which leads to climate change.

Chiesa and Gautam (2009) set out five clusters in the travel and tourism sector that contribute to carbon emissions: land transport, air transport, water transport, accommodation, and tourism activities. Each cluster contributes directly and indirectly to GHG emissions. According to Tang et al. (2018), transport accounts for 75% of $CO_2$ emissions in the sector, followed by accommodation and catering (21%) and tourism activity (4%). Similarly, the OECD (2010) estimated that the tourism industry contributes up to 5.3% of global GHG emissions, with transport accounting for 75%. Direct carbon emissions are from sources such as transportation, which uses fuel and energy, the restaurant and accommodation sectors, which use electricity and gas, and other tourism activities (Fang, 2011). Indirect carbon emissions occur from manufacturing processes, infrastructure development, airline offices, and travel agents indirectly involved in tourism. Therefore, indirect carbon emissions need to be considered and addressed when calculating tourism industry's carbon footprint, as their effects can also lead to global warming.

As Sunlu (2003) explained, the relationship between tourism and the environment is complex because many tourism activities have a detrimental effect on nature, even potentially destroying it. The construction of infrastructures, such as roads and airports, and tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses, and marinas, is how tourism can negatively impact the environment. The recent increase in tourism may lead to the depletion of natural resources. However, tourism has also the potential to impact the environment by introducing protection and conservation measures positively. The tourism industry must work with governments and local communities to create sustainable activities. A thriving, sustainable tourism industry can contribute to socio-economic development, which will benefit communities. Both the environment and manufactured infrastructures need to be preserved to benefit the sector and healthy living. Therefore, efforts to promote low-carbon alternatives worldwide are necessary to maintain tourism as a key industry in the long term.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Low-Carbon Tourism

Currently, low-carbon lifestyles are spreading in many countries worldwide. The tourism sector is part of this trend by making the low-carbon approach one of its goals. Although low-carbon tourism (LCT) is still being explored, many stakeholders, including governments and businesses, are working together to make LCT a success. According to Yang (2015), LCT requires joint efforts from governments, industry, and universities to grow efficiently and environmentally friendly. Moreover, LCT can support the development of a low-carbon economy. Proposed by the British government in 2003, the low-carbon economy aims to improve living standards by increasing the use of natural resources that have less impact on the environment and increase economic production in the long run (Huang & Deng, 2011). Shi and Peng (2011) explained that a green economy could be achieved with low-carbon energy consumption, low-pollution production, and low-carbon emissions. In the era of globalisation, increased tourism activities, human behaviour, and culture are the greatest contributors to carbon emissions (Bhaktikul et al., 2020). Therefore, the implementation of LCT needs to be intensified to succeed in achieving a low-carbon economy. Most of the sector's energy consumption comes from transportation and infrastructure operation and development. Formally, the concept of LCT was proposed in May 2009 at the World Economic Forum in a report on low-carbon travel and the tourism industry (Huang & Deng, 2011). LCT practices can protect the environment and culture and positively contribute to the lives of local people.

Scholars describe LCT in different ways. Wang et al. (2019) argue that LCT is a way of achieving maximum tourism experience with new forms of travel planning and a way for the industry to provide higher social, economic, and environmental benefits to the community. Similarly, Thongdejsri et al. (2016) believe that LCT is an effort to reduce carbon emissions to a minimum when conducting tourism activities. They add that the low-carbon technology introduced thanks to LCT is a useful undertaking that provides greater benefits to the economy, society, and the environment. According to Yang (2015), LCT is part of developing a low-carbon economy supported by clean technology. LCT can help reduce carbon emissions and energy consumption while aiming for sustainable economic and environmental development. LCT can also provide a high-quality tourism experience by reducing entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, transportation, and accommodation pollution. Xiong (2017) maintains that LCT is a form of environmentally friendly tourism with high efficiency and sustainable production methods; thus, LCT offers economic, social, and environmental benefits.

According to Shi and Peng (2011), there are two types of low-carbon tourist attractions: absolute and relative. An absolute tourist attraction provides comprehensive low-carbon services of the highest possible standard. A relative tourist attraction offers limited travel services with energy-efficient residential facilities and eco-friendly travel equipment. Thongdejsri et al. (2016) argue that national and local government agencies need to cooperate and adopt low-carbon management technologies to implement the LCT concept at the policy level, thus contributing to a clean environment. The support of tourists is also needed to strengthen low-carbon practices in the sector. Essentially, every stakeholder—the government, the private sector, businesses, and tourists—should all play their role in promoting LCT.

Tourism components such as hotels, airports, roads, trains, heating and cooling equipment, and various leisure activities contribute to global warming. One of the main culprits in this sense is the method of travel. We suggest several activities that promote LCT, such as walking and cycling. Trains are another means of transport that can be highlighted for ecotourism because they have a low impact on the environment. At present, the popularity of railway lines has never been greater because of the increase in road traffic. The use of public bicycles in urban areas worldwide is also a very popular trend currently and is recognised as a low-carbon travel method. Longer walking and cycling trips play an important role in the sustainability of tourism, both economically and environmentally. Over the past hundred years, itineraries in popular tourist destinations that possess deep historical traditions have developed into trendy long-distance walking routes. For example, Penang Heritage Trail and Melaka City offer a self-guided walking tour with a map to discover the history of a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is being carefully restored, maintained, and improved.

Cycling is an improvised version of LCT that has become more popular over the past 40 years. Although cycling is often in line with regional and national policies for sustainable tourism, this alternative has several barriers. For example, poor integration with public transport and a lack of reliable infrastructure hinder market development. Therefore, the parties involved need to provide traffic-free routes through urban and rural areas with gentle gradients to encourage people to use bicycles for recreational purposes. Several sites have introduced LCT practices by promoting rickshaws, bicycles, and rental scooters. Rickshaws are the most common means of transport found in Kota Bharu, Malacca City, and Komtar. Furthermore, Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Cyberjaya have promoted numerous bicycle and scooter rental services. Beam and Neuron are among the companies that provide rental services in Malaysia. In short, by adopting LCT, we can reduce our carbon footprint to sustain nature for future generations.

## Carbon Footprint

A carbon footprint (previously known as an ecological footprint) shows the potential for global warming. A carbon footprint is the quantity of $CO_2$ emissions from certain activities. By calculating the carbon footprint of activity, we can manage and mitigate emissions. Significant sources of emissions can thus be identified and reduction and efficiency prioritised for the benefit of the environment (Pandey et al., 2010). It highlights the importance of carbon footprint calculation to solve the pollution problem. The notion of an ecological footprint refers to the biologically productive land and sea areas needed to sustain a particular human population. From this perspective, a carbon footprint refers to the soil needed to absorb all the $CO_2$ produced by a person in their lifetime. The idea of a carbon footprint is now quite familiar among the public and a major concern for the world's environmental agenda. A carbon footprint can be changed by shifting to more sustainable practices.

A carbon footprint measures the $CO_2$ emissions produced directly or indirectly by activity or throughout the life cycle of a product (Durojaye et al., 2020; Fang, 2011). From 1850 to 2015, the average surface air temperature has increased by 1.53°C (probability range from 1.38°C to 1.68°C), while the global mean surface temperature has risen by 0.87°C (probability range from 0.75°C to 0.99°C; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2019). A record rise in temperature of 0.87°C has urged climate scientists to focus on immediate actions to curb global warming. Tourism has one of the largest carbon footprints in the economy. Tourist activities involve the movement of humans, which accounts for about 50% of global traffic, including air traffic, which contributes around 2.5% of global $CO_2$ emissions. As these figures show, tourism is a significant contributor to GHG emissions. For example, air travel is one of the fastest-growing sources of GHG emissions. Sunlu (2003) predicted an increase in international tourists from 594 million in 1996 to 1.6 billion in 2020, but it is not achieved due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Becken (2009) emphasised the importance of distinguishing the global carbon footprint of tourism from the footprints of specific destinations. The global footprint includes all tourism activities ranging from international air travel to transportation, types of residence, and visits to places of interest. In contrast, national footprints focus on emissions that occur within domestic borders. However, national carbon footprint analysis rarely includes the climate-related effects of international air travel, which is the largest contributor of $CO_2$ emissions compared to all other sources of emissions in the economy. A comprehensive measure is therefore needed to the worst impacts of excessive $CO_2$ emissions.

Apart from transportation, resort development is also a major contributor to carbon emissions. Bohdanowicz et al. (2001) estimate that a typical hotel devotes 50% of its energy consumption to heating and air-conditioning, 25% to catering, 15% to hot water, and 5% each to lighting, and other activities. Salehudin et al. (2015) have suggested renewable energy as an alternative energy source to support the tourism industry in Malaysia, especially in resorts located on islands, where there are many sources of renewable energy. Renewable energy can improve economic competitiveness and raise the profile of LCT in Malaysia, thus ensuring its future prosperity. The Malaysian government supports this effort by promoting the use of natural energy sources.

Other human activities that have significant carbon footprints include the use of vehicles and heavy machinery, electrical equipment for daily chores (e.g., washing machines) and other items that use electricity and fuel to function (Durojaye et al., 2020). Increased carbon footprints raise the concentration of GHGs, which leads to severe global warming. As the understanding of this phenomenon has improved, concerns about preventing it have become more pressing. In 1997, the Kyoto protocol established that developed economies and several developing economies should reduce their emissions from five types of GHGs ($CO_2$, methane, nitric oxide, perfluorocarbons, and hydrofluorocarbons) by at least 5.2% compared to 1990 levels in 2008-2012 (United Nations [UN], 1998, as cited by Durojaye et al., 2020). Thus, low-carbon products and the adoption of low-carbon practices can solve the global warming problem. Malaysia is no exception when it comes to the increase of GHG emissions globally. As Figure 1 shows, in 2019, Malaysia produced 250 million tons of $CO_2$ from burning fossil fuels for energy and cement production. The nation's emissions started increasing drastically in 1950 as part of the age of development.

Green transportation can solve the biggest problem in terms of $CO_2$ emissions in the tourism sector globally. Fang (2011) explains that green transportation aims to encourage people to use the public transport offered by city governments. For example, Taipei City provides various cloud-based transportation services, including electric golf carts, to facilitate travel from one village to another. These initiatives can reduce the use of private vehicles, thus diminishing carbon emissions. Low-carbon practices can also lessen traffic congestion. Salehudin et al. (2015) recommended that tourism facilities replace fossil fuels and other non-renewable energy sources with renewable energy to reduce $CO_2$ emissions. Mohamad and Jaafar (2012) found four energy sources with a high potential to be developed in Malaysia: solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear. However, the environment should be continuously monitored to ensure a balanced approach so that these developments do

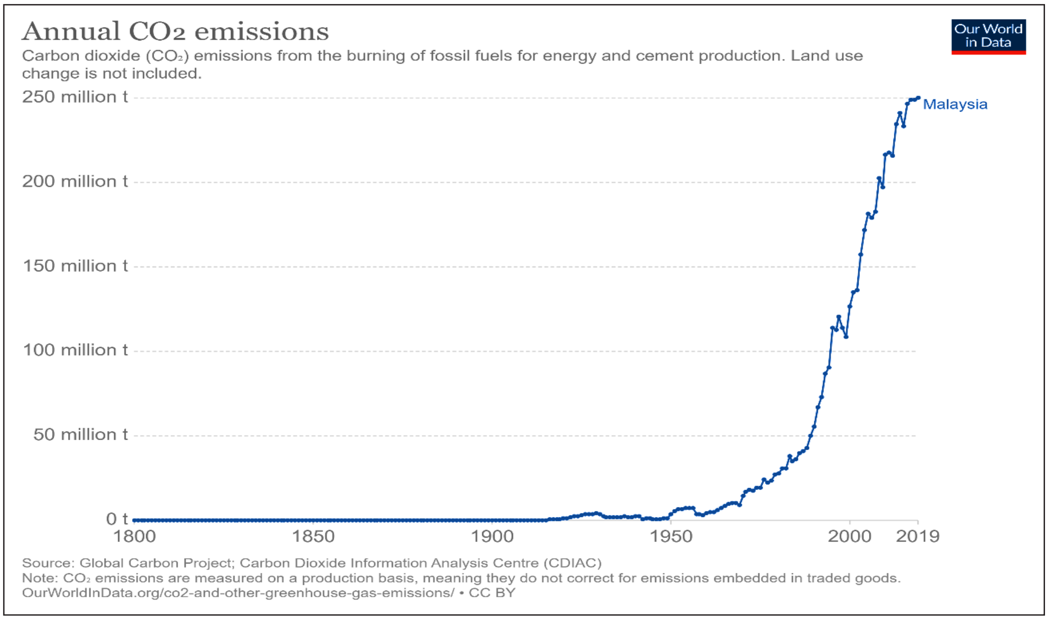

*Figure 1.* $CO_2$ emissions in Malaysia based on Our World in Data
*Source:* https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions

not pose a risk to life. Furthermore, the global carbon emissions of tourism are not measured satisfactorily. Therefore, the environmental problems caused by tourism activities' carbon footprint still need to be resolved.

## METHODS

This research promotes LCT as an alternative form of tourism development in various industry sub-sectors. A comprehensive understanding of LCT needs to be achieved. A literature search was conducted in leading electronic journal databases (Science Direct and Scopus) with "low-carbon tourism" keywords.

This research used content analysis to examine the relevant literature. The aim was to identify measurements of tourism's carbon emissions, explain the low-carbon strategy, and assess the effects of implementing an LCT programme. The study also discusses how Covid-19 can influence LCT. Finally, it looks at the blueprint for a low-carbon recovery proposed by the OECD. The study's findings are useful as a starting point for future study, especially when formulating a guide for LCT development best practices. Moreover, regarding the Malaysian context, the study offers insights into the sustainability principles required for the future development of tourism to stakeholders such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Town and Country Planning Department, and university researchers.

## RESULTS

### Tourism's Carbon Emissions

In its effort to seek economic gain, the tourism industry ignores the damage done to the environment. Xiong (2017) showed how the impact of tourism on rural areas had destroyed the cultural and natural landscape in Jiangxi, China. Without proper knowledge of the environment and the LCT approach, the tourism industry can cause large negative impacts in the areas where it operates. According to Sunlu (2003), the negative effects of tourism occur when the number of visitors exceeds the reception capacity of the environment and the available tourist facilities in a location. This situation affects natural areas worldwide. Popular destinations have been closed because of excessive visits that cause damage to the environment, including Mount Everest, Boracay Island, and Maya Bay ("5 destinasi popular ini ditutup", 2019). The impact of improperly planned tourism can also lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, dumping of waste into the sea, loss of natural habitats, increased stress on endangered species, and high susceptibility to forest fires (Sunlu, 2003). As a result, local communities have to compete to access increasingly scarce resources. Lee (2011) argued that because the tourism industry affects climate change, a direct change is required in tourism's resources and socioeconomic policy. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a new low-carbon policy to take recovery measures before the situation becomes too critical.

Tourism development is contributing to the depletion of natural resources, including water and land. Water resources are essential to all tourism activities, including hospitality, landscaping, and personal use. Careful use of water should thus be implemented to ensure an adequate supply for residents and future tourists. Tourism development can also affect forest ecology. Without careful planning, widespread deforestation for firewood and land clearing for development destroy natural areas important for stabilising ecosystems (Sunlu, 2003). In addition to recreational purposes, biodiversity is important for supplying food, medicinal and industrial products, and for expanding humans' knowledge of the richness of life (Zakaria & Hasbullah, 2009). Excessive tourism activities degrade our biological diversity, which may lead to natural disasters such as floods and droughts, while human-induced ecosystem stress causes pollution and climate change (Sunlu, 2003). As one of the thriving industries in the world economy, tourism should sustain both flora and fauna and protect the mountain, marine, and coastal ecosystems. After all, the loss of biodiversity will lead to the loss of tourism potential.

Several studies have proven that increases in tourism and travel contribute to the worsening of global climate change (Bhaktikul et al., 2020). Therefore, scholars have started promoting LCT implementation in strategies, practices, organisations, governments, and operators (Bhaktikul et al., 2020; Lee, 2011; MLITTJ, 2011; Yang, 2015). As a result, more LCT initiatives are being undertaken worldwide, such as building low-carbon cities, low-carbon hotels, and scientific museums based on low-carbon themes (Huang & Deng, 2011). Therefore, behavioural changes are necessary to diminish the impact of tourism on the environment by promoting an approach with fewer carbon emissions.

We need to introduce a new and more efficient approach to maintaining biodiversity and the natural environment for the enjoyment and benefit of all living things. Among the proposed measures to develop LCT are those to create low-carbon tourist destinations and provide low-carbon facilities, thus preserving tourism while absorbing carbon from the atmosphere (Huang & Deng, 2011). Table 1 shows the strategies put forward by various researchers to reduce GHG emissions in the tourism industry.

Table 1
*Low-carbon tourism strategies*

| No. | Strategies | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Reduce energy consumption through LCT development | i. Monitor total energy consumption and carbon emissions in the tourism industry.<br>ii. Provide many green areas to reduce heat islands and increase insulating effects.<br>iii. Increase the implementation of energy-saving measures and raise awareness of the importance of environmental care for all the groups involved.<br>iv. Choose local products offered in the tourist area.<br>v. Provide adequate parking spaces and racks to encourage the use of bicycles in tourist areas. |
| **2** | Adopt energy-saving technologies and implement emissions reductions through LCT development | i. Replace diesel boilers with gas boilers.<br>ii. Introduce a system of waste-heat collection.<br>iii. Replace fluorescent lightbulbs with low-consumption LEDs.<br>iv. Build an independent power plant using a clean power generator.<br>v. Install water-saving and rainwater collection equipment.<br>vi. Introduce environmental management and operation systems.<br>vii. Promote energy-saving technologies and emissions reductions in low-carbon tourist attractions. |
| **3** | Increase the use of renewable energy in LCT development | i. Install solar panels and hydrogen fuel cells to supply hot water.<br>ii. Introduce water and wind power generation.<br>iii. Introduce hydrogen cell vehicles and electric cars.<br>iv. Switch to biodiesel fuel. |
| **4** | Balance and reduce GHGs through the Carbon Offset Programme | i. Allocate enough funds to environmental groups to balance carbon emissions.<br>ii. Increase the area of the green belt.<br>iii. Take part in area conservation programmes or environmentally friendly species conservation.<br>iv. Conduct tree-planting campaigns with staff, tourists, and the public.<br>v. Create air ducts in aircraft to reduce fuel consumption and make aircrafts lighter.<br>vi. Use alternative fuels such as biofuels to save energy and reduce emissions.<br>vii. Choose electric, non-motorised, or carbon-free transportation.<br>viii. Encourage the construction of garden houses in tourist areas. |
| **5.** | Raise awareness of LCT in the media and through education | i. Introduce alternative methods that offer lower costs and fewer emissions.<br>ii. Replace the use of paper with an e-ticketing system.<br>iii. Encourage the use of own bags for shopping.<br>iv. Reduce the use of disposable equipment or containers.<br>v. Encourage the use of green energy transportation for tourist travel.<br>vi. Use the media to promote and explain LCT. |

Table 1 (*continue*)

| No. | Strategies | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **6.** | Create low-carbon tourist attractions | i. Plan systematically to create beautiful tourist destinations as part of a model of the circular economy.<br>ii. Promote eco-labels to protect the natural landscape and maintain its original condition.<br>iii. Provide energy-efficient tourism products and attractions, optimal structures, and demand and supply of clean energy; actively explore new clean energy applications.<br>iv. Introduce business models and management of low-carbon tourist attractions.<br>v. Encourage the use of less-polluting vehicles, such as electric scooters. |
| **7.** | The role of tourist administrative departments in LCT development | i. Implement laws and regulations to standardise and institutionalise LCT.<br>ii. Introduce policies that drive the construction of low-carbon tourism attractions.<br>iii. Set LCT standards and action plans.<br>iv. Follow the standard of low-carbon business implementation systems in tourist areas.<br>v. Create a low-carbon system for area attractions, transportation, and tourist hotels.<br>vi. Help tourism enterprises step up energy-saving efforts, reduce CO2 emissions, and use renewable energy.<br>vii. Support LCT enterprises with tax cuts, subsidies, government procurement, and green credit.<br>viii. Provide special funds to encourage the development of low-carbon projects and technologies for the tourism sector.<br>ix. Strengthen the marketing of LCT to increase its public awareness.<br>x. Establish collaborations between tourism administrators and the media to enhance tourist awareness of LCT.<br>xi. Expand international exchanges and cooperation; introduce international carbon modelling for tourism management. |
| **8.** | The role of travel agencies in LCT development | i. Support efforts to promote LCT, develop products, and use LCT routes to meet the needs of tourists.<br>ii. Design detailed plans for hiking and cycling routes to guide tourists back to nature, protect the environment, reduce carbon emissions, and ensure the continued development of tourism.<br>iii. Adopt low-carbon activities in every domain, including reducing paper consumption, managing waste disposal, avoiding disposable cutlery, controlling the number of visitors, protecting forest and green areas, providing ecological parking, encouraging the use of low-carbon vehicles and renewable energy sources, namely hydro, wind, and solar. |
| **9.** | The role of hotels in LCT development | i. Enhance low-carbon management efforts through the setting and popularisation of green standards.<br>ii. Promote low-carbon technology, renewable energy sources, new materials, and intelligent control systems in the manufacturing and using electrical goods. |
| **10.** | The role of tourists | i. Disseminate the benefits of LCT-related activities through various advertising methods.<br>ii. Support and choose the LCT industry to increase the demand and supply of LCT activities. |

*Source:* Bhaktikul et al. (2020), Huang & Deng (2011), Lee (2011), Shi & Peng (2011), Tang et al. (2018)

LCT principles must be applied to the entire tourism process, including catering, accommodation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment, to overcome the long-term negative effects of the industry. In addition to contributing to a cleaner environment, LCT can generate new employment and income.

## An LCT Model

The concept of LCT has been developed about ecotourism and sustainable tourism. However, there are differences between these concepts regarding connotation, scope, and how to realise them. Ecotourism focuses on saving limited resources and vulnerable environments, thus emphasising natural travel, less exploitation, and human intervention. LCT is an effort to minimise the impact of conventional tourism by adopting low-carbon technologies, creating low-carbon environments, and adopting low-carbon lifestyles. Figure 2 explains the relationship between LCT, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism. LCT acts as a basic platform for ecotourism and becomes a path to achieve sustainable tourism.

Yang (2015) believes that LCT is essentially an expansion of ecotourism. LCT promotes low-carbon production and operation in each itinerary. For example, it uses new technologies and energy sources to reduce energy consumption and waste in all accommodations. It can thus reduce GHG emissions while still expanding the tourism economy. Lee (2011) argues that current green tourism stems from an older idea of eco-friendly development (Figure 3).

Huang and Deng (2011) produced a model of LCT development in the context of the leisure economy. This model was designed to reduce tourists' carbon footprint by creating low-carbon attractions and facilities. Figure 4 shows the flows through which LCT is achieved in the leisure economy.

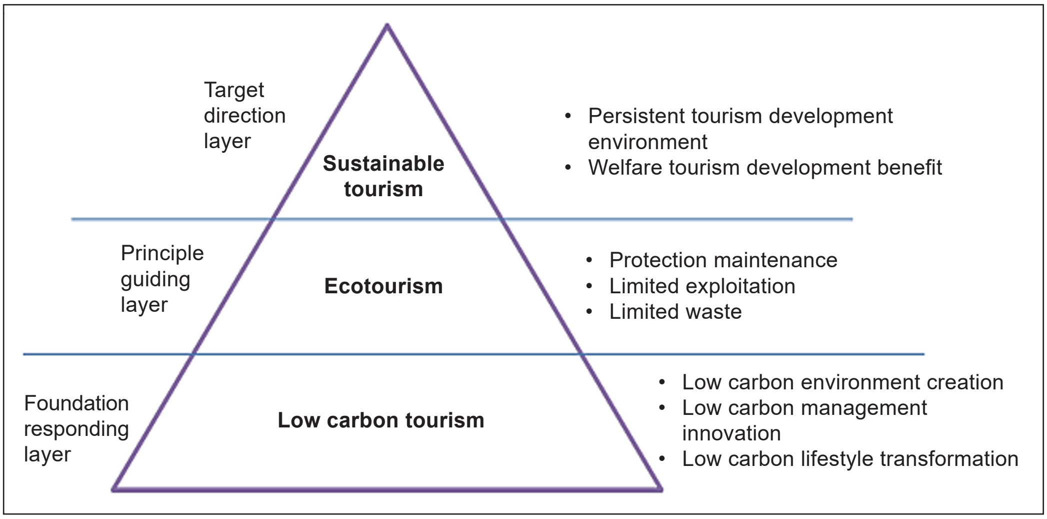
Target direction layer
Sustainable tourism
• Persistent tourism development environment
• Welfare tourism development benefit
Principle guiding layer
Ecotourism
• Protection maintenance
• Limited exploitation
• Limited waste
Foundation responding layer
Low carbon tourism
• Low carbon environment creation
• Low carbon management innovation
• Low carbon lifestyle transformation

*Figure 2.* Modern tourism development modes pyramid
*Source:* Yuan (2012) as cited in Thongdejsri et al. (2016)

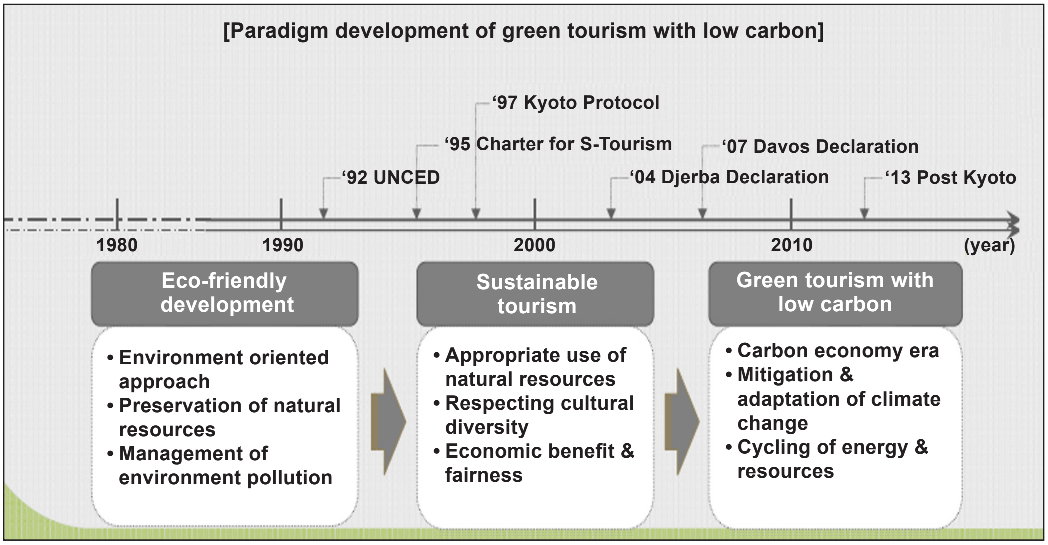
[Paradigm development of green tourism with low carbon]
'97 Kyoto Protocol
'95 Charter for S-Tourism
'92 UNCED
'07 Davos Declaration
'04 Djerba Declaration
'13 Post Kyoto
1980
1990
2000
2010
(year)
Eco-friendly development
• Environment oriented approach
• Preservation of natural resources
• Management of environment pollution
Sustainable tourism
• Appropriate use of natural resources
• Respecting cultural diversity
• Economic benefit & fairness
Green tourism with low carbon
• Carbon economy era
• Mitigation & adaptation of climate change
• Cycling of energy & resources

*Figure 3.* Paradigm development of green tourism with low carbon emissions
*Source:* Lee (2011)

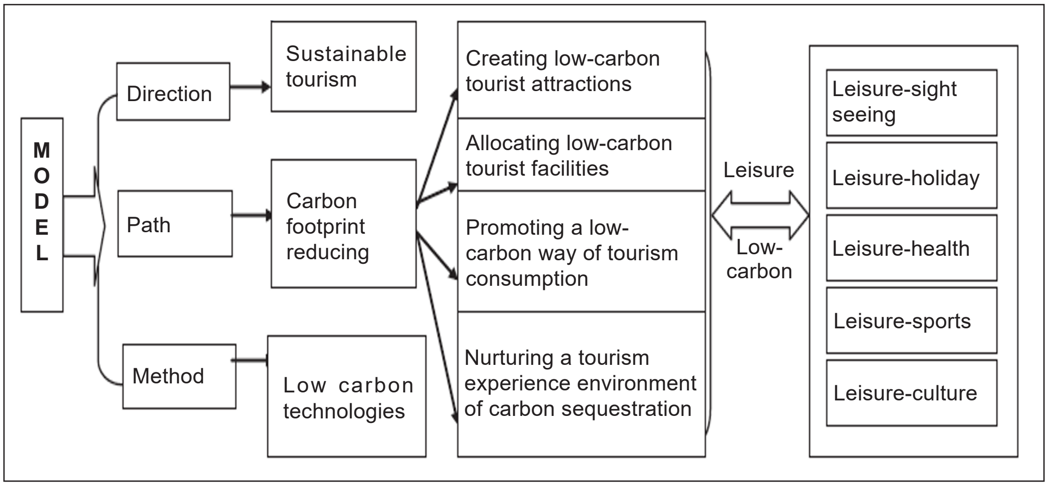
MODEL
Direction
Path
Method
Sustainable tourism
Carbon footprint reducing
Low carbon technologies
Creating low-carbon tourist attractions
Allocating low-carbon tourist facilities
Promoting a low-carbon way of tourism consumption
Nurturing a tourism experience environment of carbon sequestration
Leisure
Low-carbon
Leisure-sight seeing
Leisure-holiday
Leisure-health
Leisure-sports
Leisure-culture

*Figure 4.* Low-carbon tourism development model in the leisure economy
*Source:* Huang & Deng (2011)

As Figure 4 shows, LCT can be achieved by introducing low-carbon technologies to reduce the footprint of tourism activities. Thanks to these technologies, LCT can have a better, practical impact. For example, it can increase the choice of low-carbon infrastructures and facilities for transportation, housing, dining, and shopping. Also, the promotion of LCT must be enhanced to expose more visitors and locals to low-carbon projects, such as tree-planting initiatives. A collaboration between all parties, including agencies, communities, entrepreneurs, tourists, and governments, is necessary to foster low-carbon practices and achieve LCT goals. The planning of strategic mechanisms by governments is also necessary for more effective implementation. One of the possible actions is to encourage or enforce low-carbon technology in every activity that uses energy in the tourism sector—for example, creating low-carbon buildings, transportation, equipment, and tourist attractions. Therefore, the LCT agenda needs to go beyond ecotourism; sociocultural factors need to be included to achieve the long-term goal of a low-carbon transition.

### Assessing the Effects of Implementing an LCT Programme

Many studies have shown that tourism activities can improve the local economy, including in rural areas. Therefore, alternative tourism initiatives need to be introduced to provide win-win solutions that support local economies while upholding environmental conservation. Low-carbon programmes are initiatives to preserve the environment from pollution caused by tourism activities. Fang (2011) examined the efforts to make Pinglin a low-carbon rural tourism centre. Carbon vouchers are among the initiatives introduced there. These vouchers can be spent at “low-carbon stores,” and 10% of each purchase will be a tree-planting fund to offset $CO_2$ emissions. Furthermore, household waste will be stored and disposed of in people’s homes to maintain cleanliness around the city. These activities require the support of all the parties involved to achieve the long-term goal of a low-carbon community. So, for an LCT project to succeed, it needs the support of the government and the locals.

### Covid-19 and LCT Development

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted both the international and local tourism sectors. The OECD (2020b) has shown that well-established tourist destinations worldwide are harmed the most by the pandemic. To curb the spread of the virus, governments have imposed various travel restrictions, including on tourism-based activities at the global and national levels. These restrictions included entry bans, testing, and quarantine measures; they are based on a set of risk-assessment criteria, such as the epidemiological situation in the countries of departure and arrival and the emergence of variants of the virus (European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2021). The national response to the pandemic includes the closing of borders; travel restrictions; the closing of non-essential businesses, schools, and other public places; self-quarantine at home, mandatory quarantine in ad-hoc facilities or lockdowns; and the provision of economic stimuli (Fauziah, 2020).

The pandemic has had a severe impact on the tourism sector (Nagaj & Žuromskaite, 2021). Although the Covid-19 pandemic hurts the health system and the world economy, the pandemics positively impact the environment. According to Nagaj and Zuromskaite (2021), the Covid-19 outbreak has decreased greenhouse gas emissions from tourism activities in all Central and

Eastern European (CEE) countries. Due to restrictions on movement and travel, it covers domestic and international tourism that are enforced during the pandemic season to curb the spread of epidemics. Covid-19 prevents people from visiting tourist locations because a positive individual could potentially spread the virus. The pandemic has led to the closure of premises and tours, creating huge losses for operators and stakeholders. It has also reduced $CO_2$ emissions resulting from transportation, accommodation, and activities that involve energy consumption in the tourism sector. However, this reduction will not affect global climate change if it remains temporary. As the OECD (2020a) has shown, there is no evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic will alter the course of climate change.

Many studies show that the impact of tourism on $CO_2$ emissions is highly dependent on sustainable tourism policy and adaptation management (Paramati et al., 2017; Tian et al., 2021). According to Tian et al. (2021), the tourism sector can be an engine for reducing $CO_2$ emissions, because in the long-term perspective, increasing tourism growth by 1% reduces pollutant emissions by 0.05%. The study of Braga et al. (2020) showed the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in improved water quality in Venetian canals and lagoons through satellite imagery comparing it in 2019 and 2020. Although Covid-19 does not directly impact GHG emissions, it has nevertheless been proven to influence environmental health. Based on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA; 2020) report, the Covid-19 crisis has reduced emissions with an estimated reduction of 8% of global $CO_2$ emissions in 2020 compared to 2019. However, it will not reduce the impact of climate change because it is temporary. Therefore, further action needs to be taken to curb climate change which has a worse impact. Thus, ensuring the regulatory impact on the tourism sector for beneficial changes in the environment can last longer. The concept of sustainable tourism, promoting the idea of slow tourism, and taking care of the natural environment must be implemented in future development strategies.

Indirectly, post-crisis recovery programs provide an opportunity to align public policy more closely with climate objectives and limit the risk of locking down carbon-intensive infrastructure. Therefore, future stimulus packages need to be planned to encourage investment in sectors and technologies to accelerate the transition and increase resilience to future shocks due to climate change. In addition, governments need to ensure that emergency actions implemented to address the Covid-19 crisis do not frustrate efforts in addressing environmental challenges in tandem with efforts to improve environmental health and community resilience (OECD, 2020a). Studies from epidemiologists have found that exploiting the environment for development increases the risk of the emergence of various types of epidemics in the future (OECD, 2020a). IPCC (2019) predicts a worse situation impacted by climate change, such as the ice sheet's collapse in Antarctica. The melting of the Antarctic ice is now adding about 0.02 inches a year to global sea-level rise due to the effects of climate change (Stone, 2021). Accordingly, it is hoped that the Covid-19 pandemic could be a starting point to changes in attitudes and practices that reduce climate change mitigation. For example, reducing business travel by conducting online trading activities can reduce carbon emissions into the air. However, there are several effects of Covid-19 on the expansion of low-carbon ventures following the reduction in low-carbon investment prospects. Efforts to empower low-carbon technologies, in the long run, require substantial investments in terms of innovation and dissemination (IPCC, 2019; OECD, 2010). Among the effects of Covid-19 on the reduction of low carbon investment are;

i. Uncertainty over the economic situation affected by the outbreak is much higher than the Global Financial Crisis, resulting in investors delaying investment activities and access to financing, including the energy industry and new technological innovations.
ii. The fall in oil prices of up to 60% recorded in February and March 2020 due to reduced demand provided weaker incentives for investment in low carbon technology and energy efficiency at all levels, from research and expansion to commercial deployment. According to the EIA (2021), United States crude oil production declined by 8% in 2020 due to a sharp reduction in petroleum demand in March 2020 as a result of the global response to Covid-19 causing crude oil operators to lower production.
iii. Most of the drivers of innovation and low-carbon technology consist of small companies that are more potentially affected by the Covid-19 crisis compared to larger or powerful firms because they have lower access to the capital needed to launch temporary shocks (Bell et al., 2020; OECD, 2020a).

These factors have led to global supply chain disruptions, including renewable energy projects, which slow or prevent the addition of renewable energy capacity in 2020 due to disruptions during outbreaks such as lockdown measures, physical distances and funding challenges in the coming years. The fossil fuel sector is important for energy security as a necessary resource for low-carbon transition, including supporting innovation in technologies that could transform the sector itself, such as the use and storage of carbon capture. The Covid-19 crisis may provide an opportunity to rethink the fossil fuel industry's role in this transition. Thus, pre-recovery support towards companies and industries is needed to help the low-carbon transition, such as avoiding lowering energy-efficient standards and climate policies and providing direct support to companies, which working on the environmental improvements. For example, they are providing green stimulus packages to support long-term recovery, such as encouraging investment in low carbon infrastructure (improving buildings, renewable energy infrastructure, communications networks, and public transport), increasing government efforts for innovation and new technology start-ups and setting federal carbon prices to maintain incentives while protecting vulnerable communities.

The Covid-19 crisis provides a lesson about society's vulnerability to global shocks that significantly impact human living norms; however, this crisis can also enhance the effectiveness of public policy by reducing GHG emissions, and increasing investment in new investments economic sectors in the long run. The pandemic has helped spread LCT strategies worldwide, especially through the imposition of limits on the use of carbon-intensive infrastructure (OECD, 2020a). Stakeholders should implement emergency measures to promote LCT development during the Covid-19 crisis (OECD, 2020a). First, the management of the stock and composition of GHG emissions should occur not just in the short term. Second, as we know that the decline in emissions is temporary (based on past global crises, such as the 2008 financial crash), measures should be taken to make it even stronger in the following years. The OECD (2020a) proposes a blueprint for a low-carbon recovery, as shown in Table 2.

During the pandemic, border closures and travel bans became the worst obstacles in tourism development, adversely affecting the economy. As a result, tour operators lose their source of income resulting in losses. Accordingly, several new norms that must be adhered to as safety measures during the epidemiological season have been introduced in the tourism sector. Among the measures that need to be taken are disinfection of hotel rooms and other tourist facilities, mandatory disinfection,

Table 2
*Blueprint for a low-carbon recovery*

| No. | Proposed Actions |
|---|---|
| 1 | Keep away from developing weak environmental policies; this can help reduce policy uncertainty for business, achieve mutual benefits, and reduce political-economic barriers. |
| 2 | Support companies are facing liquidity difficulties in all sectors, including renewable energy and other low-carbon technology sectors. |
| 3 | Strengthen environmental improvements by actively providing opportunities for governments to manage and facilitate the transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon technologies. |
| 4 | Increase efforts to support behavioural change toward low-carbon transitions. |
| 5 | Construct suitable channels for the continuation of the low-carbon project. |
| 6 | Invest in low-carbon facilities and avoid polluting technology lock-in. |
| 7 | Encouragement to improve low-carbon technologies via administrative support. |
| 8 | Encourage expenditure on and use of low-carbon technologies by eliminating fossil fuel subsidies and implementing carbon prices. |
| 9 | Pay enough compensation to overcome prejudice against and political intervention on carbon prices. |

*Source:* OECD (2020a)

temperature testing of users, limiting the number of people allowed to stay in one room. The impact of the tourism industry on the environment depends on the country and the nature of the local tourism industry. Thus, it raises the awareness that tourism development can be a machine to reduce energy consumption and $CO_2$ emissions in the long run by adopting low-carbon tourism practices.

## DISCUSSION

Traditional tourism practices can cause terrible resource waste. LCT can overcome this problem by introducing energy-saving practices that reduce pollution. Similarly, LCT can increase environmental protection awareness in food packaging, housing, and low-carbon transport. Thus, LCT can save natural resources from damage and exploitation. Moreover, low-carbon travel involves a relaxing mode of transport close to nature and can reduce the stress of modern life. Among the activities that can reduce stress are walking and cycling, which allow us to enjoy the scenery of nature—something that is impossible when using a motor vehicle. Air pollution, the energy crisis, and many other environmental problems cannot be solved only through technology and science but require the joint efforts of all parties. Therefore, developing a low-carbon lifestyle is the most effective way to solve the problems caused by rapid economic growth and the development of the tourism sector.

According to Sunlu (2003), tourism can help environmental conservation in four domains: financial contributions, better environmental management and planning, increased environmental awareness, and protection and maintenance. Through tourism activities, funds can be raised for the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats. For example, collecting money from entrance tickets or equipment rental can provide funds to manage natural resources and tourist attractions. This money can also be used for the salaries of rangers and maintenance workers. Careful management of tourism development and environmental planning is necessary to reduce the impact on nature. For example, green buildings are a way to reduce energy consumption and waste production. Increased environmental awareness is required to boost public appreciation of the environment. It will hopefully lead to better behaviour towards the environment and sustainable practices, thus ensuring the well-being of nature in the long run. Protection measures are essential for conserving biodiversity and guaranteeing the sustainable use of resources. Therefore, nature protection laws need to be enforced to safeguard valuable resources and assets. For example, certain islands in Malaysia rich in coral reef species (e.g., the marine parks of Tioman Island, Perhentian Islands, and Sabah) need proper controls so that natural resources are not threatened and can be enjoyed by future generations. The growth of coral reefs takes decades, but many are dying due to rising temperatures and seawater acidity (National Science Centre, 2020). Environmental policies such as programmes to protect coral reefs and wastewater recycling can help endangered species grow again.

Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic does not affect the development of LCT; instead, the pandemic can lead to a healthy environment by producing cleaner air for the population. All parties must ensure that their efforts to address pressing environmental challenges and improve society's resilience are followed up with strong climate policies (OECD, 2020b). Furthermore, governments can take an immediate step to ensure that the emergency actions implemented to combat Covid-19 do not thwart efforts to address environmental challenges and improve community resilience (OECD, 2020a).

## CONCLUSION

Currently, unregulated economic growth is causing significant environmental damage. The rapidly growing tourism industry is no exception in this sense. Therefore, implementing a low-carbon approach can help protect increasingly endangered natural resources. There is a need for a stimulus package to boost LCT by encouraging investment in sectors and technologies that can speed up the green transition and increase societal resilience to future shocks caused by climate change. Further detailed research is needed to define LCT in terms of assessment systems, impacts, models, policies, regulations, incentives, and collective implementation measures. In Malaysia, non-renewable fuels—coal, crude oil, natural gas—are major energy sources in the tourism industry. It harms the environment through increased GHG emissions. However, LCT suggests that the use of renewable energy sources—biomass, wind, and solar—to develop resorts and other facilities can minimise emissions. Administrative departments, travel agencies, developers, traders, and entrepreneurs should support energy-saving initiatives in the tourism sector. We see low-carbon technological progress as very helpful in promoting the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Malaysia. Therefore, detailed research is required to produce a more efficient, economical, and comprehensive LCT model that can preserve natural resources, and ensure the well-being of future generations.

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# The Philosophy of Nguyen Trai for the advancement of the Concept in Humanity

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## ABSTRACT

In Vietnam, humanity thought is a national cultural value that is highly appreciated at all times. Typical for the humanistic thought of Vietnam is the philosophy Nguyen Trai's. To better understand of Nguyen Trai's thoughts on humans, the article uses a comprehensive method and specific history of dialectical materialism to clarify the humanity content of philosophers around the world. At the same time, the article uses analysis, comparison, and synthesis methods to see the interference of Chinese Confucian thought with the value humanity of Viet Nam inside of humanity Nguyen Trai. From there, the paper draws great ideas of Nguyen Trai clarifies the idea of benevolence with justice, empathy, and understanding of the plight of others. Nguyen Trai humanity thought to help the suffering and unhappiness of others, even those of your enemies. However, in the history of Vietnam and the war situation, Nguyen Trai's humanity thought has exceptional value. Humanity also means respecting and valuing the good, great, and sacred dignity in every human being. The social wisdom in managing the country is that hate the brutal forces trampling on the right to life, and happiness. That is the value for Vietnam today to build socialism.

*Keywords:* Culture, humanity, Nguyen Trai, philosophy, Vietnamese

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## INTRODUCTION

Invasion of the Ming (China) with Dai Viet, Nguyen Trai (1380 – 1442) was a great Vietnamese philosophical thinker. Nguyen Trai was an active participant in the Lam Son uprising led by Le Loi against the domination of the Ming Dynasty. He was the Lam Son insurgent (1418-1427)

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army advisor, set strategies, and drafted documents diplomatic correspondence with the Ming army. Before that, Nguyen Trai served as the mandarin of King Ho Quy Ly and his father with the position of Ngu Su Dai chief (Le, 1998a). After the Ming invasion, his father, Nguyen Phi Khanh, was taken to China. Dai Ngu country fell under the rule of the Ming Dynasty. Nguyen Trai willingly participated in the Lam Son uprising movement led by Le Loi against Ming domination and regained independence, naming Dai Ngu, Vietnam. Nguyen Trai served under Kings Le Thai To and Le Thai Tong with Internal Control and Thua Chi (Chu, 2005). So, when the uprising was successful in 1428, Nguyen Trai became the founding deity of the Le Loi monarchy in Vietnam's history. He was honored by UNESCO as a "World Cultural Celebrity" and one of the 14 typical heroes of the Vietnamese people. Nguyen Trai's philosophical thoughts on humanity show noble moral values (Van & Phong, 2021).

Nguyen Trai's humanity ideas are reflected in how he manages the country, or in his military strategy, even with his enemies, he points out how to fight most humanely. Nguyen Trai's thought of humanity comes from the love of family, the love of the motherland, along with a deep awareness of the good values of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Lieu, 1966). From there, he promoted the power of nationalism to choose a "humanity" path first. The article aims to analyze and clarify the origin and content of Nguyen Trai's humanities. Thereby, the meaning of Nguyen Trai's humanity thought for the development of Vietnamese people. Nowadays, the humanity ideology in Nguyen Trai literature is necessary to develop global welfare values and combat inequality. From this study, the paper believes that Nguyen Trai's thoughts on humanity are the theoretical basis for defining human training strategies and introducing human values, and training policies, and development orientations of Vietnam's education economy today. In Vietnam, the cultural and spiritual life of Vietnamese people always appreciates the importance of humanity. It is a long tradition of Vietnamese people.

### Research Questions

The article focuses on clarifying research questions, which is also the orientation in which the report conducts research:

1. What factors does Nguyen Trai think comprise the nature of human ideas?
2. How might Nguyen Trai's thoughts regarding humanity be reflected in daily life?
3. What does Nguyen Trai's thoughts on humanity mean for Vietnamese society today?

## LITERARY REVIEWS

### Concept of Humanity

Many fields have examined the concept of humanity. Philosophers have been interested in since philosophy was born. According to ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, both wrote a lot on virtues, although never written about man as a virtue, despite attaching great importance to love and kindness, two of man's strengths. Instead, Plato and Aristotle regarded "courage, fairness, mode" and "generosity, wit, friendliness, honesty, generosity, and greatness" as the only virtues (Schultz, 2021, p. 25).

Inauthentic Christianity, Thomas Aquinas embraced the "Seven Virtues of Heaven" (Moser, 2021); humanity means goodness, altruism, and love, which are all mentioned in the Bible (Spalding et al., 2019). That encompassed prudence, justice, temperance, faith, hope, and charity. In contrast with philosophy and religion.

The psychological point of view, being approached in the field of investigation, is relatively new for psychological researchers (Egargo & Kahambing, 2021). Still, the strengths of personality and virtue have been measured consistently in psychological surveys and proven positively related to psychology and, subjectively, weed. Moreover, even among those who endorse the world of spiritual/genuine interest, these greeting associations seem to be better explained by humanity/politely than an endorsement of belief in a supernatural (Figdor, 2021).

Humanity is a practical element with an apolitically charged, seeking to formulate a theoretical plan for a fair and decent life in a world full of division and competition, fear, and uncontrollable disasters (Lee & Johnstone, 2021).

Humanity means that kindness is (countless) the will to do good. At the same time, correctness is (unaccountable) the qualities or conditions of justness, holiness, purity, sanity, justness as used in the scriptures and the cheesy it mainly occurs (Artiqova & Ertdllayevna, 2020). It ableist holiness, an understanding of the principles of righteousness and affection of the heart, and the conformity of life to divine law (Gilbert, 2021).

Considering people as the starting point in philosophical thought, Confucian philosophers (Confucius, Manh Tu, and Tuan Tu) all conceive that morality, style, and behavior in human-to-human social relations show in the category of benevolence and righteousness (Lee, 2021). According to the first practical postulate of Confucian (Sertdemir, 2021). Confucian philosophers have evolved into a system of political philosophy, moral philosophy, and historical philosophy. They argue that the implementation of the word "Human" is not a difficult task. Still, it is the admire of behavior in each individual's social relations, which in that relationship requires each person to take on their responsibilities in each case of behavior (Yongli & Yiping, 2021). Individually under specific conditions and nowhere else (Liu & King, 2021).

In Vietnam, under the influence of "kindness and justice" in the philosophical thought of Confucianism for a long time. The feudal states wanted to control and make Vietnam become a district of the Chinese feudal states. Therefore, when Vietnam's feudal states gained independence, they still took Confucian ideas as social management. Education takes the philosophy of Confucius as the content for teaching and exams. Thus, Confucian thought became and the standard moral value in Vietnamese society during the feudal period. However, Nguyen Trai's "good and right" thought reached a new level of the era—something before and even in his time achieved. In particular, Nguyen Trai's opinions, especially his "be good and right" thoughts, are not only meaningful in his time but also valuable to this day and perhaps in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to study Nguyen Trai's "be good and right" thought and emphasize its importance in today's lifestyle education.

## The Origin of the Formation of Humanity

Vietnamese national history, human thought has profound humanitarian significance, is nurtured in pain and loss through the struggles to protect the Fatherland and daily life from agricultural production.

Humanity is the manifestation of love, peace, happiness. It shows to the family the affection people have for each other. As: Fathers are like Thai Son Mountain/ Motherfork like the water in the source flowing out; brotherly love "like hands and feet," the couple's Love of "exposed knees and hands;" more comprehensive neighborly love.... Humanity means loving and expressing by helping and forgiving those who have made mistakes, those who betray the nation but know how to recognize mistakes... (Hien, 2021, p. 39).

John Rawls' theory of justice was known to leaders in most Western countries, at least in its main outlines (Krishnan, 2021). Moreover, Jürgen Habermas's ideas about democratic speech were known in Europe and influenced the public's aspirations (Fleuß, 2021). The prevailing views of 19th-century think-book thinkers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, although most are misunderstood by economists today, have a broad influence on that industry worldwide (Patgiri, 2021).

However, when we turn to international schools - for debate regarding welfare, human rights, and how to compare the achievements and quality of life of different countries—things are other (Dung, 2021, p. 1444). Economists play a central role, and philosophers, until very recently, were completely ignored. This oblivion is new early economists such as Adam Smith were philosophers (McCloskey, 2021). Even later, great economists such as John Maynard Keynes and Friedrich Hayek were very interested in philosophy (Assa, 2021). Today, the disconnection is almost complete.

Marx's theory with an approach that points to the origin of inequality is due to division mainly based on economic theories regarding class structure. Therefore, Marx's view that the class struggles to protect the exploited poor workers is also the value of humanity (Bibi et al., 2021). Humanity means eliminating injustice in society by pointing out its causes and origins. Max Weber emphasizes that economic power can result from holding power on other grounds. Social status and prestige may derive from economic power, but it is not the only necessity (Otto, 2021).

Confucianism with Vietnamese identity. Nguyen Trai's humanity ideology was influenced by Confucian thought. Confucianism is considered an ideology that has a far-reaching and lasting impact on Vietnamese society, is the moral foundation for human education, makes excellent contributions to the organization of the state, and maintains order. Social development, economic development, literary creativity during monarchy such as the Ly, Tran, Le, and Nguyen dynasties, throughout history, have been consistent and harmonious with Vietnamese life, forming the foundation of Vietnamese culture.

Besides, in history and society, Vietnam has always been influenced by China, including Confucianism. In Confucian classics, the cause often associated with meaning humanity is benevolence and righteousness. In Confucian philosophy, benevolence means kindness and compassion towards others, which means what should be done and what should be done according to morality and reason. Humanity is great love, affection, first of all, love in five primary human relationships (five cakes): King and son, father and son, spouse, brothers, and friends. In Confucian thought, the son has valued in society. Their mission is to train themselves according to the five values of Humanity, Justice, Ceremony, Wisdom, and Faith to "rule the family, rule the country and peace the world." It is a social responsibility. Nguyen Trai learned Confucian philosophy. Confucian philosophy promotes "legitimacy," a hierarchical position in society, and the people must respect the King (Trai, 1976). Nowadays, the thought of humanity is still a cultural value crystallized in Vietnamese people. It has still preserved and educated (Dung, 2021, p. 26).

## The Content of the Concept of Meaning

Humanity means that the content of moral philosophy approach from different angles in Nguyen Trai's philosophical thought.

Humanity means love in a psychological sense, often studied for attachment to others. Humanity means kindness is part of a human solid suppressive, close to related terms that evoke feelings such as selflessness, generousness, help, and the general desire to help people (Applebaum et al., 2021). Humanity means that good is how people love each other, so humanity means equality and fairness among everyone in society (Wu, 2021). Humanity means to show respect for the power of man. It is socially intelligent (Pippin, 2021). Humanity implies the standard of a leader; good at social leadership is a form of intelligence. Therefore, emotional intelligence also plays a vital role in governance (Katou et al., 2021). Therefore, respecting managers and rulers is a way to treat and act under Vietnamese ethics (Rasch, 2021). Consider in solidarity with each other during this challenging and complex time, and humanity means respecting those who can overcome difficulties, hardships, and trust in the people to unite.

Humanity approaches combating injustice in society. Western philosophy and jurisprudence have focused on this issue to ensure justice and fairness in the community (Masvawure, 2021). Humanity also loves and helps each other in need in difficult times without heeding and calculating; Give in and take care of each other. When they miss a step; Support each other in work and daily life; Selfless and generous tolerance; The next generation always remembers the merits of previous generations (Omstedt, 2021).

Humanity is a process where people distance themselves by behaving differently because of different statuses, roles, and characteristics (Yitshaki et al., 2021). Kindness is the cultural value of each person, the community and ethnicity of Vietnam, cultivated for generations. It has become a hidden tradition in every person of yesterday and today. Whenever there is tribulation or difficulty, kindness arises, spreading voluntarily and voluntarily to share and shoulder love. Humanity means gestures, a word of support, care, sympathy for each other, simplicity, sincerity shared in life (Cifaldi & Malizia, 2021). Humanity means the spirit of building a peaceful and prosperous country. Make people's lives better and more meaningful. People love life more, have more power to overcome difficulties.

Human thought means military art in the defense and defense of the country. Efforts for peace in Vietnam, peace for other peoples, resolutely fighting for independence and freedom, but taking every opportunity to restore peace is Nguyen Trai's consistent motto in foreign affairs. For ten years (1407–1417), Nguyen Trai thought about a road to save water and save people. In 1418, when the Lam Son was the leader Le Loi broke out, Nguyen Trai quickly found his way into Thanh Hoa province to meet Le Loi to award "Binh Ngo dai cao," He advocated using humanity as a weapon of struggle. His humanity thoughts are shown in many works such as: "The central army from the destiny (the booklet includes the texts written by Nguyen Trai on behalf of Le Loi to the General of the Ming Dynasty, as well as the commandments of the general during the Lam Son inn); "Binh Ngo dai cao" (a summary of 10 years of anti-Ming invasion, as valuable and meaningful as the Second Declaration of Independence of the nation); Some screenings and charts of Le Thai To and Le Thai Tong (1433–1442); "Lam Son Truly Green" (a history of the 10-year Lam Son Inn was created by King Le Thai To in 1432); "Vinh Lang the god of compassion" (the stant in Vinh Lang, about the body and career of King Le Thai To); "The Boy Who Practiced;" "National Music Exercise" (Nôm poetry collection consists of 254 articles); "Chi Linh Son Phu" (a Chinese-worded song about the Lam Son army retreating to Chi Linh Mountain for the third time in 1442); "Ice Lake Green" (Chinese text about the life of Chen Yuan khan); "Book of Letters" (written between 1440 and 1441). All of the above works have been summed up by him, drawn into the rules to serve the cause of building and keeping water in the historical—specific conditions of Vietnam; from there, raise the mindset of Vietnamese people to a new level. Through his main and typical works, such as The Central Army from the destiny, Binh Ngo Dai Cao, Nguyen Trai's country's life in his society: politics, military, diplomacy, culture; on the role of the people, on social ideals, etc. Nguyen Trai's thoughts through these works are of physical and practical value to contemporary society and profoundly influential throughout the history of Vietnamese thought in general (Lieu, 1966).

In Nguyen Trai, humanity is tolerant of living together and respecting all people in society, not class division; officials and people work together to develop a flourishing country (Repez & Polixenia, 2021). Humanity means recognizing differences in time and social status without requiring people to value formality. More importantly, benevolence is through the actions and concrete actions of people for each other. Therefore, humanity is wealthy and social power divided equally. That is the basis for the country's sustainable development (Yuldasheva, 2021). Then Ho Chi Minh promoted the humanity thought of Nguyen Trai and pushed it up into the grand national unity bloc (Tinh, 2021).

## METHODS

In this article, the author uses the method of Methodism of justified materialism for research (Mitchell, 2021). Nguyen Trai mentions the issue where people need to clarify humanity's nature, content, goals, and roles. This article, refining the research question with the principles of a comprehensive and historically specific method of reasoning. Moreoever, carry out a form of dosing studies in the course of research.

The article uses a comprehensive approach to consider the importance of humanity on a global ideological scale to recognize the similar values in Nguyen Trai's view of humanity with great human thinkers like Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx. Or Vietnamese humanist thinkers such as Tran Nhan Tong, Ho Chi Minh. Thinkers all have common ground in giving thoughts, opinions, and feelings when discussing human values such as dignity, affection, wisdom, beauty, and strength. In essence, humanity is a universal value, directing people to the importance of truth, goodness, and beauty (Vlasenko et al., 2021).

In addition, the article uses specific historical principles. That understands that every object exists, moves, and grows in specific space and time conditions. Space and time conditions have a direct effect on the nature and characteristics of things. If the same object exists under specific conditions of time and space, its properties and properties will differ, and its character can change completely. Therefore, the study of human problems must be associated with their inner relationship and the elements that make up Nguyen Trai's human philosophy (Levitt et al., 2021).

The article focuses on comparison to clarify Nguyen Trai's humanitarian problem's actual content and development methods. From the practice of reasoning, the report uses specific ways to study the issues of humanity. The article uses comparative methods to show that the factors that make up the humanitarian nature revealed and the whole life of the activities of goodness with many different angles and aspects and many perspectives show (Melnyk et al., 2021).

The article also uses analysis and synthesis to clarify humanity, including two factors: the origin and nature of humanity and the content of Nguyen Trai's view of humanity. The method of analysis and synthesis is shown in the article to identify the problem of humanity shown by Nguyen Trai. Along with that, humanitarian issues analyze to clarify Nguyen Trai's humanity philosophy to understand it coherently, more veined, and diversely. Based on the part-by-part analysis of humanity, a synthesis needs to have a complete and accurate understanding, thereby finding solutions to the kind of problems that Nguyen Trai solves. The consideration of Nguyen Trai's thought should be based on historical and social circumstances. That is the basis for evaluating and considering the human value of Nguyen Trai as the peak representative of the national cultural value. From that, the meaning drawn in preserving and promoting humanity for Vietnam today.

The article begins by describing the society of 15th-century Vietnam with Vietnam going to war against mind invasion. In the battle, death and poverty always happen often, but the humanity of Nguyen Trai approach will help the state make policy plans to limit human harm to both the enemy and the People of Vietnam. They focus on economic growth as the primary goal of development and measure the quality of life simply by looking at the total domestic product per head. However, that rudimentary measure does not even take into law distribution and is wholly useless against countries with high poverty and inequality rates.

That is mainly due to the common assumption that descriptive or explained using the concept of human nature to have or will have significant normative meaning. Some people think that human nature excludes the possibility of social organization - for example, it excludes any equal society.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Nguyen Trãi in two sources and content shows humanity.

### The Origin of Humanity is Peace

The influence of Confucian thought on the expression of behavior in society. Therefore, Confucius considered every action in society as a ritual. Ceremonies are the way for military leaders in life. The ceremony has become a compulsory convention, a norm, a measure of human behavior when participating in social relations. The ceremony is not merely an ordinance, but a convention, a rule, a law, a lifestyle with each nation's cultural, moral color. Therefore, people need to unite, contribute to building and training honest personalities.

However, with Nguyen, he conceived humanity as the source of peace, no war, no conflict. Humanity is the source of a leader's behavior and a king's behavior to the people (responding to Phuong Chinh letter; Trai, 1976). He believes that "the works of goodness and correctness are rooted in bringing peace to the people" (p. 28), "using an army of goodness and justice to save those who suffer and defeat sinners" (p. 81), "sacred and great wars do not require killing; the army is humanity and just to protect the people" (p. 35). Therefore, the goal of kindness and correctness, which is "peace for the people," follows the sacred path to protect the people by fighting the enemy with heart and correctness to be achieved (the letter calls for the surrender of generals and soldiers at the Imperial City of Binh Than; Trai, 1976). Nguyen Trai sees "the peace of the people" as the purpose and "defeats cruelty" as the goal and means of kindness and justice so that a kind and a rightful person must take care of eliminating "violence," i.e., chasing the invaders. He must fight in a way that is "supported by heaven and earth and the people." So that "the weak can defeat the strong," "the few can overcome many," "with supreme correctness, we have conquered fierceness and cruelty; with ultimate kindness, we have replaced the position of oppression and dictatorship" (Binh Ngo dai cao) (Trai, 1976, p. 79). Humanity means that peace for the people means an end to cruel and anti-human acts against the people. It also means ensuring people a peaceful life and not "causing trouble" for them. With this in mind, Nguyen Trai presented a truth: the flag of "good, right and peace for the people" raises the people's hearts connected to create the country's strength. He advocated saving the country with the power of the people, using the power of the people to win the resistance. It is an ins volatile and long-term strategy, a rule to build and protect the country of the Vietnamese people.

Therefore, kindness and justification meant saving the country and protecting the people, a category of strategic significance that Nguyen Trai pointed out for Le Loi's victory over the Ming Dynasty to bring peace to the country and manage it prosperously. As such, this view has gained a new quality depth compared to traditional Confucian thought.

## Humanity is Fair to Everyone in Society

Nguyen Trai influenced Confucian education. Therefore, he also "followed the path of kindness and justice, wholeheartedly worshipping the court" (Trai, 1976, p. 433). Nevertheless, Nguyen Trai himself was a child of Vietnamese people, born and raised in turbulent times. He also suffered from being separated from his family (his father was captured by China when they invaded Vietnam; Le, 1998b). Therefore, he understood human suffering and the values of life, so his kindness and correctly also carried the human spirit of Vietnamese culture. Thus, the difference in Nguyen Trai's "benevolence and righteousness" ideology from those of Confucius and Mencius is that kindness and justice are above all to bring peace to the people (Trai, 1976). Nguyen Trai's kindness and political correctness also mean respect and gratitude to the people. The "people" were always mentioned and appreciated by him even after the successful resistance. As a result, the country was liberated and moved towards a new chapter (Trai, 1976).

Humanity means treating the people as the root of the nation, being close to them, really having compassion for them, and working for them. Being excellent and correct is to save the country and the people. To eliminate cruel behavior, the power of "ultimate good" must be used to stop those acts. Nguyen Trai was also the power to protect the nation through the role of a waterman. So he thought in the earlier stages of the war against the Yuan invaders. Hich Tuong si (Exhort for military officers) also emphasized: "Every century there are heroes who have sacrificed for the country" (Trai, 1976, p. 77). That is a very new and human perspective of Nguyen Trai (Trai, 1976).

The Humanity of Nguyen Trai's thoughts is to love the country and the people and fight with the enemy to save the country and the people. Being human and correct means fighting for the Vietnamese to survive and thrive. The "spiritual tactics" of Nguyen Trai very beautifully touch the people's hearts and help the enemy become good. About spiritual warfare is: "using reason to influence the mind and consciousness of the enemy (Trai, 1976) . The basis for this strategy was the quintessence of military tactics in the ancient history of China and Vietnam, which Nguyen Trai creatively applied to the practice of national liberation in the context of the country's fight against the Ming invaders." Nguyen Trai's military tactics Combine both force and spiritual warfare. It is the art of making truth to persuade and guide the star people back to the right path. The Lam Son army broke their fighting spirit by making them lose their will to invade, feel tired, accept. However, of course, The Lam Son army in combination with the attack. The military art of the Vietnamese military has proved that the war strategy is a combination of these two methods that always make every victory for Vietnam in the battle against invaders. In particular, Nguyen Trai's good and correct thoughts also stand out from the point of view of treating the enemy when they have been defeated or surrendered. Nguyen Trai discussed with King Le Loi to implement the military policy of Lam Son's army that after the enemy surrendered, the people would not kill, punish or take revenge. Lam Son army will provide food and boats for the Ming invaders (China) to return home. Humanity expresses in the tolerance of the victor to the loser. If you win, you will have peace; you will reunite with your family, wife, and children. If you lose, you die. Philosophy Nguyen Trai's great about the idea of humanity. According to Nguyen Trai: "Revenge is common, but dislike killing is a morally correct way of acting" (Trai, 1976, p. 153).

Nguyen Trai's Humanity has affirmed his social value when considering and evaluating modern captioning strengths in contexts and challenging situations; the intelligent treatment method is a psychological assessment of the muscle and inhibition of the enemy and the country's current position. With reconciliation moves without hitting, calling on the enemy to surrender and keep credibility was to show his excellent ability to "understand who understands me" from relationships with others, including social relationships related to inactivity and trust, persuasiveness, team membership, and political power. As a result, Nguyen Trai's army did not need to fight nor win.

Nguyen Trai lived in the 15th century, so he accepted the class division and concluded that the King and the people lived as children together. According to Marx, class relations are the key to all problems in social life. Economic interests, political interests, and social opinions stem from the class structure, so it is necessary to fight against this injustice.

Thus, receiving the meaning of abandoning the risk of war and preserving the country's peace is a noble humanitarian spirit and a deep philosophy (Letter of Request). Thereby, Nguyen Trai's humanity ideology has expanded compared to the original view of Confucianism (Trai, 1976). Therefore, Nguyen Trai's conception is very positive and full of humanity.

## Humanity is The Preservation and Defense of the Country

Vietnam's military tactics to win overall enemies to invade the country are a testament to its humanity. Nguyen Trai's *Humanity* in regaining national independence was inherited from the traditional ideology of the nation and developed to a new level. In the 15th century, after the victory over Minh, Nguyen Trai announced the "Binh Ngo dai cao" as an affirmation of the nation's independence. This work shows the love and a deep sense of national self-esteem, becoming the most critical content in the third Vietnam Declaration of Independence.

Nguyen Trai's "kind and right" ideology reflects the excellent relationship between people and shows the thought of "respect" and "gratitude to the people." Chinese Confucianism divides society into two categories: superiors and subordinates, of which superiors are educated and knowledgeable, who play a role in governing, while the inferior are those who are not educated and therefore ruled (benevolence and righteousness; Shao-ming, 2012). However, Nguyen Trai has never mentioned that difference throughout his life but mainly speaks of those who have "respect" and "gratitude," He realized that: The people produce food and clothing, that the emperor's palaces are built on the people's sweat, "anything of a large and splendid scale comes from the people's hard work." Therefore, it remembers that "the benefits that court officials enjoy are to repay the people's hard work."

Moreover, he is also aware of the significant role of the people with the country manager, such as fathers and sons (Trai, 1976). They can "push boats" and "flip boats" to create a profound social transformation. Nguyen Trai's kind and correct thought also mean "mercy to the people." When the country invaded, he was painful and intolerant of the ruthless actions of the Ming invaders. According to him, those who made history stood up to fight against the Ming invaders, liberate the country and regain freedom.

Nguyen Trai was very close to the people and understood their difficulties. So, his heart thinks of people and is sympathetic to their sufferings under the dosing of the Ming invaders. And the oppression and exploitation of the pioneering officials. Often, a feng shui court official who is a Confucian scholar must have the thought of being loyal to the monarchy in life and death. However, Nguyen Trai believes that "Love is loyalty to the monarch." He was devoted to the court because he had a very high sense of responsibility for the emperor and the country. Because of that loyalty, he advised the emperor to have mercy on the people. He evoked deep and specific feelings for the emperor to be sympathetic and concerned about the people's interests. According to him, only a king who cares about his national deity and has mercy on them can gather the people and harness their physical and mental strength to build a powerful force in the struggle for national liberation and build a prosperous country. Therefore, his thought of love is loyalty to the monarch. That encourages over, putting the interests of the country and the nation above all. That is the difference between his thoughts and the "loyalty to the king" of Confucianism of China.

According to Nguyen Trai, the ideal model of society is one in which: "the monarch only wants his subjects to have peace and martial arts, so according to literature, by that way, the country will remain stable and prosperous" (Trai, 1976, p. 114). A peaceful country is a place where the King is of good character and his officials are loyal so that even in rural villages, there is no voice of anger, resentment, and sadness. Therefore, the country will have a prosperous and beautiful life in harmony and peace with other countries. Nguyen Trai's socio-political thoughts align with the aspirations and dreams of the nation and the people and reach the highest level as permitted by historical conditions. Therefore, Nguyen Trai's conception is very positive and full of humanity.

Nguyen Trai's strategic and scientific vision to all for talents to help the country and the people. Nguyen Trai believes that the decisive factor in building a peaceful and prosperous country is people. How to promote all the positive elements of the people? In human power, which factor is the strongest motivation? Nguyen Trai pointed out that factor is talent. In the Ordinance calling for talented people, he: "court officials from high school and above each nominate one person, in court or the countryside, whether they become an official or not, if they are talented and can help the emperor, then... they will be awarded titles depending on their talents" (Trai, 1976, p. 194), or nominate "people with great talents hidden in the military or in the countryside" (p. 95) to shoulder the work of caring for the people and the country. Thus, it is clear that Nguyen Trai is very interested in training, fostering, developing, and using talented people in ruling the country and bringing peace to the people. This personnel strategy of Nguyen Trai, up to now, is still very valid. In short, Nguyen Trai's humanity ideology is the core content of his entire philosophical and political ideas system.

The study of Nguyen Trai's humanity thoughts also left its mark in the history of Vietnamese philosophy today. It also has a profound influence on the country's political reality in the future. However, the article with clarification of Nguyen Trai's humanity thought. Still, it is not possible to clarify Nguyen Trai's compassionate thoughts compared to humanitarian, fair, democratic, and tolerant ideas worldwide to generalize the foundations and foundations for policies and standards in political relations and principles in the country's management.

## CONCLUSION

Humanity is at the core of great thought in Nguyen Trai's system of ideas, expressed through his works that exist today. With the inheritance and development of this thought from Chinese philosophy, Nguyen Trai has contributed to enhancing the traditional thinking of Vietnamese people towards humanitarianism. In Nguyen Trai's philosophy, humanity has values in work. This voice deeply reflected the needs of society at that time. Despite the ups and downs of history, Nguyen Trai's "goodness and correctness" ideology still has practical values and meanings for the cause of building and defending the Fatherland today. These are lessons on national Love and independence, Humanity, and the importance of building and developing a human culture in Vietnam today.

The article with the understanding of Nguyen Trai's humanity ideology is the basis for making recommendations on building the ethical, cultural values of Vietnamese people today, such as:

First, build a lifestyle "for people" (for others). Making a "for people" lifestyle is crucial. This lifestyle will help to build a better society without exploitation, and therefore people will become happier. We live together, so there must be equality, sharing, opposition, mutual benefit, and respect so that our society grows more and more civilized.

Secondly, build a responsible lifestyle for the community. Humanity is also living responsibly with our society and community. Humanity means living with compassion, caring, and communicating with people. Moreover, benevolence means compassion for the mistakes of others. Humanity means living responsibly. Train yourself to be disciplined, to be aware of your responsibilities towards yourself, your family, society, and the country.

Third, protect national independence so that the Vietnamese people can build a warm, happy and peaceful society from their owners. Today, Nguyen Trai's Humanity is studied, followed by Vietnamese people, and become the culture of Vietnamese people in protecting national independence and developing the country through the historical periods of the nation. Besides, Vietnam also absorbed Marxist humanity. That was Ho Chi Minh applied creatively in bringing complete independence to the Vietnamese people. Today, Nguyen Trai's human values continue to ensure the success of building a strong, humane, and sustainable Vietnam under the socialist orientation, following the laws of the times and the eternal values of humanity.

Thus, Vietnam is now independent and free, developing the country. However, Vietnam's humanity still has to be promoted from inside and outside to realize the goal of "Rich people, strong country, democracy, justice and civilization," "State of the people, by the people, for the sake of the people," socialist orientation. Humanity today also builds a Vietnamese human value system imbued with traditional human values and the humanistic thought of Nguyen Trai. That is the consistent foreign policy of peace, independence, self-reliance, the rule of law, responsible member of the international community, handling human problems.

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# Metaphors in Indonesian Nature Tourism Discourse: Disclosing Cognition about Nature

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## ABSTRACT

Research about nature as an object of tourist gaze has been carried out to cover the relationship between nature, language, and tourists. Due to the increased tourists' desire to have full commitment to enjoying nature, communicating what nature offers and revealing people's behavior and concept about nature is, therefore, important. The concept of nature leading to ways to treat nature can be expressed in language, little, however, has been done to disclose how language shapes and conceptualizes nature, in particular in tourism discourse. This research aims at disclosing the concept of nature, which also reveals humans' cognition about nature, constructed through metaphors in tourism discourse. Employing the theory of Conceptual Metaphor and the procedure of *Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universitet* (MIPVU), this study analyzes metaphors in an online tourism magazine that describes Indonesian nature. In this study, the concepts of nature as heaven, a person, an object to be identified, and an entity are disclosed. The concept of nature as a person is the most frequently constructed notion. Comprehending this, as a result, can suggest ways how humans treat nature.

*Keywords:* Cognition, discourse, metaphor, nature, tourism

## INTRODUCTION

Nature is one of the objects of the tourist gaze, and tourism, as a result, has been produced, organized, and maintained around views of natural landscapes and townscapes. Only recently has viewing life been elevated to mean experiencing it for the tourists or visitors themselves (Franklin, 2003). The relationship between nature and visitors

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has transformed into a new paradigm. In a zoo, for example, visitors now view animals not as a pure display of performance but as an exhibition of their interest in the well-being of the animals, such as how animals are bred or put in captivity due to potential extinction. Similar activities are carried out in nature; visitors enjoy nature in a new way; they desire to experience nature in full commitment, such as rock and mountain climbing, rafting, canoeing, diving, etc. Some reasons for this transformation are frictional problems such as queues, traffic congestion, and crime. Due to globalized information, new, high-risk muscular leisure activities become the purpose of traveling, and environmentalism contributes to the changing of nature tourism (Franklin, 2003). Although the world (cities, nature, history, cultural events) is commodified as tourist products (Judd, 1999; Meethan, 2001), Thrift (2001) suggests that contemporary tourists search for more embodied tourism of nature.

One way to promote nature tourism is through promotion in brochures, leaflets, tourism websites, newspapers, and magazines. An extensive body of research has investigated the significance of visual images on tourism advertisements and discourse, indicating that visual representation of images plays an important role in tourism (Govers et al., 2007; Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005; Pink, 2007; Scarles, 2010). However, according to Dann (1996), the language of tourism is crucial as it intends to persuade people to become tourists. Some research reveals that visual images and verbal texts impact tourist behavior, particularly purchase intentions (Bigné et al., 2001; Chen & Tsai, 2007).

One notion in verbal communication is the metaphor. Many writers have discussed different aspects of metaphors in tourism and leisure studies, event management, and the hospitality industry (Elliot et al., 2013; Laing & Crouch, 2009; Larson, 2009; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Urry, 2000, 2002; Urry & Larsen, 2011). However, with the wide array of tourism research, little attention has been paid to metaphor in tourism discourse to disclose how people view and conceptualize nature. Therefore, a study on metaphor in tourism discourse is crucial, and this has led the authors to research metaphor in describing nature to reveal the cognition of human beings. This study attempts to disclose humans' cognition about nature as expressed in the Indonesian adventure theme of tourism discourse from cognitive linguistic approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Metaphor and Discourse

The traditional view on metaphors has proposed an emphasis on creating poetic imagination and rhetoric. Metaphors have always been closely associated with literature and the arts, indicating the deviance of human thoughts (Goatly, 1997). However, this assumption has been challenged by the cognitive view suggesting that metaphors are prevalent and are conceptualized in human thoughts as they are encountered in daily life. Steen (2007) states that conceptual structures reflected in semantic structures are embodied in our experiences. It means that metaphors prevail in our language and thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Steen, 2007).

Studies on metaphor from a cognitive view have been motivated by the seminal work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) on metaphor, producing the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor. According to them, metaphor is encountered in daily life as the following examples illustrate:

(1) "Your claims are indefensible." (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4)

(2) "He attacked every weak point in my argument." (p. 4)

(3) "I've never won an argument with him." (p. 4)

Examples (1-3) explicate how the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is conceptualized. In this sense, the words "defense," "attack," "demolish," and "win" are associated with war, so the conceptual metaphor of arguments as war is constructed. When arguing, one party views the other party as an opponent who can attack the position and, as a result, the party needs to defend its position. It is similar to an argument in which the parties involved use strategies to win.

Language usage on something not referred originally to demonstrate similarity or link comparable things is a metaphor (Knowles & Moon, 2006; Milstein, 2016). Cruse (2000) states a similar definition mentioning that a metaphor is the use of words to refer to things different from their literal meanings. Goatly claims that a metaphor "occurs when a unit of discourse is used to refer unconventionally to an object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way" (1997, p. 8). He adds that a metaphor is comprehended based on similarity, matching, or analogy. Goatly illustrates this in the following examples:

(4) "Although Atkinson lost that fight…." (1997, p. 106)

(5) "You never know what's around the corner." (p. 106)

(6) "Too many cooks spoil the broth." (p. 106)

The first two examples (4) and (5) may not effortlessly be understood as metaphors as the phrases "lost that fight" and "around the corner" do not instantly indicate similarity or analogy to a specific vehicle, signaling that his view on metaphor is based on cognition as well. To understand the meaning examples (4) and (5), lexical meanings of *lost* and *around* need to be identified, thus signaling differences in the lexical and contextual meaning. Understanding a metaphor based on the similarity, matching, or analogy, as Goatly (1997) states, requires further analysis of how the similarity or analogy can be revealed. Example (6) denotes an analogy of a specific situation, and comprehension can be achieved when the reader can relate the situation of "cooks" and "broth." Cognitively, a cook can make broth, yet when too many cooks are involved in making a particular broth, each cook may have a different ingredient to add that may result in distasteful broth. Such a situation can be applied when too many people in charge lead to an unfavorable outcome.

According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor means apprehending a conceptual domain as another conceptual domain

(Kövecses, 2010). Metaphor in the cognitive view has two main domains: the source domain, which tends to be concrete, and the target domain assumed to be abstract or less concrete. The conceptual domain of A as the conceptual domain of B is the claim of the cognitive view about metaphor. However, it has been noted that there are differences between the conceptual metaphor and metaphorical linguistic expressions (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, the words "indefensible," "attacked every weak point," "demolished," and "won" in examples (1–4) are metaphorical linguistic expressions, while the conceptual metaphor constructed is ARGUMENT IS WAR.

Knowles and Moon come up with the following examples of metaphor:

> (7) "The jewel in Northumbria's ecclesiastical crown is Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island, built as a monastery in 635 and reached by a tidal causeway." (2006, p. 2)
>
> (8) "We used to trash all the teams in Keith Schoolboy League. We had a great squad and no one could touch us." (p. 2)

The words "jewel" and "crown" in example (7) do not refer to their literal meaning as the context leads the reader to Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island as the "jewel in a crown." Hence, by considering the similarity between "jewel in a crown" and "Lindisfarne Priory on Holy Island," the reader can comprehend the metaphor. Deriving a similar way of thinking, in example (8), the words "trash" and "touch" are used to denote the success of a team in a game, in which "trash" is used to refer to "the opponent side" while "no one could touch" refers to "we" as the winning team.

As illustrated in the examples, the importance of the metaphor in human cognition denotes that metaphors can conceptualize a less concrete experience in terms of a more concrete one. Research by Krisnawati (2014) on metaphors in soccer news discloses a similar notion of understanding one domain as another domain. As our conceptual systems emerge from our bodies, in comprehending a metaphor, the reader needs to identify the source domain, the target domain, as well as a set of mappings between the source and the target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). With the power of our cognition, the process of conceptual metaphor comprehension is achieved effortlessly. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) mentioned that all mental operations deal with meaning, and inference deals with unconscious cognitive operations.

Studies on metaphor have uncovered aspects of the character of a text or an author's style in literature (Heywood et al., 2002) and metaphor patterns in a corpus (Crisp et al., 2002). In discourse, writers use metaphors to emphasize the pressure of coherence to create novel metaphors (Kövecses, 2010). Metaphors in EU universities' mission revealed some conceptual metaphors such as COMMERCE, QUANTITY, and COMPETITION metaphors (Arcimaviciene, 2015). In persuading people, metaphors are often used (Charteris-Black, 2004), and it is prevalent in promotional advertisements

(Bhatia, 2005). Breeze (2013) adds that metaphoricity and analogy make advertisements more powerful. The use of metaphors in tourism discourse has been investigated by Mattiello (2012), stating that there are various metaphorical expressions in the tourism industry and metaphors tend to occur together with hyperboles.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach that does not pertain to the number of samples and population. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative method is used to explore and comprehend the problem of an individual or group, through which the explanation and interpretation are discussed. This method was selected to describe metaphors about Indonesian nature published in the online travel magazine "Destinasian" Indonesia.

"Destinasian" Indonesia, established in 2013, is the first quarterly travel magazine intended for travelers in Indonesia. In addition to its printed edition, the online version is available at https://destinasian.co.id with theme features of *adventure*, *eat and drink*, *interview, city scene, photo stories, column, heritage, culture, travel insights, hotel report*, and *shopping*. As the focus of the study was nature, the discourse in the adventure theme was selected. Only discourse describing the nature of Indonesia was collected to disclose the cognition of Indonesian people about their nature manifested in metaphor. Data were collected from the adventure theme of the online "Destinasian" travel magazine from 2016 to 2019. Nineteen articles about Indonesian nature containing metaphors were selected, with eighty-seven metaphorical linguistic expressions identified.

In order to determine linguistic metaphor expressions in tourism discourse, the procedure undertaken was the one developed by Steen et al. (2010) called MIPVU (*Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universitet*) as employed in the research on metaphor in soccer news by Krisnawati (2014). The procedure describes the steps to decide the basic meaning and the contextual meaning of a word with the assistance of the online Lexico dictionary powered by Oxford. In this study, the procedures were as follows.

1. The authors scrutinized every word in the discourse as a lexical unit, mainly on the verbs and nouns as well as the elements that preceded and followed them. For example, in the expression, *the seductive beach*, the unit investigated was the *beach*. As *the beach* was preceded by *seductive*, the whole lexical unit to be analyzed was the *seductive beach*.
2. The authors identified the basic meaning and the contextual meaning of the lexical units under study. The basic meaning is more concrete, specific, and human-oriented (Steen et al., 2010), while the contextual meaning is the meaning of the lexical unit based on the context. An example of this is the expression of *trawl international*

*tourists* by focusing on the basic meaning of *trawl*. Identifying the basic meaning of *trawl* to refer to catching fish, the expression of *trawl international tourists* thus evoked another meaning, namely the contextual meaning.

3. When the basic and contextual meanings were identified, the authors determined the difference in both meanings and checked for the metaphorical linguistic expressions' potential source and target domains. As the focus of the paper was nature, the target domain was nature, and the context of the expressions could reveal the source domain.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Theme of Adventure

The adventure theme of "Destinasian" magazine covers a wide variety of outdoor activities in Indonesian and international tourist destinations. An adventure component tour is recognizable by the activity and location, such as diving, snorkeling, visiting jungles, or looking for unusual wildlife (Buckley, 2006). Mostly promoting the beauty of the places, the writers put enticing titles such as "Want to Have a Cruise Ship Tour? Here is the guideline," "Hunting for Gili," The Most Beautiful Irony in the World," "Expedition of Pinisi with Ayana Komodo," etc. Some texts present outdoor adventures such as 'A Project to Save the Giants of the Sea" and "An Adventure in Puncak Area." With a focus on Indonesian nature tourism discourse, the description of other countries' nature was excluded.

In tourism discourse, particularly in the adventure theme, tourists communicate their experiences (Djafarova & Waring, 2012), and geographical and cultural distance is important (Dann, 1996; Heller & Areni, 2004). Therefore, to create visual images of tourist destinations in the mind of the readers, writers use metaphorical linguistic expressions.

Based on the metaphorical linguistic expressions in the tourism discourse in "Destinasian," as many as eighty-seven expressions about Indonesian nature were collected. The frequency of target domains of tourist destinations, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, seas, waves, beaches, hills, mountains, valleys, and rice fields is depicted in Table 1. In addition, the metaphorical linguistic expressions of the target domains are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1
*Frequency of target domain*

| Target Domain | Frequency |
|---|---|
| tourist destination | 21 |
| waterfall | 2 |
| river | 11 |
| lake | 3 |
| sea | 17 |
| waves | 8 |
| beach | 11 |
| hill | 5 |
| mountain | 3 |
| valley | 3 |
| rice field | 3 |
| Total | 87 |

Table 2
*Target domain and metaphorical linguistic expressions*

| Target domain | Metaphorical linguistic expression |
|---|---|
| tourist destination | *surga tropis Asia* 'Asia's tropical paradise'<br>*menjala turis internasional* 'trawl international tourists'<br>*mulai tertangkap radar turis* 'starts being caught in radar'<br>*tercium radar turis* 'detected by tourists' radar'<br>*Mamasa punya banyak amunisi untuk menjala turis*.<br>'Mamasa has ammunition to trawl tourists.' |
| waterfall | *Air terjun mempertemukan kucuran air tawar dengan air laut*<br>'The waterfall unites running fresh water and sea water.' |
| river | *Sungai mengamuk*.<br>'The river is raging'.<br>*Sungai mengirimkan banjir.*<br>'The river sends in flood'. |
| lake | *Danau ini tampil dengan wajah tercantiknya*.<br>'The lake appears in its beautiful face.' |
| sea | *laut yang membingkai pulau* 'the sea that frames the islands'<br>*rahim laut* 'the womb of the sea' |
| waves | *tarian ombak* 'the dance of the waves'<br>*Ombak mengisap dan menggulung pasir*.<br>'Waves suck and curl up the sand.' |
| beach | *pantai seduktif* 'the seductive beach'<br>*pohon-pohon menggerayangi pantai* 'trees are fondling the beach' |
| hill | *perbukitan mengukir lanskap* 'the hills engrave the landscape' |
| mountain | *ditaburi gunung-gunung* 'sprinkled with mountains'<br>*gunung-gunung jantan yang menusuk langit* 'male mountains piercing the sky'<br>*tubuhnya dipenuhi guratan luka sisa letusan*.<br>'its body is full of wound scratches due to eruptions'<br>*gunung-gunung mengangkangi Bali* 'the mountains straddle Bali' |
| valley | *lembah hijau yang digerayangi kabut*<br>'the green valleys fondled by the fog' |
| rice field | *sawah memanjakan mata* 'rice fields spoil the eyes'<br>*sawah yang mengukir lembah* 'rice fields engrave the valleys'<br>*sawah mengukir lereng* 'rice fields engrave the slopes' |

**A Tourist Destination as Heaven.** The conceptualization of nature tourist destinations in Indonesia as heaven is seen in the phrase 'Asia's tropical paradise' signaled by the word paradise. In the dictionary, paradise means "the abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall in the biblical account of the Creation; the Garden of Eden." With such a lexical meaning, paradise used in the expression does not refer to the lexical meaning. Contextually the meaning of paradise is "an ideal or idyllic place or state." Paradise is synonymous with heaven meaning "a place regarded in various religions as the abode of God (or the gods) and the angels, and the good after death, often traditionally depicted as above the sky." Even though nobody has ever been in heaven and talked about what heaven looks like, religiously, the situation in heaven can be pictured on people's minds as the definition of heaven exhibits. It supports some research revealing that religion accompanies the mind when seeing nature (Adu-Ampong, 2016; Jaworska, 2017), implying that the nature tourist destinations in Indonesia are of ultimate beauty. Thus, the source domain is heaven.

**A Tourist Destination as A Person.** As a person, a tourist destination is conceptualized to have human abilities. Dealing with how a tourist destination serves as a place of interest, the tourist destinations are depicted to have the ability to trawl tourists through the expression of "trawl tourists." By demonstrating such an ability, the tourist destinations are conceptualized as fishers doing their jobs to catch fish. The tourists, then, are perceived as fish. In human cognition, catching fish with a net denotes an attempt to obtain as many fish as possible, and such resemblance is viewed in tourist destinations. Concerning nature tourist destinations, the destinations are pictured as fisher people attempting to obtain as many tourists as possible, yielding in the source domain of people. In this expression, the metaphorical expression is used to communicate the intangible tourism features (Buckley, 2006, 2010) such as the atmosphere or friendliness of the local people as well as the tangible features (Djafarova & Andersen, 2008; Stern, 1998) like the water in the river or the beach surrounded by trees.

**A Tourist destination as an Object to be Detected.** Other expressions perceiving tourist destinations as objects to be detected from the expressions of "caught in radar" and "detected by tourists' radar." The lexical meaning of radar is "a system for detecting the presence, direction, distance, and speed of aircraft, ships, and other objects, by sending out pulses of radio waves which are reflected off the object back to the source." As a military technology, radar is used to detect approaching enemy airplanes or missiles. Civilian airplanes and larger boats and ships use radar as a general aid for navigation (https://www.explainthatstuff.com/radar.html#uses). The radar detects an approaching object through radio waves. Referring to the use of the radar, expressions "caught in radar" and "detected by tourists' radars" do not bear the lexical meaning. Based on the context, the word radar means tourists detect tourist destinations by technology or other media available to them. The metaphor is in the form of A is B, in which a tourist destination is cognitively perceived as an object. Adding the word radar to the expressions completes the way how tourists know tourist destinations. In these expressions, thus, visual images of the destinations are not pictured, but the way a tourist destination is known to potential tourists is evoked in mind. Finding a tourist destination requires a specific skill and tool, like when radar detects something under close observation.

### Water-related Nature

**Nature as A Person.** Water-related nature in the discourse covers waterfalls, rivers, lakes, the sea, and waves. In describing these objects, the writers conceptualize them as persons who can do things such as uniting, getting angry, sending in something, dancing, sucking, and curling up. One disposition of a person demonstrated in the discourse is beauty as expressed in "its beautiful face" when talking about a lake.

The expression "the waterfall is uniting running freshwater and seawater" demonstrates the combination of two different objects. It is written to describe how the waterfall is coming to meet the seawater below it. Another expression, "The river is raging," is used to conceptualize nature as a person that gets angry. Expressing anger is one characteristic of a person, and when a person is angry, one form of anger realization is an aggressive behavior (Verona et al., 2009) and a behavioral outburst (Alia-Klein et al., 2020). The river referred to in the discourse is the holy river, acting aggressively by sending in floods. Despite the misery it has caused, the people living in the area view this as a warning signaling their wrongdoings, as said by one of the prominent leaders. Therefore, the river rage in this sense is not to be misinterpreted as a condition not supporting the promotion of the place as a tourist destination. Conversely, nature has warned them to introspect and think over future actions, exactly which is what this place offers to tourists. Such an expression guides the reader or the tourist on treating nature well as it can get angry.

Unlike expression of the river, the expressions of the lake, sea, and waves are more positive, as seen in *tarian ombak,* 'the dance of the waves,' and factual condition in *laut yang membingkai pulau* 'the sea that frames the islands.' These expressions conceptualize nature with the ability to dance and the ability to unite scattered items in one frame as what a person can do. In particular to the ability to unite, it signals that the sea surrounds the islands. Another expression about the sea is *rahim laut,* 'the womb of the sea.' Only a female has a womb; thus, this expression conceptualizes the sea as a female. The womb in a female person means "the organ in the lower body of a woman or female mammal where offspring are conceived and in which they gestate before birth" and an organ to yield reproductive outcomes (van der Sijpt, 2018). Such meanings contribute to the concept of the sea as a reproducing entity in which many living creatures strive to live and reproduce.

Seeing nature as a person in tourism discourse provides the readers as potential tourists with information on treating nature. Compliments and precautions to nature can help the destinations be preserved and admired and assist them in getting good treatment and positive behaviors from tourists.

### Land-based Nature

**Nature as A Person.** Beaches, hills, mountains, valleys, and rice fields are land-based nature depicted in the tourism magazine of "Destinasian." As expressed in "hills are engraved on the landscape," the picture of how the hills are designed on the landscape will emerge in the reader's mind, signaling that the hills are placed artistically as what a sculptor does. With the word engraving, meaning "cut or carve (a text or design) on the surface of a hard object," a clear and vivid visualization of the landscape is revoked. Sight and touch are the embodiment pictured in the expression.

Different from the hills, the mountains are written in various expressions such as "sprinkled with mountains," "male mountains piercing the sky," "the mountain is full of scratches," and "the mountains straddle." The mountains in all of the expressions are perceived as both living and non-living entities. As a living entity, the mountain can pierce, straddle, and suffer from an injury. The ability of the mountain to do things or experience something is specified in the physical characteristics such as height and sharpness (as the word pierce denotes). In "the mountains straddle," a particular picture comes into mind visualizing how a person's leg is wide apart; thus, it reflects an image metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), in which the mental image of a person straddling is evoked. By relating it to the mountains, the meaning becomes "situated on both sides of a place." In this sense, the attribute of the mountain is its huge size.

Being conceptualized as a person, the mountain can be in a less unfortunate situation as in the expression of "the mountain is full of scratches." Scratches are marks or wounds because of scratching. Considering the context of the expression, the scratches refer to the marks by eruptions. Eruptions of the mountain are thus pictured as an unfortunate condition due to marks left after an eruption, which is conceptualized as scratches. Evaluating the target domain of the mountain from the expressions, senses of sight, hearing, and touch are evoked. Being conceptualized as a person is also viewed from the expression of "the male mountains piercing the sky." The lexical meaning of male is "of or denoting the sex that produces gametes, especially spermatozoa, with which a female may be fertilized or inseminated to produce offspring." Inferences derived from the metaphorical expression arise from the activation of a collection of meaningful nodes that lead to the activation of other nodes (Lakoff, 2008). Therefore, by relating the physical appearance of a human being to the mountain, a visual image is conceptualized in the mind, and the meaning is comprehended. The word male in the expression refers to the physical characteristics of a male with the ability to pierce.

Attributes of sexual appeal are identified in the words "fondle" and "seductive," as used to picture valleys and beaches expressed in "the fog is fondling the valleys" and "tress are fondling the beach." The lexical meaning of the verb fondle is "stroke or caress lovingly or erotically," while seductive means "tempting, attractive." Viewed from the semantic field, the feature of love and eroticism are covered in the metaphorical expression of the beach and valley. Henceforth, cognitively it denotes that both the beach and valleys are pictured as objects that readily accept external treatments due to their sexual attributes. The metaphorical expression in the discourse can draw visual images on tourists' minds (Blasko & Connine, 1993). For both the word "fondle" and "seductive," the senses evoked are sight and touch.

Being an agricultural country with relatively many rice fields, Indonesia describes rice fields as one tourism attraction as metaphorically expressed in "rice fields spoil the eyes," "rice fields engrave the valleys," and "rice fields engrave the slopes." One of the meanings of spoil is "treat with great or excessive kindness, consideration, or generosity." The phrase "spoil the eyes" entails the great beauty of the rice fields. As the brain is shaped through experiences (Lakoff, 2008), Indonesian people can easily understand how rice fields engrave the valleys and slopes. Through those expressions, awareness of unfamiliar tourism objects can be pictured (Blasko & Connine, 1993; Dann, 1996). The word "spoil" cognitively evokes the sense of sight, while the word "engrave" is related to sight and touch.

Nature, in general, is conceptualized as a person with a wide range of abilities and attributes. Therefore, when remote nature is pictured in the mind of potential tourists, they will be encouraged to explore it (Cook, 1992). The tourists then become the center of attention due to their capabilities in narrating their experiences (Dann, 2002) and communicating the qualities and attributes of tourism (Stern & Schroeder, 1994).

**Nature as an Entity.** In "sprinkle with mountains," the mountain is perceived as a non-living entity. The word sprinkle, meaning "scatter or pour (small drops or particles of a substance) over an object or surface," denotes the mountain as a small drop or particle, or an entity that can be scattered or poured. Relating the expression to the lexical meaning of sprinkle to denote cover surface with small drops or particles, the mountain is not certainly a small drop or particle. Placing mountains as small entities scattered all over the land is understood as comparing the mountains to a larger land on which they reside. Thus, it can be concluded that despite their large size, the mountains are used to signal other existing entities that are incomparably larger. Cognitively, the mental image of "sprinkle with mountains" evokes the picture of mountains that can be spotted in many locations across the country.

## CONCLUSION

Metaphorical linguistic expressions in the Indonesian adventure theme of tourism discourse uncover how language conveys meanings and conceptualizes human cognition about nature. Nature in the Indonesian adventure theme of tourism discourse is conceptualized as heaven, a person, a thing to be detected, and as an entity. The main concept constructed in mind is nature as a person with certain physical qualities and attributes that can guide the reader or the tourist in treating nature. The study also reveals that the target and the source domains of metaphor in tourism discourse are concrete. As the expressions evoke the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, they can draw visual images in the mind of the readers as potential tourists, who could be encouraged to explore nature.

This article discusses metaphors in revealing cognition about nature in tourism magazine articles published in a relatively short period. Hence, it is worth including a longer time frame to note the possible differences in human cognition across time frames. Further research may focus on how nature and culture may affect cognition, possibly resulting in more various linguistic metaphorical expressions.

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# Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Women Directors in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Modern society is currently experiencing strong influences in the 21st-century that are shaping culture, structure and various institutional features. Although modern rational value systems supersede traditional ones, some traditional and modern values still coexist. The blurring of the modern-traditional values dichotomy is the result, even now in the Malaysian corporate world, shaping corporate and economic behaviour and practices. The social inclusion and exclusion of women in board directorship are influenced by traditional values as much as modern values, hence challenging male board dominance. Based on a qualitative research methodology, this paper discusses some empirical findings. Semi-structured interviews with 17 male and female directors from public-listed (PLCs) and private companies in Malaysia found the coexistence of traditional and modern values and related aspects that have enabled women to get appointed, empowered, and sustain their appointment on the PLCs boards. Modern values like rationality, efficiency, meritocracy, professionalism, and individuality coexist with traditional personalism, trust, loyalty and patriarchy (notably male status quo dominance). These values are portrayed through hard and soft skills, technical and practical business knowledge, some personality traits and professional business and work experiences. This social inclusion and exclusion aspects will drive the rise, withdrawal, exit or even avoidance of women as company

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directors of PLCs in Malaysia. This blurring dichotomy argument may hold for as long as the society subscribes to the coexistence of modern and traditional values systems in modern corporate Malaysia.

*Keywords:* Directorships, social exclusion, social inclusion, traditional-modern values dichotomy, women directors

## INTRODUCTION

Modern society is currently experiencing strong influences of the 21st-century that are shaping culture, structure, and various institutional features. Thus, this century is demonstrating a phenomenon as well as undergoing a modernising process that reinforces the 20th-century modern way of life (Ritzer, 1993; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Modern 20th-century social life features are social values, norms, mindsets, practices, and behaviour.

Rationality, efficiency, calculability, predictability, equality, professionalism, technological inclination, and individuality are some modern 20th-century core values. They arguably supersede traditional values of personalism, trust, faith, filial piety, patriarchy, collectivism, social solidarity, respect for tradition and customs, the importance of status quo, affective inclination, and others (see Haas, 2007; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Moreover, rational bureaucratically organised social systems like private business organisations and the State facilitate the modern value system (Watson, 2017).

In the view of modernisation theory, the 20th-century society faced evolution that has caused its traditional value systems to be replaced with modern values over time (see Parsons, 1991; Parsons & Smelser, 1984; Ritzer, 1997; Turner, 1990). However, interestingly, today in the 21st-century, some traditional values coexist with modern values. It causes the blurring of the dichotomy between modern and traditional value systems. It is seen in Malaysia. Modern and traditional values have become the foundation of various resources that determine corporate and economic practices and behaviour. Human capital theory, social networks and social capital theory would argue the resources as human capital and social capital in the form of personal characteristics, technical, social and organisational skills, corporate knowledge and experiences, social networks and others (see Abdullah et al., 2016; Aldrich & Reuf, 1999; Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Becker, 1964; Borgatti et al., 2018; Burgess & Tharenou, 2002; Chan et al., 2017; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Huse, 2011; Ismail et al., 2017; Kesner, 1988; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Malmberg & Nordquist, 2001; Newman, 2018; Nor & Ismail, 2017; Putnam, 2000; Scott, 1991; Sheridan, 2001; Selvadurai et al. 2020; Simpeh, 2011; Terjesen et al., 2009; Teixeira, 2014; Westphal & Milton, 2000). Resource-based theory regards the values, characteristics, and others as resources for strategic management and strategic planning (Barney et al., 2012). The values also support corporate and institutional behaviour through law, policies, guidelines, and others at organisational and institutional levels (Huse, 2011).

Corporate women in Malaysia, for example, in public-listed companies (PLCs), generally enter board directorship through institutional support and modern social value systems. However, at the same time, traditional values such as personalism, trust, loyalty and male status quo dominance may prevail in the inclusion process. Moreover, patriarchy may also still exist, regardless. Consequently, to an extent, existing gender-based social and power structures and institutions remain, thus possibly reinforcing a gender-biased modern corporate culture. Traditional values are portrayed through social networking, personal loyalty to mentors and sponsors, male acceptance of female board members, glass ceiling effects, trust of women by the men, family support, female support, and others (Abdullah et al., 2016; Burgess & Tharenou, 2002; Chan et al., 2015; Lewis, 2019; McKinsey & Company, 2012, 2017; Selvadurai et al., 2020).

Social networks are theorised as social relations established between two persons to facilitate social and individual action (Scott, 1991; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The networks can generate benefits to network actors, for example, beneficial corporate and economic activity (see Borgatti et al., 2018; Chan, 2015, 2017; Chan et al., 2015, 2017; Field, 2003; Granovetter, 1985; Halpern, 2005; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Newman, 2018; Scott, 1991; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). In addition, the networks produce social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Field, 2003; Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 2000) and homophilous attachment, which, when in excess, can raise legitimation and trust issues (Perrault, 2015). Social capital is produced "when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action" (Coleman, 1990, p. 304). Forms of social capital are social networks, trust and norms (Putnam, 1996).

The modern values are revealed through professional and practical knowledge, strategic professional work roles and positions, hard skills (digital and technical skills), soft skills (public relations and communication skills for self-advocacy), business and work experiences and particular personality traits, such as determination, hardworking, meticulousness and self-motivation. Following Becker (1964), skills, traits and others are considered human capital that can add value and bring about benefits and facilitate productive activity and corporate action, i.e., getting included on boards (see also Teixeira, 2014). Resource-based theory may argue that these skills, traits, and others are resources for the women**'s** strategic entry onto company boards, where they get involved in strategic decision-making, management, and planning (see Barney et al., 2012).

Modern values, such as rationality, meritocracy, efficiency, individualism, and professionalism coexist with traditional values. Hence, the blurring of the traditional-modern values dichotomy leads to the coexistence of values. This paper theorises the coexisting traditional and modern values and related aspects as resources, human and social capital that enable women to get included on company boards, empower themselves towards board entry and sustain their directorships after board entry. However, some values and related aspects can also get women excluded from board memberships. Therefore, for this paper, social inclusion means the socio-cultural and institutional processes that enable women corporate and economic behaviour, i.e., women to empower themselves to "enter", participate, ascend, and sustain the male-dominated directorship world through the coexistence of traditional and modern value systems. Thus, women are empowered to develop their capabilities to sustain their directorships for as long as organisational, institutional, governmental, and societal support for the coexistence of modern and traditional value systems remain.

For this paper, social inclusion does not constrain and hinder but facilitate and improve women's corporate progress and all the aspects that lead to this (see Chan et al., 2017, Selvadurai et al., 2020). A social exclusion means the exclusion of women from corporate leadership. Modern and traditional values are also the social exclusion aspects. In brief, social inclusion and exclusion aspects can be understood as means that facilitate and improve women's board participation, as well as those factors that constrain and hinder women's participation and corporate ascendance.

The key question in this paper concerns the role of coexisting modern and traditional values in the inclusion and exclusion of women as directors in PLCs in Malaysia. In line with these questions, the objective is to explore the coexistence of those values in the women's board inclusion and exclusion and explain the related social inclusion and exclusion aspects.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines women board participation by exploring the following themes; namely state of women board participation, the role of modern values on women board participation and the coexistence of modern-traditional values on women board participation.

### State of Women Board Participation

Women's participation on board is lacking in both developed as well as in developing economies. For example, in the United States, Fortune Magazine, dated June 7, 2017, showcased the rise of women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies from 21 women in 2016 to 32 women in 2017 (Fortune, 2017). In Malaysia, more and more women are also given a chance to ascend the corporate pipeline, but their participation rate is still below 10 per cent (see Chan et al., 2017).

Many women can hold senior managerial and management positions. It demonstrates a changing social system in Malaysia that no longer excludes women membership from the top corporate power structure. The State as a powerful rational actor in spearheading Malaysian economic growth, is responsible for this phenomenon. In 2011, the State, via the government, implemented a policy that empowered women to participate in decision-making positions in all sectors. The then Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi, called for the implementation of a 30 per cent women participation policy in all sectors, especially in decision making at the highest echelons.

The 30 per cent policy was in line with the Ninth Malaysia Plan's (2006-2010) [9MP] gender equality and women's empowerment target and proposed new policies and strategies to strengthen further the government's commitment to the mainstreaming of women in development (Loh, 2011; The Economic Planning Unit, 2006). In addition, the Millennium Development Goals for Malaysia, especially Goal no. 3 set in 2013, propagated gender equality and women's empowerment to create awareness of the importance of women in top corporate positions in Malaysia (Index Mundi, 2016).

## Modern Values and Women Board Participation

Many studies have documented some key modern values for women corporate ascendency. Studies conducted in Western and Eastern societies, for instance, confirmed professionalism and rationality as acquired through higher education while in law, banking or fields related to the company's industry. In addition, these values are the foundation of technical expertise, soft skills and competencies developed through professional experiences, professional training, corporate mentorship and sponsorship, state policies, organisational and institutional support systems and others (Nielsen & Huse, 2010; Thams et al., 2018; van der Walt & Ingley, 2003; Yusoff & Armstrong, 2012). For Yusoff and Armstrong (2012), aspiring women should possess eight competencies: finance and accounting, corporate planning, business forecasting, legal, risk management, marketing, human resource and internal business.

Pajo et al. (1997) argued that women in New Zealand appointed based on merits rather than tokenism would improve their visibility in the corporate world. Thams et al. (2018) found that progressive gender-based policies introduced by the State could increase women's participation on boards. Abdullah et al. (2016) and Daum and Stuart (2014) argued that women are appointed as non-independent directors because of their expertise and service and prior business experiences. Lahey (2016) contended that women need to have experience in public-listed companies, non-profit organisations, or government boards if they wish to improve their chances of getting on boards. Selvadurai et al. (2020) argued that without professional personal characteristics and organisational as well as institutional support, women would encounter difficulties in becoming directors on public-listed companies in Malaysia.

In the modern corporate world, including Malaysia, rationality is the key principle underlying corporate and economic rational behaviour (Haas, 2007). Rationality supports the widely accepted 30% Malaysian policy and other modern values, such as meritocracy, efficiency, professionalism, human and corporate competency. The Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance 2012 has even issued guidelines towards the inclusivity of women on boards (Securities Commission Malaysia, 2012). The modern rational values and related aspects can empower women towards board participation and sustain their participation over time (Andarajah, 2001; Cabrera-Fernandez et al., 2016; Chan et al., 2017; Rahman, 2013; Mehta & Sharma, 2014; Selvadurai et al., 2020; Sudarmanti et al., 2015; Thamsb et al., 2018; Yusoff & Armstrong, 2012). In Malaysia, Razali et al. (2019) argued that women board participation improved corporate performance in private education companies. Rahman and Ismail (2018) claimed that women directors influenced corporate responsibility disclosure (CSR).

## Coexistence of Modern-Traditional Values and Women Board Participation

Modern rational economic behaviour, however, is not spared from the onslaught of pervasive traditional values. Persistency of some traditional values in corporate and economic behaviour is clearly present despite economic, political and technological changes brought about by rapid globalisation and industrialisation (Haas, 2007). The idea of traditional values converging with "modern" values does not seem to materialise as traditional values continue to have a particular influence on the social and cultural changes caused by modern economic development. This situation is particularly stark in the current Western and Eastern corporate world, including in public-listed companies in Malaysia, whereby certain traditional values matter, particularly in the rise of women as company directors (Chan et al., 2017; Selvadurai et al., 2020). It clearly shows that the social exclusion of corporate women is influenced by traditional values as much as it is by modern values. Moreover, it challenges the male board dominance and male status quo as corporate leaders.

Coexisting with modern values are traditional values in social inclusion and exclusion, such as personalism, patriarchy, the dominance of male status quo and trust. They can empower women directorship entry and sustain their directorship. Some traditional values are seen through social networking, mentoring, personal loyalty, male trust of women and others. McKinsey and Company (2012, 2017) reported in their study of 235 large European companies that women can get onto boards if they are able to network, including with the men. More women on boards would eventually lead to gender diversity and gender equality on the boards.

In Malaysia, Ismail et al. (2017) found that women are appointed based on recommendations by the Chief Executive Officer and other board members. Other Malaysian researchers and scholars have also posed similar arguments (Chan et al., 2017; Selvadurai et al., 2020), suggesting that women's contributions can be potentially overlooked as well. Chan et al. (2017) proved good networking skills to advance to higher and permanent corporate positions. The ability of women to forge strong relationships or networks with internal and external corporate entities, especially with powerful allies, to gain work-related knowledge and experience and personal development improvement is key to their directorship success (Burgess & Tharenou, 2002). The inherent traditional feminine orientation in relationships and modern socialising networking skills can be potent potential hybrid qualities.

Mentoring can be rational and professional, and yet at the same time, personal. Here the coexistence nature of modern and traditional values is postulated. It is rational and professional if the mentoring is based on work relations. It may turn personal if the process is mainly due to personal relations. It can activate positive social relations if viewed from a traditional value of solidarity. Ohens (2017) contended that mentoring is an important factor in career advancement and development. A mentor, an individual of high position in an organisation or company and is normally knowledgeable and experienced, can provide direction, leadership, and motivation to mentees. Mentees can receive many benefits, such as promotion, self-efficacy, and career satisfaction. If the mentoring is successful, personal loyalty may be sustained. In addition, family ties matter if women desire to get appointed on boards, even in the modern 21st-century (Amran et al., 2014; Chan et al., 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2012, 2017; Pastore & Tommaso, 2016; Selvadurai et al., 2020). Moral support from spouses is an invaluable resource for women if that exists. Thus, traditional familial support amidst industrial and corporate culture pressures is also important to sustain women board members.

The above studies share some common arguments about the presence of either traditional or modern values as some key aspects necessary or required for women's participation, empowerment, and sustainability in corporate leadership. However, those studies do not link their arguments and findings within the contexts of social inclusion and exclusion of women on boards and the dichotomy and coexistence of modern-traditional values in modern corporate society. Furthermore, the studies either focus on modern or traditional values but not on the coexistence of these values within social inclusion and exclusion context, except for the studies by Chan et al. (2017) and Selvadurai et al. (2020). This paper argues that the social inclusion and exclusion focus is significant because it can systematically demonstrate the concurrent role that traditional and modern values play in the board inclusion and exclusion process. Therefore, this paper aims to fill theoretical, methodological, empirical, and practical gaps by presenting some findings from a recent study that could explain the inclusion and exclusion in relation to women's board participation, empowerment and sustainability, more so within the context of the blurring dichotomy and coexistence of modern and traditional values (see Chan et al., 2017; Selvadurai et al., 2020).

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research methodology for the study is a combination of deductive, inductive, and abductive research strategies that mainly subscribe to the qualitative research approach. It is deductive when the initial research began by poring through various literature on women board participation, board gender diversity, and women's board empowerment and sustainability. Several themes were derived from the literature review. The study turned inductive when the authors posed general but guiding and open-ended interview questions to obtain narratives on women's journeys (concerning meanings, experiences, and viewpoints) into corporate leadership as well as problems, challenges faced and opportunities in sustaining on board. Finally, the study became abductive when the authors reviewed the interview transcripts and compared those themes with the themes from the literature review to generate new themes and fine-tune existing themes to make further interpretations and analyses. The research strategies enabled the adaptation of some existing theoretical ideas and further theorisation of the findings on social inclusion and exclusion in relation to women empowerment based on the coexistence of traditional and modern values.

The methodology guided the interviews of 17 directors (10 females and seven males), mostly from various PLCs and private limited companies in Malaysia. Except for one male director who was 80 years old, the rest of the informants were 40 to 80 years old. It demonstrates their high calibre, expertise, and vast corporate experiences in the Malaysian (and some overseas) corporate world. They are all involved in strategic decision making, management and planning by virtue of their directorship positions and previous top management positions. They currently hold several kinds of executive and non-executive directorship in both PLCs and private companies, for example, Chairman, Managing Director, Vice President, executive director, and non-executive director. Many hold multiple directorships.

These informants were selected through purposive sampling, i.e., mainly because they were directors of PLCs and private companies in Malaysia. A key informant provided names of these informants who fit the purposive sampling criteria of the study. The numbers of informants are determined by the saturation criterion whereby the selection of more new informants stopped when the existing informants kept giving similar answers to similar interview questions. The interview questions concerned socio-demographic characteristics, board directorship characteristics, relations with male and female directors, particularly the women's corporate journeys, gender relationships on boards, and problems and challenges upon board entry and board sustainability. Based on thematic analysis, several significant social inclusion and exclusion aspects related to women board participation, empowerment and sustainability are discovered.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Some key social inclusion and social exclusion aspects are evident at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels. They are manifested as types of resources, human capital, and social capital. These findings are supported by social networks and social capital theory, human capital theory and resource-based theory. The following discussions on the findings reveal theory application as well as further emergent theorisation during the analysis.

The social inclusion aspects are a combination of modern and traditional values and norms. The modern ones are rationality, efficiency, meritocracy, professionalism, and individuality. These values underpin hard and soft skills, technical and practical knowledge about business and management, business expertise, personality traits and professional business and work experiences. Resources, human capital and social capital contribute significantly to women's strategic decision-making and strategic management process at the directorship level. Specifically, the women possess digital literacy and technological skills at the personal level, corporate administrative and managerial credibility, and public relations and communications skills. Their corporate experiences and exposure are undoubtedly present and of utmost value. They also possess self-advocacy skills, such as the ability to do smart social networking (e.g., who and how to undertake network relationships). Some of them gain their formal skills from joining professional organisations.

Some women are also able to demonstrate corporate loyalty as well as personal loyalty to mentors (i.e., again normally men) in whatever situation is necessary. Trust as a form of social capital cements the women's social networks (i.e., relationships) with their mentors. Putnam's argument on trust as a type of social capital is substantiated in this finding (Putnam 1996, 2000; see also Coleman, 1988). Mentoring and sponsorship can be professional, rational, and personal at the same time. In addition, most women are well educated in local and overseas institutions of higher learning in business studies, management, economics, accounting, law, engineering, and science fields. At a much more personal level, most of them possess resources that become human capital, such as key personality traits, such as being hardworking, being meticulous, trustworthy, possessing professional attitudes, determination, confidence, risk-taking aptitudes, responsibility, accountability, have integrity, high motivation, desire to succeed, could balance work and life, as well as to self-advocate and others. Interestingly, the women also see the importance of understanding the traditional values of gender-related skills, which are seen through reading and deciphering male behavioural codes. It supports the argument of the coexistence of both traditional and modern values in the social inclusion process.

At the organisational and institutional levels, the social inclusion aspects, such as corporate institutional support—company policies, corporate mentorship, male acceptance, and others provide corporate strategic space for the women's directorship entry. In addition, the positive change in society's perception, mindsets and behaviour on women empowerment is a sufficient motivator. Personal acknowledgement and recommendations by superiors and trust by mentors (i.e., normally men) also play a role in addition to selective cronyism (i.e., it is about whom you know can help you). No doubt, following Coleman's idea, social networks are key elements of women's social capital (see Coleman, 1988, 1990, see also Chan et al., 2017). For Putnam (1996), a trust is a key form of social capital. Moreover, these women would not have succeeded without the family as an important traditional institution that fully supports the women's career climb. This finding contradicts the often-reported barrier that family support is the major hindrance of women to ascend the hierarchy in the workplace, but most importantly it shows a positive shift in attitudes towards women's participation in the workplace and women ascending to the highest plateau in the workplace now as opposed to the past (see also Kapur et al., 2016). The role of the spouse is significant in this matter. Thus, according to Coleman's and other social network theorists' words, social networks with family members and spouses become social capital with beneficial outcomes for the women concerned. The authors of this paper also argue that these aspects at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels act include both modern and traditional values as empowerment agency enablers as well as institutional enablers.

Social exclusion aspects are also discovered at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels. They are personalism, trust, patriarchy, respect for dominance of the male status quo and others. Personally, some women may have the inability to read the traditional value precepts of male behavioural codes, lack digital literacy and technological skills (not tech savvy), personally exclude themselves from social and corporate space due to preference for family life, lack personal confidence, lack motivation for continuous learning and reskilling and others. Again, a proper understanding of coexisting traditional and modern values matters in the social exclusion of women directors.

The personality traits and others can hinder the women, especially if those traits are on the decline, at the minimum or totally absent. Besides that, the informants reported that some women do not possess social networking skills or do not feel the need to develop social networking skills. Moreover, some women lack self-advocacy public relations and communication skills because the skills might be considered unimportant for corporate career climb. As a result, the social exclusion process normally involves gradual exit from directorship for lack of directorship performance, lack of male directors' support, and social disapproval by the men on boards. In addition, the informants said that at the organisational, institutional, and societal levels, there are minimum or non-existent gender-friendly company policies, non-male acceptance, religious hindrances, absence of mentorship (i.e., again normally from men), and maximum glass ceiling effects due to traditionally and culturally based patriarchy that determines gender stereotypes and gender-based social statuses. Furthermore, if a lack of political will is not gender-biased, the women would probably not stand a chance to hold corporate leadership positions, let alone become company directors.

This paper has demonstrated that for women to get included or excluded as directors of public-listed companies today in Malaysia, the coexistence of traditional and modern value systems at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels is necessary to facilitate the inclusion or exclusion processes. Furthermore, the social inclusion aspects enable women to become directors in Malaysia's public-listed companies to push the argument further. Consequently, their directorships can be sustained if the aspects remain in place.

To recapitulate, the modern social inclusion aspects discovered are rationality, efficiency, meritocracy, professionalism, technological inclination, and individuality. As for traditional social inclusion aspects, they are personalism, trust, faith, patriarchy, the importance of the male status quo and others. Types of resources and human capital, such as particular kinds of hard and soft skills, corporate experiences and knowledge, digital literacy, strategic positions held, and others, are usually found among the women who can get themselves included in the directorship pipeline. So are other personality traits mentioned earlier. This finding is substantiated by human capital theory as well as resource-based theory on the role of resources in generating positive outcomes. At the same time, company gender and promotion policies, male acceptance and leader and corporate mentorship have indeed assisted in the inclusion process. Informants 1, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 have all agreed on the importance of expertise, experiences, knowledge and skills and particular personality traits as recipes for directorship success.

Individuals who have human capital in the form of expertise and skills are of added value to the company. Hence, it is highly likely that women who have the expertise or experience needed will be invited and accepted into the board of directors. Informant 1 issued these statements:

> Basically, I think what have actually put me to the board, I believe is my experience, actually my experience in managing company. It is where you actually you are responsible for the overall wellbeing of the company, and you have to know everything about the company. Even though not detail, but the holistic approach to everything. (Informant 1).

In addition, Informants 4, 10, 11 and 16 claimed that women directors should have other kinds of human capital and resources, such as digital knowledge and be tech-savvy to enable them to do a good job as a director.

Informant 10, who said that women with digital technology backgrounds are in high demand, supported this view.

> Go get yourself expert in digital, because you can combine woman and digital and you will be in great demand. (Informant 10)

Furthermore, women directors who used to hold strategic roles or positions in the public or private sector also stand a chance of becoming a director. The positions, for example, human resource, marketing, accounting, or finance dealing with strategic projects, would allow the women to connect and network with the industry, other organisations, or the government. Visibility and spotlight, which are seen as crucial, are consequently improved due to their social networks. Social network theory has supported this finding on the beneficial contribution of social networks to network actors. In Field's words, "relationships matter" (2003, p. 1). Thus, the women's social networks became a mechanism for them to acquire benefits and positive outcomes in terms of increased visibility, social recognition, increased corporate experiences and potential increase of future directorship appointments (see Selvadurai et al., 2020).

Besides social networking, other types of human capital and resources, such as public relations and communication skills, are important to develop or enhance the women's visibility to improve their chances of getting recognised by the males (directors or company chairpersons) and get accepted and appointed by them as directors. Informants 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, 13 and 17 shared these views. According to Informant 1, the importance of visibility is critical to ensure the person's ability is valued. Her comments are as follows:

> When I talk to women colleagues, I always tell them that networking is very important. You have to make yourself visible. (Informant 1)

Informant 1 promoted herself through the social networks formed by attending conferences. According to her,

> If you want to meet the people who are decision makers, I think, it's more, for me la, because I don't play golf, but I do attend high level conferences. And I am there, I do network. (Informant 1)

For Informant 2, visibility increases a person's chances to sit on the board because the person is known, compared to someone unknown, by existing board members. Thus, visibility also acts as an indirect promotion that increases a person's chances to sit on the board of directors.

> See, you have to, enhance, you have to, people got to get to know you la. You know. You can't expect them to look for you, you know. (Informant 2)

According to Informant 1, the importance of visibility is critical to ensure the person's human capital as such an ability is valued. Her comments are as follows:

> If you are not visible, and, if people don't see what you have done, people would not appreciate. (Informant 1)

Mentors also play a role in building a strong foundation for aspiring women to serve on the board. Mentors play a role in identifying the potential of individuals and influence in shaping the attributes of these women so that they may qualify to sit on the board of directors. Based on social network theory's argument, social networks with mentors provide beneficial outcomes for women. Informants 1, 3, 7, 12, 13, 16 and 17 admitted the role of mentor in their corporate leadership success. For instance, in the words of Informant 1,

> Of course I have people who were mentors to me that I supposed have actually assisted or contributed to where I am today. (Informant 1)

For Informant 13, the Chairman is a good mentor to have. However, Informant 9 quips, her mentor is the "best influence" on her. She attributed her entry into the board to her mentor who did not treat her as a woman. She was assessed on her human capital or resources, i.e., capabilities and not because of her gender. Here again, the traditional guru-follower precept underpinning the mentor construct and the modern value of capability influence simultaneously their prospect for a board position. For Informant 7, mentors also act as a reference on how to behave and are presentable to the board and can be considered a quick method of getting recommendations, which would shorten the woman's journey to being appointed to the board. She added that if the mentors,

> …see the potential in these women, they might recommend or be referee for these women. (Informant 7)

A type of social capital, such as trust and human capital, such as trustworthiness, are important board inclusion aspects, should the women get on boards and sustain their board membership. Informant 9 and Informant 17 agreed on this matter. In combination with a solid professional foundation, trustworthiness will facilitate the climb onto the board of directors. Informant 9 credited her success to trustworthiness.

The earlier section has also mentioned that in comparison with the social inclusion aspects, social exclusion aspects discovered are also seen at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels. They are personalism, trust, faith, patriarchy, male status quo and others. These aspects do not act as useful human capital and resources but are rather destructive to inclusion, i.e., directorship participation, empowerment and sustainability. Therefore, the informants argued that women would find difficulty getting included in the directorship realm if they experience a lack of digital literacy and technological skills (i.e., not tech-savvy); lack of particular soft skills, personal exclusion from the social and corporate space due to a preference for a work-life balance, lack of personal confidence and lack of mentorship (i.e., again normally from men). What is also not helping are patriarchal hindrances that produce glass ceiling effects, gender stereotypes, gender-based social statuses, male non-acceptance, and social disapproval due to lack of company support for continuous learning and reskilling, and barrier due to social networks based on old boys' club (see Chan et al., 2017). The women's social exclusion process resting primarily on traditional primordial values adhered by corporate leadership normally involves women's gradual exit from directorship.

Traditional values centred on gender stereotypes and glass ceiling effects that hinder women corporate leadership are both cultural and social. Informants 6, 7, 13, 14, 15 and 17, all strongly shared these points. Gender-based barriers will hinder women's participation as board members for as long as the society holds on to traditional gender stereotypes and modern gender-based culture (e.g., the commodification of women as ornamental representatives onboard) remains intact. As a result, women would face pipeline issues, as agreed to by Informants 1, 3 and 7. Pipeline issues will also continue if the women lose the motivation and determination to work towards corporate leadership, especially becoming directors, due to poor work-life balance issues or merely having the desire to commit to their families as they advance into their senior years. Furthermore, regarding directorship liability, Informants 3, 5 and 6 shared this view that holding board directorship positions deter women from pursuing directorship because of the incurrence of directorship liability circumscribed by Malaysian corporate law. According to Informant:

> Anything happen to a company, you are liable. So many people actually now think twice. (Informant 3)

Internal organisational initiatives can encourage women's participation on boards, according to some informants. Informants 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 viewed that the initiative to increase women's participation is associated with internal rationally motivated changes driven by organisational rules, guidelines, training programmes for directorship and talent management, mentorship, and others. Informant 2 stated that:

> The change from within is going to be pushed by the rules and the guidelines. I think if you left to their own devices they probably just stay as they are. (Informant 2)

External initiatives are as important as internal initiatives to encourage and propel women's corporate leadership participation. Informants 3, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 17 similarly shared this view. Usually, external institutional aspects implemented by the government and other key players (Bursa Malaysia and Securities Commission) involve the enactment of laws, such as the 30% policy and the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance 2012 (Securities Commission Malaysia, 2012).

To summarise, the coexistence of modern and traditional values at the personal, organisational, institutional, and societal levels plays a key role in shaping and encouraging women's corporate and economic behaviour as company directors, especially in PLCs in Malaysia. They are resources (i.e., human capital) and social capital the women. Thus, women's economic behaviour is embedded in the coexistence of modern and traditional values suited for Malaysian corporate and societal contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has supported the blurring traditional-modern values dichotomy argument and the coexisting traditional and modern values' role in the inclusion and exclusion of women as directors in public-listed companies in Malaysia. This argument may hold for as long as the society subscribes to the coexistence of modern and traditional values in modern corporate Malaysia. What is necessary is not traditionalism, i.e., clinging onto archaic and negative traditional values but drawing on traditional positive values, such as trust, family support, loyalty, etc. However, at the same time, there is an institutional, governmental, and societal need to address modern negative values, such as the commodification of gender, hegemonic masculinity, and so on whilst supporting and promoting positive modern values in the social inclusion process, where women become proactive and where their collective power will increase women mentoring, advocating, and empowering. As a result, more aspiring women will become more aware and motivated to participate in boards early in their careers, increasing board-ready women in the executive pipeline. This paper has theoretical, empirical, methodological, and societal implications for policy making, women directorship training and development of empowerment and intervention strategies, not only at the individual and government levels but also at the corporate and non-government organisations levels, such as the Institute of Corporate Directors Malaysia (ICDM), Bursa Malaysia, Security Commission, Bank Negara and others.

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# Item Generation Stage: Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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## ABSTRACT

Discussion on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among teachers has gained much interest among scholars. However, a review of past literature indicates no specific instrument developed for measuring teachers' OCB in Malaysia. Most studies pertaining to the OCB of teachers in the country have adopted instruments previously developed in the Western context. Therefore, this study aims to generate items that can truly measure the OCB of teachers in the Malaysian context. This study employed two types of research approaches involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Stage one involved 64 secondary school teachers, while stage two comprised 14 teachers who participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The result found 35 behaviors that have been identified as the OCB of teachers in Malaysia, where 18 behaviors were specific to the OCB of teachers in Malaysia and 17 behaviors were adapted from existing instruments developed in the Western context. A total of 24 items measuring teachers' OCB in the Western context were dropped because they were considered tasks related to the performance of teachers in Malaysia. The findings show that OCB among teachers in this country should be measured using an instrument specifically designed to suit the local context. Furthermore, there are several differences in behavior with regards to teachers' OCB in Malaysia compared to those in the Western context. Therefore,

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this study extends the existing body of knowledge about measuring OCB.

*Keywords:* Extra-role behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, school, teacher

## INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian education system is undergoing a major reform, particularly in its primary and secondary education system, to meet the emerging educational needs and cope with the changing and increasingly competitive environment at the national and international level. The aim is to transform the Malaysian education system into a world-class system. The success of this reform lies not only on the policymakers, education administrators, and school leaders but also on the school teachers themselves (Da Wan et al., 2018). One of the key thrusts of the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to elevate the quality of Malaysian student outcomes to be on the same level as the top third of education systems globally (Economic Plan Unit, 2016). Thus, teachers play a vital role in achieving this aspiration (Ahmad & Ghavifekr, 2014; Da Wan et al., 2018).

Past research has indicated that teachers need to strengthen their capability in terms of knowledge and skills to meet the diverse needs of students, schools, and the Ministry of Education (Handler, 2010). More so, in times where education reforms are being implemented, teachers play a more significant role in ensuring successful implementation of the educational reform at the school level (Oplatka, 2009). Often when schools undergo transformation resulting from educational reforms, there are more things to do. Therefore, teachers are required to take up those additional responsibilities where some of which are beyond their formal job requirement (Oplatka, 2009; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2007). Also, schools need proactive teachers who are willing to participate and support the schools' initiatives (Oplatka, 2006; Somech & Ron, 2007; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2007). These proactive or discretionary behaviors are described in the literature as organization citizenship behavior (OCB) (Eddleston et al., 2018; Gupta & Sharma, 2018; Zhu, 2013) and known as teachers' OCB in the school setting (Mansor et al., 2013; Oplatka, 2006; Oplatka & Stundi, 2011; Somech & Ron, 2007; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2007). The key aspect in OCB is the initiatives taken by employees, in this context referring to teachers, to function beyond the formal job requirement willingly.

The importance of OCB in schools cannot be denied. Previous studies revealed that successful organizations require employees who will perform beyond the given tasks and contribute to better than expected performance to increase organizational effectiveness (Jahangir et al., 2004; Zabihi et al., 2012). Other than benefiting an organization, OCB may enhance employees' performance (Chib, 2016). In the educational setting, Somech and Ron (2007) argued that schools' success depends on the willingness of the teachers to engage and take responsibilities beyond the prescribed works. In addition, past studies have revealed that teachers' OCB influences their development in terms of the level of job satisfaction and a sense of self-fulfillment, as well as improve students' achievement and schools' performance in terms of school image (Oplatka, 2009; Zabihi et al., 2012). In other words, engaging in OCB affects the schools' effectiveness and success and the development of its teachers and students.

### Rationale for Generating Items for Teachers' OCB

There are several reasons to justify the need for study on developing teachers' OCB scale. First, although a validated teachers' OCB scale has been developed, researchers argue that the nature of teachers' OCB cannot be generalized across all teachers and may vary by cultural and social rules (Amah, 2017). Thus, the teachers' OCB identified in one country may not be in another country (Suharnomo & Hashim, 2019). Taking this into consideration, scholars suggested that it would be essential to investigate the types of teachers' OCB in other countries (Dipaola & Neves, 2009; Jiao et al., 2013; Jimmieson et al., 2010; Oplatka & Stundi, 2011).

Second, the majority of past studies that measured the OCB of teachers in Malaysia had adopted instruments that were developed in the West, which might not be appropriate for the school setting in the local Malaysian context (Saraih et al., 2015; Selamat et al., 2016; Shah & Halim, 2018). Third, despite its importance, studies on teachers' OCB have been scarce. Teachers' OCB was generally measured in past studies using the validated generic OCB scales developed in industrial settings, such as those developed by Podsakoff et al. (2000), Smith et al. (1983), and Williams and Anderson (1991) or by using scales which were developed in school settings but in the western context (Dipaola & Hoy, 2005; Habeeb, 2019; Kumar & Shah, 2015).

Fourth, there is a lack of generalizability of the construct in the educational environment where the nature of OCB may vary due to contextual differences (Farh et al., 2004; Jimmieson et al., 2010). In fact, schools cannot lay out the specific description of all tasks and roles as well as the conduct and behavior needed to achieve its goals and aspirations because of the nature of the teaching profession (Amah, 2017). While OCB is considered an extra-role behavior, it is difficult to determine which of the behavior forms part of the essential tasks or voluntary behavior at schools in different countries (DiPaola & Neves, 2009). Moreover, in the education sector, the role of teachers covers a wide range of duties and responsibilities inside and outside the classroom (Muema et al., 2019). Therefore, it is difficult to determine the boundary of the teaching profession objectively. Teaching is also a field that emphasizes helping others. Therefore, some aspects of OCB can overlap with the responsibility of teaching (DiPaola & Neves, 2009; Jimmieson et al., 2010), which may vary by country. Hence, a country-specific scale is needed to measure the OCB of teachers in the Malaysian school setting. This study thus aims to generate a pool of items for eventual inclusion in the Malaysian version of the teachers' OCB scale. For the purpose of this study, the quantitative and qualitative research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent the previous scale of teachers' OCB suits the teacher's behavior in Malaysia?
2. What are the attributes of OCB that would most likely suit school teachers in Malaysia?

## Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

The initial idea of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), known as self-development, was derived from Katz in 1964 (Podsakoff et al., 2000), who pointed out that self-development can be defined as a person's effort to participate in the activities that can improve one's knowledge, abilities, and skills for the sake of organization. The concept of self-development comprises employees' involvement within the organization, employees' capabilities on the organization's operation system, and employees' spontaneous behavior. Based on Katz's (1964) definition, spontaneous behavior includes providing assistance to others and sustaining a good attitude to improve the performance of the members and organization entirely. Katz (1964) has also identified three basic types of behavior that are important to the function of an organization, in which: 1) employees must be motivated to join and remain in the organization, 2) employees must carry out a specific role with a reliable way, and 3) employees must have an innovative and spontaneous activity that exceeds the role prescription (Organ et al., 2006). Scholars revealed that the third feature of an effective organization from Katz and Kahn's theory had gained much attention from many scholars (Chou & Stauffer, 2016). The third behavior, which refers to innovative and spontaneous behavior, explains that organizations need employees with a desire to succeed beyond the minimum requirement of their jobs and specific aspects of business operations. Many scholars developed their study and derived OCB dimensions based on the innovative and spontaneous behavior introduced by Katz and Kahn in 1966 (Podsakoff et al., 2000). This feature also leads to the concept of extra-role behavior (ERB) introduced by Katz and Kahn (1966).

Organ and his colleagues were the pioneers in the use of the OCB term in the 1980s. The definition of OCB has gone through many revisions, but the constructions kept their core (Hoffman et al., 2007). The rapid growth of research on OCB has contributed to numerous definitions of OCB. At first, they emphasized OCB as a discretion behavior that people implement without any reward and training provided for the task. Based on such understanding, OCB also can be defined as a behavior that yields benefits for the social process in an organization, which affects task performance indirectly (Bateman & Organ, 1983). Citizenship behavior includes helping others with job-related problems, volunteering, sharing ideas to produce new products, making constructive recommendations, being punctual, encouraging supervisors to achieve higher goals, making creative suggestions, encouraging teamwork, and participating in organizational governance (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Furthermore, Organ (1988) had extensively discussed the definition of OCB by describing it as a spontaneous behavior, which helps promote the functioning of an organization without any reward and official appreciation. Workers are free to help others to achieve tasks. It is discretionary, promotes the effectiveness of organizational performance, and is not directly related to the reward system. This definition emphasizes that the behavior ought to be voluntary to promote the organization whether the role is prescribed or part of an official duty.

OCB is also defined as a kind of behavior that emphasizes the discretion of people, which is not directly rewarded for enhancing the organization's performance (Bakhshi et al., 2009). Chib (2016) defined OCB as anything positive behavior that employees do voluntarily, which has a positive impact on co-workers and benefits the company. The value of OCB lies in its contribution to performance. As global competition increases, successful business managers must consider every available approach to increase efficiency. Thus, engaging workers to go beyond the minimum and discretionarily work to enhance the organization's fortune without increasing direct rewards seems to be an ideal approach (Turnipseed & Turnipseed, 2013).

As reviewed above, although there is no empirical study that confirms self-development as a form of OCB, the element of spontaneous behavior in the self-development concept continuously appears to be a discretionary form of employee behavior in the literature (Bakhshi et al., 2009). Accordingly, Katz's first idea of OCB consisting of spontaneous behavior still influences scholars' defining OCB. Moreover, the literature review found that scholars also use other terms to explain OCB, such as contextual performance, extra-role behavior, pro-social behavior, and organizational spontaneity.

Based on the review presented, it can be observed that studies by Organ and his colleagues have become the foundation for other scholarly studies pertaining to the topic of OCB. Although there have been some efforts to define OCB based on different contexts or terms, such as Bakhshi et al. (2009) and Chib (2016), these definitions still share the same meaning and concept with Organ and his colleagues. Hence, it can be concluded that OCB refers to voluntary behavior conducted by employees to benefit employees' performance and the organization. It also indicates that the definition and concept of OCB proposed by Organ and his colleagues continuously influence the OCB field in an organizational setting.

## Teachers' OCB

Nowadays, schools are moving towards the era of advanced education development. The performance of teachers is evaluated by "task roles," which are compulsory but insufficient to determine the schools' success (Bogler & Somech, 2004). In other words, teachers need to perform tasks that exceed their formal work to help schools to be successful. Psychologists assume that to meet the new standards set for schools, the school personnel must go beyond the minimum performance standards of their duties (Farooqui, 2012). For this reason, several scholars have defined OCB from the perspective of the school setting.

In an educational context, OCB is viewed as behaviors that go beyond the requirements of the role specified and the individual, group, or organization as one unit, to promote the organization's goals (Bogler & Somech, 2005; Somech & Ron 2007). Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) defined OCB as voluntary behavior directed towards an organization and its team and individuals, which are performed beyond the required formal task to achieve the organizational goals. This definition emphasizes three main components of extra-role behavior (ERB) in teachers' OCB, in which: (1) the behavior should be voluntary whether it is part of formal duty or non-job description; (2) the behavior might not be performed in the organization, but it is directed towards the organization's success, and effectiveness; and (3) the definition of OCB is multidimensional naturally. Although scholars agree with the multidimensionality of the OCB construct, the recognition of its dimension is still lacking (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2012; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000).

Meanwhile, Bogler and Somech (2004) and DiPaola and Hoy (2005) defined OCB in schools as an extra-role behavior played by teachers towards their colleagues and students that can influence the technical core of the organization. In this regard, teachers' extra-role behavior includes helping students with class materials, providing extra assignments for students, contributing voluntarily to the school committee, and helping absent teachers by preparing and assigning assignments to their classes (Bogler & Somech, 2004). These extra-role behaviors are related to the technical core, which helps the organization (i.e., school) to achieve its goals.

Adding to the discussion, Vigoda-Gadot et al. (2007) defined OCB in school via three components: helping others, benefiting the organization, and achieving formal tasks at work. Unfortunately, Dipaola and Neves (2009) stated that the third component is inconsistent with the basic concept of OCB as the behavior is discretionary and exists only when an individual freely and willingly helps others in accomplishing a task.

In a study that focused on OCB in school, Dipaola and Neves (2009) defined OCB as work behavior performed in excess of formal jobs, which benefits the individual and organization. Thus, teachers who exhibit OCB usually do their work beyond what has been described in the formal task. In other words, teachers are doing the stipulated task and must freely help others complete the task (Dipaola & Neves, 2009).

OCB among teachers has also been discussed by Oplatka and Stundi (2011) as teachers' behavior in school that is implemented discretionarily, not defined in the specification, and beneficial to the school. There are four components to describe the concept of OCB: 1) teachers volunteer to do a task that is beyond what is required; 2) teachers personally choose to perform the behavior; 3) the behavior is directed towards others or the school; and 4) the behavior is not harmful to the school (Oplatka & Stundi, 2011). In addition, the concept of OCB among teachers also refers to their helpful behavior to the school administrators and colleagues, such as helping to reduce the workload or providing specific assignments based on the students' achievement (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010; Nutov & Somech, 2017). Accordingly, OCB is done by teachers voluntarily, including activities such as conducting additional tasks, helping, and collaborating with others and supporting schools' activities without expecting any reward and recognition (Mansor et al., 2013). Indeed, this behavior is unrelated to the formal reward system, and it can improve the function of the respective organization (Zabihi et al., 2012).

Following the review of teachers' OCB as presented above, it can be concluded that there are two characteristics of OCB in schools. These characteristics of teachers' OCB are supported by Belogolovsky and Somech (2012).

1. The behavior must be done on a voluntary basis, which is not specified in the duties.
2. The focus is not on the behavior that only occurs at school but also on its benefits to the school as a whole.

Based on the review of various OCB concepts, either in the organizational or school setting, it is shown that most OCB concepts are subjective. A significant number of studies on OCB have concluded that there are inconsistencies with regards to the terms used where some concepts have been noted to overlap with different terms used to explain similar concepts. Several scholars also assert that OCB is highly associated with contextual performance, prosocial organizational behavior, and extra-role behavior (Borman, 2004; Eddleston et al., 2018; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000; Zhu, 2013).

Notably, most OCB concepts are operationalized based on the context of people's behavior in different study settings. Based on the review presented, the definition of OCB in an organizational setting seems to focus more on the benefit to the respective organization since the studies deal with employees' behavior within organization. In contrast, OCB in a school setting focuses more on the benefit to students, other teachers, and the respective schools since the studies deal with teachers' behavior in schools. Furthermore, scholars have stated that OCB is generally a new construct and has become a crucial subject studied in the literature (Ocampo et al., 2018). The concept of OCB has reached far and wide into the organizational setting, supporting the fact that it influences the effectiveness and performance of the respective organizations.

## The Process of Item Generation

Scale development is a critical process in certain areas, such as health, social, and behavioral science (Boateng et al., 2018). In fact, many studies attempt to create the best practices for scale development (Boateng et al., 2018; Delgado-Rico et al., 2012; Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018). For this study, the researchers employed the steps of scale development by Boateng et al. (2018) and specifically followed the steps of item generation by Delgado-Rico et al. (2012).

Boateng et al. (2018) divided the process of scale development into three phases, 1) item development, 2) scale development, and 3) scale evaluation. Specifically, these phases consisted of nine other steps of scale development. Phase one of Boateng et al.'s (2018) guideline in scale development was 1) identification of the domain and item generation and 2) consideration of content validity. It is important to note that this study aims to generate items for measuring Malaysian teacher OCB. Therefore, this study used only one step of scale development by Boateng et al. (2018), which involved identification of the domain and item generation.

In other studies, there were two steps for the item development, which consist of the conceptual definition of construct and item construction (Delgado-Rico et al., 2012). In the current study, the conceptualizing construct started by reviewing previous studies on the instrument development of general OCB and teachers' OCB as well. Several discussions were made to ensure the construct of teachers' OCB could be defined accurately. Then, two stages of studies were conducted for item construction to generate items for teachers' OCB. The process of item generation for the current study is shown in Figure 1.

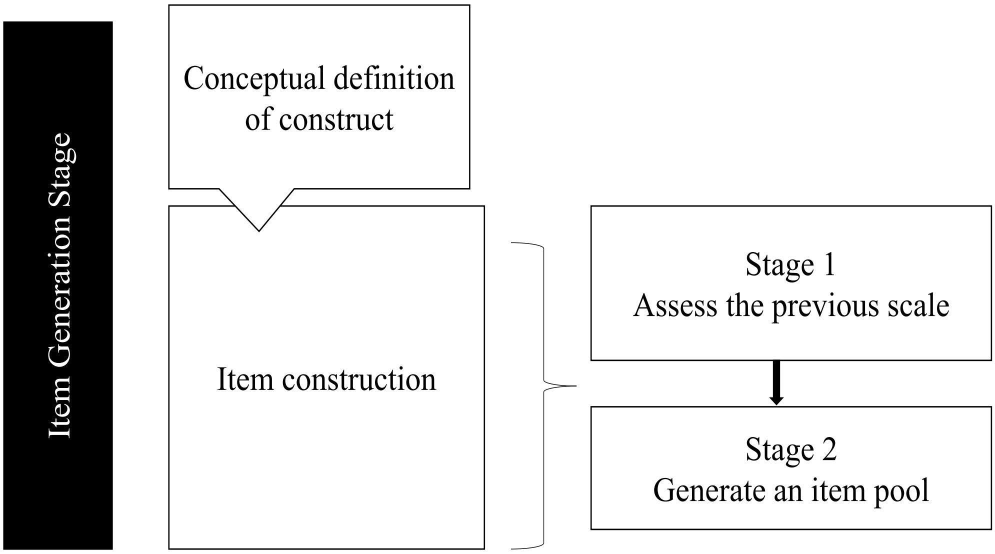

*Figure 1.* The process of item generation

## METHODS

The purpose of this study is to generate items for assessing teachers' OCB in Malaysia. This study employed two types of research approaches, which involved the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Data is collected sequentially at two stages in the research process. Stage one involved quantitative research that was conducted to determine the extent to which the previous OCB scale suit to teachers' behavior in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Stage two involved qualitative research in exploring new items for the OCB of Malaysian teachers. The combination of two methods (qualitative and quantitative) in a research process contributes to a better understanding of the research problems rather than using one approach alone (Creswell & Garrett, 2008).

### Participants

Stage 1: A total of 64 secondary school teachers were selected using convenient random sampling. This study used inter-rater agreement to assess the teachers' OCB items. Bujang and Baharom (2017) revealed that the minimum sample size for inter-rater agreement ranges from 2 to 927. In some studies, sample sizes for the inter-rater agreement were as low as 10 to 50 respondents (Hoy et al., 2012; Zapf et al., 2016). The current study showed that more than half of the respondents (59.4%) were female, and 40.6% were male. There were larger proportions of older Malaysians between the ages of 35 to 43 category (40.6%) versus respondents ages 35 to 43 (35.9%) and 44 to 53 (23.4%). The result also revealed that most of the respondents were bachelor's degree holders (98.4%). In terms of teaching experience, the result showed that a total of 18 respondents (28.1%) had 2 to 10 years of teaching experience, followed by 54.7% respondents with 11 to 19 years of teaching experience and 17.2% respondents with 20 to 30 years of teaching experience.

Stage 2: A total of 14 teachers were selected as the respondents via purposive sampling. Creswell (2013) suggested that purposive sampling involves selecting respondents from those who meet the specified criteria. A proper and appropriate selection of respondents is an important part of a qualitative study to deepen and enrich the obtained information (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2013). These respondents were selected based on their expertise in the education sector which include (1) teachers with a minimum of five years of service in the education sector; or (2) teachers who held positions in school (e.g., school principal). Additionally, the respondents must voluntarily participate in the study. These criteria were set to ensure the information obtained from the respondents was precise. The 14 respondents comprised ten females (71.4%) and four males (28.6%). The finding also showed that eight respondents (57.1%) were at the age of 30 to 38 years old, and three respondents (21.4%) were between 39 to 47 and 48 to 55 years old, respectively. Their education level comprised bachelor's degree (64.3%), master's degree (28.6%), and Ph.D. (7.1%). Additionally, half of the respondents (57.1%) had seven to 16 years of experience in the educational field, five respondents (35.7%) had 17 to 25 years of experience, and only one respondent (7.1%) had more than 26 years of experience in the educational field.

### Instruments

Stage 1: From the review of past literature, a pool of 41 items was determined pertaining to teachers' OCB. These items were constructed based on two previously established instruments. The first instrument was adapted from Somech and Ron (2007). The items were constructed from the OCB Scale, specifically adjusted to suit the educational setting developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990). This instrument was used by Somech and Ron (2007) to conduct a study on teachers' OCB, whereby the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) in the study was .80. Meanwhile, the second instrument was acquired from Belogolovsky and Somech (2010). The internal consistency reliability of the study using this measurement was .84. The respondents were asked whether the teachers' behavior listed in the questionnaire was 'voluntary behavior' or 'tasked related.' In addition, these 41 items were divided into two categories of teachers' behavior related to teachers' tasks and their relationship with others at school. Teachers' behavior is related to tasks comprised of 30 items. The first 13 items, such as "Keep abreast of changes in the school," were taken from Somech and Ron (2007). Another 17 items, such as "Acquire expertise in new subjects that contribute to teaching," were derived from Belogolovsky and Somech (2010). Items pertaining to teachers' relationships with others at school consisted of 11 items. The first ten items, such as "Does not find fault with what the organization is doing," were adapted from Somech and Ron (2007), and one item was adapted from Belogolovsky and Somech (2010). At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to suggest other behavior related to OCB among teachers in Malaysia.

Stage 2: Interview protocol was used as the instrument in this study that comprised two sections. The first section consisted of the demographic profile of the respondents, such as gender, age, educational level, and employment details. Meanwhile, the second section contained the interview questions. The participants were asked to list all kinds of behavior teachers may perform that benefit the students, peers, and school.

A translation model by Brislin et al. (1973) was used in the translation and adaptation process. It consists of five steps of the translation process: 1) forward translation, 2) assessment of the forward translation, 3) backward translation, 4) assessment of the backward translation, and 5) discussion with experts. First, a Malaysian professional translator translated the items from English into Bahasa Melayu, and the forward translation was reviewed with the supervisor. Then, another professional translator conducted backward translation by translating the items from Bahasa Melayu back into English to ensure the credibility of the translation. Finally, the translation was once again reviewed with the supervisor. This translation approach is called back-to-back translation. Then, after several discussions with the other authors, experts were held to review the translated items. These experts comprised individuals who have been involved in scale development studies and have working experience as secondary school teachers.

### Validity and Reliability

The reliability of the teachers' OCB scale in the quantitative study was tested for inter-rater reliability. It provides statistical proof to the extent to which the items in this study were correct to represent teachers' OCB. In addition, rater reliability is important to determine the extent to which an instrument measures the particular behavior within the test (McHugh, 2012). For the current study, the reliability of teachers' OCB scale was obtained using κ Fleiss kappa statistic. Kappa value of items exceeding .60 was substantial and considered reliable (Belur et al., 2021; McHugh, 2012).

The validity and reliability of qualitative research are often the subjects of debate by scholars (Amankwaa, 2016). However, the validity and reliability of a qualitative study lie in the extent to which the study's finding is based on evidence (Silverman, 2013). Furthermore, the proof of validity and reliability ensures the establishing of rigor in a qualitative study (Amankwaa, 2016; Creswell, 2012). For the current study, three strategies have been used, such as audit trail, peer examination, and double coding, to ensure the validity and reliability of the study (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2012).

### Data Collection Procedure

Stage 1: A pool of 41 items was determined for teachers' OCB from conceptualizing the construct. Study 1 was conducted by distributing the questionnaire to 70 teachers through the drop and collect method. A total of 64 questionnaires were completed, returned, and valid for further analysis. In order to ensure and facilitate the participants' understanding of OCB, the definition of OCB was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. The respondents were also required to list other potential teachers' OCB besides the items listed in the questionnaire. This process aimed was to investigate the clarity of the statements, the meaning reflected by each item, typo or grammatical mistakes, and the time needed to answer all questions in the questionnaire. The data obtained from Study 1 was then analyzed.

Stage 2: This study also employed a qualitative method by conducting Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving 14 teachers. Three FGDs were conducted separately among three groups of teachers—one of the FGDs comprised school principals, including school administrators. Before the FGD began, a general definition of OCB was explained to participants of the FGD. After that, the participants were asked to discuss teachers' behavior in school that can be seen as OCB. These discussions were recorded and transcribed before further analysis.

### Data Analysis

Stage 1: The result of stage one was calculated based on the percentage of the behavior that the respondents classified as 'voluntary behavior.' This study used the kappa statistic to test the inter-rater reliability of OCB items. Generally, the kappa value ranges from -1 to +1. The inter-rater reliability is a crucial process to determine the items that represent teachers' OCB. For the current study, the items were accepted as OCB if at least 61% of the respondents classified it as 'voluntary behavior.' This decision was based on the kappa value of the inter-rater agreement of .61, and the above is considered good (Belur et al., 2021; Dettori & Norvell, 2020). In fact, kappa below .60 indicates inadequate agreement (McHugh, 2012).

Stage 2: In a qualitative study, data analysis is the process of making sense of the data by interpreting the informants' opinions and the researchers' understanding of what they have seen and read (Merriam, 2009). The purpose of this study is to generate items for measuring teachers' OCB scale. This study used a constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to analyze the data. It began with comparing a particular incident from the interview, field notes, or documents with another incident in the same or another set of data. Such comparison will lead to several categories of data, which will be compared to each other and other instances. The researcher will continue to collect the data, analyze and code the information, and compare incidents until the point of data saturation is reached (Kolb, 2012).

## RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in two sections. Section one describes the quantitative study by presenting the stage of selecting items for teachers' OCB in Malaysia. Section two focuses on the qualitative study by presenting the stage of exploring new items for OCB among Malaysian teachers.

### Stage 1

Following the item generation stage, the study found that 17 out of 41 existing instruments in the West obtained a minimum of agreement coefficient = .60, as teachers' OCB in Malaysia. The study showed that 24 items measuring teachers' OCB in the West were dropped because that behavior was classified as task-related performance for teachers in Malaysia. The result for stage one is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*The result of item generation*

| No | New Item |
|---|---|
| 1 | Organize additional classes at night to improve students' performance. |
| 2 | Organize training (e.g., sports/competitions) outside the school schedule. |

Table 1 *(Continue)*

| **No** | **Item** | **Kappa** | **Action Taken** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Helps orient new teachers even though it is not required. | .84 | Kept |
| 4 | Willingly helps others who have work-related problems. | .75 | Kept |
| 5 | Is always ready to lend a helping hand to those around him/her. | .88 | Kept |
| 6 | Attendance at work is above the norm. | .35 | Eliminated |
| 7 | Does not take extra breaks. | .43 | Eliminated |
| 8 | Obeys school rules and regulations even when no one is watching. | .20 | Eliminated |
| 9 | Believes in giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. | .67 | Kept |
| 10 | Attends meetings that are not mandatory but are considered important. | .51 | Eliminated |
| 11 | Attends functions that are not required but help the school image. | .57 | Eliminated |
| 12 | Keeps abreast of changes in the school. | .33 | Eliminated |
| 13 | Reads and keeps up with school announcements, memos, and so on. | .24 | Eliminated |
| 14 | Organize social activities for school. | .77 | Kept |
| 15 | Make innovative suggestions to improve the school. | .71 | Kept |
| 16 | Attend functions, which help the school's image. | .43 | Eliminated |
| 17 | Organize joint activities with parents. | .48 | Eliminated |
| 18 | Decorate the school. | .50 | Eliminated |
| 19 | Volunteer for school committee. | .63 | Kept |
| 20 | Offer the colleagues worksheets that the teacher prepared for his/her class. | .71 | Kept |
| 21 | Participate actively in teachers' meetings. | .61 | Kept |
| 22 | Prepare learning programs for substitute teachers. | .50 | Eliminated |
| 23 | Help an absent colleague by assigning learning tasks to the class. | .73 | Kept |
| 24 | Stay after school hours to help students with class materials. | .86 | Kept |
| 25 | Arrive early for class. | .30 | Eliminated |
| 26 | Acquire expertise in new subjects that contribute to teaching. | .47 | Eliminated |

Table 1 *(Continue)*

| No | Item | Kappa | Action Taken |
|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | Stay in class during breaks to listen to students. | .92 | Kept |
| 28 | Go to school on free days to prevent problems in the class. | .94 | Kept |
| 29 | Participate in private celebrations of students. | .90 | Kept |
| 30 | Invite students to the home. | .94 | Kept |
| 31 | Does not consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters | .67 | Kept |
| 32 | Looking at things positively rather than negatively. | .51 | Eliminated |
| 33 | Does not make “mountains out of molehills”. | .51 | Eliminated |
| 34 | Do not find fault with what the organization is doing. | .41 | Eliminated |
| 35 | Is the classic “squeaky wheel” that always needs greasing. | .57 | Eliminated |
| 36 | Takes steps to try to prevent problems with other teachers. | .39 | Eliminated |
| 37 | Is mindful of how his/her behavior affects other people’s jobs. | .37 | Eliminated |
| 38 | Does not abuse the rights of others. | .36 | Eliminated |
| 39 | Tries to avoid creating problems for colleagues. | .31 | Eliminated |
| 40 | Considers the impact of his/her actions on coworkers. | .43 | Eliminated |
| 41 | Work collaboratively with others (planning assignments, joint projects, etc. | .35 | Eliminated |

### Stage 2

Furthermore, the study found an additional 18 items that are unique to the context of Malaysian teachers and different from previous studies. These items were derived from the qualitative phase. Supporting literature was used to operationalize the items based on the responses provided by the respondents. Therefore, better and meaningful items can be added to the pool of OCB among teachers in Malaysia. These items are presented in Table 2.

In summary, deductive and inductive approaches were used in this study to generate a pool of items measuring the OCB among Malaysian teachers. As a result, 35 behaviors have been identified as the OCB of teachers in Malaysia based on stage one and stage two. However, this study is limited to generating an item pool of teachers’

OCB. Hence, the developed items ought to be reviewed by relevant experts (content validation stage) in the future to validate the content and relevance of each item in terms of wording, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

Table 2

*The result of Focus Group Discussion (FGD)*

| No | New Item |
|---|---|
| 1 | Organize additional classes at night to improve students' performance. |
| 2 | Organize training (e.g., sports/competitions) outside the school schedule. |
| 3 | Provide own transport to send students to any events/functions. |
| 4 | Participate in *gotong-royong* to clean the school ground. |
| 5 | Send students to certain competitions (sports) outside of school hours. |
| 6 | Make copies of school assignments using personal items, such as printers and copiers |
| 7 | Act as the inventory officer to check school equipment/items, which need to be disposed of, and others. |
| 8 | Repair school furniture, such as damaged chairs, textbooks, and others. |
| 9 | Teach using personal LCD to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. |
| 10 | Look for sponsors to support school events. |
| 11 | Allocate time to join the external agencies 'network' to help the school. |
| 12 | Get involved in NGOs to get benefits for students. |
| 13 | Voluntary collaboration among teachers to improve the school's academics. |
| 14 | Use personal money to cover students' food expenses for events outside the school. |
| 15 | Do not charge students for exercise sheets/notes. |
| 16 | Willing to spend time working during my off days. |
| 17 | Willing to key in students' information/exam results in the online system outside working hours (e.g., at night, during holidays). |
| 18 | Search for additional materials for students. |

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to generate items related to OCB among teachers in Malaysia. The decision to use an existing instrument to generate the items in this study is consistent with Jimmieson et al. (2010), who developed a new scale of OCB for Australian teachers. The construction of an OCB scale for teachers that combined existing and new items may better measure the phenomenon. Based on the results, new OCB items that suit the Malaysian context were adapted, and several existing items in the Western OCB scale were removed. In addition, this study discovered several additional items based on the teachers' point of view.

Initially, the first draft of the teachers' OCB instrument consisted of 41 items. However, 24 items were eliminated as schools in Malaysia require teachers to obey certain behaviors, such as 'helps other teachers who have been absent,' 'arrive early for class,' and 'does not abuse the rights of others.' Therefore, these behaviors were irrelevant to be considered as part of the teachers' OCB in Malaysia. Furthermore, this study revealed that 40 items were familiar with previous studies (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010; Somech & Ron, 2007; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

This study employed a quantitative method to assess the content of existing items and a qualitative method (i.e., Focus Group Discussion) to increase the amount of information. The result revealed 18 unique attributes that are appropriate for the context of this study. These attributes serve as new behavior for Malaysian teachers, which translates as part of their OCB. Notably, the qualitative phase is the strength of the current study as it revealed different attributes of teachers' OCB. It provides relevant information on the prevalence of necessary OCB features among teachers in the Malaysian context. Moreover, the items found from the qualitative investigation provide a comprehensive meaning to OCB among teachers. The combination of using quantitative and qualitative methods in the current study resulted in strong evidence to create new content for the construct. Items that were retained and eliminated reveal that OCB among teachers is often geographically segregated and tends to differ across countries. Therefore, this study supports the suggestion of previous scholars that the characteristics of OCB are affected by cultural and social rules (Amah, 2017; Suharnomo & Hashim, 2019).

The present study also revealed the steps that ought to be considered to generate an item pool via the adaptation process and construction process (Boateng et al., 2018; Delgado-rico et al., 2012). The adaptation process includes the process of reviewing the original scale and defining the construct clearly and accurately. Therefore, information obtained from the adaption process can be used during the construction process. Furthermore, it is important to note that the adaptation process is not limited to merely translating the original items and validating them in a new context; however, also enriches the validity of studies by concerning various aspects of cultures and items (Delgado-rico et al., 2012). For this reason, this study provides a good contribution in test construction or adaptation and offers important applications for developing OCB instruments.

Limited evidence on teachers' OCB has opened an opportunity for the implementation of this study. It reveals a gap in the existing literature related to the issue in measuring OCB in the educational context, where most existing OCB instruments were developed in the Western context.

Thus, the outcome of this study extends the existing body of knowledge on the subject of measuring OCB by generating a pool of items for teachers' OCB scale in the Malaysian context. The findings of this study show that the effort to build a scale that measures teachers' OCB in Malaysia is necessary. This study is limited to the item generation stage of teachers' OCB. Hence, further studies need to be done to develop and validate the OCB scale for Malaysian teachers. Ultimately, both practitioners and scholars can use the findings of this study for further improvement and accurately measure OCB among teachers.

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# The Effect of Enterprise Risk Management on Ameliorating Competitive Advantage: A Cross-Sectional Study of Software Houses in Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

In the current dynamic environment, organizations need a more anticipatory and effective risk management system. Implementing the holistic Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) process will perceive, analyze, and assess risks as they must be regarded from the entire enterprise's perspective. The research aims to empirically analyze the effect of ERM practices on the Competitive Advantage (CA) and examine the moderating role of Organizational Culture (OC) in the Software industry of Pakistan. The primary data were obtained from 250 respondents through the questionnaire method. The validity and reliability were analyzed by using Structural Equation Modeling Analysis, PLS Algorithm, and Bootstrapping. The results show that the implementation of ERM has a significant effect on firms' competitive advantage. The analysis supports the hypothesis and identifies the positive moderating effect of organizational culture in carrying out ERM programs, which can enhance organizational competitiveness. This study is useful for managers to help them in the planning and decision-making phase so that they can act responsibly in a rapidly changing environment and consider organizational culture as one of the key factors of the ERM program that helps accomplish organizational competitiveness.

*Keywords:* Competitive advantage, enterprise risk management, organizational culture, software industry

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, organizations are getting affected by several risks factors, for example, globalization, change in the environment, technological advancements, complex financial models, and corporate governance changes (Gatzert & Martin, 2015; Tekathen

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& Dechow, 2013). In a modern business environment, achieving organizational competitiveness becomes one of the key challenges. Companies are required to work on new knowledge and methods and to pursue the practical wisdom that enables them to develop a competitive edge (Nonaka et al., 2014). Enhancement of competitive advantage strictly relies on the organizational management system (Simons, 1990). Managers are continuously working to create and expand their knowledge on the competitive business advantage based on the capability to establish a system for generating and protecting the firm's resources (Grant, 1996). Organizations having effective risk management systems can easily cope up with uncertain and complex environmental changes.

Traditional risk management deals with assigning risk management to each department, primarily responsible for the risks within its own business. Hence in the past, numerous organizational failures occurred due to a traditional risk management approach that damaged the company's viability (Ching et al., 2020). Enterprise risk management (ERM) is recognized as a newfangled way for managing no. of risks like strategic, operational, and financial occurrences in organizations. It also effectively deals with an organizational control system in an organized and systematic manner (Hoyt & Liebenberg, 2011; Olson & Wu, 2015). It is an approach used for managing risk and is also a tool for controlling the internal system of organizations that enables them to improve resource allocation and proper utilization of those assets (Berry-Stölzle & Xu, 2018; Jabbour & Abdel-Kader, 2015). Despite the increasing spotlight on ERM in Asia, Empirical evidence on ERM is missing as the modern way of minimizing negative factors as the majority of studies concentrate on the extent of ERM adoption in developed countries. This system received very little attention in how it helps in increasing competitive advantage (Chen et al., 2020). Many organizational factors are directly influencing ERM function; like Lack of knowledge about the system is one of the barriers in ERM execution and enhancement (Kleffner et al., 2003).

In the organizational context, culture is an important key factor that strengthens the business mission and defines the values that help in making decisions and making business strategies (Taneja et al., 2015). A strong organizational culture becomes a norm of behavior based on ethical values that creates a healthy work environment. Management must accept the need to manage its diverse workforce to get high-quality results that satisfy its consumers across the country. A firm's culture represents a common identical sense and stickiness among people that serves to mitigate any difference from a diverse cultural environment (Wahyuningsih et al., 2019). Adjustment of the organizational culture improves the efficiency of the company (Denison et al., 2004). It is expected that this will have a positive effect on the external adaptability and internal harmony that makes a corporation's efficiency possible.

The organization receiving appropriate cultural support will benefit from positive employee attitudes, perception, ethical behavior, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. These benefits will surely enhance the organizational performance and long-term competitiveness of companies (Wahyuningsih et al., 2019).

This research has three benefits over the existing research. (1) The objective of this study is to examine empirically the argument that ERM is related to Competitive Advantage and how organizational culture moderates this relationship. (2) The research technique is more reasonable. ERM has not been appropriately addressed in Pakistan's academic and business environment. This holistic approach of risk management helps in minimizing the financial and management risks of a company. So, this study helps business leaders and risk managers working in the IT industry of Pakistan how to deal with uncertain circumstances. (3) The results are more in-depth. The organizational culture (organic) plays an important role in the implementation of ERM and helps an organization in getting a competitive advantage. In today's highly competitive environment, companies must act quickly to secure their financial position and market position. Businesses are continually striving to find ways to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. They must have more internal strengths to bring added value to the customer, strong differentiation, and scalability (Hamel, 1994).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Orientation for the Study

Resource-Based View (RBV) theory and contingency theory are employed as the basic theoretical foundation that strongly supports the research model. RBV theory analyzes and interprets organizational internal resources and capabilities to formulate a strategy to attain sustainable competitive advantage. Resources can be measured as inputs for companies to operate. Internal resources and capabilities determine the strategic options of companies while competing in their external business environment. Business capabilities also permit companies to enhance the client's value chain, develop new products or enlarge into a new market. Thus, RBV leverages the resources and capabilities of the organization to develop sustainable competitive advantages. Whereas, Contingency approach consists of identifying the most common parameters and observing how different structures, strategies, and behavioral processes behave in each context (Hambrick, 1983). Richard Scott explains contingency theory as: "The best way to organize depends on the nature of the environment to which the organization must relate" (Scott, 1987, p. 89).

### Enterprise Risk Management

ERM is an evaluation, quantification, financing, and risk management at the company level. It is a holistic approach for managing risk, so it can also create value for companies (Nocco & Stulz, 2006). This paradigm concept highlights a broader view of risk and replaces the silo approach, which is compartmentalized from a department to another in an organization (Ching et al., 2020). ERM helps a firm in examining risks jointly and assessing the interaction of every risk with the firm's portfolio of other essential risks (Froot & Stein, 1998). Thus, it improves the internal decision-making of an organization and leads toward more effective resource allocation and better capital structural decisions (Graham & Rogers, 2002). Various models are presented "by a no. of researchers…" for ERM (Wu & Olson, 2008). However, the most accepted model from prior scholars is the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO, 2004) "ERM integrated framework" (Ahmad et al., 2014; Arena et al., 2010; Daud et al., 2010; Moeller, 2007; Olson & Wu, 2015; Tahir & Razali, 2011; Yazid et al., 2011).

The framework describes a risk management model in eight important components with four theme objectives. According to this framework, ERM components are "(1) internal environment: which is the basis for all other components. It includes many variables, such as entity's risk appetite; the entity's risk management philosophy; the entity's competence and ethical values development of personnel, and how the manager assigns responsibility and authority in organizations; (2) objective setting: It is a process to set objectives, which are consistent with the entity's risk appetite and its mission; (3) event identification: which means identification of both risks and opportunities that affect the achievement to entity's objectives from the internal and external environment; (4) risk assessment: it permits an entity to consider the impact and likelihood of events and analyzing risk by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. It examines the positive and negative effects of potential events all over the entity; (5) risk response: management should select a proper reaction (avoiding, reducing, accepting, and sharing risk), which is in line with the risk tolerance and risk appetite of an entity; (6) control activities: it includes the policies and procedure which help a manager to ensure that risk responses are effectively performed at all level of organization; (7) information and communication: this means information communicate to staff in a form and timeframe, which helps them to fulfill their role and responsibility regarding ERM and other activities; and (8) monitoring: the ERM process and activities are monitored through separate evaluations, ongoing management activities, or both and modifications made as necessary (Saeidi et al., 2019). The framework proposes that a company's ERM mechanism should be positioned to attain the following four objectives: (1) strategy: high-level objectives, which are in line with the mission of the organization; (2) operations: short-level objectives, which are related to the efficient and effective use of the resources; (3) reporting: accuracy of the quality of organization's reporting system; and (4) compliance: acting according to accepted regulation and lows (Saeidi et al., 2019). Additionally, scholars must understand how the overall risk management process interacts with business attributes and other aspects of a company's strategy to influence its performance (Andersen, 2008, 2009).

### Relationship between ERM and Competitive Advantage

Enterprise Risk management gets significant importance in recent years. Different organizations, agencies, public authorities, and stock exchanges have recognized the need to manage risks and have imposed several requirements to improve risk management practices in public companies. In the present work, there is a growing consensus among professionals and academics that ERM is the fundamental paradigm for managing the portfolio of risks faced by companies (Anton, 2018). An effective risk management practice can diminish the uncertainty variations in decision making, creates value for firms, and help in minimizing the undesirable impact on the company's performance both now and in the future (Faisal & Hasan, 2020).

Effectively managing organizational risk will generate positive results. It acts as one of the key factors in gaining a competitive advantage. The first description is associated with the theory of RBV. The company's RBV has become a well-established theory of competitive advantage. The theory was first presented by Werner in 1984 (John, 2000). RBV stresses a firm's assets, internal organization competence, and recognition of resources to raise revenues and the strength of an organization (Nikmah et al., 2021). Many tangible and intangible resources are a part of an organization, resources that create value and scarce that helps in generating competitive advantage; and if resources are difficult to transfer, unique in nature, and imitable, they will provide benefits. These resources are called strategic assets (Barney, 1991). Given the above, ERM could be considered a strategic asset that generates a competitive advantage. Effectively managing your organizational risk could be examined as a primary foundation. Every organization has its systematic way of corresponding to its activities, mission, goals, and objectives (Beasley et al., 2005).

Consequently, the ERM system of one business cannot be applied to other different businesses. It is unique to everyone, and its success is precious to an organization, and no one can sell it (Hoyt & Liebenberg, 2011). In addition, ERM creates advantages for organizations that use them, whereas other organizations cannot. Therefore, the theory of RBV explains that companies could gain a competitive advantage through the subsequent utilization of ERM as strategic assets. Finally, RBV theory states that organizations should use their resources optimally to obtain competitive advantages (Wade & Hulland, 2004). As the capital and the fund resources are the crucial elements of the organization's resources. Their Ideal distribution in a secure environment is essential for the progress of a business. ERM permits firms and management to improve their capital distribution and investment opportunity effectively. As a result, they get a better position in the market (Beasley et al., 2005; COSO, 2004; Meier, 2000).

Furthermore, if the company recognizes more about the risks of its sector than its competitors, it can properly manage these risks through taking active actions. Thus, they will handle opportunities and risks to organize a vision of both their disadvantages and their benefits (Nocco & Stulz, 2006). Furthermore, by enhancing internal and external risk knowledge, they can adapt and change their situations quicker than competitors. Similarly, companies that integrate ERM into their business and strategic planning processes can make informed risk decisions (Meidell & Kaarbøe, 2017). In that type of scenario, the chances of gaining monetary and non-monetary goals in organizations will be increased.

An appropriate risk management system can offer four kinds of benefits, which can lead to a competitive advantage. It leads to maintaining the organization serving its customers when they are notable, looking for more risky dealings, excellence in their daily performance, and establishing a strong image that helps in generating competitive advantage (Elahi, 2013).

**H1:** ERM has a positive impact on competitive advantage.

## ERM, Organizational Culture and Competitive Advantage

Organizational culture is normally used for defining the internal environmental structure of an organization, as it is particularly important to make the organization more effective and has a long-term impact on the organization. The hallmark of a strong organizational identity is the existence of a strong organizational culture (Halmaghi et al., 2017).

The culture of an organization is strongly reflected in the congruence of vision, the existence of principles of command, teamwork, the creativity of employees, innovation, responsibility, harmonization of elements, the same direction and same objective, high coordination and integration, and the employee development according to the needs of the company. It is deeply embedded in the identity of the organization that cannot be easily changed. So, the impact of a strong organizational culture on the effectiveness of the organization can be positive or negative. The impact is positive when following organizational culture is a common practice among the members of an organization so that they accept it. It helps in achieving the objectives of the organization. The negative consequences happen when the organizational culture puts a negative impact on the goals of an organization (Halmaghi et al., 2017).

The culture of an organization is represented by its human resource management. Therefore, effectively managing your human capital will be a strong basis for gaining a competitive advantage. Conceptually, Susanto et al. (2008) defined organizational culture by the value for human resources to solve external problems, hurdles, and efforts to adopt integration into the organization. Hence, organizational members must adopt these values and should know how to behave and act. Organizations with excellent quality human resources should gain a competitive advantage because the excellent workforce improves the processes and results of the organization and, therefore, contributes to the success of the organization, as they make other resources in proper use (Pahuja, 2017).

Several competitive strategies, as well as human resources practices, have been studied that have a significant impact on employee performance. One study firmly confirmed that employees could gain a competitive advantage because they are the ones who do the business and can contribute to the success of the business. Human capital is the main asset of a company and should not be treated as an expense. Therefore, continuous efforts and learning should be made to create a healthy and knowledgeable environment with coaching, workshops, discussions, and regular advice to motivate learning and development (Choudhury & Mishra, 2010).

ERM is known as a valuable initiative designed to help organizations perform better in ambiguity; it would not be irrational to expect the internal culture of an organization to be an important aspect in ERM deployment. In fact, ERM implementers encounter problems related to organizational culture. Numerous writings highlight the significance of organizational culture when implementing ERM programs. This study attempts to build a connection so that those who are responsible for the implementation of ERM can obtain useful information about the nature of the organizational culture with respect to ERM and what type of organizational culture is appropriately suitable for the implementation of an ERM system (Kimbrough & Componation, 2009). Different studies on ERM encourage the desirability of certain cultural attributes. It is necessary to move from the tradition of risk management within organizational silos to the management of portfolio risks by the entire entity (Leech, 2002). The organizational environment should support effective communication flow, collaboration among members, commitment, and employee engagement (Kimbrough & Componation, 2009). Many explanations and frameworks describe ERM as a process that entails a mechanistic set of attributes like centralization, proper obedience to the supervisor, and a long chain of command. It advocates adherence to rigorous activities that include "systematic identification, examining, prioritization, monitoring, control activities and practice of a common risk language" (Kimbrough & Componation, 2009).

Leech (2002) describes the traditional approach and the new modernistic vision for risk control and governance. The first comprises the role of management in the assignment of tasks and supervision of personnel, the environment governed by policies and rules, and limited employee participation. The new vision has a culture of continuous improvement and encourages the participation of members in the organization (Leech, 2000). Lam (2014) explains that there are two sides to managing risk. The hard side consists of risk policies, procedures, and audit processes, whereas the soft side includes risk awareness, individuals, trust, and communication. Lam (2014) advocates a balance among the soft and hard sides (Lam, 2014). Leech

(2002) strongly supports the new vision because organic culture is more likely to adopt change and effectively manage your risk in the organization (Kimbrough & Componation, 2009).

For ERM implementation, an organic culture must be created that supports innovative ideas, strategic leadership, competitiveness, and a strategic focus on customers. Organizations dominated by the attributes of organic design are considered to generate and move knowledge within the organization more effectively and respond quickly to challenges that pressurize and affect organizational performance (Stojanović-Aleksić et al., 2019). In addition, to improve competitiveness, ERM must need to filter and monitor internal as well as external. It requires the collection of data and information, and then its analysis, identifying events both in terms of opportunities and threats, proper analysis of those events, then picking the best response for controlling them (COSO, 2004).

From another point of view, based on the theory of contingency, organizations are composed of a hundred and thousands of inter-related subsystems. Therefore, they cannot be seen in a one-dimensional aspect (Reinking, 2012). Contingency theory explains that "there is no valid bivariate relationship between two variables and the effect of the independent variable on dependent variable depends upon some third variable (interaction, moderator or mediator). It means that the relationship between two variables is part of a large causal system involving other variables so that the valid generalization takes the form of trivariate or more relationships" (Saeidi et al., 2019). A relationship of two variables is too easy for capturing the law as the regularity connection. Hence, the more complex statement is essential (Donaldson, 2006).

This research delivers a detailed view on the applications of organizational culture and ERM in organizations. The research model with hypothesis is presented in Figure 1.

**H2:** Organizational culture has a positive moderation impact on ERM and competitive advantage relationship.

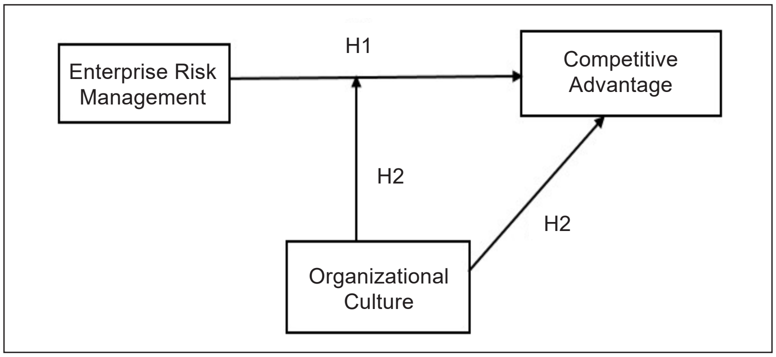

*Figure 1.* Research model and hypotheses

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study was anchored on positivism philosophy because it complies with only factual knowledge gained through observations, including measurement. This type of philosophy depends on quantifiable observations that lead to statistical analyses. A cross-sectional research design has been used to understand the linkages between the variables. The population selected for the research study is the software houses of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan that was 1,114 in number. In Islamabad, there are 245 software houses, which are registered, while in Rawalpindi, only 80 Software Houses are registered in PSEB Registered Companies of 2019. So, there are 325 registered software houses in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The average working employees in a Software House are 8-9 employees and above (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). This study conducted a questionnaire survey as a research method. Data is collected from all experienced managers and employees practicing the ERM system in their organizations and managed to give time to my survey. A total of 300 self-administered questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. Two hundred seventy-five were returned. The response of 25 employees was irrelevant as they had not filled the questionnaire, and many of the statements were unfilled. Therefore, the response of only 250 employees was considered for the analysis, and this makes the response rate 83.33%. Data analysis was done through SPSS and PLS-SEM, such as mean, standard deviation, correlation, and hypothesis testing.

### Variable Measurement

Twenty-three items were used for measuring all eight components of ERM. Seven Items were related to the firm's competitive advantage. The scale was adopted from (Saeidi et al., 2019). In addition, the eight items were used for organizational culture (adapted from (Wahyuningsih et al., 2019). All questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale varying from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The details are documented in Table 1.

For the dependent variable CA, the mean Is 2.2023, and the standard deviation is 1.02212. The highest mean value of ERM, i.e., 2.6246 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.71606. The correlation analysis is given in Table 2. The results indicate a high positive correlation between

Table 1
*Descriptive statistics*

| | Number of Observations | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **ERM** | 250 | 2.6246 | 0.71606 |
| **OC** | 250 | 2.5053 | 0.78698 |
| **CA** | 250 | 2.2023 | 1.02212 |
| **Valid N (listwise)** | 250 | | |

*Note:* ERM= Enterprise Risk Management, OC= Organizational Culture, CA= Competitive Advantage

ERM and OC (r=.774, p<.01). ERM and CA are positively correlated (r=.732, p<.01). OC and CA are also positively correlated (r=.884, p <.01). Therefore, it can be interpreted that ERM and Competitive Advantage have a positive impact on Organizational Culture.

To check the multi-collinearity, we examined tolerance and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Tolerance and VIF have been measured by using SPSS. VIF value must be less than five, and the tolerance is greater than 0.2, then it can be concluded that there is no problem of multi-collinearity (Hair Jr et al., 2014). In Table 3, it is clear from the collinearity statistics that the VIF value for ERM and Organizational Culture is 2.491. All values are below threshold 5. The tolerance is the opposite of VIF and should be greater than 0.2. All tolerance values are above the threshold of 0.20, which is 0.401 for ERM and 0.401 for Organizational Culture. Hence the conclusion of the analysis is that there is no multi-collinearity problem in the data.

## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Square (PLS) were conducted to test the hypothesis. PLS is an SEM technique that maximizes the explained variance (rather than covariance) of endogenous constructs (Hair Jr et al., 2021). SEM is a multivariate analysis technique that is used to study the structural connections. SEM contains factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, and it is utilized to examine the relationships

Table 2
*Correlations among variables*

| | | ERM | OC | CA |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ERM** | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .774** | .732** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 250 | 250 | 250 |
| **OC** | Pearson Correlation | .774** | 1 | .884** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 |
| | N | 250 | 250 | 250 |
| **CA** | Pearson Correlation | .732** | .884** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 250 | 250 | 250 |

*Note:* ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3
*Results of multicollinearity*

| S.No. | Variables | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | VIF | Tolerance |
| 1 | ERM | 2.491 | 0.401 |
| 2 | Organizational Culture | 2.491 | 0.401 |

among the latent and measured constructs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Path models are made up of two elements: (1) the "structural model," which designates the associations among the latent variables, and (2) the "measurement model," which pronounces the relations between the latent variables and their measures (i.e., their indicators). The empirical findings were analyzed in two steps. First, the validity and reliability of the scales "measurement model" were scrutinized, and second, the "structural model (hypotheses testing)" was verified.

## Measurement Model

In order to assess the measurement model, CFA was conducted, and results are shown in Table 4. Cronbach alpha, CR estimates, and Average Variance Extracted were higher than the cut-off values of .7 and .5, respectively. Benchmark for factor loadings is .7. The analysis shows that all the values were higher than the standard range. Therefore, two items were removed from the variable organizational culture and nine from ERM due to the lower factor loading (Hair Jr et al., 2014).

Table 4
*AVE and reliability of the variables*

| Constructs | Items | Loadings | Cronbach Alpha | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Enterprise Risk Management** | CA1 | 0.818 | 0.946 | 0.952 | 0.589 |
| | CA2 | 0.761 | | | |
| | CA3 | 0.797 | | | |
| | EI1 | 0.786 | | | |
| | IC1 | 0.764 | | | |
| | IC2 | 0.773 | | | |
| | IE1 | 0.689 | | | |
| | M1 | 0.724 | | | |
| | M2 | 0.809 | | | |
| | M3 | 0.824 | | | |
| | RA1 | 0.853 | | | |
| | RA2 | 0.732 | | | |
| | RR1 | 0.714 | | | |
| | RR2 | 0.678 | | | |
| **Organizational Culture** | OC1 | 0.815 | 0.907 | 0.929 | 0.685 |
| | OC2 | 0.814 | | | |
| | OC4 | 0.786 | | | |
| | OC5 | 0.791 | | | |
| | OC7 | 0.869 | | | |
| | OC8 | 0.884 | | | |
| **Competitive Advantage** | C1 | 0.853 | 0.945 | 0.955 | 0.754 |
| | C2 | 0.900 | | | |
| | C3 | 0.855 | | | |
| | C4 | 0.807 | | | |
| | C5 | 0.885 | | | |
| | C6 | 0.903 | | | |
| | C7 | 0.872 | | | |

Cronbach alpha was calculated for Organizational Culture after construct authentication was calculated and was .907, and composite reliability was .929, which designates a high correlation amongst the objects, and the scale is consistent.

Discriminant validity was conducted by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) test at the construct level and Cross-loading at the item level. Overall, the measurement model is accepted and supports the discriminant validity among the constructs shown in Table 5.

Table 5
*Fornell and Larcker's test*

| Variables | CA | ERM | OC |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CA** | 0.868 | | |
| **ERM** | 0.742 | 0.767 | |
| **OC** | 0.807 | 0.672 | 0.827 |

## Structural Model (Hypothesis Testing)

Figure 2 shows the beta values and factor loadings. The beta value for the proposed relationship is .197, which shows that the connection between ERM and Competitive Advantage is positive, and the impact of ERM on Competitive Advantage is 19.7%. The beta value for the proposed relationship is 0.418, which shows that the relationship between organizational culture and competitive advantage is positive, and the impact of organizational culture and competitive advantage is 41.8%. Therefore, the Organizational Culture has moderates by .357 and buffers the relationship by 35.7% between ERM and Competitive Advantage. T values of all the variables are accepted and are within the standard range (Figure 3). According to Hair Jr et al. (2021), the acceptable values range from 1.96 and above as the T value range is greater than 1.96 and the P value less than .05. T=7.142 for moderating effect, and the same goes for the p-value, i.e., p=.000, which is lower than .05. In this respect, the above analysis shows that relationships, which have

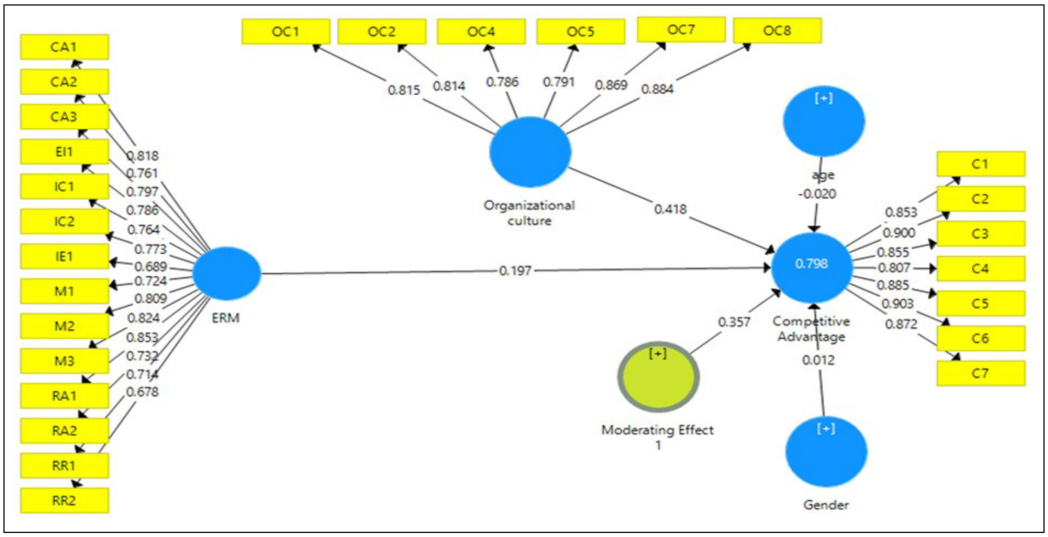

*Figure 2.* Beta values and factor loadings

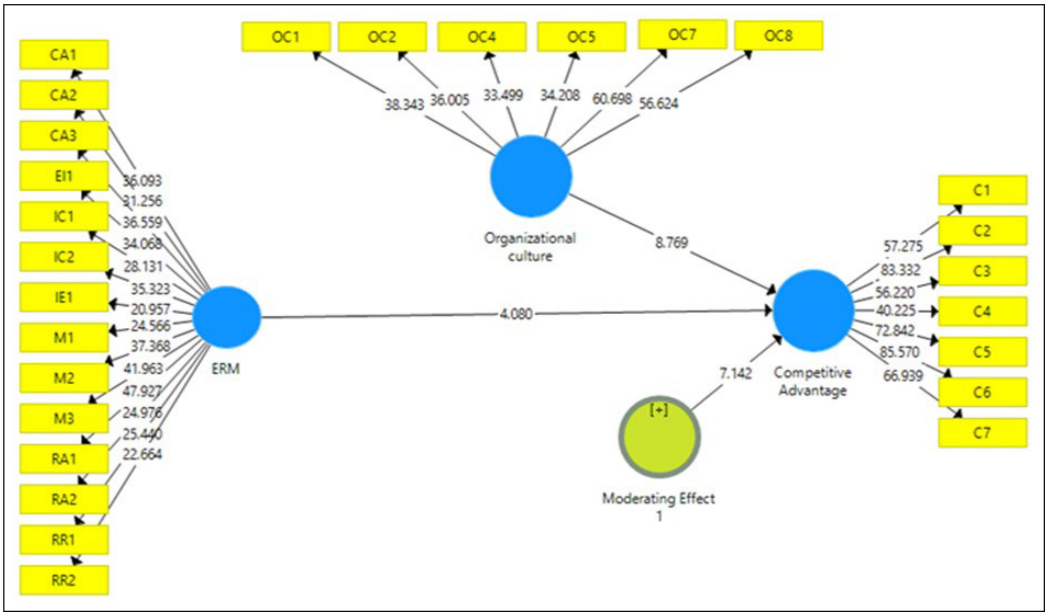

*Figure 3.* Significance results (T-values)

standard values are significant. Hence, H2 is accepted.

Substantive factor model values must be significant rather than method factor loadings. Table 6 shows that there is no issue of common method bias. In PLS, the UMLC approach was used to measure the common method variance (Marcoulides & Chin, 2013).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to model enterprise risk management and competitive advantage moderated by organizational culture. As stated in the literature part that ERM could affect almost every part of an organization. Empirical evidence on the relationship between ERM and competitive advantage is still limited. Our study utilizes SEM for examining the connections among the constructs (ERM, OC, and CA). Therefore, this study contributes such links empirically by considering all software houses of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan, using the ERM program. This research explores that ERM showed a significant influence upon organizational competitive advantage (Saeidi et al., 2019). ERM helps in improving work performance and increases profit, shareholder value, and is considered as a strategic tool for an organization's success (Annamalah et al., 2018). It is extremely important for the companies to identify and acknowledge their risks and be more aware to detect any danger, especially more so that they can compete with their rivals. With this information in hand, a company can fit in a rapidly changing environment (Saeidi et al., 2019). Organizational culture shapes desirable organizational behavior and practices, and our results showed

Table 6
*Common Method Variance (CMV)*

| **Constructs** | **Indicators** | **Substantive Factor Loadings (R1)** | **R1$^2$** | **Method Factor Loading (R2)** | **R2$^2$** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Enterprise Risk Management** | CA1 | 0.768 | 0.589 | -0.075 | 0.00562 |
| | CA2 | 1.005 | 1.010 | -0.231 | 0.053 |
| | CA3 | 1.214 | 1.473 | -0.380 | 0.144 |
| | EI1 | 0.763 | 0.582 | -0.032 | 0.001 |
| | IC1 | 0.487 | 0.237 | 0.230 | 0.052 |
| | IC2 | 0.704 | 0.495 | -0.017 | 0.00028 |
| | IE1 | 0.758 | 0.574 | 0.061 | 0.0037 |
| | M1 | 0.689 | 0.474 | 0.068 | 0.0046 |
| | M2 | 0.643 | 0.413 | 0.161 | 0.025 |
| | M3 | 0.797 | 0.635 | -0.026 | 0.00067 |
| | RA1 | 0.489 | 0.239 | 0.290 | 0.084 |
| | RA2 | 0.822 | 0.675 | -0.095 | 0.009025 |
| | RR1 | 0.905 | 0.819 | -0.098 | 0.009604 |
| | RR2 | 0.647 | 0.418 | 0.180 | 0.0324 |
| **Organizational Culture** | OC1 | 0.851 | 0.724 | -0.039 | 0.001521 |
| | OC2 | 0.933 | 0.870 | -0.126 | 0.0158 |
| | OC4 | 0.870 | 0.756 | -0.099 | 0.0098 |
| | OC5 | 0.377 | 0.142 | 0.463 | 0.214 |
| | OC7 | 0.879 | 0.772 | -0.013 | 0.000169 |
| | OC8 | 1.030 | 1.060 | -0.162 | 0.026 |
| **Competetive Advantage** | C1 | 0.947 | 0.896 | -0.101 | 0.010 |
| | C2 | 0.815 | 0.664 | 0.090 | 0.0081 |
| | C3 | 1.230 | 1.512 | -0.407 | 0.165 |
| | C4 | 1.003 | 1.006 | -0.213 | 0.045 |
| | C5 | 0.625 | 0.390 | 0.281 | 0.078 |
| | C6 | 0.829 | 0.687 | 0.080 | 0.0064 |
| | C7 | 0.661 | 0.436 | 0.229 | 0.052 |

that organic organizational culture (i.e., innovation and outcome orientation) affects the use of ERM practices in a positive manner (Chen et al., 2019). First, we established and tested the existence of the relationships (hypotheses) between the constructs. Second, we investigated the impact of organizational culture on ERM and CA. Finally, the model was tested. The results indicated that this positive and significant effect of ERM on CA would increase as the organizational culture level increases (Saeidi et al., 2019).

The results of this study extend our knowledge in numerous ways. First, the present work on enterprise risk management is among few studies that consider this holistic approach of managing risk in a country like Pakistan. Although, previous studies have focused on the relationship between enterprise risk management and competitive advantage as an important aspect of resolving organizational risk, increasing a company's profit, etc. Second, the model of the study focused on the moderating role of organizational culture on the association between ERM and competitive advantage. Thus, as per scholars' knowledge, this study is among the first to highlight organizational culture as the prominent aspect, which can positively increase the effect of ERM on firm competitive advantage.

In the perspective of practical contribution, first, this study helps management and employees of the software industry to manage their risk more effectively as compared to the traditional risk management system. Second, the software industry of Pakistan is growing very rapidly, and the competition among them is also very aggressive. In this state, ERM and organic organizational culture help in improving organizational performance. Hence, developing competency of improving risk management system motivates organizations and managers to grow and earn profit. Further, organizations get better global and local market position and give good competition to their competitors.

The current research findings establish a clear understanding of control systems and risk management. Organic cultures would lead to superior ERM implementation that further increases organizational competitiveness. The correlation simplifies the result that organizational culture (organic) is more likely to deal with change, whether in the form of a new ERM program or any other significant shift in management or technology (Kimbrough & Componation, 2009). The present research indicates a positive correlation among all variables. It illustrates that the ERM has a positive impact on CA with a standardized regression weight of .197. In contrast, OC has a significant effect on CA with a standardized regression weight of .418. The OC significantly and positively moderates the effect of ERM on CA with a standardized regression weight of .357. This research study will provide the insightful inclination to the employees, managers, and top executives of the organizations to act responsibly in a rapidly changing environment and help in accomplishing organizational competitiveness.

This study has enhanced our understanding of managing organizational risk and highlights the significance of designing a sophisticated ERM system to deal with unfavorable circumstances. However, as it helps in consolidating our understanding in the area, it has several limitations that can be introduced as some interesting future research projects. First, this study incorporated a "cross-sectional analysis plan," which allows the researcher to gather data at one point in time, but "longitudinal research" approaches can also be considered to examine their relations and whether the relations change over time. Second, the researcher could expand the model or introduce other organizational factors as moderators or mediators (e.g., organizational performance, training, innovation, employee engagement). Third, the study focused on software houses working in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. In the future, the study could be replicated with other software houses working in different cities having different organizational settings to check whether the study's findings apply to a broad range of environments in Pakistan. Lastly, the current study conducted a questionnaire survey, while in the future, it should be done by evaluating the casual interactions of variables through interviews or observations method and might be a better vision for the findings of this study.

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*Review article*

# Halal Industry's Organizational Performance Factors: A Systematic Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

The global Halal industry is one of the world's fastest-growing consumer segments, as evidenced by substantial research and published papers. This paper aims to identify and characterize the factors that influence organizational performance in companies within the Halal industry. It also offers an overview of the factors influencing companies' organizational performance in various Halal industry sectors. A systematic Literature Review (SLR) of the Web of Science, Scopus, Emerald, and Science Direct databases guided by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses) protocol was used to analyze the data. The electronic database's search results included articles focused on halal certification, halal product development, and supply chain management. A methodical review of these articles found four main factors that influence the organizational performance of halal companies: 1) the

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strategic management of Halal business, 2) the management of Halal requirements, 3) the understanding of consumer demands, and 4) the creation of the best organizational environment. This review provides detailed guidelines based on important research findings on how Halal organizations can manage and excel in their businesses. As a result, companies can better minimize the effect of volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments in managing the business.

*Keywords:* Consumers' demand, halal, management strategies, organizational conduct, systematic literature review, VUCA

## INTRODUCTION

Halal (permissible) and Thoyyibban (wholesome) are two (2) basic pillars in Islam, and their revelation has been clearly stated in the Holy Quran (Al-Baqarah, 2:168-174). Halal is derived from an Arabic word, meaning means "allowed" or "permitted" according to Sharia (Islamic) law (Lokman, 2001; Noordin et al., 2009; Sadek, 2006). Thoyyibban, on the other hand, means top quality, safe, clean, nutritious, and authentic (Sadek, 2006). Even though Halal is commonly related to food, the global Halal industry has expanded beyond food and beverages, venturing into other sectors such as tourism, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and cosmetics. As a result, the current Halal market share skyrockets, reaching a 1294.5 million US dollars value in 2020, despite the global COVID-19 pandemic. This value is expected to reach 1911.3 million US Dollars by the end of 2026, growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 5.7 % from 2021-2025 (Industry Research, 2020).

Numerous aspects have influenced the organizational performance of the organization in the Halal industry. Supply Chain Management, the activities over the breadth of a complete system of distributing and adding value to products that starts from raw material to finished products, has been a constant focus by researchers as determinants to corporate efficiency (James & Mbang, 2012). As Malaysia is committed to being a holistic global Halal hub, Halal organizations need to be resilient, sustainable, and well-performed in the market to achieve this status (Abdullah & Oseni, 2017). Consumers nowadays are also empowered by advanced information technology and the knowledge economy; thus, a demand for high-quality goods and services has always been a key issue (Annabi & Ibidapo-Obe, 2017). Therefore, this article focuses on these aspects that previous scholars highlighted as influencing the organizational performance of Halal industries to clarify this interest. Although there are numerous studies on the performance of the organizations in the Halal industry, the effort to review these studies is not emphasized systematically. This article aims to identify and characterize the factors that influence the organizational performance of companies in the Halal industry and provide an overview of the factors influencing the organizational performance of companies within various sectors of the Halal industry. In addition, this paper aims to fill an important gap in the literature by providing a systematic review focusing on organizational performance in the Halal industry as most of the available reviews in this area have mainly focused on Halal chain management and Halal certification (Omar et al., 2015; Syazwan et al., 2016).

The literature study was guided by the research question to develop a relevant systematic review—What factors influence companies' organizational performance within various Halal industry sectors? As a result of the research question, this study focuses on the numerous factors contributing to the Halal sector stakeholders achieving good organizational performance. This study does not focus on a specific geographical region but rather aims to capture and characterize all relevant factors in an open market.

## METHODOLOGY

The systematic literature review has contributed significantly to the social sciences field (Ao & Huang, 2019). This study explores factors that influence organizational performance discussed through a systematic review, where the method starts to set its foundation in Social Sciences research (O'Keefe & Jensen, 2009; Peloza & Shang, 2011). In comparison to conventional literature reviews, which involve manual selection of articles (handpicking), systematic literature reviews provide a more robust structure for identifying studies in a specific research area, owing to their comprehensive components, which include a systematic search strategy, predetermined inclusion, and exclusion criteria, and article quality assurance, which is a content analytic process conducted by more than one reviewer. Hence, a systematic review aids in the identification of relevant articles through a preliminary screening of many articles and pooling them to the very least number of articles that truly focus on the topic of study. Moreover, the methodology and results from a systematic review can be objective-oriented, reproduced, and reliable (Moher et al., 2009).

In this paper, the systematic review is developed based on this main research question: What factors influence organizational performance in the various sectors of the Halal industry? Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to identify the influential factors of organizational performance. In addition, the next section also discusses the need to conduct this systematic review and justify the approach applied in answering the research question. Following that, we focus on the systematic review process and its synthesis of scientific literature to identify, select, and evaluate relevant research. The final segment gives recommendations and conclusions on how these current discussions can expand the body of knowledge and improve the organizational performance of the Halal industry.

### The Need for Systematic Literature Review

Petrosino et al. (2001) defined systematic review as the process of identifying, combining, and evaluating all accessible data to generate a robust, observationally determined response (quantitatively and qualitatively) to address a study's formulated research question. A systematic review has the upper hand regarding its qualities compared to the conventional literature review style. This review style provides a more structured and established process in retrieving, which effectively widens the area of research to be covered and provides more definite objectives capable of controlling research bias (Shaffril et al., 2019). In addition, a systematic literature review is also capable of clarifying a researchers' direction in getting high-quality pieces of evidence with significant results. However, no systematic literature review has been undertaken to collect and synthesize previous findings as far as the focus of this study is concerned.

The systematic literature review can be considered a new methodology in Social Sciences since a limited number of studies using the method are conducted within the area (Shaffril et al., 2019). Most studies focused on hard sciences research areas (Babatunde et al., 2017; Rifkin et al., 2018), and in the western context (Brunetta & Caldarice, 2019; Rohat et al., 2019; Sanchez et al., 2018; Thaler et al., 2019). As Islam is one of the world's fastest-growing religions (Essoo & Dibb, 2004), understanding the Halal industry in all western and non-western contexts is deemed crucial.

The Halal industry promises a massive opportunity for businesses since there is a significant growth in its population. According to Pew Research Center (2017, 2019), the Muslim population will increase by 70%, from 1.8 billion in 2015 to nearly 3 billion in 2060. The Muslim population is expected to grow at about twice its rate than the non-Muslim population over the next two decades, as shown by an average annual growth rate of 1.5%for Muslims compared to 0.7% for non-Muslims. As a result, Muslims will comprise 31.1% of the world's total projected population (10.2 billion) in 2060. Due to this projected growth, the demand for Halal products and services is expected to grow exponentially. In 2020, the global Halal market was valued at 1294.5 million US dollars, and by 2025, the market will have increased by 47.65%. Indeed, the global market demand for Halal products and services has a significant impact on the growth of the domestic Halal food industry in Malaysia. Based on this scenario, it is plausible that high demand for Halal food would increase the supply of Halal certification and logos, making Halal certification more important than before. Halal certification informs Muslims that they can lawfully consume its products and services under the Shariah principles. This information promotes consumers' confidence and prevents confusion on the Halal status of a particular product (Sadek, 2006).

The above discussions have highlighted some important points that triggered the need for reviewing the significant factors for organizational performance in the Halal industry. Therefore, this paper aims to systematically review the relevant literature and fill the gap by examining empirical findings from past literature that discussed significant factors contributing to organizational performance. Thus, this study synthesizes past findings to provide readers with an answer to the research question. Furthermore, it gives a compassing pattern on the trends that contributed to the performance of the organizations in the Halal industry, which is significant due to the scarcity of existing research on this topic. In addition, the study can guide future researchers to reproduce the study, improve understanding, and analyze the wide range of information aligned with the continuum of time and changes in the paradigm.

Special attention is given to literature from the studies based on Asian countries since most Muslim countries are in the Asia Continent. Thus, through this systematic literature review, past literature was gathered and extracted to acquire the essence of the influential factors that significantly influenced the organization's performance in the Halal industry.

### Review Protocol (PRISMA)

PRISMA or Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses is one of the publication standards used to conduct a systematic literature review. At a glance, publication standards are required to guide the authors to systematically evaluate and examine a review's quality and rigorousness (Shaffril et al., 2019). In addition, PRISMA emphasizes utilizing reviewed reports that evaluate random trials as the foundation in reporting systematic reviews for other types of research (Moher et al., 2009).

PRISMA is a popular methodology in medical research. Still, it is equally appropriate for social science research due to its ability to precisely define, guide, and answer research questions (Sierra-Correa & Kintz, 2015). At the same time, PRISMA can help further build the inclusion and exclusion criteria to narrow down specific criteria relevant to a study. Furthermore, using PRISMA can help examine a massive database of literature at a given time and allow for a precise search of keywords related to organizational performance in the Halal industry.

**Resources (Databases Included).** This literature review process was conducted using two primary databases, namely Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus considering the database is robust and covers more than 256 fields of studies, including Social Science. Specifically, Scopus indexes a total of 4345 journals related to Social Science and business management, and WoS indexes a total of 4938 journals related to Social Science and arts/humanities. In addition, other databases included in this review (Emerald Insight and ScienceDirect) were utilized to broaden the literature search to retrieve as many articles as possible, as more databases are fundamental to increasing the likelihood of obtaining relevant articles (Younger, 2010).

### Strategic Systematic Searching for Articles Selection Process

**Identification.** The systematic review process in selecting relevant articles to answer the research question consists of three main phases. The first phase is identification, which begins with the determination of keywords, followed by synonyms identification for the keywords. Next, the keywords were expanded by consulting thesaurus, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and previous studies. Following that, search strings were developed to be used in systematic strategic searching throughout all the databases featured (Figure 1). Through the developed search strings, 131 articles were identified. This number was further reduced through the remaining processes and during the removal of duplicate articles.

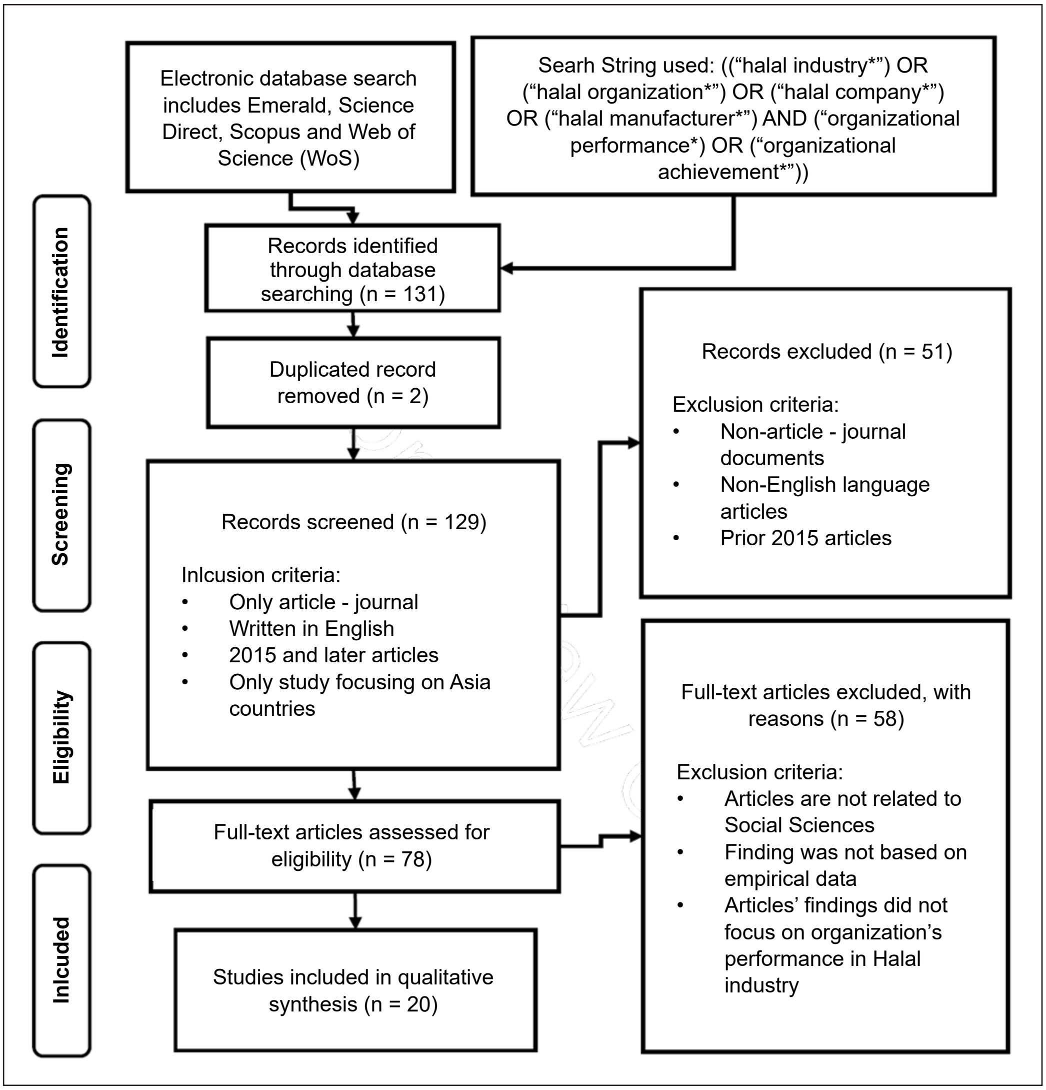
Electronic database search includes Emerald, Science Direct, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)
Searh String used: ((“halal industry*”) OR (“halal organization*”) OR (“halal company*”) OR (“halal manufacturer*”) AND (“organizational performance*) OR (“organizational achievement*”))
Identification
Records identified through database searching (n = 131)
Duplicated record removed (n = 2)
Records excluded (n = 51)
Exclusion criteria:
• Non-article - journal documents
• Non-English language articles
• Prior 2015 articles
Screening
Records screened (n = 129)
Inlcusion criteria:
• Only article - journal
• Written in English
• 2015 and later articles
• Only study focusing on Asia countries
Eligibility
Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 58)
Exclusion criteria:
• Articles are not related to Social Sciences
• Finding was not based on empirical data
• Articles’ findings did not focus on organization’s performance in Halal industry
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 78)
Inlcuded
Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 20)

*Figure 1.* Review protocol used in this study (adapted from Moher et al., 2009)
*Note.* This figure is the application of PRISMA to the qualitative synthesis of published studies (as reprinted in Moher et al., 2009).

**Screening.** In the previous process, the articles were identified through systematic strategic searching using the developed search strings and removing duplicated articles. Two articles were excluded for duplication in this review, and 129 articles were screened to determine inclusion and exclusion criteria in the second stage. The first criterion was to limit the search to journals (research articles) written in English only. Conventionally, English publications have been the principal source of empirical data. Also, we excluded other types of publications, such as systematic reviews, reviews, conceptual papers, meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, book series, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings.

Further exclusion of articles was made based on publication years. This study only selected articles published between the year 2015 until 2020. Furthermore, only studies from Asia Continent countries were included since the demography represents most Muslim populations. Lastly, this study only selected articles published in Social Sciences to increase the possibility of retrieving related articles. Overall, a total of 109 articles were excluded based on these criteria.

**Eligibility.** A total of 78 articles were selected for the third stage, known as eligibility. In this stage, we examined the titles, abstracts, and the screened articles' main contents to ensure that they fulfilled the inclusion criteria and are fit for the study. After the screening process, a total of 58 articles were excluded because they did not highlight findings related to Social Sciences. They were not based on empirical procedures, and the findings' themes did not focus on organization performance in the Halal industry. After going through all the stages of the systematic search and selection procedure, 20 articles were selected. All papers chosen were representative of all sectors of the Halal industry, which is the context that this study aims to address in detail using an empirical technique for article selection.

**Quality Assurance.** In ensuring the integrity of the selection process, all confirmed articles were subjected to a quality assurance process. In this process, all selected articles were evaluated using the PRISMA checklist by evaluating members. Four members were selected from related areas such as Halal study, organizational communication, and brand study. For an article to be included in the meta-analysis process, evaluating committee members must reach a consensus. Disagreements were discussed thoroughly to decide the validity of articles to be included. This process was fundamental to ensure the selected articles met the criteria that have been outlined. The final set of articles is confirmed when all evaluating committee agrees. Thus, the quality assurance process was able to solidify the justification for the selected articles (Shaffril et al., 2019).

The above diagram shows the conducted systematic review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Electronic databases were used to conduct literature searches with a variety of keywords to identify articles. All articles were identified by scanning the reference lists of publications recovered within four databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Emerald, and Science Direct. All articles that were selected after the eligibility process is from the year 2015 until 2020. We confirmed the final set of articles after the qualitative synthesis that matched them with the highlighted characteristics.

## RESULTS

As for the geographical area covered (Figure 2), it has been identified that 11 previous studies were conducted in Malaysia (Abdullah & Oseni, 2017; Ab Talib & Ai Chin, 2018; Ab Talib et al., 2017; Baharuddin & Ismail, 2018; Elias et al., 2017; Karia, 2019; Othman et al., 2017; C. N. L. Tan et al., 2017; K. H. Tan et al., 2017; Supian et al., 2019; Zailani et al., 2019), three studies were conducted in Indonesia (Hendayani & Febrianta, 2020; Katuk et al., 2020; Ratnasari et al., 2020), one study was conducted in Iran (Fard & Amiri, 2018), one study was conducted in India (Khan et al., 2019), one study was conducted in the Philippines (Salindal, 2018). In addition, one study focused on Middle East countries (Liat et al., 2020). Furthermore, two studies were conducted in cross-geographic areas: Malaysia-Pakistan (Butt et al., 2017) and Malaysia-Indonesia (Rahman et al., 2017).

As highlighted in Figure 3, the selected articles were spread within four publication years. Seven articles were published in 2017 (Ab Talib et al., 2017; Butt et al., 2017; Elias et al., 2017; Othman et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2017; K. H. Tan et al., 2017; C. N. L. Tan et al., 2017), six were published in 2018 (Abdullah & Oseni, 2017; Ab Talib & Ai Chin, 2018; Baharuddin & Ismail, 2018; Fard & Amiri, 2018; Khan et al., 2019; Salindal, 2018), three published in 2019 (Karia, 2019; Supian et al., 2019; Zailani et al., 2019), and four articles were published in 2020 (Hendayani & Febrianta, 2020; Katuk et al., 2020; Liat et al., 2020; Ratnasari et al., 2020).

According to the publications selected, past studies on the Halal industry have explored six distinct industry sectors, with most articles (9) focusing on food

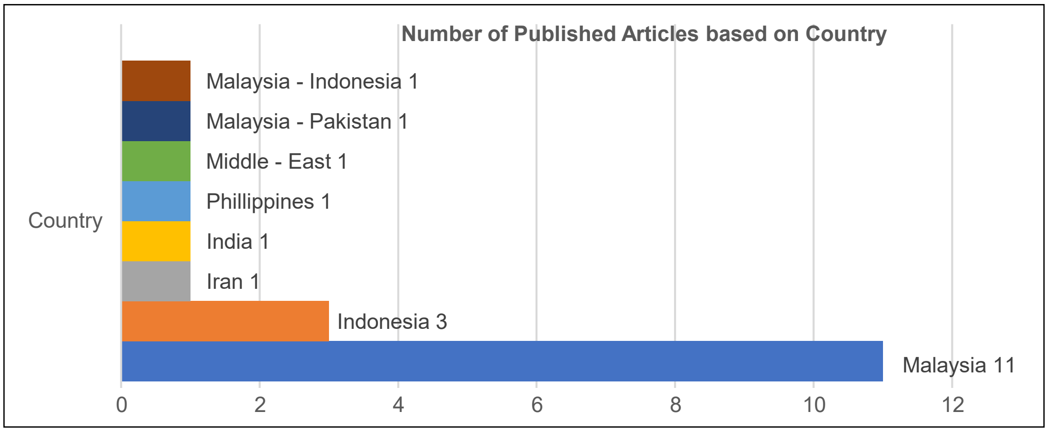

*Figure 2.* Countries where the studies were conducted

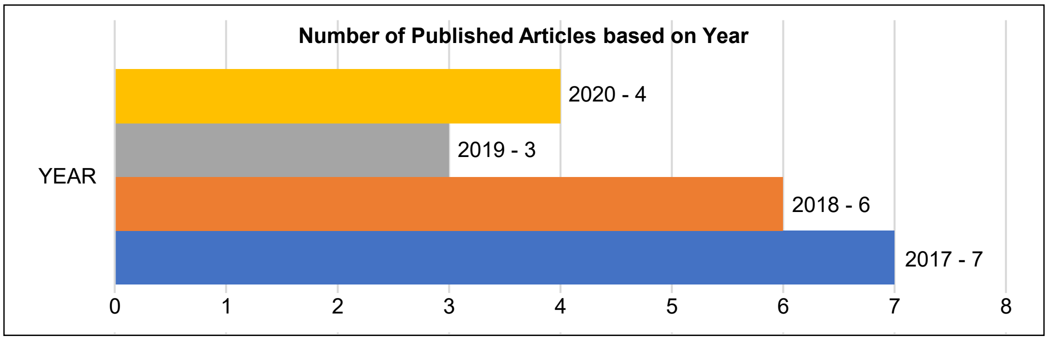

*Figure 3.* Year of publication

manufacturing, followed by articles on the Halal industry (4), Islamic finance (2), one each on Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Halal logistics, and three on Halal tourism. Two of the business areas mentioned: food manufacturing and Halal industry, are the biggest market for the Halal industry in 4 Southeast Asian countries led by Malaysia. In addition, Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, has made Halal tourism a major focus of their research. It demonstrates that Sharia-compliant business models and Halal certification are critical components of the Halal industry. Table 1 summarizes all articles based on the business areas covered.

Table 1
*Business area covered and country*

| Authors | Business Area Covered | Country |
|---|---|---|
| Ab Talib et al. (2017)<br>Ab Talib and Ai Chin (2018)<br>Baharuddin and Ismail (2018)<br>Elias et al. (2017)<br>Fard and Amiri (2018)<br>Salindal (2018)<br>K. H. Tan et al. (2017)<br>Zailani et al. (2019)<br>Hendayani and Febrianta (2020) | Food Manufacturing | Malaysia, Philippines & Iran |
| Khan et al. (2019)<br>C. N. L. Tan et al. (2017)<br>Othman et al. (2017)<br>Supian et al. (2019) | Halal industry as a whole | Malaysia & India |
| Abdullah and Oseni (2017)<br>Rahman et al. (2017) | Islamic Finance | Malaysia & Indonesia (Cross-study) |
| Butt et al. (2017) | Multinational Corporations (MNCs) | Malaysia & Pakistan (Cross-study) |
| Karia (2019) | Halal logistics | Malaysia |
| Ratnasari et al. (2020)<br>Katuk et al., (2020)<br>Liat et al. (2020) | Halal tourism | Indonesia & Middle East countries |

## Main Findings

One hundred and thirty-one published studies were identified in the systematic search, with a final set of twenty articles adopted for qualitative synthesis. The table below summarizes the characteristics of each study (research approach, data analysis, and findings). In addition, this narrative summary is provided to guide readers through the selected articles' findings and themes.

Based on the findings from the prior studies, four themes and eighteen sub-themes have been established in Table 2. The themes and sub-themes were then summarized and tabulated in Table 3.

According to the summary table above, the past literature has been classified into four major themes and their associated sub-themes. Table 4 below explains in detail each sub-theme that the findings in all selected articles have represented to offer readers a better understanding.

## DISCUSSIONS

All selected articles in this study discuss the fundamental factors of organizational performance across all business areas in the Halal industry since this is the study's main objective. Thus, 18 out of the 20 articles chosen were quantitative in approach, while two were qualitative. Within the final selection, four themes: management and strategies, Halal, consumers' demand, and organizational environment were constructed from the articles' findings, which established that the four themes are the main factors that significantly influenced all business areas in the Halal industry.

### Strategizing the Halal Business

Overall, ten of the twenty selected articles emphasize the importance and significant relationship between management and strategies and organizational performance in the Halal industry. The management and strategy's theme is divided into seven sub-themes highlighted in Table 4. Quality is the first sub-theme, and it refers to recognizing good management practices, such as ISO 9001 and HACCP, apart from MS1500 certification, compulsory for the Halal industry, especially in food manufacturing.

Second, marketing refers to the marketing strategy employed to observe consumers' patterns and trends that are heavily influenced by their purchasing behavior. Therefore, to ensure that the organizational performance stays relevant in the market, it needs to follow the latest trends and attributes of the consumers' purchasing behavior. For example, in the Halal industry, most consumers are from the Muslim community, in which religious identity is the biggest influence on their purchasing behavior. Therefore, by ensuring that the Halal status of products stays updated with current requirements, consumer confidence can be retained or enhanced.

Third, the leadership style practiced by the top management is crucial in determining an organization's direction and ensuring the organization's relevancy in the competitive market. However, past findings on leadership styles indicate spirituality as a trait a strong and diverse leader must possess.

Table 2
*Outcomes of included studies*

| **Authors** | **Research Approach** | **Data Analysis** | **Findings** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Liat et al. (2020) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Covariance–based (CB – SEM) 214 for samplings | Innovation in process, organization, marketing, and religiosity influenced organizational performance, especially in the Halal tourism sector. |
| Ratnasari et al. (2020) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 400 samplings | Halal certification improves organizational performance in winning consumers' behavioral intention, especially in the Halal tourism sector. |
| Katuk et al. (2020) | A quantitative approach through the structured interview | Multiple Regression for 298 samplings | Halal certification and knowledge on Halal significantly influenced the performance of food operators. |
| Hendayani and Febrianta (2020) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 100 samplings | Investment and adaptation of technology contributed to the organizational performance in supply chain management. |
| Khan et al. (2019) | A quantitative approach through the application of integrated IRP and Fuzzy TISM | Ranking of dominance after IRP and Fuzzy-TISM:<br>Gaining Consumer Confidence – I = 0.885<br>Clear Understanding of Halal – II = 0.348<br>Readiness to recognize competent HCBs – III = 0.274 Common platform for Halal issues – IV = 0.263 | Using Interpretive Ranking Process (IRP) and Fuzzy Total Interpretive Structured Modelling (Fuzzy-TISM) in analyzing the variables. Gaining customer confidence gives the strongest impact on the overall performance of the organization by staying relevant to their needs and wants. |
| Zailani et al. (2019) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 154 samplings | The results indicate that logistics (Halal materials, Halal storage, and transportation) and Halal culture positively impacted organization performance. |
| Supian et al. (2019) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 212 samplings | Compliance, coordination, control, cooperation, and communication are significantly<br>influenced by organizational performance in terms of supply chain management. |
| Karia (2019) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 129 samplings | Strategic logistics management (practices and integration) significantly improved organization performance in logistics. |

Table 2 (*continue*)

| **Authors** | **Research Approach** | **Data Analysis** | **Findings** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Elias et al. (2017) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 278 samplings | SME's performance in the Halal industry is weak because of the upper management's failure to identify the opportunities along the supply chain in the industry. The organization also failed to recognize the pattern of the consumers' demand, which is crucial for the organization's future. Also, the lack of leadership style in the Halal industry contributes to the incompetence of the SME in the market. |
| Baharuddin and Ismail (2018) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Partial Least Sequence (PLS-SEM) for 274 samplings | Apart from being Halal-certified, organizational performance in the Halal industry also needs to evolve in management quality through ISO certification. |
| Ab Talib et al. (2017) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with $R^2$ value of 0.520 | Halal certification has a positive and significant relationship with the performance of the organization. The notion of safety in the Halal certification gives confidence to the consumers, especially among Muslim consumers. |
| Ab Talib and Ai Chin (2018) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with $R^2$ value of 0.578 | Consumer demand, organizational commitment in obliging the halal certification, and dedication in maintaining a robust quality assurance have a positive relationship with the organizational performance. |
| Butt et al. (2017) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Hypothesis testing result with a critical ratio value of 0.922 | Organizational performance in marketing can be improved by focusing on marketing strategies and aligning them with religious identity since it is the strongest factor influencing Muslims' purchasing behavior. |
| Hendijani et al. (2018) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with $R^2$ value of 0.711 | Entrepreneurial Management influenced the innovation performance of SMEs in the Halal industry, which improves financial performance. |
| Othman et al. (2015) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with $R^2$ value of 0.419 for the main model and beta value for knowledge is 0.320 | The result shows that knowledge of the Halal brand is the strongest influence on organizational performance in the Halal industry. |
| Salindal (2018) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | Hypothesis testing result with a critical ratio of regression weight value of 3.247 | Halal innovativeness influences business performances and market performances. |

Table 2 (*continue*)

| **Authors** | **Research Approach** | **Data Analysis** | **Findings** |
|---|---|---|---|
| K. H. Tan et al. (2017) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with an $R^2$ value of 0.962 | Halal assurance systems influence production and product quality performance. |
| C. N. L. Tan et al. (2017) | A quantitative approach through the questionnaire as an instrument | PLS-SEM with an $R^2$ value of 0.556 | The internal working environment is the most effective in providing the foundation for creating and integrating knowledge into the organization. Thus, improving the overall performance in the Halal industry. |
| Abdullah and Oseni (2017) | A qualitative approach through an interview | Interviews with selected 48 SME Halal firms and data analyzed through content analysis | Financial constraint is the major obstacle for Halal SMEs to grow and perform well in the market. |
| Rahman et al. (2017) | A qualitative approach through the interview | Semi-structured in-depth interviews with three selected respondents and data analyzed through content analysis | Maqasid al-Shari'ah (commitment to the wellbeing of the society) performance framework will significantly contribute to the Halal business and commerce. |

Table 3
*Themes and sub-themes of the finding*

| Theme | Sub-theme | Authors |
|---|---|---|
| Management & Strategies | Quality, marketing, entrepreneurial, leadership style, financial, logistics & Islamic management | Baharuddin and Ismail (2018)<br>Butt et al. (2017)<br>Fard and Amiri (2018)<br>Abdullah and Oseni (2017)<br>Rahman et al. (2017)<br>Elias et al. (2017)<br>Supian et al. (2019)<br>Karia (2019)<br>Zailani et al. (2019)<br>Liat et al. (2020) |
| Halal | Standards, certification, knowledge, innovativeness & assurance | Ab Talib et al. (2017)<br>Salindal (2018)<br>K. H. Tan et al. (2017)<br>Othman et al. (2017)<br>Ab Talib and Ai Chin (2018)<br>Fard and Amiri (2018)<br>C. N. L. Tan et al. (2017)<br>Supian et al. (2019)<br>Karia (2019)<br>Zailani et al. (2019)<br>Liat et al. (2020)<br>Ratnasari et al. (2020)<br>Katuk et al. (2020) |
| Consumers' Demand | Patterns, trends, satisfaction & opportunities | Elias et al. (2017)<br>Khan et al. (2019)<br>Ab Talib and Ai Chin (2018)<br>Butt et al. (2017)<br>Ratnasari et al. (2020) |
| Organizational Environment | Information sharing & technology adaptation | C. N. L. Tan et al. (2017)<br>Supian et al. (2019)<br>Hendayani and Febrianta (2020) |

The fourth sub-theme, Entrepreneurial management, focuses on an organization's internal attributes: innovativeness, proactiveness, calculated risk-taking, customer purchasing behavior, resourcing, and value creation. These are the characteristics that organizations in the Halal industry must prioritize to have effective entrepreneurial management.

Fifth, Logistics refers to the strategic management of the supply chain that involves transportation, warehouse, and drop-point. Additionally, it signifies the integration of a system that consists of all the elements mentioned above and is managed in accordance with Sharia ethics, which is critical in preserving the integrity of Halal status.

The sixth and seventh sub-themes are Financial and Islamic Management, respectively. It refers to the ability of an organization to be well funded in terms of

Table 4

*Themes and sub-themes of the findings*

| Authors | Management & Strategies | | | | | | | Halal | | | | | Consumers' Demand | | | | Organizational Environment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | QLY | MKT | ENT | LS | FNC | LGT | IM | STD | CTF | KNW | INV | ASR | PTN | TRD | STF | OPT | IS | TA |
| Liat et al. (2020) | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Ratnasari et al. (2020 | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Katuk et al. (2020) | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | |
| Hendayani and Febrianta (2020) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |
| Zailani et al. (2019) | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | | |
| Supian et al. (2019) | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Karia (2019) | | | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Baharuddin and Ismail (2018) | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Butt et al. (2017) | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | |
| Fard and Amiri (2018) | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Abdullah and Oseni (2017) | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rahman et al. (2017) | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ab Talib et al. (2017) | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | |
| Salindal (2018) | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| K. H. Tan et al. (2017) | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Othman et al. (2017) | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | |
| Elias et al. (2017) | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | |
| Khan et al. (2019) | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Ab Talib and Ai Chin (2018) | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| C. N. L. Tan et al. (2017) | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | |

**Management & Strategies**
QLY = Quality
MKT = Marketing
ENT = Entrepreneurial
LS = Leadership Style
FNC = Financial
LGT = Logistics
IM = Islamic Management

**Halal**
STD = Standards
CTF = Certification
KNW = Knowledge
INV = Innovativeness
ASR = Assurance

**Consumer's Demand**
PTN = Patterns
TRD = Trends
STF = Satisfaction
OPT = Opportunities

**Organizational Environment**
IS = Information Sharing
TA = Technology Adaptation

capital strength and infusing the Islamic values into their daily operation, which will ensure compliance with shariah. Furthermore, this will foster positive brand support for the organization. Indeed, capital strength is equally important since the rigorous certification exercise requires a significant monetary investment in the Halal industry.

### Managing Halal Requirements

Thirteen of the twenty selected articles in this systematic review emphasize five important factors in Halal that are crucial to the Halal industry. They are standards, certification, knowledge, innovativeness, and assurance.

Harmonizing and aligning the Halal standards and certification process with the Halal certification bodies is important for the Halal industry's performance. This standardization ensures that the organization can follow one standard process in the certification and avoid overlapping or contradiction in the certification process.

Halal knowledge is critical for organizations. It is fundamental for an organization to understand the key aspects of Halal, its principles, and the technicalities of the Halal certification process.

Innovativeness, based on the review, is an organization's ability to conduct good research and development exercises on products. By having a good product innovation, an organization can identify the competitive advantage its products need to stand out in the market.

In this review, the assurance factor refers to an organization's commitment or guarantee that its products comply with the guidelines specified by the Halal certification bodies. In Malaysia, MS1500 is the certification that endorses the manufacturing of products under good Halal practice. The obstacle that has been highlighted in research is the ability of the organization to maintain its Halal assurance status since the certification needs to be renewed every two years. As a result, most organizations cannot maintain their Halal status due to the rigorous certification exercise, which ultimately affects their Halal assurance.

### Understanding the Consumers' Demands

Based on the past findings, five previous scholars agreed that an organization needs to be proactive and reactive in identifying the patterns and trends of the consumers that influence their purchasing behavior and identifying a new opportunity that emerges from the trends themselves. This measure will ensure that the organization stays relevant since the Halal industry is competing with the niche market in the Halal market share and competing with the conventional market that produces the same products. More recently, consumers are becoming more sophisticated in their purchase behavior due to information exposure. As a result, ensuring their satisfaction is a major factor in determining an organization's performance.

## Creating the Best Organizational Environment

Three of the selected articles supported that the organizational environment is important for an organization's success. Organizational environment refers to the information sharing and technology adaptation process within an organization. In addition, good information sharing through communication technology ensures that internal members of an organization can access crucial information, especially in the Halal certification process. Similarly, good information sharing ensures that the mission and vision of an organization are well channeled, and the organization's internal stakeholders well understand their Halal values.

## Elements to be Considered in the Halal Industry

This systematic review of literature has highlighted crucial factors to be considered by organizations looking to show the value of Halal in their brand. Indeed, based on the review of past findings in this systematic review, more than half of the 13 selected articles agreed that Halal is the most significant factor determining whether an organization succeeds or fails. The sub-themes of Halal represent the variables on which the organization needs to focus. Past researchers have identified that a holistic understanding of Halal is paramount in this industry. Most of the studies in the Halal industry focus on supply chain management and certification, which are two of the most important sections in Halal, which indicates that the variables identified in this review have a significant impact on an organization's performance (Noordin et al., 2009, 2014).

Management and strategies are the second factors that organizations need to focus on after Halal. Six different scholars have emphasized the importance of good management and strategies in ensuring that Halal certification is obtained and well understood by the members of an organization. As a result, this review will serve as a nudge for organizations to promote their brand to the targeted consumers to develop more innovative products through research and development and better understand the Halal certification process. Consequently, strategic management has an impact on overall management effectiveness (Kang & Sung, 2017).

In this systematic review, five selected articles stress the importance of fulfilling consumers' demands and the organizational environment variable. Consumers are one of the organization's greatest drivers, and satisfying their needs and desires is crucial for success. Past findings have emphasized the important elements that influence demand from consumers, which are the purchasing patterns and trends. Indeed, to maintain demand, a product needs to stay relevant from a consumer's perspective. Organizations also need to be more proactive in product development, which relies on the research of the latest trends that will significantly influence the purchasing patterns and trends of the consumers, thus, positively contributing to the performance of an organization in the market. Consumers' trends and patterns in the Halal industry are more sophisticated than the conventional market since Halal–conscious consumers are risk-averse. Thus, efforts to engage them with organizations' brands are significantly challenging (Wilson & Liu, 2011).

Organizational environment refers to the information-sharing ability and the effectiveness of the information flow in the organization through the advanced facilities. Therefore, the rigorous process in halal certification procedure needs to be aligned with a good information-sharing facility to improve the workforce and overall performance of an organization (Masrom et al., 2017).

**Organization Performance Factors in Minimizing Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) Environment in the Halal Industry.** The VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) in business depicts an unpredictable environment of fast changes, focus on diverse employees, and the challenge of working with sophisticated and demanding customers. Therefore, organizations in the Halal industry need robust performance management to develop and sustain a competitive advantage in the market (Hamid, 2019).

Managerial and strategic planning implication is paramount in developing and maintaining an organization's good performance through increased employee satisfaction. Furthermore, the management and strategic planning elements work in tandem with information-sharing capabilities and effective information flow in generating a favorable organizational environment, which is critical in managing VUCA in the market setting (Triraharjo et al., 2020) (Rose et al., 2019).

Kryvoruchko et al. (2018) suggested in their study on enterprise management in a VUCA environment that SMEs must be more dynamic in their entrepreneurial management and more agile in adjusting their business models to remain relevant to evolving customer trends that have become more sophisticated in recent years. This fluidity will ensure that an organization can comprehend and meet consumer demands, thereby acting as a catalyst for businesses to mitigate the influence of VUCA (Hamid, 2019). A more sophisticated and highly demanding consumer these days contribute to VUCA components in the Halal market.

Given the rising complexity and volatility of the external environment, understanding possible changes comprehensively and developing capacities to impact them through a major managerial and strategic planning goal has become increasingly difficult to achieve. Thus, the ability of an organization to foresee changes in a dynamic marketing trend is becoming a core element of the managerial and strategic planning of business entities (Bereznoy, 2017).

Baran and Woznyj (2020) suggest seven key factors for managing VUCA: 1) communication and transparency, 2) knowledge sharing and teamwork, 3) fostering agile behavior, 4) iterative improvement and learning, 5) deep customer focus, 6) leadership and role modeling, and 7) strategic alignment and managing talent. All seven key factors suggested are consistent with the findings of this study, which are represented by the emerging themes and sub-themes. Thus, it shows that organizational performance factors suggested in this study are important guidelines for business players in the Halal industry in managing and sustaining their presence in the market.

The outlined themes in this study through the systematic literature review process align with the suggested recommendations from various scholars in mitigating the effect of VUCA in the organization. Thus, the findings in this study give a significant implication to the businesses in the Halal industry in managing VUCA in the market environment nowadays.

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the selected articles from Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, Emerald, and ScienceDirect. The articles were selected using PRISMA to ensure that only the relevant articles were chosen and summarized. Most of the findings in the selected articles for this review were derived from studies that used an empirical data analysis technique, Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), to test their variables. In addition, there was also a qualitative approach article selected that supported this systematic review's overall findings. Overall, four themes and fifteen sub-themes were developed from the presented findings that best represent the variables discussed in each selected article.

First, the highlighted themes and sub-themes in this review provide us with crucial recommendations for Halal-certified organizations. These recommendations might serve as a reference for businesses regarding critical issues that significantly impact organizational performance in the Halal industry. Second, organizations in the Halal industry may benefit from this study's findings by implementing the factors identified by the themes and concentrating on enhancing their organization's key areas reflected by the study's sub-themes. Thus, it will ensure that an organization can implement a holistic approach to improve its performance in the market. Third, the themes and sub-themes derived from this review also have a significant implication in managing VUCA in today's market. Thus, this study provides a significant contribution to the business players in the Halal industry by highlighting fundamental factors not only suggesting good elements in improving an organization's performance but also enlightening them with the importance of the findings in managing VUCA.

Fourth, in terms of academic contribution, this study lays the groundwork for future researchers who wish to contribute to the body of knowledge in the Halal industry by referring to the themes and sub-themes discussed in this review and previous literature. Future researchers may focus their study on the area that past researchers have not explored. For instance, one aspect that has received limited attention in the

Halal market is brand identity management. The discovery of this limitation, which we believe to be significant, was uncovered during the systematic review process for this study. We were unable to retrieve any article that covered Halal brand identity management. Hopefully, more attention will be given to brand identity management in the Halal industry since its significant impact has been proven in other industries.

Fifth, it is recommended that future researchers conduct more exploratory and quantitative studies to identify more variables that can contribute to organizational developments in the Halal industry setting.

Finally, other limitations have been identified by the researchers in this study. This systematic literature review only focuses on published articles in prominent databases, such as Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, Emerald, and Science Direct. It is where selection bias becomes a limitation in this study. The researchers believe some articles must have been excluded from this study because they were not published in a high-impact journal. Another limitation in this study is the geographical areas covered by selected articles. All articles selected covered southeast Asian countries whose population is predominantly Muslim. Thus, the factors highlighted in this study are mostly from the perspective of Southeast Asia. It is recommended that a comparable study centered on western perspectives be done in the future. Overall, these limitations serve as clear markers of worthwhile research opportunities in the Halal industry.

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# HRM and Employee Significant Behavior: Explaining the Black Box through AMO Theory

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the employees' perceptions towards the role of HRM policies and practices in assisting them to perform the desired behavior in contributing to the organizational goals achievement. Employees' perceptions are explored through their actual experiences with the implementation of HRM policies and practices. Interviews were conducted with employees in five different star-rating hotels to understand contextual factors that can be observed. Different perceptions on the role of HRM policies and practices in influencing employees' performance are reported from the interviews. Instead of acting as a medium to transmit the message of their work expectations, employees view the HRM policies and practices as a common process happening in their organization and unrelated to their work demand. Therefore, findings of this study could light a torch of awareness for organizations to give more attention to the employees' responses and feedback to minimize their dysfunctional behaviors that are detrimental to organizational achievement. Suggestions are given to increase the employee desired behavior relevant to the organizations from the perspective of AMO theory.

*Keywords:* AMO theory, behavior, employee performance, hotel, human resource management, job expectations

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## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) has been recognized as an essential tool for organizations to manage their operations while adapting to the challenges of a complex business environment. Much effort is tailored to explain the relationship between HRM and performance. Researchers believed that employee performance is valuable to assist the organization in gaining a competitive advantage as they are expected to play their roles accordingly in any situation. Therefore, the purpose of HRM is crucial as it enables the organization to influence employee behavior to achieve organizational goals (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). HRM offers a list of workplace processes through its policies ranging from recruitment, performance management, training, rewards, and benefit until the end of the employment contract (Baran et al., 2002). Organizations have used these policies to manage their employees, regardless of size and industry.

However, the effectiveness of the HRM policies and practices is still an ongoing issue debated by researchers because of the gap between intended and actual employee performance, which remains familiar to most organizations (Khilji & Wang, 2006). More attention is demanded on the implementation aspect because the effectiveness of HRM policies and practices could only be proven when it is executed successfully by managers (Nehles et al., 2006). It ensures the primary purpose of sending the right message to the employees on their work role expectations can be accomplished through those policies. Instead of providing a descriptive explanation on any issue at the workplace, researchers urged for more holistic research on the HRM study to explore details about the underlying causes and factors that may influence a particular issue. Therefore, the contribution of the research finding is not limited to theoretical development, but more importantly, to increase its ability to be put into action (Syed et al., 2009).

While employees' performance is a critical issue for most organizations, rapid changes in the business environment with high uncertainties have increased the concern of the top management to formulate an effective strategy for their organization. As such, organizations are required to be more flexible in doing their business. It is to increase their ability in adapting to the changes of the market. This situation also requires employees to have the necessary skills in line with the increased expectations of their jobs. However, for the organizational strategy to work well in accomplishing the goals, this requires the top management and employees to be on the same page in understanding the job expectations that likely to change based on the current business situation. It is to ensure that employees' performance can be monitored and improved to meet the employer's expectations. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the perceptions of employees towards the role of HRM policies and practices in assisting them in performing and contributing to the organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### HRM Policies and Practices

HRM policies and practices can be used to influence employees' perceptions of the required performance of their roles (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). These can be done through a rich array of policies, including selection, training, performance management, motivation, and career planning (Baran et al., 2002; Boxall & Steenveld, 1999; Delaney & Huselid, 1996). From the beginning of the employment process, an appropriate recruitment and selection mechanism could ensure that an organization gets a candidate who can perform well and contribute to achieving the organizational goals. Moreover, a comprehensive training program is needed to equip the employees with the desired skills and knowledge to cope with heightened demand for their work expectations. Since employees come from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, training and development are essential to equip themselves with appropriate skills and knowledge when they perform their jobs.

Many kinds of research on the importance of HRM practices have explored the relationship between HRM and employee performance (i.e., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Boxall & Purcell, 2011; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Their work leads to understanding possible organizational outcomes that arise from the perception of HRM practices among employees. It includes organizational commitment and work engagement (Charlwood, 2015). These positive attitudes can motivate employees to participate and engage in organizational strategy, leading to higher citizenship behavior (Wright, 2003). In addition, more work behaviors that are significant to the organizational outcomes can be achieved when the absenteeism and turnover are decreasing (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2003).

Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) developed the people management-performance causal chain to explain the relationship between HRM policies and practices to unit-level outcomes. They have proposed that the intended expectations of the management are sent through the development of the HRM policies in the organization. Based on these policies, the HR people will translate it into real action and process at the workplace. Employees will develop their perceptions of the implemented policies through their experiences. As a result, it will influence their attitudes and behavior towards their jobs. Researchers highlighted that the perception of HRM practices plays a significant part that influences employee attitude and behavior (Alfes et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2017; Mat et al., 2017). Most recent studies found a more reliable connection between employees' perceptions of HRM practices and employee work behavior, as compared to the actual practices executed by managers (Aryee et al., 2012; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Jensen et al., 2013; Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

The relationship between HRM and performance has long been discussed. For instance, Hall and Torrington (1998) agreed that HRM policies and practices are useful for changing employees' attitudes towards their roles. For employees to understand what they are supposed to do, Hall and Torrington (1998) proposed that the development of procedures and manuals is needed to ensure employees' performances meet the expectations of their superiors. It is especially true in the complex business environment where employees must adapt to the current changes that increase their work demand. Only with that capability could employees contribute to the organizational achievement as a source for competitive advantage through HRM policies and practices that influence the employees' work behavior (Delery & Shaw, 2001).

Debates on the HRM-performance link drive to the issue about what HRM practices and policies do that lead to better performance (Buyens & De Vos, 2001). Even though many approaches have been developed to accommodate organizational conditions, continuous debates arise as to their subjectivity and difficulty in measurement. Therefore, researchers suggest that combining approaches may produce a better result and give value to HRM. This suggestion shows the importance of gathering the views of HR people closely involved with the implementation of HRM policies and practices. Researchers believed that understanding both parties of employees and superiors are required to determine the appropriateness of HRM policies and practices from different perspectives; policymaker and implementer. However, most studies neglect the employees' perception at the individual level (Jiang et al., 2017; Yuan & Woodman, 2010) . As a result, employees often interpret the HRM policies and practices differ from that of top management (Wright & Nishii, 2013). Furthermore, the exploration of the implementation of these policies is still under researched (Nehles et al., 2006). This is a crucial gap to be filled because employees' actual performances often fail to reflect what is required by their role evaluators through the message sent by HRM policies and practices in the organization (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Mat et al., 2017).

In terms of the research gap, many HRM scholars pay significant attention to employee perceptions of HRM practices to improve the HRM-performance relationship (Baluch, 2017; Jiang et al., 2017). Researchers believed that the interpretation of HRM practices from employees' perspectives as the end-users is supposed to receive due consideration to improve HRM effectiveness (Nehles & Veenendaal, 2017). Other than that, the non-western perspective is found lacking in HRM studies (Jack et al., 2013; Kaufman, 2015; Mayrhofer et al., 2019). More exploration is suggested in other contextual settings to provide a more practical solution to HRM issues by integrating it into the local realities (Cooke, 2017). Researchers suggest that HRM matters should not be assumed to work the same way in different places. Due consideration to be given to conducting HRM research beyond the Western countries. One of the misconceptions in understanding HRM research is the assumption that everything will work the same way regardless of the context (Mayrhofer et al., 2019). Thus, although HRM practices have long been discussed, the evolution of HRM studies requires continuous exploration due to the time changes and context differences for a better management adaptation over time

(Cooke, 2017). The gap can be bridged through an appropriate methodological setting.

The methodological limitations of HRM studies have long been debated among scholars. Researchers urged for a better approach in narrowing the gap between theoretical findings with practicality due to the inability of the research methodology to explain the observed findings. The findings, drawing upon the qualitative research paradigm, are expected to provide more attention to detail in regards to local realities, which is crucial to bridge the gap of HRM—employees' performance link. Further, considering employees voice to investigate on the effectiveness of HRM practices are crucial in bridging the gap of HRM-performance black box (Budjanovcanin, 2018). Employees' voices can better represent the role holder's opinions on HRM practices than role sender expectations (top management). Thus, the HRM research findings that aim to understand the phenomena in a particular research setting are better conceptualized through a qualitative research methodology that is able to explain 'why' and 'how' it is happening the way it is (Cooke, 2017).

## AMO Theory

Researchers have investigated factors influencing individual performance to understand the challenges of performing the work role (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). The determinants influencing work performance have been developed using the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) framework (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). In contrast to other established theories in HRM studies, namely contingency theory and resource-based view, AMO has been used to explore organizational psychology to find the cause of action rather than the effect of HRM performance (Paauwe, 2009). This difference has made some researchers view AMO as an added value of resource-based view (Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). The AMO components are described as the resources needed by the employees to perform well. Moreover, these elements are interrelated, suggesting the necessity for all components to exist at the workplace (Jiang et al., 2012). Of more significant concern, the advantage of using this framework is explaining the gap in the HRM-performance black box (Harney & Jordan, 2008). Moreover, the association between HRM policy and practices and performance could justify the reason behind the actual event happening at the workplace.

In discussing an appropriate theory to be used for a study, researchers suggest that powerful theory depends on its ability to provide a detailed explanation about the issue in the chosen context (Child & Marinova, 2014). In this study, an attempt to explore employees' perceptions about HRM practices that influence their performance is deemed appropriate with the AMO concepts. Furthermore, AMO is used widely by recent HRM studies, especially to explore about HRM-performance link (i.e., Bos-Nehles et al., 2013; Malik & Lenka, 2019; Nadeem & Rahat, 2021; Salas et al., 2021). Therefore, AMO is appropriate for this study as the main focus is to explore employees' perspectives. In addition, it is in line with the AMO concepts' application to exposing individual-level ability and motivation and system-level opportunities that also apply to assess individual understanding of the practices (Szulc et al., 2021).

**Ability.** Ability is an essential factor influencing employee behavior and task performance (McShane & Travaglione, 2007). It encompasses the employees' necessary knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to perform their job (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). McShane and Travaglione (2007) have grouped these elements as natural aptitudes and learned capabilities. In the former, employees' natural talents can assist them in performing their tasks effectively. In the latter, employees' skills and knowledge can make their behavior and task performances unique. The combination of these elements is known as competencies.

Skills and abilities play an important role in employee performance, mainly related to the higher workload given to the employees due to the changes in the job structure (Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Jackson & Schuler, 1995). Therefore, skill development is essential to solving the issue of the skills gap among employees in the modern workplace (Payne, 2012). Furthermore, it has been proven that to accomplish many positive organizational outcomes; employee skills need to be utilized effectively (Buchanan et al., 2010). To achieve that, the researcher suggested improving the organizational policy so that the skills demand employees required that to meet the organizational expectations could be identified (Payne, 2012). It is important because there is a time constraint to utilizing skills if the management does not recognize them correctly.

**Motivation.** Researchers point out that skilled employees will not perform well if they are not motivated (Delaney & Huselid, 1996). In discussing this issue, the form and structure of an organization's HRM system will impact employees' motivational levels in several ways. First, organizations may implement an approach of positive reinforcement to guide employee behavior towards specific organizational goals. It can be done through a merit pay or incentive compensation system that rewards the employees when they successfully achieve the desired goals. Organizations may, however, adopt a negative reinforcement approach such that grievance procedures are used to avoid undesirable behaviors. By doing this, employees are motivated to work harder because they realize the consequences of their work behavior. While most knowledge workers in the modern workplace highly value financial rewards, this could be challenging for the organization to develop a fair and equal policy for all employees (Guest, 2017).

**Opportunity to Perform.** AMO theory suggests that employees who are given the opportunity to contribute and perform their job will produce more positive organizational outcomes (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Opportunity is described as the engagement in job-related behavior, which can be achieved through job design and involvement (Guerci et al., 2017). A previous study found the relationship between job design and various employees' attitudes at the workplace (De Jong et al., 2015). This is especially true with developing innovative workplace behavior in the modern workplace where employees are required to adapt to the current changes and perform their job accordingly. Besides, assigning employees to work in a team is also viewed as part of the opportunities for employees to perform (Gerhart, 2005). Researchers found that the chance to perform influences employees' motivations in their performances. The concept of opportunity to perform suited the prevalent issue of work engagement to give employees more autonomy to perform their jobs. Importantly, researchers highlighted the importance of enhancing the perception of HRM practices among employees to engage them with innovative behavior that is significant to organizational achievement (Nehles & Veenendaal, 2017). As such, HRM practices provide some guidelines for employees to behave accordingly and meet their work expectations that rapidly change in line with the changes in their work demand.

**Research Context: Malaysian Hotel Industry.** The hotel industry in Malaysia is extensive, with accommodation ranging from lodging houses to 5-star hotels. The Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) was established in 1974 to support government initiatives in enhancing the efficiency of the hotel industry in Malaysia after realizing the increasing demand in the hotel industry. With over 900 members, MAH provides the platform to improve the service quality of Malaysian hotels and supports government initiatives to ensure the growth and development of the service sector as well as the tourism industry. For instance, an annual survey conducted by MAH shows a remarkable contribution of the hotel industry towards the development of the tourism industry in Malaysia with its increased number of tourists' arrivals and the attraction of more foreign investments.

Unfortunately, the survey also revealed uneven performance amongst hotels in Malaysia based on the locations (Horwath HTL, 2011). The major contributor to the growth of the Malaysian hotel industry is hotels in Kuala Lumpur, while the performance of hotels in other cities has declined. The performance of hotels in Kuala Lumpur is consistent, regardless of changing business environments. This location is where most of the luxurious and five-star hotels are located. It is probably another reason that contributes to the higher performance compared to hotels in other places. Instead, lower-rated hotels in Malaysia are yet to contribute to the growth of the Malaysian service industry.

Researchers have noted that a high turnover rate of employees is a significant problem in the Malaysian hotel industry (Abdullah et al., 2010). Three factors are associated with this problem: the employees' relationships with supervisors, income, and tenure. As the hotel industry's performance is vital to developing the tourism sector in Malaysia, the problem of employee performance should be further investigated as it could negatively affect the hotel performance that is detrimental to the national agenda.

Having a national context or country-level differences (Malaysia as of this study) is a strong fundamental mechanism to explain the current complex HRM issue; however, the same issue has been explored in other parts of the world (Parry et al., 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

This research employed qualitative research methodology to explore the employees' understanding about the implementation of HRM practices in their organizations. Qualitative research design is appropriate for this study as the research aimed to gather the information through the employees' experience and get detailed information on the real situation from the employee's point of view. Further, a qualitative research design is not merely a methodological choice but more towards exploring the emerging HRM issues and ensuring the continuation of investigation about a particular phenomenon to cater to many situations and contexts as of the HRM research gap. Furthermore, qualitative methodology is appropriate to conceptualize findings, especially to integrate many contextual elements with the research data to offer a more practical solution that works well in real life (Cooke, 2017). On the other hand, positivist-oriented research has a limitation in explaining the complexity of a situation, which is significant for formulating management strategy and solution (Jackson et al., 2014; Kaufman, 2015).

A single data source is considered sufficient depending on the purpose of the study (Parry et al., 2020). Thus, hotel employees are chosen as respondents of this study for their position as 'role holders' who interpret the message of HRM practices to perform their work. The selection of employees is appropriate for this study as they are the most knowledgeable source who experienced the actual execution of HRM practices in their hotel. The data collection process was done from August 2016 until December 2016. While the evolution of HRM issues occurs continuously, the data gathered from this study is relevant to observing changes affecting the organizations over time (Edwards et al., 2013). Perhaps, findings of this study can be used to compare the results before and after the pandemic Covid 19 happened, which aimed at exploring the adaptation strategy that may be applicable for the hotel industry in challenging times. The list of hotels is obtained from Malaysian Association Hotels (MAH), where five hotels in the East Coast Peninsular Malaysia have been chosen as a case study. The researcher had asked permission from the management of each hotel before the interview sessions were scheduled. It ensures the quality of the data gathered from the respondents as they were unlikely to be distracted during the interview when the time was set earlier.

Different star-rated hotels are taken into consideration to observe the impacts of contextual elements on the implementation of HRM policies and practices. This study is exploratory in which an attempt is made to investigate the actual situation happening in all hotels. Every organization defines people management: the qualitative methodology explains the complexity of the issues under contextual circumstances. The interpretation of the respondents to the interview questions determines the validity of the data. Researchers suggest that the appropriate sampling selection depends not only on which organizations are chosen but also on the suitable respondents who have knowledge of the issue being explored (Parry et al., 2020). Data collection is done based on the accessibility of the interviewer to get cooperation from the hotels. Organizations are taken from the service sector primarily based on the sector's importance to the Malaysian economy. The empirical basis of this study consists of 32 interviews with the hotel employees in the hotel's case study. During the interviews, five main HRM policies and practices are asked: recruitment, selection, performance management, rewards and benefits, and training. For each HRM practice, the study analyses how employees understanding of implemented HRM policies influence their work performance. Content analysis has been used to interpret the data from those interviews and determine the theme from the respondents' experiences. The theoretical theory underlying the findings of this study is based on the AMO theory. The use of AMO theory in this study is acted as a guideline for 'theory building' rather than 'theory testing.' As a theory-building mechanism, the findings of this study have not been pre-determined based on AMO assumptions. Instead, it is used to make sense of the information gathered from the respondents (Anderson & Kragh, 2010). Without an underlying theory, researchers may not integrate their findings into a theoretical stance sensibly, exposing the data with personal biases, especially for novice researchers (Gioia et al., 2013). Further, having an underlying theory does not limit the exploratory nature of the research because new knowledge can be developed by extending and challenging the existing theory to yield novel insights from the current research findings (Epp & Otnes, 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews were conducted with hotel employees from various departments. A total of 32 respondents were interviewed to represent five hotels: the number differs based on the accessibility and availability of employees agreed upon by the management of the hotels. The interview sessions were scheduled based on the availability of the respondents to reduce distractions that could negatively influence their feedback to the interview questions. The demographic of respondents is illustrated in Table 1. In terms of the star rating, the researcher was unable to get responses from the 4-star hotels due to the issue of accessibility. Other star rating hotels are represented by one hotel each and two hotels for five stars. Based on table 1, most respondents are female, aged between 20 to 40, and have a secondary school certificate. Besides, all respondents work for three different departments: front office, administration, and food and beverages.

### HRM Practices

In general, respondents in all hotels' case studies have shown a limited understanding when asked about 'HRM policies' implemented in their hotel. They only captured the policies when the researcher addressed recruitment, performance evaluation, and compensation examples. However, respondents realized that those policies are standard processes happening in their hotel. The first part of this research project has covered superiors and managers' perceptions of HRM practices. Findings have shown a good knowledge of HRM practices in their hotel. In the current study, as most respondents have the same understanding about HRM policies of their organization, this supports other researchers' arguments that the influence of co-worker's perception is more reliable than the manager's perception of HRM practices (Jiang et al., 2017). It is evidenced in the study that although their managers are well verse about HRM policies, however, it is different from their subordinates. Instead, employees share more understanding in general HRM practices with their co-workers compared to the managers. Based on the thematic analysis of the interviews' data and the assumption of AMO theory, the understanding of HRM policies and

Table 1
*Background of the respondents*

| | **Hotel 1**<br>(3 star) | **Hotel 2**<br>(2 star) | **Hotel 3**<br>(5 star) | **Hotel 4**<br>(5 star) | **Hotel 5**<br>(1 star) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | | | | |
| Male | 1 | | 5 | | 1 |
| Female | 7 | 2 | 11 | 2 | 3 |
| *Age* | | | | | |
| 40 – 50 | 1 | | 4 | | |
| 30 - 39 | 2 | | 9 | | 1 |
| 20 – 29 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| < 20 | | | 2 | | 1 |
| *Ethnicity* | | | | | |
| Malay | 8 | 2 | 16 | 2 | 4 |
| *Education level* | | | | | |
| Bachelor | | | | | |
| Diploma | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Secondary school | 6 | 1 | 15 | 1 | 3 |
| *Department* | | | | | |
| Food & beverages | | 1 | 10 | | 2 |
| Admin | 6 | | 4 | | 1 |
| Front Office | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| *Total* | 8 | 2 | 16 | 2 | 4 |

practices found in this study falls under all elements of ability, motivation, and opportunity. Specifically, recruitment and selection are categorized under Ability, performance management, and rewards under Motivation, and lastly, training practices fall under Opportunity.

Ability is related to recruitment and selection. Since the primary purpose of recruitment is to attract potential employees to join the company (Noe et al., 2014), this process requires identifying the most suitable person and fit with the job. The recruitment process ends with the selection when the company decides on whom to be employed. The decision will be made based on the criteria set by the management that suit the job descriptions, job specifications, and key members' expectations.

The motivation for employee desired behavior is influenced by two practices: performance management and rewards and benefits. The effective performance evaluation could ensure that employees realize the state of their performances and find ways to improve, where necessary. From rewards and compensation employees receive, the organization shows their appreciation of employees' contributions to the organizational achievement. These interpretations of HRM practices under the AMO domain are consistent with those reported in Guerci et al. (2017)'s study.

## Employees' Interpretations of HRM Practices

**Ability.** Most respondents are aware of the recruitment method used by the hotel to recruit new employees. Respondents from Hotel 3 and 4 have a consensus on the recruitment method of their hotels. However, responses from the employees of other remaining hotels varied. Different employees reported different ways. For instance, in Hotel 1;

One respondent said,

> *I think this hotel usually informs the vacancy through social media like Facebook. For me, the social platform is suitable for now because most people referred to social media more than newspaper.* (R1, H1)

Another respondent gave different feedback from the same hotel,

> *I know the vacancy at this hotel from the newspaper. It is easy to refer to newspaper because I am not always going online because I don't often have internet access at my place.* (R2, H1)

Based on the interviews, respondents talked about different experiences they gained during the application process. It is similar to all hotels, except Hotel 1. Respondents of Hotel 1 agreed that they were recruited after their internship. The answer to the recruitment method from respondents of other hotels varied from a resume, application form, internship, and walk-in-interview. Respondents have agreed on the suitability of using social media for the recruitment process in recent times, albeit different experiences they gained in their time.

For the selection process, respondents in all hotels have gone through the interview before working with the hotel. In terms of the content of the interview, consensus arrived at the understanding of general questions, such as academic background and work experiences. Interestingly, most respondents reported that they were not concerned much about the particular positions they came for the interview. It is encapsulated through the response;

> *I came for the interview with the entire certificates that I have and wear proper attire. I am not sure about the job, but I've heard about it from my friend.* (R27, H4)

Others said;

> *My preparations before the interview are to make sure that I have brought all the documents needed and be on time. I have asked a few friends who have experience with job interviews, normally that is the first thing that the organization would ask from the candidates. So, I decided to take the advice because I don't have experience before.* (R9, H2)

Out of all respondents, only a minority of them were aware of the position they applied for because they have undergone the training of specific jobs. It is especially true for respondents who were selected after they finished their internship at the same hotel.

When discussing how they understand their job scope, respondents from Hotel 1, 2, and 3 believed they had been given the job description at the beginning of their employment period. For Hotel 4, mixed responses are reported from the interview. Those employees from the administration department said they have the job description, while employees from other departments have different opinions on that. They told the researcher that they had never been given the job description. However, respondents agreed that they did not refer to the job description to perform their job but mostly learned through observation and referred to their supervisors. For instance, one respondent spoke;

> *I don't know about others, but for myself, I just observe how the senior staff performs their job, and that guides me to perform mine. I think everybody is busy with their jobs, so it is easy to just look at how others did their job and do the same thing. I am afraid if you ask too many questions, it will disturb others to do their jobs.* (R5, H1)

Similarly, other respondents said;

> *We don't refer to job description. We understand our job based on the explanation by the supervisor. Or else, I feel more comfortable discussing with my colleague if I have a problem performing my job.* (R13, H3)

Employees' reliance on the supervisors and their colleagues suggests that the document prepared by the HR department failed as a guideline for the employees to perform their jobs. This situation could explain the gap in employee performance as they are not having a reliable source of information to understand their job expectations. Other researchers have highlighted the need for a clear and consistent policy to increase awareness among employees on the HRM-performance issue (Heffernan et al., 2016). Instead, in this study, more dependence on understanding job expectations is put into co-workers and supervisors. This finding is consistent with the study by Jiang et al. (2017), who found the influence of co-workers who shape more understanding of HRM practices. Unless the understanding of other co-workers is accurate, HRM practices may fail to foster better communication among employees to understand the expectation of their jobs (Cafferkey & Dundon, 2015).

**Motivation.** Respondents claimed the existence of performance evaluation in their hotel but could not describe how the process is being implemented. Most of them perceived the feedback given by the supervisor during working time as part of the evaluation process. Respondents from Hotel 1 and 3 described the feedback during a morning briefing as a way of understanding the expectation of their job demands. This situation possibly causes the issue of employee performance in the hotel case study. While each employee has their way of defining the HRM practices implemented in their hotel, unfortunately, it is inconsistent with organization expectations. For employees to be motivated, employees should own the universalistic understanding (Guest, 2011). It is to ensure the intended performance expected by the management is interpreted similarly by the employees. This situation also reflects the importance of supervisors or line managers to effectively communicate the HRM policies to the employees (Purcell et al., 2003). A different implementation of HRM policies between line managers may result in different understandings of the message received by employees.

Mixed responses were reported for the rewards and benefits. Respondents from three hotels (H1, H2, and H3) suggest that they are satisfied with their compensation. It has been described concerning the salary and other benefits provided by the hotel, including medical and food. Respondents from the remaining hotels spoke about their dissatisfaction because the salary given is not suitable for the skills and levels of education. Salary is another factor that influences the turnover (Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2007): explains the situation in the hotel case study. Interestingly, respondents in all hotels disagreed about giving suggestions for improving the work process and their job scopes. It is encapsulated through the statements;

> *We never got the opportunity to speak up, especially to say our dissatisfaction. Sometimes my superior did ask about any suggestion, but it doesn't specifically focus on salary or rewards that we got.* (R3, H1)

> *I just follow the routine. I think if we give suggestions, it wouldn't be used anyway. Because at the end of the day, those who at the upper management who make the decision. We are not involved in that meeting.* (R27, H4)

It could be a reflection of the non-existence of organizational climate in the case study. The importance of the organizational climate is the organization's ability to nurture positive outcomes among employees (Ahmad & Schroeder, 2003). As a result, employees are not motivated to perform more than their standard practice. While service quality is the primary concern for the hotel industry, this would be a signal that limits employee performance. Thus, the management needs to consider employee dissatisfaction, which would impact customers' satisfaction with the hotel service (Aminuddin, 2013).

**Opportunity to Perform.** Consensus arrived at the understanding that training is insufficient for employees. The only exception is respondents from Hotel 1, who believed the training was sufficient and assisted them in performing better. It is mainly related to the nature of the hotel as part of the training center for students who are interested in the hospitality industry. Thus, training is a typical program conducted by Hotel 1, unlike the other hotels.

Further, most respondents said their training is more general to the service quality program than specific to their particular jobs. Therefore, researchers suggested that HRM influences HRM activities rather than financial achievement (Purcell & Kinnie, 2007). However, enhancing the employees' capabilities can be achieved through HRM activities like training and development (Nehles & Veenendaal, 2017). Therefore, the failure to provide employees with the training to equip them with the necessary skills to perform their job may influence their satisfaction and performance at work. More importantly, training is also considered an appreciation to employees so that they realize the willingness of the hotel to invest in their development (Tremblay et al., 2010). Therefore, it is another possible explanation for the gap in employee performance in the hotel case study.

While each policy plays its part in transmitting the information to the employees to grasp their overall responsibilities when they hold a particular position, this suggests that employees' understandings need to cover all policies. These include policies aimed at attracting, developing, retaining, and motivating employees to assist the achievement of organizational goals. Thus, the implementation of HRM practices aims at assisting the employees to maximize their contribution to the organization. However, moving towards an innovation requires time and effort, which may not be possible in a short time without proper guidance and risk analysis. Therefore, employees are required to gain more ability to adapt to the current changes and job demands as expected by the organization (Sull et al., 2015). In turn, employees can contribute to organizational achievement and bridge their performance gap.

## CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, AND SUGGESTIONS

This study examines the role of HRM policies and practices in enhancing employee work behavior that is significant to organizational achievement from the perspective of AMO theory. In this relationship, HRM practices represent the mechanisms that stimulate employees' work behavior that influence their performance. Based on the actual experience of employees with the implementation of HRM policies, it is proven that the gap between the expectations of top management and that of employees exists in the hotel case study. The crux of this performance gap is caused by the failure of HRM practices to transmit the right message of the employees' work expectations. Understanding work expectations is crucial as it will influence employees' work performance. In this study, all elements in the AMO theory are unable to be filled by HRM practices to assist employees to produce significant work behavior. This failure is interpreted through the weaknesses of these practices to provide the signal of employees' work requirements for them to perform and contribute to the organizational achievement. While the data for this study is limited to employees' experiences, more investigation from the perspectives of key-related parties involved in evaluating employees' performance would be beneficial to understanding the situation at the workplace. Investigating different levels of employees could provide insights into the acceptance and awareness of HRM policies and practices among employees. Regardless of the position and educational background, all employees must have sufficient knowledge of their work demands, especially in the context of the hospitality industry, where satisfied employees may largely influence customer satisfaction. Drawing on the assumptions of AMO theory, it is suggested that workplace development for innovation programs may be required to increase the effectiveness of the HRM implementation. It is to ensure that employees are prepared to adapt to the changes in their work demands. Furthermore, the role of line management is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of HRM policies and influence employees' behavior towards their jobs. Importantly, top management as an evaluator of employee performance should have an interest in, and nourish, a supportive HRM environment to open communication and participation towards engaging employees in the HRM activities to increase their understanding of the HRM processes. In turn, a better understanding of HRM policies and practices may potentially bridge the gap of employees' performance and contribute to the organization's development.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theoretically, HRM issues are often viewed as context-dependent and interdependent (Cooke, 2017); thus, the current study is relevant to fill the HRM literature gap from International perspectives other than the

Western world. Societal context (Malaysia as part of the non-western context) contributes to bridging the gap of HRM literature to reduce the dependency on Western values, which may not be compatible with other contexts (Parry et al., 2020). Further, employing qualitative research methodology contributes to overcoming the weaknesses of HRM research as proposed by researchers, particularly on the weak capability of the research data to explain the observed findings (Cascio, 2012; Chidlow et al., 2015; Romani et al., 2018). Using qualitative research design allows the explanation of 'how' and 'why' questions to explain the findings in more detail better (Yilmaz, 2013).

Practically, understanding employees' perceptions and behavior assist the organization to be prepared before dysfunctional behavior are produced by employees, which is detrimental for organizations, especially in the current situations where adaptability is a main requirement for organization to survive. While organizations are looking forwards for more effective and efficient operations especially in time of economic challenges and difficulties, an effort to bridge the performance gap is highly valuable not only to achieve the organizational target, but to reduce human errors that could cost more financial burden to the business. Moreover, as the nature of the hospitality industry lies with fluctuating customer demand and changing business goals over time, these require the hotel management to choose the most efficient approach in managing employees' performance, especially for Malaysia that applied tight cost-control practices in the hotel sector (Ahmad & Scott, 2013; Mat et al., 2019).

## CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

There is no conflict of interest during the completion of this article. All co-authors gave their commitment and contributed to the completion of this article.

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# Cognitive Aspects of Students' Mathematical Reasoning Habits: A Study on Utilizing Lesson Study and Open Approach

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the cognitive aspects of the mathematical reasoning habits of 3rd Grade students by utilizing Lesson Study (LS) and Open Approach (OA) in teaching mathematics. The cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits are a powerful complement to teaching mathematics because they are particularly focused on skills and procedures. However, the major problem with teaching mathematical reasoning is that teachers cannot teach mathematical reasoning habits directly but can set up tasks that encourage reasoning. A total of eight students were purposively selected as they have been taught using OA treatment in the LS process for two years, from 2016 to 2018. Four study instruments were used: lesson plans, activity worksheets, field notes, and an interview protocol. In addition, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) (2009) framework, consisting of four cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits, namely (i) analyzing a problem; (ii) implementing a strategy; (iii) using connections, and (iv) reflecting on a solution, was employed to determine the cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits. Qualitative results revealed three pieces of evidence to support all four cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits. In conclusion, the results of this study contribute significantly to our recognition of the importance of OA treatment in the LS process while teaching mathematics in improving students' mathematical reasoning habits.

*Keywords:* Cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits, evidence, lesson study, open approach

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## INTRODUCTION

Mathematical reasoning is one of the core mathematical learning components, and informed learning skills and innovations are recognized as ways to enhance human quality and potential in the 21st-Century (Oslington et al., 2020). Classroom teaching is a cultural activity that involves social interaction between two or more parties, namely the teacher and his or her students and between students, and subject matter is an essential element in the social interaction (Lim et al., 2013). For some time, the teachers' beliefs have been identified as a challenge for the reform of mathematics instruction (Stipek et al., 2001). Mathematical reasoning, or the principles of mathematical reasoning, is part of the mathematical thinking process that enables students to enhance their mathematical skills. Consequently, mathematical reasoning could be thought of as the 'glue' which helps students make sense of mathematics (Askew, 2020). Askew further explained that students must evaluate situations, select problem-solving strategies, draw logical conclusions, develop, describe, and reflect on solutions when engaging in the mathematical reasoning process. Therefore, mathematical reasoning habits can be developed after students engage in plenty of learning experiences using numbers, quantities, numerical relationships, and problem-solving (Oslington et al., 2020).

Current mathematics curricula emphasize the reasoning process as one of the key mathematical practices. Consequently, the teacher should prepare an effective environment for nurturing mathematical reasoning by deliberately choosing tasks and activities that require students to engage in mathematical reasoning. In short, the teacher's role when it comes to providing opportunities to practice the reasoning habit is significant (Tall, 2014). However, Thai students are relatively self-conscious, and their natural inquisitiveness is not expressed as much as possible. It is perhaps caused by unfortunate approaches used in teaching mathematics, which prevent the students from being curious, asking questions, and engaging in reasoning. It means that students are unable to connect ideas, gain a deeper conceptual understanding, and ultimately enjoy learning mathematics (Thinwiangthong et al., 2020). In fact, in the current context of mathematics classes in Thailand, teachers still fail to utilize cognitive factors to promote students' mathematical reasoning habits in terms of mathematical and learning processes. The non-functional status quo offers an essential opportunity for educators to implement Lesson Study (LS) and the Open Approach (OA) to support the development of the cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning. Students' habits, such as an effort, would contribute useful educational insights for teachers in formulations of meaningful teaching.

Over recent decades, multiple studies have provided plentiful evidence of the value of providing opportunities for students to engage in normal statistical reasoning from the earliest years of schooling (Aridor

& Ben-Zvi, 2017; Doerr et al., 2017; English, 2013; Lehrer & English, 2018; Makar, 2016; Makar & Rubin, 2017). For example, English (2013) argued that elementary school students could make informal inferences in uncertain situations to ensure a solid learning foundation for formal statistical understanding in later years. Moreover, Makar and Rubin (2017) asked students to interpret data from familiar sources. As a result, they were exposed to some big ideas in statistics, such as variability, range, and the aggregate properties of data sets. They found that multiple alternatives are often reasonable. Hence, teachers have to understand students' mathematical thinking (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999), while students have to improve their mathematical reasoning habits in order to develop the relevant ideas (Cuoco et al., 1996) and use them to enhance their mathematical competence (Kilpatrick et al., 2001). Even though mathematical reasoning habits are recognized as important components of mathematical learning, students are not adequately trained to adopt them. Consequently, many students are reported to be facing difficulties to possess them (Foster, 2012). One of the significant barriers was that teachers liked to emphasize the memorizing approach and did not encourage students to engage in autonomous learning to cultivate mathematical reasoning habits (Wagner, 2008; Zhao, 2009). This was later supported by Inprasitha (2014). Inprasitha raised the problems that teachers tend to use rote memorization to teach mathematics, instead of using their creativity to enhance the students' problem-solving skills. It indicates that creative and innovative teaching is incredibly important to enhance mathematical reasoning habits.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A long-established practice of lesson preparation that originated in Japan, the so-called lesson study (LS) approach, has been in existence for over 130 years (Tall, 2008). LS is defined as a teacher-led instructional improvement cycle in which teachers work together to convey student learning targets, design a lesson, teach and/or observe the lesson, reflect on the collected evidence, go through the lesson for improvement, and re-teach the reviewed lesson (Lewis, 2002; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004). Moreover, LS is considered a professional learning model based on collaboration, which supports mathematics teachers' learning about content, curriculum, and student thinking, and facilitates greater reflection and more focus on conversations than traditional types of professional development (Hart et al., 2011). LS has been implemented to improve lessons in actual classroom contexts, and it is considered one of the most effective strategies to enhance teaching, particularly for mathematical subjects (Loipha & Inprasitha, 2004). Because of LS's versatility, innovation has continued to be a vital component for teacher development and has become well known and popular in the teaching profession (Baba, 2007). LS was first introduced and adapted to the Thai educational context in 2002, encompassing three steps: (i) design a research lesson collaboratively (Plan); (ii) observe the research lesson collaboratively (Do), and (iii) discuss and reflect on the research lesson (See) collaboratively (Inprasitha, 2009).

The open approach (OA) also originated in Japan. The ideas underpinning OA are targeted at permitting students to learn mathematics in response to their mathematical ability, complemented by a certain degree of self-determination in their learning. This latter can improve the quality of the learning processes and result in mathematics achievement (Nohda, 2000). Later, Inprasitha (2011) proposed an OA that consisted of four phases, namely (i) posing open-ended problems; (ii) encouraging students' self-learning; (iii) introducing whole-class discussion and comparison, and (iv) summarize by connecting students' mathematical ideas that have emerged in the classroom by incorporating OA into the three-step LS model. The researchers adopted Inprasitha's (2011, 2014) conceptual framework as elucidated in Figure 1 in this study. Moreover, Thinwiangthong et al. (2020) found that the LS and OA framework can encourage mathematics teachers to foster a positive learning environment with regard to any learning activities. According to Loipha and Inprasitha (2004), integrating the OA and LS process involves encouraging students to access alternative perspectives, methods, and answers through dealing with open-ended problems, which could enhance students' reasoning skills.

According to Isoda (2015), two types of theories underpin the incorporation of OA into the LS process, namely problem-solving approach and theories for curriculum. Shimizu (1999) explained the problem-solving approach as a well-known Japanese teaching method for understanding and turned it up as a shared teaching theory to develop students to learn mathematics by and for themselves. On the other hand, Isoda and Katagiri (2012) described the problem-solving approach as teaching about learning how to learn and teaching values so that students are being able to use their mathematical thinking in solving problems as one of the most fundamental goals of teaching mathematics. Theories for the curriculum are another theory used, as illustrated in teachers' guidebooks in the form of several technical terms, which are only used by mathematics teachers and educators to share mathematical knowledge for teaching (Isoda, 2015).

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2009) builds on the ideas of NCTM's Principles and Standards for School Mathematics and focuses on how school mathematics can better prepare students for future success through mathematical reasoning as the heart of school curriculum. By following the proposal of the NCTM (2009) with regard to the conceptual framework, the researchers have conceptualized the cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits in four steps as follows: (i) analyzing a problem; (ii) implementing a strategy; (iii) using connections, and (iv) reflecting on a solution. The NCTM (2009) recognized mathematical reasoning habits as productive ways of thinking in mathematical inquiries and sense-making. The rationale of fostering student reasoning habits is addressing the direction of school mathematics in the 21st century because it involves three critical aspects: (i) meta-cognition (reflecting on and identifying one's thinking processes), (ii) the role of student discourse in promoting student reasoning, and (iii) the importance of providing equitable opportunities for all students to engage in and share their reasoning. The three critical aspects correspond to the main ideas of OA and LS, as students need to explain their thinking after they have had their self-learning and discussion with their peers.

In the 'Plan' step of LS, the LS group is teachers discussing the relevant contents and teaching activities required for students to utilize their cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits in the OA problem-solving process. This step mainly highlights how mathematical reasoning acts as the 'glue' that helps mathematics make sense. Finally, data will be collected through the 'Do' step of LS. In other words, the researchers will determine all the cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits through their observations, interviews, and consideration of the students' worksheets, to refine their understanding of what students mean by the term 'mathematical reasoning.'

Martin and Kasmer (2010) mentioned that mathematical reasoning habits should be integrated into and implemented with various curricular topics in all mathematics classes and at all school levels. These aspects are essential in mathematics learning as they ensure that students are equipped with the necessary understanding and the ability to apply such understanding in practice. On the other hand, Cuoco et al. (1996) studied the relevance of mathematical reasoning habits in mathematical learning and found that the mechanisms with regard to promoting students' understanding are still not given sufficient attention. Teachers primarily attempt to prepare students for tests to meet designated standards (NCTM, 2000). Occasionally, teachers have immediately revealed answers and guided them straight away. This phenomenon reflects that students rarely have adequate time to develop their mathematical reasoning habits (Foster, 2012).

In this context, the researchers would like to explore how the cognitive aspects of students' mathematical reasoning habits relate to integrating LS and OA into the mathematics subject teaching activities of 3rd Grade elementary school students. In short, LS is a tool to improve the teaching approach, while OA is a teaching approach and an aspect of LS (Inprasitha, 2011).

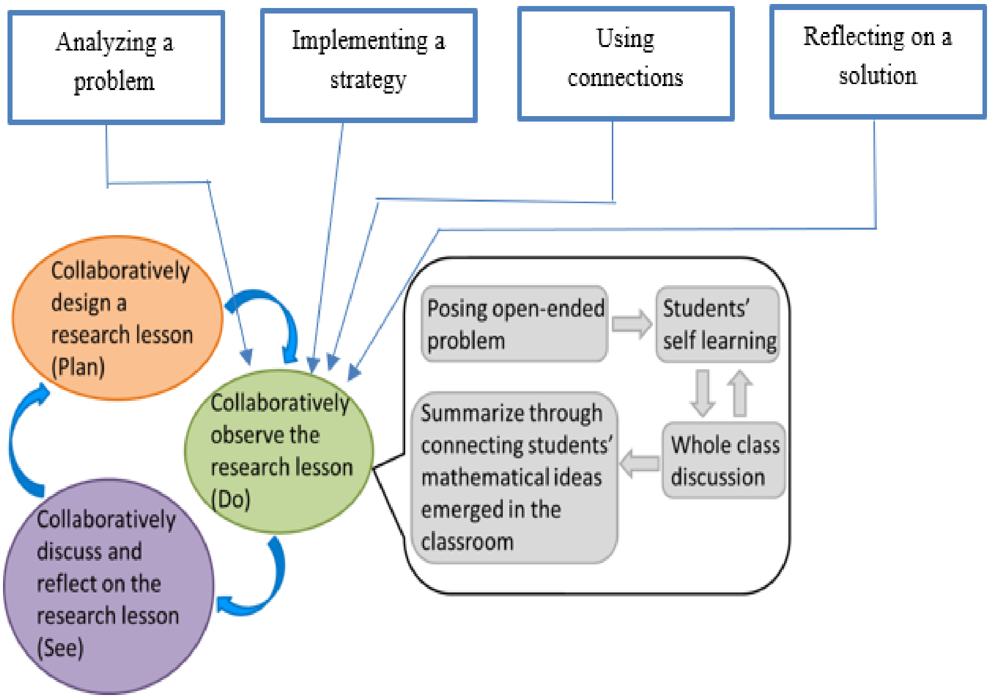

Analyzing a problem
Implementing a strategy
Using connections
Reflecting on a solution
Collaboratively design a research lesson (Plan)
Collaboratively observe the research lesson (Do)
Collaboratively discuss and reflect on the research lesson (See)
Posing open-ended problem
Students' self learning
Whole class discussion
Summarize through connecting students' mathematical ideas emerged in the classroom

*Figure 1*. Conceptual framework

## METHODS

### Study Samples

The target group comprised eight 3rd grade students (Elementary 3/2) during Semester 2 the academic year 2018 from Ban Nonsankham Nongsala Sisa-at School, Sisaket Province, Thailand. These eight individuals were purposively selected because they had participated in a teacher professional development project for mathematics financially supported by the Education Equity Fund and conducted by the Centre for Research in Mathematics Education, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Thailand. The whole school approach was applied to the research school by incorporating OA into the LS process in every mathematics lesson for 96 LS cycles over the past two years (2016 to 2018). It implies a collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning and the conditions that support the OA incorporated into the LS process as the teaching innovations.

The purposive sampling technique was appropriate in this study involving consideration of students' behaviors and work outcomes, aimed at demonstrating the cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits. In addition, a teacher advisor was interviewed to identify the characteristics of each student. After that, researchers used tracking practice to create four homogeneous groups of students, with the assumption that this would make it easier for teachers to tailor instruction to students' needs. Finally, the eight samples were identified using cross-case analysis.

### Study Design

Researchers employed a qualitative approach aiming to convey meaning and comprehension via a detailed description. In this sense, the qualitative approach is a powerful method for exploring educational issues in that it allows us to develop a comprehensive view of complex social settings. Therefore, the qualitative approach is suitable for identifying the mathematical reasoning habits of the samples' real-life experiences within those settings. A cross-case study research design was employed as it offers the opportunity to blend several methods, which justify the study approach. The cross-case analysis was built upon the mathematical reasoning habits found in the specific cases. Data for this qualitative approach were obtained from several different sources in interviews, observations of real-life settings, and documents.

### Study Procedure, Instruments, and Data Collection

Students' mathematical reasoning habits were hypothesized to improve after the OA treatment in the LS process was used for teaching mathematics. The research procedure involved three phases. An LS team was formed and worked collaboratively to develop lesson plans for the 3rd Grade mathematics topic 'Division with Remainders' by incorporating OA in the first phase. The second phase followed it. All LS team members observed the teaching by focusing on the cognitive aspects of the mathematical reasoning habits of the students except the teacher who was teaching. In the final phase, the LS team members discussed and reflected on the teaching results, examined the observation-derived results, and attempted to improve the research lesson.

The learning observation was constructed using the framework of NCTM (2009) regarding four cognitive aspects as follows: (i) analyzing a problem; (ii) implementing a strategy; (iii) using connections; and (iv) reflecting on a solution. Two instruments were used, namely students' worksheets and field notes, along with the learning observation. Students' worksheets were in the form of written assignments, including the records of students who used mathematical ideas to solve mathematical problems, who offered problem solutions involving logical explanations. In addition, students' worksheets and field notes were used to record all the problem-solving behaviors and cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning through the lesson observation.

In the final phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight participants to collect qualitative data. The interview protocol was designed mainly to explore the eight participants' views regarding how they analyzed the problem, how they implemented strategies in solving the mathematical problems, how they made connections to solve the problems, and how they reflected on the solution. The students' logical thinking to produce ideas was our major interest. Therefore, the researchers had to ensure that the interview questions were aligned with the research questions before engaging in an inquiry-based conversation. The research questions required students to explain their thinking and how they believe their solutions make sense. Data were analyzed using content analysis.

## RESULTS

The results of this study are presented by following the aims indicated above. The three steps of the LS framework (Inprasitha, 2011) were employed as a study procedure, while the OA (Inprasitha, 2011) was operated as a treatment during the second step of the LS framework. Finally, the researchers used the NCTM (2009) framework to identify the four cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits.

### Step 1 of LS: Collaboratively Design a Research Lesson (Plan)

The study was begun by creating an LS team consisting of a mentor, researcher, and two mathematics teachers to design a lesson plan. When designing the lesson plan, the LS team had to fit in the overall development of the particular topic content that was 'Division with Remainders' as part of the 3rd Grade mathematical syllabus. They also must stipulate the main objectives of the lessons and the comprehensive development of the lesson arrangement by taking into account the OA treatment. In other words, the LS team organized the lesson plans in sequence so that an appropriate range of mathematical reasoning habits was taken into consideration (Askew, 2020). In this way, the possible solutions were planned so that the teacher could organize a coherent discussion based upon the following problem situation (Tall, 2014). Figure 2 shows the LS team creating a joint lesson plan.

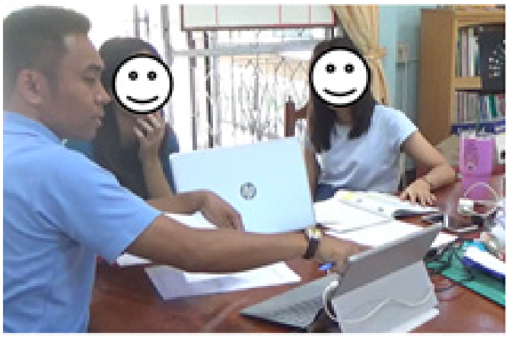


*Figure 2*. LS team was creating a joint lesson plan

The problem situation was derived from the topic "Division with Remainders" in the 3rd Grade mathematics textbook (Inprasitha, 2010, p. 45), as shown in Figure 3:

*"If you have 20 apples and 23 oranges, how many bags do you need to fit four of each kind of fruit in each bag?"*

*Instruction: Write a corresponding mathematical statement and provide an answer.*

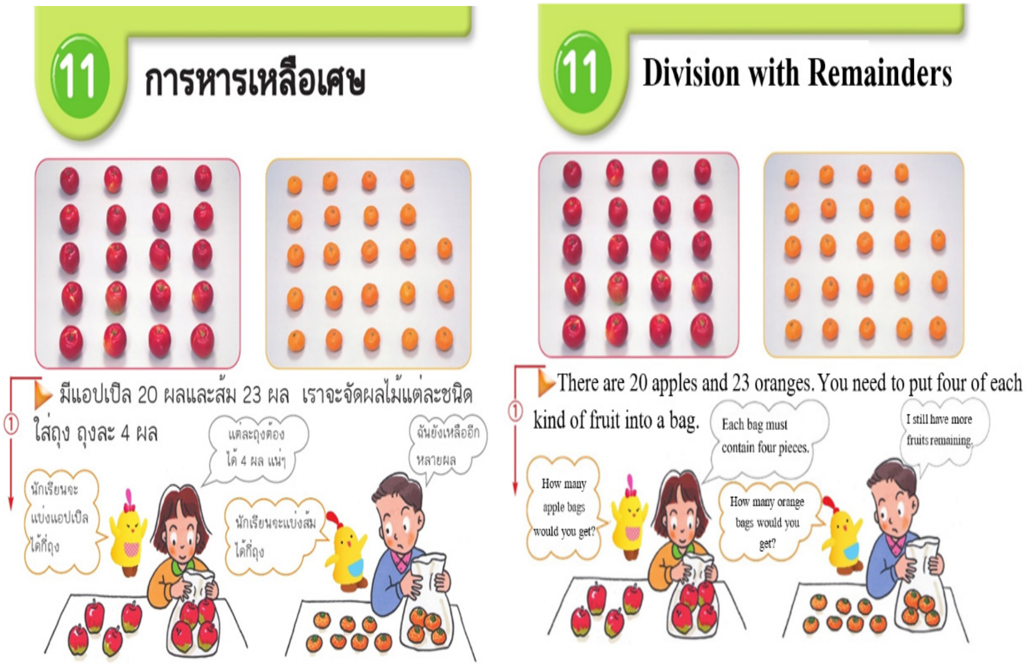

11
การหารเหลือเศษ
มีแอปเปิล 20 ผลและส้ม 23 ผล เราจะจัดผลไม้แต่ละชนิดใส่ถุง ถุงละ 4 ผล
①
นักเรียนจะแบ่งแอปเปิลได้กี่ถุง
แต่ละถุงต้องได้ 4 ผล แน่ๆ
นักเรียนจะแบ่งส้มได้กี่ถุง
ฉันยังเหลืออีกหลายผล
11
Division with Remainders
There are 20 apples and 23 oranges. You need to put four of each kind of fruit into a bag.
①
How many apple bags would you get?
Each bag must contain four pieces.
How many orange bags would you get?
I still have more fruits remaining.

*Figure 3*. Problem situation

## Step 2 of LS: Collaboratively Observe the Research Lesson (Do)

As indicated in Step 1 of the LS procedure, the LS team members planned the research lesson collaboratively. It was followed by Step 2, whereby the research lesson was conducted by a mathematics teacher (an LS team member), with a group of supportive observers (the other LS team members) who discussed and reflected on the research lesson immediately after the lesson had finished. In this step, it is important to have a group of observers (the LS team members) who have ideas fresh in their minds because they can then have a comprehensive focus on every cognitive aspect of the mathematical reasoning habits.

The observers stayed at the back or sides of the classroom as the lesson proceeded, but when the students were working on the problem, they were able to walk around and observe how students approached the problem differently. At this point, they could make field notes, ask the students why they had solved the problems in such a way, and so on. The main intention was to obtain a coherent overall view of the research lesson in terms of the students' mathematical reasoning habits. Figure 4 elucidates Step 2 of the LS approach.

*Figure 4*. Step 2 of LS implementation

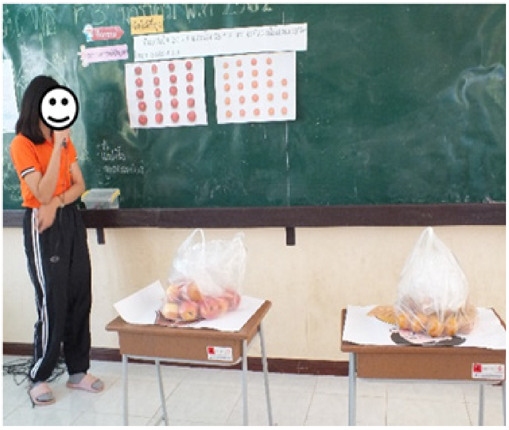


*Figure 5*. Posing open-ended problem

As part of the second step of the LS approach, the teacher integrated the four OA steps into their teaching practices according to the research lesson plan as follows:

(i) Posing an open-ended problem

The teacher-reviewed the students' prior knowledge before starting her teaching activities. Therefore, she asked her students what they had learned previously. This was followed by posing the problem situation by teacher with the instruction on the chalkboard. The problem situation was "If there were 20 apples and 23 oranges, how many bags would be needed if you have to fit four of each kind of fruit in each bag?". She then requested the students to read the problem situation and its instruction together. After that, she identified students' understanding of the problem situation, as shown in Figure 5.

(ii) Students' self-learning

In the second step of OA, the students were required to read the problem situation and the associated instruction and were encouraged to discuss the problem situation with their peers. Subsequently, the teacher distributed the worksheets and teaching aid to each group of students to solve the problem together, as shown in Figure 6.

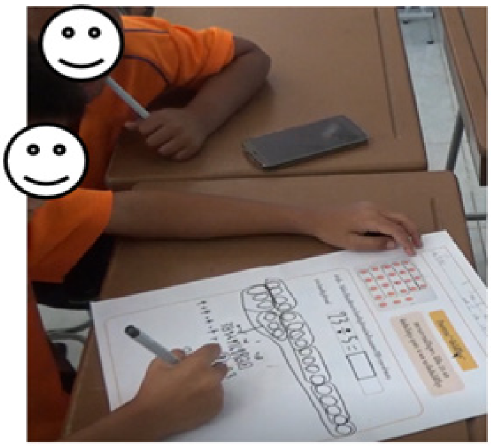


*Figure 6*. Students' self-learning to solve the problem

(iii) Whole class discussion and comparison After the students had finished solving the problem and submitted their worksheets to the teacher, the teacher selected the groups with different mathematical reasoning habits to present their views about how they solved the problem. At this step, students were encouraged to learn collaboratively, and the teacher gave sufficient opportunities for their peers to give their viewpoints. Figure 7 shows the activity of whole-class discussion and makes a comparison.

After the students had finished solving the problem and had submitted their worksheets to the teacher, the teacher selected groups with different mathematical reasoning habits to present their views about how they had solved the problem. At this stage, the students were encouraged to learn collaboratively, and the teacher gave sufficient opportunities for their peers to give their viewpoints. Figure 7 shows the activity of whole-class discussion, and the teacher made a comparison.

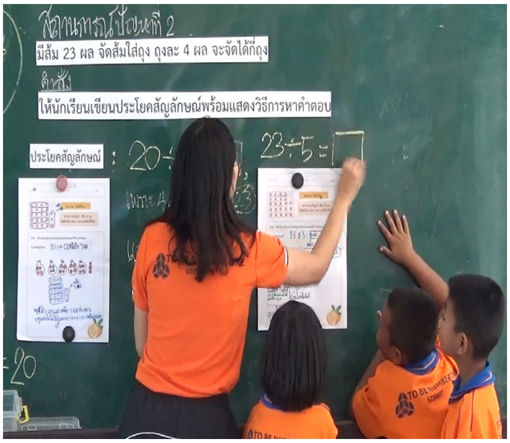

สถานการณ์ปัญหาที่ 2
มีส้ม 23 ผล จัดส้มใส่ถุง ถุงละ 4 ผล จะจัดได้กี่ถุง
คำสั่ง
ให้นักเรียนเขียนประโยคสัญลักษณ์พร้อมแสดงวิธีการหาคำตอบ
ประโยคสัญลักษณ์
23÷5=

*Figure 7*. Whole class discussion and comparison

(iv) Summarize by merging students' mathematical ideas in the classroom. After the students had completed their group work presentation, the teacher posted their worksheets on the chalkboard. The students were then required to explain their mathematical reasoning verbally, and the teacher wrote down all the additional information on the worksheets. Finally, the teacher summarized the lesson by compiling all the students' viewpoints according to the worksheets on the chalkboard. Then, all the students were allowed to share their viewpoints, as shown in Figure 8.

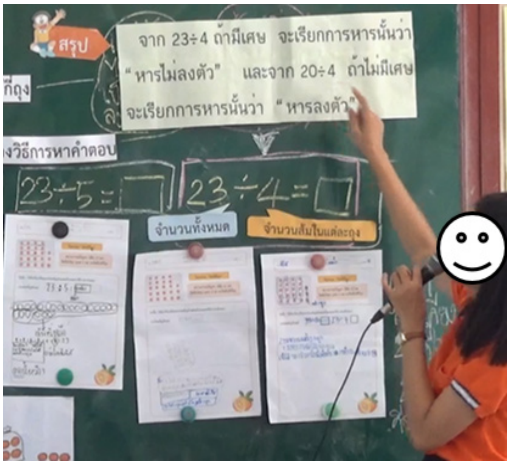

สรุป
จาก 23÷4 ถ้ามีเศษ จะเรียกการหารนั้นว่า "หารไม่ลงตัว" และจาก 20÷4 ถ้าไม่มีเศษ จะเรียกการหารนั้นว่า "หารลงตัว"
วิธีการหาคำตอบ
23÷5=
23÷4=
จำนวนทั้งหมด
จำนวนส้มในแต่ละถุง

*Figure 8*. Summarizing by connecting students' mathematical reasoning habits

### Step 3 of LS: Collaboratively Discuss and Reflect on the Research Lesson (See)

During Step 2 of LS, the members of the LS team observed and collected the data with regard to the students' mathematical reasoning habits. A reflection session was conducted after the research lesson mainly dealing with the learning activities based on the collected data. According to Tan et al. (2017), there are three main advantages of Step 3: (i) As the observing teachers observe another teacher's lesson, they can share their views to create a clearer or more comprehensive picture of mathematical reasoning habits as demonstrated by students; (ii) the teacher who teaches the research lesson can realize their strengths and weaknesses from the observing teachers' feedback, and (iii) the observing teachers learn as they observe the teaching of another teacher. In sum, Step 3 of the LS approach is important because the LS team members were able to discuss and reflect on the research lesson collaboratively, allowing them to identify the pieces of evidence relating to the students' mathematical reasoning habits. Thus, this process can promote the mathematics teachers' professionalism. Figure 9 elucidates Step 3 of LS.

*Figure 9.* LS team members discussed and reflected on the research lesson

## Study Outcomes: The Four Cognitive Aspects of Mathematical Reasoning Habits

The outcomes of this study are presented by following the framework of NCTM (2009) with regard to the four cognitive aspects of mathematical reasoning habits. The eight specific cases were identified and labeled as S1 to S8.

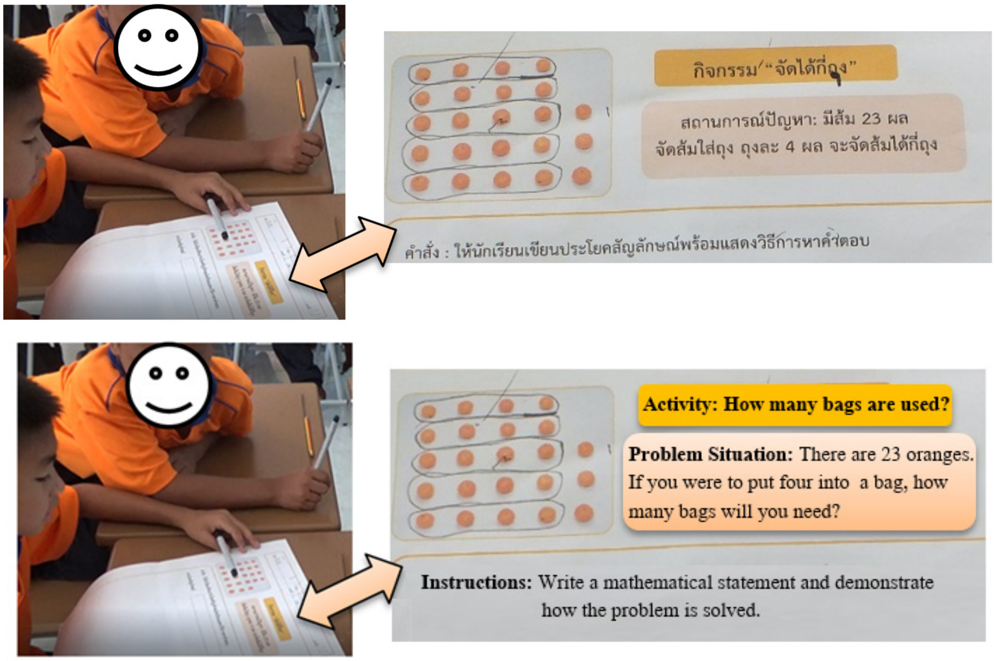
(i) Cognitive aspect 1: Analyzing a problem

In this step, a protocol analysis was conducted to examine the cognitive aspect described as "Analyzing a problem" using the problem situation detailed on the activity sheet. The data was obtained from a video recording of the class activities during the research lesson. The researchers transcribed the records, identified behaviors in textual form, and created a protocol showing the verbal expressions and behaviors of the students. It is elaborated as follows:

Item 1 S1: *Write here.*

Item 2 S2 and S3: *There are 23 oranges; by putting four into a bag, how many bags of oranges would be there?*

Instructions: *Write a corresponding mathematical statement and provide an answer.*



กิจกรรม “จัดได้กี่ถุง”

สถานการณ์ปัญหา: มีส้ม 23 ผล จัดส้มใส่ถุง ถุงละ 4 ผล จะจัดส้มได้กี่ถุง

คำสั่ง : ให้นักเรียนเขียนประโยคสัญลักษณ์พร้อมแสดงวิธีการหาคำตอบ

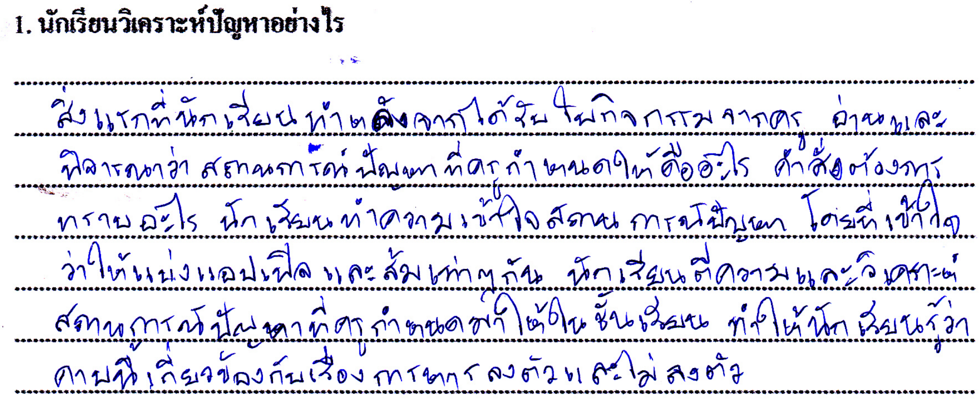
**Activity: How many bags are used?**

**Problem Situation:** There are 23 oranges. If you were to put four into a bag, how many bags will you need?

**Instructions:** Write a mathematical statement and demonstrate how the problem is solved.

*Figure 10*. The students are analyzing a problem from the worksheet

The qualitative result obtained from the field notes and the interviews revealed the verbal expressions and behaviors of the students as elaborated below:



**1. นักเรียนวิเคราะห์ปัญหาอย่างไร**

สิ่งแรกที่นักเรียนทำหลังจากได้รับใบกิจกรรมจากครู อ่านและ
พิจารณาว่า สถานการณ์ปัญหาที่ครูกำหนดให้คืออะไร คำสั่งต้องการ
ทราบอะไร นักเรียนทำความเข้าใจสถานการณ์ปัญหา โดยที่เข้าใจ
ว่าให้แบ่งแอปเปิล และส้มเท่าๆกัน นักเรียนตีความและวิเคราะห์
สถานการณ์ปัญหาที่ครูกำหนดมาให้ในชั้นเรียน ทำให้นักเรียนรู้ว่า
คำถามนี้เกี่ยวข้องกับเรื่องการหารลงตัวและไม่ลงตัว

*Figure 11*. An excerpt from the field notes demonstrating how the students analyzed a problem

*1. Translation*

*Upon receiving the activity sheet from the teacher, the first action the students took was to read and determine what the problem situation required and what the instructions expected. The students attempted to understand the situation. They understood that apples and oranges must be equally distributed. They interpreted and analyzed the assigned problem situation in class and found out that the period was going to be about divisions with and without remainders.*

*Figure 11 (Continue)*

As exhibited in Figure 11 (field notes) above, the statement "*Students interpreted and analyzed the problem situation assigned by the teacher in the classroom*" was evidence to show that the students jointly analyzed the problem until they began to realize that they were going to study divisions with remainders.

Interviewer: *What are you doing here?*
Item 2 S4: *I am reading the instructions.*
Item 3 Interviewer: *What did you do while analyzing the problem?*
Item 4 S5: *We read, discussed, and tried to understand it together. So, we were able to do it.*

*Figure 12*. Interview results

The above results revealed that the students helped each other (Figure 10) to understand and interpret the problem situation (Figure 11) and that the students read the problem situation together (Figure 12). The other evidence emerged from the interview analysis from Item 4, when Student 5 (Figure 12) stated, "*We read, discussed, and tried to understand it together. So, we were able to do it*." This verbatim statement reflects that the students were aware of their roles in mathematical learning while internalizing and understanding the problem related to division with and without remainders. When the researchers triangulated data from various sources, namely photos, field notes, and semi-structured interviews, the qualitative results revealed that this was the cognitive aspect of the mathematical reasoning habits and could be categorized as the 'analyzing a problem' aspect.

(ii) Cognitive aspect 2: Implementing a strategy

The second aspect relating to mathematical reasoning habits was conducted to examine the students' cognitive aspects regarding implementing a strategy by using multiplication to solve the problem situation on their activity worksheets. Figure 13 shows the cognitive aspect of the students' mathematical reasoning habits through the way they implemented a strategy to solve the problem situation detailed in their activity worksheets. It is identified as the first piece of evidence of the second aspect of their mathematical reasoning habits.

Item 3 S6: *Four, five, twenty*  
Item 4 S7: *How many bags are needed for the distribution? There is no mathematical statement for it.*

$$4\times 1=4,\quad 4\times 2=8,\quad 4\times 4=16,\quad 4\times 4=16,\ 4\times 5=20,\ 4\times 6=24$$

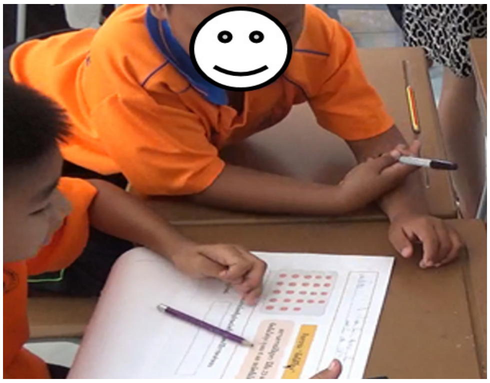
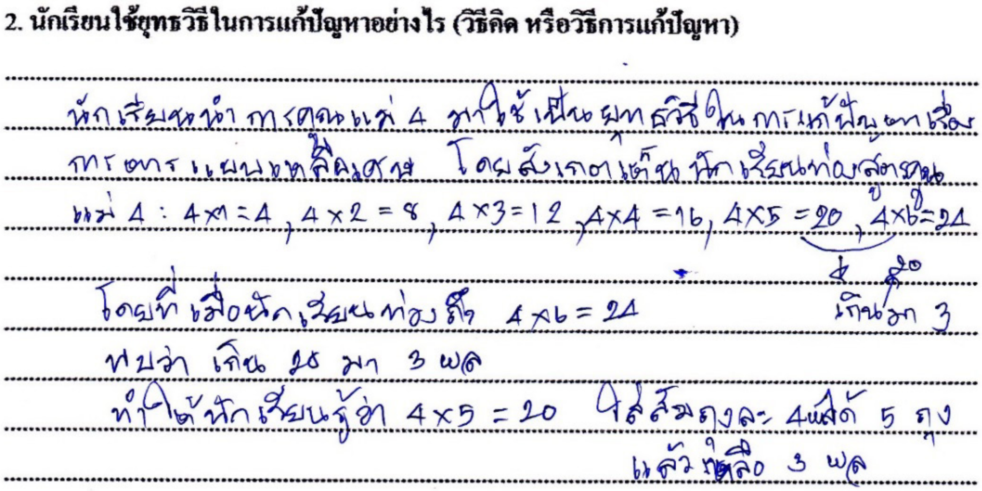


*Figure 13.* Implementing a strategy through multiplication to solve a problem

The second piece of evidence was obtained from the field notes ad indicated that the students were implementing a strategy while studying mathematics during the research lesson. Figure 14 shows the results from the field notes.

The third piece of evidence was obtained from the semi-structured interviews, as shown in Figure 15.

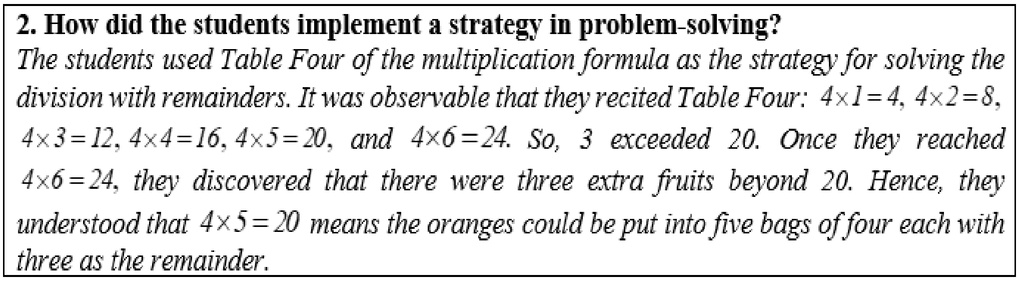
The three pieces of evidence were then triangulated and were concluded as the second aspect of mathematical reasoning habits, namely implementing a strategy as follows: The first evidence from the students' worksheets indicated that Table Four of the multiplication formula was utilized as elucidated in Figure 13. Figure 13 shows that the students applied a mathematical idea known as Table Four of the multiplication formula as their strategy to solve the problem. The second piece of evidence was derived from the field notes.



**2. นักเรียนใช้ยุทธวิธีในการแก้ปัญหาอย่างไร (วิธีคิด หรือวิธีการแก้ปัญหา)**

นักเรียนจะนำการคูณแม่ 4 มาใช้เป็นยุทธวิธีในการแก้ปัญหาเรื่อง
การหารแบบเหลือเศษ โดยสังเกตเห็นนักเรียนท่องสูตรคูณ
แม่ 4 : $4\times1=4$, $4\times2=8$, $4\times3=12$, $4\times4=16$, $4\times5=20$, $4\times6=24$
โดยที่เมื่อนักเรียนท่องถึง $4\times6=24$ เกินมา 3
พบว่า เกิน 20 มา 3 ผล
ทำให้นักเรียนรู้ว่า $4\times5=20$ ใส่ส้มถุงละ 4ผล ได้ 5 ถุง
แล้วที่เหลือ 3 ผล

*Figure 14.* Field notes (Second aspect of implementing a strategy)



**2. How did the students implement a strategy in problem-solving?**

*The students used Table Four of the multiplication formula as the strategy for solving the division with remainders. It was observable that they recited Table Four:* $4\times1=4$, $4\times2=8$, $4\times3=12$, $4\times4=16$, $4\times5=20$, *and* $4\times6=24$. *So, 3 exceeded 20. Once they reached* $4\times6=24$, *they discovered that there were three extra fruits beyond 20. Hence, they understood that* $4\times5=20$ *means the oranges could be put into five bags of four each with three as the remainder.*

*Figure 14. (Continue)*

*Item 15 Interviewer: What was your teacher's question that led you to use this solution to solve the problem?*

*Item 16 S8: Multiplication: Four multiplied by five, twenty, and the remainder is three.*

*Item 17 S1: Student 8 spoke, and the teacher wrote.*

*Item 18 Interviewer: Yes! The teacher wrote after Student 8 had spoken.*

*Figure 15***.** Semi-structured interviews with students (Second aspect of implementing a strategy)

The identified statement was, "*The students used Table Four of the multiplication formula as the strategy to solve the division with remainders.*" This evidence was identified while the students scaled the Table Four formula until they reached 4x5 = 20. The problem was that since there were 23 oranges in total, the students realized that three were left as a reminder following the division. Hence, multiplication was used as a strategy to solve the division problem with remainders. The final evidence emerged from the semi-structured interviews (Figure 15), Item 16, Student 8's statement as "*Multiplication: Four multiplied by five, twenty, and the remainder is three*". This statement indicated the use of multiplication as a strategy to solve a division problem with remainders, and that the students realized that 4x5 = 20 and the remainder was 3. The researchers then triangulated, concluded, and categorized the three pieces of evidence as to the cognitive aspect of mathematical reasoning habits as 'implementing a strategy' aspect.

(iii) Cognitive aspect 3: Using connections

The third aspect of mathematical reasoning habits was considered by examining the cognitive aspects related to using connections to solve the problem situation on the students' activity worksheets. Figure 16 shows the cognitive aspect of mathematical reasoning habits through the way the students use connections to solve the problem situation detailed in their activity worksheets. This is identified as the first evidence of the third aspect of mathematical reasoning habits, as shown in Figure 16.

Item 5 S3: *It won't work.*

Item 6 S4: *Why not circle four at a time? Just circle them.*

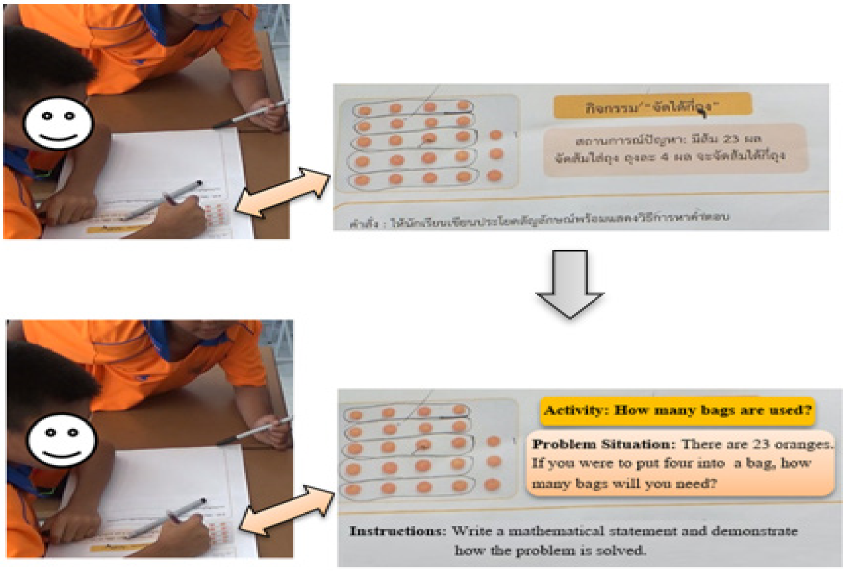
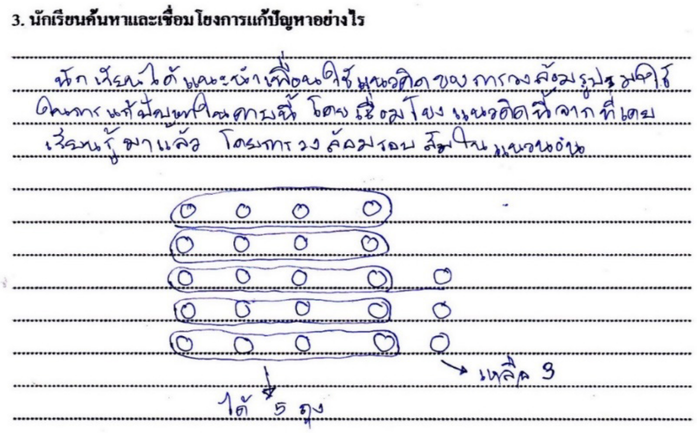

กิจกรรม "จัดได้กี่ถุง"
สถานการณ์ปัญหา: มีส้ม 23 ผล จัดส้มใส่ถุง ถุงละ 4 ผล จะจัดส้มได้กี่ถุง
คำสั่ง : ให้นักเรียนเขียนประโยคสัญลักษณ์พร้อมแสดงวิธีการหาคำตอบ
Activity: How many bags are used?
Problem Situation: There are 23 oranges. If you were to put four into a bag, how many bags will you need?
Instructions: Write a mathematical statement and demonstrate how the problem is solved.

*Figure 16.* Students' writings indicate an association of the image-circling idea to solve problem



3. นักเรียนค้นหาและเชื่อมโยงการแก้ปัญหาอย่างไร

นักเรียนได้แนะนำเพื่อนให้ใช้แนวคิดของการวงล้อมรูปสมาชิก
ในการแก้ปัญหาในครั้งนี้ โดยเชื่อมโยงแนวคิดที่มาจากที่เคย
เรียนรู้มาแล้ว โดยการวงล้อมรอบส้มในแนวนอน

เหลือ 3

ได้ 5 ถุง

*3. How did the students use connections in problem-solving?*

*A student suggested to his peers that the idea of image circling could be used to solve the problem under consideration. The connection was made by referring to an idea which is based on previous knowledge, and the students drew horizontal ovals for the oranges. This could relate to multiplication by grouping.*

*Figure 17.* Field notes that demonstrate how students used connections

The third piece of evidence was obtained from the semi-structured interview results as shown in Figure 18.

*Item 22 Interviewer: Where did you learn about the circling technique that you are using?*
*Item 23 S5: Elementary 2*
*Item 24 Interviewer: Are you learning about the circling technique during Elementary 2?*
*Item 25, S5: Yes, I was using the circling technique that I learned in Elementary 2 to solve most of the mathematical problems.*
*Item 26 Interviewer: So, it is using the knowledge that you are getting in Elementary 2, correct?*

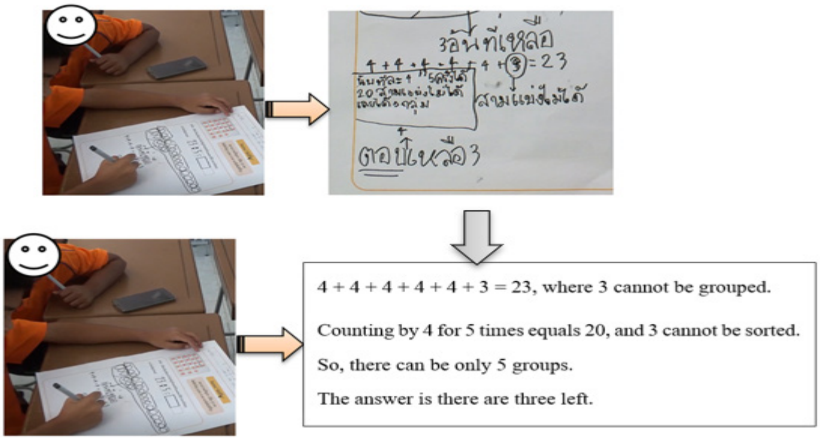
*Figure 18.* Semi-structured interviews with students (the third aspect of using connections)

The above three pieces of evidence were then triangulated and concluded as the third aspect of mathematical reasoning habits, namely using connections. So, it goes as follows: The first evidence is derived from Item 5, when Student 3 said, *"It won't work."* This signaled that a new method was required. Afterwards, Student 4 came up with a previously learned idea that involves circling four oranges at a time and suggested to Student 3 that he connect this idea with problem-solving and write the solution onto the activity worksheet. Again, in Item 6: *"Why not circle four at a time? Just circle them"*. Moreover, a photo of the students establishing a connection through circling is shown in Figure 16 and is further confirmed as the first piece of evidence. Next, the second piece of evidence was from the field notes, specifically in the text that states, "A student suggested that his peers employ the circling strategy to solve the problem under consideration by connecting the previously-learned idea to the problem-solving". During the time, the researchers noticed that the students made a connection by circling the oranges horizontally, forming five bags, with three being left as a remainder. This indicates how the students connected the circling idea with "Division with Remainder" (Figure 17). The final piece of evidence emerged from the semi-structured interviews with the students 5 through the statement: *"Yes, I am using the circling knowledge that I learned in Elementary 2 to solve the problem."* This verbatim statement was logged when the students connected the image circling knowledge from Elementary 2 to the problem-solving for 'Division with Remainder'. Finally, the researchers triangulated, concluded, and categorized the three pieces of evidence as to the cognitive aspect of mathematical reasoning habits, namely the 'using connections' aspect.

(iv) Cognitive aspect 4: Reflecting on a solution

The final aspect of mathematical reasoning habits was carried out to examine the students' cognitive aspect of reflecting on a solution onto their activity worksheets as follows:

Item 7 Student 1: *4 + 4 + 4 +4 + 4 + 3 = 23 (The student told his peers and wrote the answer simultaneously).*



4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 23, where 3 cannot be grouped.

Counting by 4 for 5 times equals 20, and 3 cannot be sorted.

So, there can be only 5 groups.

The answer is there are three left.

*Figure 19.* Students' writings indicate their reflection on a solution

The second piece of evidence that was obtained from the field notes, which indicated that the students were reflecting on a solution, as their behavioral data were recorded during the research lesson. Thus, the second piece of evidence relating to the final aspect of mathematical reasoning habits was elucidated in Figure 20.

***4. How did the students reflect on the solution?***
*The students were observed to have implemented the addition strategy to validate and confirm the solving of the problem. After having studied, 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 23, where number 3 was circled and indicated as non-groupable, they realized that the remainder was 3. The students counted by 4 and reached 20 oranges. However, the remaining 3 did not reach 4, so it did not meet the condition.*

*Figure 20.* Field notes indicating their reflection on a solution

The third piece of evidence was obtained from the semi-structured interview results as shown in Figure 21.

Item 42 Interviewer: *What did you use to confirm your answer?*
Item 43 S6: *I used addition.*
Item 44 Interviewer: *What was added?*
Item 45 S6: *Four*
Item 46 Interviewer: *How was it added?*
Item 47 S7: *4+4+4+4+4+3 = 23*

*Figure 21.* Semi-structured interviews with students (the final aspect of reflecting on a solution)

The above three pieces of evidence were then triangulated and were concluded as the final aspect of mathematical reasoning habits, namely reflecting on a solution. This went as follows: The first evidence was from the students' verbal explanation in Item 6, in which Student 1 spoke and wrote *"4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 23"* onto the activity worksheet. Moreover, a photo reflects that the students employed addition to confirm their problem-solving idea for division with remainders, specifically, by placing four oranges in bags at a time, and recognizing the remaining three as the remainder (Figure 19). This is followed by the second piece of evidence, which was derived from the field notes. The evidence statement is: *"The students employed addition to review or validate the problem-solving"*. This statement was recorded when the students were observed to be writing down the addition in this way: *4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 23* and circled the number 3 as the remainder. In doing so they considered the conditions of the problem where four oranges were to be put into bags, making a total of five bags. Hence, they were able to produce a reasonable answer using addition to validate the image-circling idea to solve a division with the remainder (Figure 20). The final piece of evidence emerged from the semi-structured interviews with the students, as shown in Item 45, when Student 6 stated: *"Four is added"*. The statement was mentioned when the students added four repeatedly, based on the number of bags of oranges, i.e., four per bag for a total of five bags with a three remainder. This was, as Student 7 stated in Item 47, that *"4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 3 = 23"*. As the data from various sources were triangulated, it was found that this cognitive aspect of the mathematical reasoning habits could be categorized as "reflecting on a solution".

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The researchers explored the impact of OA treatment in the LS process on teaching practices in terms of enhancing the cognitive aspects of the mathematical reasoning habits of 3rd Grade students. The results of this study clearly contribute to our recognition of the importance of OA treatment in the LS process while teaching mathematics, in terms of improving students' mathematical reasoning habits, such as (i) analyzing a problem; (ii) implementing a strategy; (iii) using connections, and (iv) reflecting on a solution in accordance with the framework of NCTM (2009). Therefore, this study extends the current literature by proposing a descriptive framework, not only for observing mathematical reasoning in elementary grade students, but also for mapping different developmental aspects of reasoning (Manmai et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results from various sources reveal that students can describe the mathematical concepts through their prior knowledge and adapting this to their problem-solving methods. This implies that students can find their own way regarding solving a problem, find various strategies, introduce different strategies to solve a problem, including being able to prove and interpret the outcomes through appropriate reasoning.

Moreover, the results of this study correspond to Oslington et al.'s (2020) results. They found that mathematical reasoning habits can be developed after students engage in many learning experiences using number, quantity, numerical relationships, and problem-solving. In addition, our study procedure showed that the LS team members' active engagement in utilizing the LS and OA innovations through implementing change in their classroom practice has had a positive impact on them to rethinking their teaching practice, on their attitudes to students, and about their learning tasks when it comes to improving mathematical reasoning habits, collegiality, and professional self-identification. This implication is supported by Khokhotva and Albizuri (2020) who found that the LS framework has enormous potential regarding facilitating change in teachers' educational beliefs. These changes are associated with establishing a more positive student-centered teaching approach and encouraging a rights-based school culture in which teachers share their vision and increasing the capacity for innovation. Following this line of reasoning, we suggest that mathematics teachers should be encouraged to use OA treatment in the LS process as a method for improving their students' mathematical reasoning ability.

In conclusion, the results can be rationalized in terms of the current evidence and should be applied in the future to improve students' mathematical reasoning habits from elementary through to high school education levels. This is because researchers discovered that the components of mathematical reasoning habits should be developed through lesson plans across the curriculum. Moreover, the key elements for mathematical reasoning should be included in mathematics content strands. The examples that illustrate the roles of teachers and students in the classroom to reshape the conversation about school mathematics and shift the curriculum toward emphasis on reasoning for all students should be widely introduced to elementary and high school mathematics teachers.

The results might be of value for school leaders, educators, teacher trainers, and policymakers in terms of advocating OA being incorporated into the LS framework as a systematic approach to whole-school enhancement. This would act as a tool to encourage positive change in school culture, as well as give stimulus to future studies involving the school culture perspective about developing LS and OA impact evaluation tools (Khokhotva & Albizuri, 2020). However, this requires a thorough understanding of the details of LS (Inprasitha, 2011) and OA (Nohda, 2000) concepts, while teachers are planning and implementing OA treatment in the LS process.

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# Gender Roles in the Relationship between *Hijrah* Intention, Satisfaction, and Islamic-Bank Customer Loyalty

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the differences between gender roles and the influence of *hijrah* intention and satisfaction on customer loyalty in Islamic banks. The data was collected from the Indonesian Islamic bank customers using convenience sampling. A total of 360 out of 927 questionnaires were received and sent back online. The hypothesis was tested using Structural Equation Model (SEM) with Smart-PLS. The variable indicators of interest were reflective and adapted from some previous literature. Furthermore, the data had satisfied convergent and discriminant validity requirements. The results showed that the Islamic bank customer loyalty routes differ between men and women. Satisfaction encourages *hijrah* intention without directly affecting customer loyalty in males. However, satisfaction strongly determines loyalty rather than *hijrah* intention for women. In the full model, *hijrah* intention serves a stronger mediating role on the satisfaction and loyalty relationship than the mediating role of satisfaction on the *hijrah* intention-loyalty relationship.

*Keywords:* Customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, gender role, *Hijrah* intention, Islamic bank

## INTRODUCTION

In the Islamic banking industry, the banking segment develops dynamically. Islamic differ from conventional banks due to the principle of profit-and-risk sharing. Still, they can attract non-Muslim customers since they perceive it fairer (Saleh et al., 2017). Despite the enormous potential, people consider Islamic banks less popular and experienced

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than conventional ones. Because of the challenging environment, developing and maintaining customer loyalty is important for long-term survival and positively affects business developments, including saving amounts, operating and marketing costs, customer retention rates, and future income (Bloemer et al., 1998; Saleh et al., 2017).

Based on relationship marketing and social exchange theory, the company and customers continue interacting with reward exchange. The parties in relationships evaluate them in several contexts, including behavior, short-term injustice, and long-term mutual benefits. Therefore, evaluating and developing factors like customer satisfaction and loyalty is vital. Since having loyal customers is critical, customer loyalty in Islamic banking has received a lot of concern and attention from recent literature (Hoque et al., 2019; Saleh et al., 2017; Rehman & Shabbir, 2010; Suhartanto et al., 2019). Although previous studies have mostly explored the satisfaction and service quality variables as top priorities in customer loyalty, most have focused on service quality and customer satisfaction to determine and drive customer loyalty (Saleh et al., 2017; Rehman & Shabbir, 2010; Suhartanto et al., 2019). Social exchange theory does not merely measure rewards using economic or material, and social criteria. Most previous studies have not fully considered the transcendental and spiritual aspects (Riyadi, 2021). Accounting for the spiritual aspects of consumer behavior is critical since, as an important sub-cultural factor, religion affects satisfaction. It is also a sacred value that strongly influences emotions, experiences, thoughts, behavior, and psychology. Therefore, some literature recommends accounting for religious factors in marketing studies.

Although some literature proves that religion influences consumer behavior, several studies show that religious variables do not significantly affect some of its aspects (Haron et al., 1994; Kaynak & Harcar, 2005), implying a pervasive influence  (Lubis et al., 2021). In reality, heterogeneity exists among individuals in the same religion who are faithful and committed to practicing it. Furthermore, how religion influences customer behavior highly depends on the level of commitment each shows by referring to it and reflecting their attitudes and religious behavior. Therefore, religion affects consumers' intention to behave.

In customer-loyalty literature, one very important thing worth considering is someone's intention to behave 'loyally' to Islamic banks and their influence. In fact, studies have proven that how strong the intention is influences loyalty (Haider et al., 2018). While, in general, intention critically determines customer attitudes and behavior, only a few studies have examined it (*hijrah*-intention variable) as a determinant of customer loyalty in Islamic banking (Hoque et al., 2019). This context inspires *hijrah* (a strong commitment to a change of Islamic-based betterness), an Islamic value. In general, *hijrah* aims to carry out religious teachings in intention, commitment and leave what religion prohibits. Therefore, its variable can fill the gaps in the customer loyalty study with management and marketing studies focusing on gender differences. Various perspectives of gender roles have been investigated, including work environments (Babin & Boles, 1998; Yavas et al., 2008), ethical perceptions (Ergeneli & Arıkan, 2002), and the role of stress (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006). Studies in management and marketing contexts (Babin & Boles, 1998; Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006) concluded that while men are task-or-goal-oriented, women are more relationship-oriented (communal).

The influence of gender on human interactions has been studied in social life. However, marketing literature on gender interactions in service-trading situations, their effects on relationship development and customer loyalty is still limited. Similarly, there are no studies on gender roles in customer loyalty of Islamic banks, though consumer loyalty is a popular study topic. Because of the increased participation of women in the workforce, interest in gender differences in business decision-making under risk has emerged. Many studies have found gender differences in attitude and behavior towards risk (Powell & Ansic, 1997). However, stereotypical beliefs about them prevail despite recent contradictory evidence (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000). The findings suggest that these gender differences *really* matter in business decision-making or risky business activities. However, the previous researchers do not consider them due to their different methodologies—especially when structuring questionnaires—and their various levels of competency and understanding. Consequently, the study aims to predict the differences in routes across gender and the relationship between Islamic banks' satisfaction, *hijrah* intention, and customer loyalty. The findings would help Islamic bank practitioners understand the paths of satisfaction for potential customers and provide new insights (*hijrah* intention) on loyalty. This study differed from the previous ones because the *hijrah*-intention variable used significantly affected Islamic bank customer loyalty. The following sub-sections covered literature review and hypotheses development, methods, results, discussion, and conclusions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### Islamic-Bank Customer Loyalty

Recently, loyalty has reflected many meanings, with some experts defining it in several aspects, resulting in varied judgments (Fournier & Mick, 1999; Oliver, 1999). There have been substantial disagreements about the definition or nature of loyalty. However, it is generally defined as a relationship (from very superficial to very strong) between an actor and an entity that demonstrates their behavioral or psychological loyalty to the entity despite other alternatives. It is also defined as a commitment to re-purchase preferred products and/or services from time to time, instead of adhering to marketing efforts offered from competitors to persuade customers to switch to other banks (Aldas-Manzano et al., 2011; Abou-Youssef et al., 2015). Several studies on customer loyalty antecedents have documented the satisfaction-loyalty relationships in varied aspects (Dick & Basu, 1994; Fournier & Mick, 1999; Johnson et al., 2006; Johnson & Morris, 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Mohamed et al., 2020; Oliver, 1999).

It is important to maintain customer loyalty for Islamic banks in the service industry. While many factors affect customer loyalty, satisfaction is the main one (Soelasih & Sumani, 2021). After consumption, customers become satisfied or dissatisfied, making them loyal. Still, the *hijrah* intention strongly determines loyalty from the inside-of-the-customer perspective. Several channels can be used to develop empirical customer loyalty (Suhartanto et al., 2019). However, the satisfaction path is the most often used. Many studies have concluded that satisfying a customer positively and significantly influences loyalty (Abror et al., 2019; Meesala & Paul, 2018).

Service providers must align relevant services with user interests, emotionally and rationally retain, and use them to attract diverse customers. Compared to goods, service consumers have more customer loyalty (Panther & Farquhar, 2004). A bank-customer loyalty study established that customers with a "completely satisfied" statement were 42% more likely to be loyal than those with "satisfied" (Jones, 1996). Many experts assert that only the highest level of satisfaction (very satisfied) can be acceptable performance. Besides, satisfaction and loyalty do not surrogate each other (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Oliver, 1999). A customer can be loyal but not very satisfied or very satisfied but disloyal.

### Gender in Consumer Behavior and Customer Loyalty Framework

Men and women, while shaping brand loyalty, behave differently. Although women have more intense forms of involvement than men, gender differences in the decision-making process can affect their attitudes and loyalty levels (Melnyk et al., 2009). Furthermore, gender differences affect their perceptions of masculinity and femininity in products, making gender identity an important role (Fischer & Arnold, 1994). However, several previous studies have varied results about how gender difference influences intention. For example, while masculinity significantly predicts consumers' purchase intention (Glavee-Geo et al., 2017), femininity is more important (Fischer & Arnold, 1994).

Other studies have also established that gender differences significantly affect customer loyalty which differs among male and female customers (Melnyk et al., 2009). While females develop and maintain their loyalty individually, males are more loyal in groups (companies). Moreover, females are more likely to maintain social relationships, including those with a company (loyal), men (Cross et al., 2000), and they also have a higher interdependent self-construal. Their loyalty differs significantly (Melnyk et al., 2009), with women being more likely to be individual while men being inclined towards groups.

Based on the previous study results, there are more gender role differences in customer loyalty, especially mobile banking (Haider et al., 2018 Zoghlami et al., 2018). First, males are more influenced by self-expression and reliability, while females by privacy and innovation (Kalinić et al., 2019; Zoghlami et al., 2018). Second, other studies use gender as a variable moderator, indicating that gender differences strongly influence the strength of the relationship between mobile variables (Glavee-Geo et al., 2017; Haider et al., 2018).

## HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

*Hijrah* means a change in Muslim's attitude and behavior to pursue a better life under Al-Quran and Al-Hadits for the blessing from Allah. Since it reflects individual religious orientation (Yudiana et al., 2021), its intention is important for Muslim behavior. It intends to perform religious teachings in intention, commitment, and efforts to leave what religion (Islam) prohibits. In the Islamic banking context, not all Muslims follow Islamic provisions against usury or bank interest. In a dual banking system like Indonesia, various backgrounds and motives may prevail and make a Muslim loyal to conventional bank services. Thus, the strong desire to quit conventional banks and switch to Islamic banks based on his faith is called ***hijrah* intention**.

In this respect, *hijrah*'s intention differs from religiosity, which reflects a general term, while *hijrah* is specific. Religiosity is the degree to which a person uses religious values, beliefs, and practices in everyday life (Worthington et al., 2011), and it has different levels among its adherents. Some Muslim communities with a comparable level of religiosity may have different *hijrah* intentions towards Islamic banks. Consequently, it is influenced by many things, as stated in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which states that 'a consumer's intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control.'

Gender does not moderate variables such as e-service quality, e-satisfaction, and e-trust on e-loyalty (Ladhari & Leclerc, 2013). From a broader perspective, there are two explanations on the influence of gender roles. First, women and men focus on different aspects of service and satisfaction (Iacobucci & Ostrom, 1993). For example, although women are more relationship-oriented and very detailed, men are more task-or-goal oriented but focus less on details (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006; Yavas et al., 2008). However, the study about service marketing and gender role differences is still limited (Matzler et al., 2008; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2010). Second, assessing how service-quality dimensions affect satisfaction without considering gender moderation role mislead bank managers practically when setting appropriate priorities.

Two important findings of gender as moderating roles emerged, including the influence of empathy and reliability on satisfaction, where those female customers were more influenced than males. It confirms that they are more relationship-oriented and concerned with social interaction. Private German banks are more concerned with interpersonal relationships and communication than males and tend to offer positive word of mouth (Yavas et al., 2008).

More significant differences on how men's and women's roles influence social norms and adoption intentions emerged. When the sample was combined between men and women among users of online banking services in Pakistan, gender roles were not significant (Glavee-Geo et al., 2017). Although the intention of men is significantly influenced by perceived usefulness and self-expression, credibility matters more to women. Still, gender differences do not affect social norms on the level of adoption of m-banking services in India (Haider et al., 2018).

Gender roles have a moderating effect on the relationship between ease of use and attitudes towards adopting mobile banking in India, though it is stronger for women (Chawla & Joshi, 2018). Though women value security or respect privacy, quality information, and trust m-banking application, men value security or respect privacy, reliability, and ease of use (Zoghlami et al., 2018). Gender moderates the effects of performance and effort expectancy on behavior intention in studying mobile-microfinance services in Kenya (Warsame & Ireri, 2018). Men and women are easily influenced by their social environment and personal innovativeness, respectively (Kalinić et al., 2019).

Loyalty is a complex multidimensional concept in the consumer-behavior model. In the context of brands, it is a psychological commitment to a particular brand and the result of individual expectations about service consumption. Customer expectations affect satisfaction and contribute to user loyalty directly and indirectly (Rufín et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important to analyze loyalty from the cognitive-affective dimension while developing it (Oliver, 1999), and the cognitive always precedes the affective aspect. Meanwhile, another study explained that cognitive is a precursor to the affective component (Leverin & Liljander, 2006). Cognitive stage loyalty usually depends on some information grasped from comparing one brand or product to the others. For example, an Islamic bank consistently tries to provide more competitive prices than its competitors.

This study examined how gender roles differ between men and women, rather than using gender as a moderating variable. From the marketing strategy perspective, a customer's decision-making role largely determines the marketing strategy described in the elaboration model or the reasoned versus unintentional path described by the prototype willingness model (Ohtomo & Hirose, 2007). Male characters are more task-oriented and focused on the dimensions that help them complete tasks effectively. In this sense, task centricity and goal orientation dominate men (Saeed & Abdinnour-Helm, 2008). Since men are more willing to spend more effort to overcome constraints and challenges to pursue their goals, they, therefore, judge things primarily on functionality (Venkatesh & Morris, 2000; Venkatesan et al., 2007).

In the context of the male roles, they are more driven by the cognitive component. Since cognitive phase loyalty is based on prior knowledge or experience, it is stronger (Yi & La, 2004). Furthermore, real experiences for men are stronger than for women. Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that expectations from cognitive processes during Islamic banking services positively affect male-user loyalty. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1a: For men (male's role), the stronger *hijrah* intention, the stronger its positive influence on loyalty.

H1b: For men (male's role), the more they feel satisfied, the stronger their positive effect on loyalty.

H1c: For men (male's role), the more they feel satisfied, the stronger their *hijrah* intention will be.

H1d: For men (male's role), *hijrah* intention becomes a mediating variable on how satisfaction and loyalty relate.

In the consumers' context, women focus more on the prices of products and services and are involved in purchasing than results (Kwateng et al., 2019). Service quality can be defined as 'a global assessment or attitude related to the excellence of a service,' (Parasuraman et al., 1993) and is an antecedent of satisfaction in short-service messages (Lai, 2004). It is similar to perceived quality in marketing and significantly affects satisfaction (McKinney et al., 2002). Women emphasize external supporting factors more. Furthermore, gender moderates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Jin et al., 2013; Ramanathan et al., 2016). Female customers are more socially oriented, have communal attention, and care about relationships and their quality (Ndubisi, 2006).

Following this difference, women are more sensitive to relational aspects. Customer satisfaction directly relates to loyalty (Meesala & Paul, 2018). Although some literature on satisfaction-loyalty relationships does not consider gender, others suggest that women show a higher direction on the effect of satisfaction and loyalty (Assaker et al., 2015). Besides, in online financial services, women report higher online service quality levels, e-satisfaction, e-trust, and e-loyalty than men (Ladhari & Leclerc, 2013). Based on these results, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H2a: For women (women's role), the more they feel satisfied, the stronger the positive effect on loyalty.

H2b: For women (women's role), the stronger the *hijrah* intention is, the more the satisfaction they get to Islamic banks.

H2c: For women (women's role), the stronger the *hijrah* intention is, the higher their loyalty to an Islamic bank.

H2d: For women (women's role), satisfaction mediates the relationship between *hijrah* intention and loyalty.

## METHODS

### Data Materials

This study used a survey method through questionnaires and a convenience approach to collect data. Overall, the used approach fitted because the population was unknown, large, and showed several opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. It necessitated an effective and easy way to capture those phenomena from potential respondents, particularly taking a sample using a convenience approach through online questionnaires.

Questionnaires were distributed in Google Form to Islamic bank customers from all the Indonesian provinces to collect data. Determining potential respondents depended on contacts on the selected WhatsApp group (WAG). Since they were study groups, seminars & workshops related to Islamic economics and banking, and WAGs with Islamic economics and banking experts, we judged that its people had a great opportunity to become Islamic bank customers. As a result, 320 out of the 927 questionnaires sent to prospective respondents were filled in and sent back to the authors, making the response rate 38.8%.

Google Form link was sent to the WAG number personally to obtain a good response rate and continued exerting efforts to make the prospective respondents interested in filling in and resubmitting the online questionnaires, specifically by giving some souvenirs. The sample size used had ten times the minimum size of question-item number from all the variables of interest (Hair et al., 2018). The 28 provinces were represented by 214 and 146 women and men, respectively. Generally, the respondents' age ranged from 18 to 30, 31 to 50, and more than 50 years in 50.55%, 41.38%, and 8.07% percentiles, respectively. The respondents' occupations were civil servants, self-employed/ entrepreneurs, BUMN/BUMD (state-owned enterprises) employees, students, and private employees in 54.73%, 7.5%, 5.55%, 8.07%, and 0.55%, while the rest came from other fields. The bank usage history groups them into two as only using Islamic banks (70.28%) and using both conventional and Islamic banks (29.72%).

### Measurement

The variables that reflect satisfaction, *hijrah* intention, and customer loyalty were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 indicates that they are nature-reflective and adapted from several previous studies, including satisfaction (Tiliouine & Belgoumidi, 2009), *hijrah* intention (modification of TPB theory), and loyalty variables (Kashif et al., 2015; Mohsan et al., 2011).

Table 1

*Data measurement*

| Variable & Major References | Items |
|---|---|
| Satisfaction<br>( Mohsan et al., 2011;<br>Kashif et al., 2015) | 1. I am satisfied with Islamic bank products<br>2. I am satisfied with the services of Islamic banks<br>3. Islamic banks can always live up to my expectations<br>4. Islamic banks always provide a pleasant experience |

Table 1 *(Continue)*

| Variable & Major References | Items |
|---|---|
| ***Hijrah* Intention**<br>(Yudiana, 2021) | 1. I really want to avoid sin because of usury<br>2. I really want to have the blessing of living in the world<br>3. I really want to get the blessings in the hereafter<br>4. I convince myself that bank interest is usury<br>5. I convinced myself that bank interest is haram<br>6. Islamic banks are fairer<br>7. I want to avoid bank interest |
| **Loyalty Intention**<br>(Kishada, 2013; Mohsan et al., 2011; Vyas & Raitani, 2014; Wang et al., 2018) | 1. I intend to use Islamic banks<br>2. I intend to use Islamic banking services<br>3. I intensely recommend Islamic banks to friends<br>4. I intend to recommend Islamic banks to families<br>5. I will be loyal to Islamic banks<br>6. I tend to use Islamic banks than conventional banks<br>7. I am committed to continuing using Islamic bank products<br>8. I am committed to using Islamic banking services appropriately |

The validity and reliability of the data and study instruments were tested before hypotheses. Table 2 presents the loading factor of each construct item that exceeds 0.5 (Hair et al., 2018), making all the question items have high convergent validity. The validity indicators also showed greater values than the threshold literature recommended. Since all square-root AVE values were greater than the other coefficients for the same construction, a good discriminant validity came out (Gefen et al., 2000). It is determined by the cross-loading value of each indicator toward the variable. Seemingly, the correlation between measurement items was greater than other constructs' values (See Table 3). Moreover, the root AVE value of each variable (either male or female roles) was lower than the correlation of each independent variable to loyalty and higher than the correlation between the independent variables and others. Finally, composite reliability (CR) was greater than 0.7 and Cronbach alpha above 0.7, showing that the results were reliable.

Table 2

*Reliability dan validity indicators*

| Variables | Item | Factors Loading Men | Factors Loading Women |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Satisfaction**<br>CA = 0,892<br>CR = 0,920<br>AVE = 0,698 | $KP_1$ | 0,854 | 0,894 |
| | $KP_2$ | 0,805 | 0,889 |
| | $KP_3$ | 0,782 | 0,811 |
| | $KP_4$ | 0,854 | 0,895 |
| | $KP_5$ | 0,877 | 0,904 |

Table 2 *(Continue)*

| Variables | Item | Factors Loading Men | Factors Loading Women |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Hijrah* Intention**<br>CA = 0,784<br>CR = 0,843<br>AVE = 0,644 | $HI_1$ | 0,721 | 0,861 |
| | $HI_2$ | 0,649 | 0,840 |
| | $HI_3$ | 0,750 | 0,817 |
| | $HI_4$ | 0,540 | 0,502 |
| | $HI_5$ | 0,689 | 0,658 |
| | $HI_6$ | 0,613 | 0,621 |
| | $HI_7$ | 0,646 | 0,686 |
| **Loyalty**<br>CA = 0,929<br>CR = 0,940<br>AVE = 0,637 | $L_1$ | 0,775 | 0,835 |
| | $L_2$ | 0,799 | 0,825 |
| | $L_3$ | 0,783 | 0,793 |
| | $L_4$ | 0,811 | 0,833 |
| | $L_5$ | 0,775 | 0,776 |
| | $L_6$ | 0,834 | 0,875 |
| | $L_7$ | 0,805 | 0,852 |
| | $L_8$ | 0,804 | 0,863 |
| | $L_9$ | 0,794 | 0,707 |

*Note:* CA= Cronbach's Alpha; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted

Table 3

*Discriminant validity*

| Variables | *Hijrah* Intention | Satisfaction | Loyalty |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | | |
| *Hijrah* Intention | 0,802 | | |
| Satisfaction | 0,692 | 0,880 | |
| Loyalty | 0,879 | 0,693 | 0,859 |
| | Women | | |
| *Hijrah* Intention | 0,802 | | |
| Satisfaction | 0,692 | 0,880 | |
| Loyalty | 0,879 | 0,693 | 0,859 |

## RESULTS

### Statistical Analysis

The characteristics of the respondents were presented based on gender, age, latest education, occupation, and income of the respondents. Demographic data showed that 57.5% (about 207) of the respondents were female. Respondents of 31 to 50 years were 41.38% (149), while 8.06% (29) were over 50 years. 39.72%, 28.07%, and 17.77% of respondents had a Master's level (S2, 101), an undergraduate education (S1, 64), and doctoral education, respectively. Since most respondents work as civil servants, non-lecturers & teachers and lecturers/teachers were 28.07% (101) and 26.66% (96), respectively. The rest came from Army/Police, students, business people and entrepreneurs, private employees, and other types of jobs. While 70.28% of respondents were only customers of Islamic banks, 29.72% belonged to conventional Islamic banks. Partial-least-square structural equation models (PLS) tested the structural model and determined the significance of the hypothesized relationship. Three models of this study had been tested: the full model (n = 360), the male role (n = 153), and the female role (n = 207), as in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that for the male role, the statistically significant antecedent of the loyalty model was *hijrah* intention (β = 0.772; p-value <0.01). Satisfaction predicted *hijrah* intention (β = 0.585; p-value <0.01) positively but could not determine loyalty (β = 0.086; p-value> 0.05). Furthermore, the *hijrah*-intention variable mediated the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (β = 0.451; p-value< 0.05) fully. The results of the structural model testing (to see the goodness-of-fit model) showed the value of R-square = 0.681 and Adjusted-R square = 0.677, concluding that the satisfaction construct and *hijrah* intention can explain 67.7% of the variability of the loyalty construct on male roles.

In the male customer group, *hijrah* intention-built loyalty on its variable, thus strongly influencing loyalty. Significantly, it directly affected male customer loyalty (H1a) and fully mediated how satisfaction and loyalty (H1d) related. On the other hand, for male customers, the satisfaction variable did not significantly affect loyalty (H1c). Because men are more driven by the cognitive component (Yi & La, 2004), a banking system supports male customers' concerns when using the banking facilities they need. It means that the initial intention to be loyal to Islamic banks is more influential for male customers. These results fully support the theory of planned behavior, that is, intention can predict behavior. Based on this, how loyal Islamic-bank customers are is determined by how strong the intention of male customers is: the stronger their *hijrah* intention is, the higher their loyalty to Islamic banks. Besides, satisfaction significantly influences *Hijrah* intention in the male role (H1c). The results of the bootstrapping test are shown in Figure 1.

Table 4

*Results of testing hypotheses*

| Measurement | Full Model Coefficient (t-stat) | Male Coefficient (t-stat) | Female Coefficient (t-stat) | Hypotheses Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hijrah* Intention → Loyalty | 0.654***<br>(12.199) | 0.772***<br>(13.165) | | H1a<br>Supported |
| Satisfaction → *Hijrah* Intention | 0.708***<br>(17.173) | 0.585***<br>(9.193) | | H1b<br>Supported |

Table 4 *(Continue)*

| Measurement | Full Model Coefficient (t-stat) | Male Coefficient (t-stat) | Female Coefficient (t-stat) | Hypotheses Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction → Loyalty | 0.252**<br>(4.675) | 0.086<br>(1.346) | | H1c Not Supported |
| Satisfaction → *Hijrah* Intention → Loyalty | 0.463***<br>(9.409) | 0.451**<br>(7.059) | | H1d Supported |
| *Hijrah* Intention → Satisfaction | 0.708***<br>(16.778) | | 0.708***<br>(16.477) | H2b Supported |
| *Hijrah* Intention → Loyalty | 0.654***<br>(12.199) | | 0.654***<br>(11.643) | H2c Supported |
| Satisfaction →Loyalty | 0.252***<br>(4.675) | | 0.252**<br>(4.331) | H2a Supported |
| *Hijrah* intention → Satisfaction → Loyalty | 0.178***<br>(4.448) | | 0.178**<br>(4.195) | H2d Supported |
| Adjusted $R^2$<br>$R^2$ | 0.722<br>0.725 | 0.677<br>0.681 | 0.722<br>0.725 | - |

*Note:* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

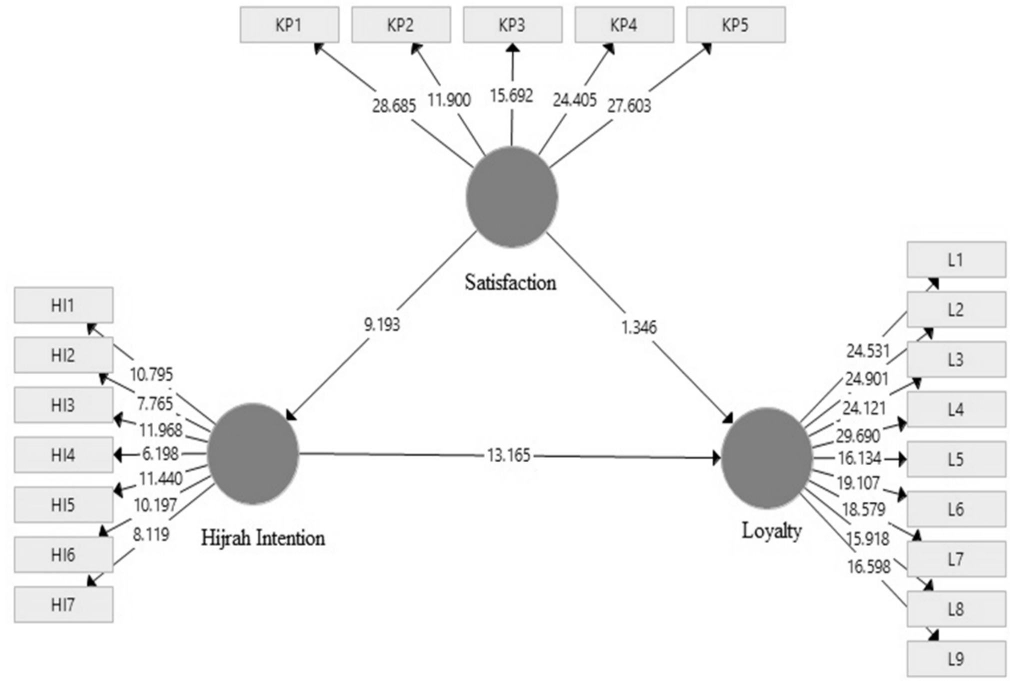

*Figure 1.* The role of the male in the satisfaction-*Hijrah* intention-loyalty relationship

In the women's group, *hijrah* intention and satisfaction as the antecedents of the loyalty model were all statistically significant. *Hijrah* intention significantly predicted loyalty (β = 0.654; p-value <0.01) positively and satisfaction with loyalty (β = 0.252; p-value <0.05). It did the same with satisfaction (β = 0.708; p-value <0.01), which still partially mediated between *hijrah* intention and loyalty (β = 0.178; p-value <0.05). While testing the structural model (female role) to see the goodness-of-fit model, the results indicated that R-square = 0.725 and Adjusted-R square = 0.722, meaning that the constructs of satisfaction and *hijrah* intention could account for 72.2% of the variability of the loyalty construct in women's roles.

The satisfaction variable greatly affects the loyalty to Islamic banks (H2a) for female customers. Uniqueness and social interaction can encourage satisfaction, which will form loyalty in line with these findings (Noble et al., 2006). These results suggested that women process more detailed information (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006; Yavas et al., 2008). They can emphasize service dependency and the accuracy of the information, ultimately affecting their satisfaction and loyalty. It harmonizes with the results, which prove that the satisfaction variable significantly and partially mediated the relationship between *hijrah* intention and loyalty (H2d). *Hijrah's* intention of female customers can affect loyalty directly (H2c) or indirectly through satisfaction. Besides, these results harmonize with previous studies on how the satisfaction variable partially mediates loyalty (Bei & Chiao, 2006; Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Bloemer et al., 1998; Choi, 2009; Cronin et al., 2000; Mosahab et al., 2010). Satisfaction on loyalty strongly affects the role of women than *hijrah* intention. The results of the bootstrapping test are depicted in Figure 2.

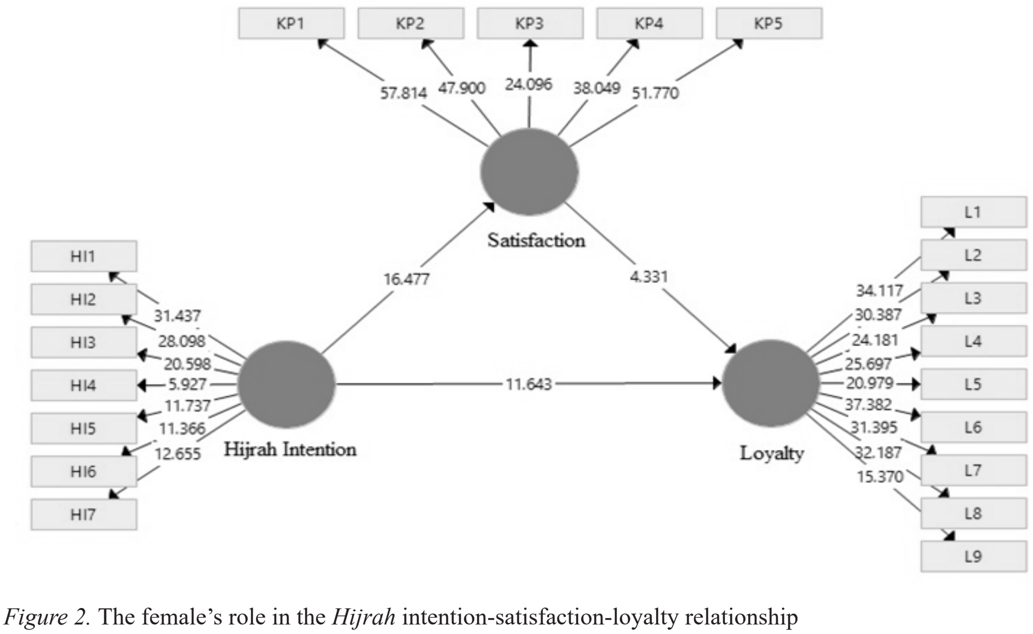

*Figure 2.* The female's role in the *Hijrah* intention-satisfaction-loyalty relationship

In the full model (male and female) (see Table 4), the test results show that *hijrah* intention more strongly mediates between satisfaction and loyalty (β = 0.463, p-value <0.05) than how satisfaction mediates it and loyalty (β = 0.178, p-value <0.05).

## DISCUSSIONS

The characteristics of loyalty among men and women vary, and men can cancel out theirs with satisfaction variables. Men can be loyal to Islamic banks without getting satisfaction from the products and services in case their *hijrah* intention is strong enough, which dominantly affects loyalty. Similarly, they can be disloyal despite getting satisfaction if they lack a strong *hijrah* intention. Islamic banks solely depend on trust, and the *hijrah* intention significantly determines the satisfaction of female customers. The satisfaction variable is complementary and reveals partial mediation. It means that *hijrah* intention and satisfaction for women complement one another in building Islamic bank loyalty. Women with a strong *hijrah* intention assimilate the product and service of Islamic banks into their expectations, lead to a maximum positive assessment (satisfaction) and increase their loyalty, which confirms the Assimilation-Contrast Theory that ‘people with *hijrah* intention will have a threshold for acceptance and rejection.’ They increase expectations to make their difference and performance small and enter the customer acceptance threshold, encouraging satisfaction and loyalty.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated how gender roles related to *hijrah* intention, satisfaction, and Islamic bank customer loyalty. The results showed that the male and female customer loyalty models differed directly on *hijrah* intention and satisfaction. Furthermore, male customers were more loyal to Islamic banks than females (from attitude loyalty) and were inclined to have the latent-loyalty. However, satisfaction mostly affected loyalty in females, though the strength of their *hijrah* intention also mattered. In addition, they were sensitive to the quality of services that provided satisfaction to be sustainable and loyal to an Islamic bank. Consequently, the positive attitude formed from the *hijrah*-intention effect was less significant than satisfaction.

The results suggest that gender is critical in how *Hijrah* Intention, satisfaction, and Islamic bank customer loyalty are related and provided empirical support for previous studies on customer loyalty (Ndubisi, 2006). Female customers were more than men, and their satisfaction resulted when they were more loyal as the banks met their expectations. However, for males, satisfaction further encouraged their intention to move (*hijrah*) to Islamic banks. These results also imply dormancy in the influence of *hijrah* intention in increasing customer loyalty for men, making them demonstrate the latent-loyalty type. Latent loyalty reflects a strong attitude with weak re-purchases (Dick & Basu, 1994). It is attributed to the non-attitudinal factor influences, which in determining repurchase or Islamic bank loyalty, are fairly strong or tend to be stronger than attitude.

Since the *hijrah* intention for female customers encouraged a positive attitude and affected satisfaction, it influenced their loyalty. Furthermore, women are naturally emotional or expressive, which supports the *hijrah* intention, which is very influential on satisfaction (Kring & Gordon, 1998), contributing to their loyalty. Consequently, the loyalty of females remained stronger because it was based on the level of loyalty and intention to move (*hijrah*).

Future studies in consumer behavior, especially loyalty, need to build a path in customer loyalty. There is a need to map the determinant variables of loyalty, especially within the financial services industry. Pathways could be mapped about the perspective of loyalty in attitude, behavioral, and integrative loyalty. Studies may consider the moderating effects of other demographic factors such as education and income in the future.

Despite the insightful findings, this study had various limitations. First, the focus was on the Indonesian Islamic bank customers, meaning that the sample was not entirely typical of the Muslim population. Therefore, future studies should test the relationship among the variables involving respondents all over the Indonesian provinces to obtain a better and more representative model result. Second, the focus was on *hijrah* intention role and satisfaction as the drivers of loyalty towards Islamic banks, yet many other variables, such as image and value, influence customer loyalty.

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# Theorization the Use of Podcasts as an Alternative Medium of *Da'wah* and its Impact on the Audience: The Case of Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to provide novelty in the study of communication science, especially on the role of new media, namely podcasts as a medium of *da'wah,* which so far has not been widely studied. Through a phenomenological approach and conducted interviews with two uploaders *da'wah* content of Baha'uddin Nursalim, and two active listeners, the results obtained that podcast as an alternative medium of *da'wah* is a message about society's civilization towards the need for auditory media to obtain religious content is increasing. Moreover, users and listeners are considered quite active in choosing an effective medium of *da'wah* because podcasts provide several advantages during high community mobility and an adaptive and dominative effort to strengthen the existence of Nahdlatul Ulama organizations in the digital era.

*Keyword:* Digital age, impact on the audience, medium of *da'wah*, podcast

## INTRODUCTION

Current technological developments require people to innovate in various aspects, one of which is in the field of *da'wah*. Historically, *da'wah* in Indonesia has been carried out through various approaches, be it social, cultural, political, and economical. So that in its application, the *da'wah* movement will take place dynamically according to the social context of society. It is included in the digital era like now. Before the existence

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of new media, *da'wah* was carried out through personal approaches, such as trade, arts and cultural media, and even political channels. When mass media, such as radio, newspapers, and television, emerged, *da'wah's* method differed. Especially with the existence of new media, where the reach of its spread is much more massive and global. Of the many new media presence in the community, one alternative that can be used as a medium for *da'wah* is podcasts.

According to Zaenudin (2019), podcasts were born with the birth of the iPod, an audio player made by Apple that Steve Jobs introduced in 2001. Podcast, which stands for "iPod broadcasting," or broadcast using IPod, is a non-linear radio broadcast. Similar to *YouTube*, it provides content for listeners on an on-demand basis when the listener wants it. Indirectly, podcasts here have some similarities with radio. While for the difference between the two are that the content on podcasts can be downloaded, and users are free to choose the content. For radio, listeners can only choose a radio frequency, and if they want to listen to their favorite program or content, they must wait until the specified time-cannot be done at any time. It means podcasts are not present based on stations or frequency like regular radio but use various types of content. There are podcasts about socio-culture, politics, entertainment, sports, mystical, fictional dramas, and the discussion of Islamic values is no exception. After conducting a search using Spotify (a music application that provides a podcast feature in it), the researcher saw that there were several contents from the religious teacher, such as Hanan Attaki, Ustadz Abdul Somad, Adi Hidayat, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, or Gus Ulil to Baha'uddin Nursalim or Gus Baha.

The use of podcasts is considered to provide great opportunities for the *da'wah* movement in Indonesia. However, not as many as America and several countries in Europe, the popularity of podcasts in Indonesia is predicted to increase. Zaenudin (2019) explains that referring to research conducted by Edison Research; there are 39 million podcast listeners in the United States. According to data reported by Statista, 24 percent of adults in the United States consume podcast broadcasts. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, according to the report written by DailySocial entitled "Podcast User Research in Indonesia 2018," 68 percent of their total respondents stated that they were familiar with podcasts. More than 80 percent of respondents admitted to listening to podcasts. It is reinforced by the explanation from *gatra.com*, the media industry player and founder of the box2box football podcast, Pangeran Siahaan, predicting that 2020 will be the golden year of Indonesian audio podcast broadcasts. According to him, the trend of media popularity will always repeat itself. He said, next year, there will be a talkative phase, where Indonesians will later make podcasts a lifestyle trend, and many will use this audio platform (Novrizaldi, 2019). It can be seen from the many podcasts of domestic children on various platforms, such as Spotify, Apple Cast, Google Podcasts, Pocketcast, Anchor, Inspigo, and so on (Zellatifany, 2020).

It is interesting, from this explanation, to examine how the current popularity of podcasts is a positive aspect in supporting the development of *da'wah* in Indonesia. Why *da'wah* and no other aspects? Because according to some existing research, podcasts are considered effective as a medium of learning, both at school and in college (e.g., Alfian et al., 2019; Harahap, 2020). Moreover, this benefit can be used or explored in other fields, including *da'wah,* because based on the majority of previous research, the use of *da'wah* media is limited to social media (e.g., Briandana et al., 2020; Wibowo, 2019) and conventional media (e.g., Kaddas & Ishak, 2018; Siagian et al., 2016). Thus, a new alternative media is needed to disseminate *da'wah* content more massive and reach all people. Moreover, in that context, podcasts can be the main choice because of the increasing usage trend in Indonesia.

Based on this background, the researcher intends to raise the *da'wah* content of Baha'uddin Nursalim as the object of research. Gus Baha is one of the religious teachers who now has many followers on social media. As reported by Redaksi (2021)*,* in one video on *YouTube*, the audience of Gus Baha's *da'wah* even reached 57 thousand. Just like the statement from Rusydiyah et al. (2020), the number of viewers of Gus Baha's study on *YouTube* reaches four to eight million in one year. It was motivated by the fact that the religious studies presented by Gus Baha were quite in-depth. He grew up in a family that was expert in the Qur'an, especially from his father's family. Plus, his educational history has studied at the Al-Anwar Sarang Islamic Boarding School under the auspices of a great religious teacher in Indonesia, namely KH. Maimoen Zubair (Redaksi, 2021).

Although the research object here refers to *da'wah* of Gus Baha content, it does not mean that Gus Baha also shares it through podcasts. Instead, their active followers share the material they get, through podcasts or other social media as stated by Ulil Abhsar Abdalla or Gus Ulil, one of the religious teachers whose *da'wah* content is also uploaded to the podcast, the content of his recitation, which is distributed through Spotify is a continuation of the content on *Facebook* (Zaenudin, 2019). Indeed, for some senior religious teachers, most of their *da'wah* content is uploaded by their followers. In contrast, younger or modern religious leaders can upload their content directly through podcasts, such as Hannan Attaki.

In this study, researchers will focus on several points, namely: the motive for using podcasts by followers of Gus Baha at the Izzati Nuril Qur'an Bantul Yogyakarta Islamic Boarding School and Al-Anwar Sarang, its effectiveness in distributing *da'wah* contents from communicators and listener perspectives, and data findings obtained based on some of these aspects will be analyzed using relevant theories.

The output of this research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how media digitization can present a new format for conveying messages. Although podcasts are not the only effective media for *da'wah*, with some benefits that other media do not have, this media can be an alternative for users. Thus, the distribution of *da'wah* content can run more massively (the more media used, the public's awareness of Islamic teachings is expected to increase), deep, effective, and efficient. Not only in terms of content distribution, by examining the impact of using podcasts on listeners, this research will also provide interesting findings of the extent to which podcasts are effective as a variant of new media present in society.

## THEORETICAL BASIS

### *Da'wah* Media

According to Aziz (2017), *da'wah* comes from Arabic "*da'wah*" in terms of language, and *da'wah* has three original letters, namely *dal, 'ain,* and *wawu*. From these three original letters, several words and various meanings are formed. The meaning is calling, inviting, asking for help, begging, naming, telling to come, encouraging, causing, bringing, praying for, weeping, and lamenting. Aziz (2017) emphasizes some of the words above, which in the end can give that *da'wah* is persuasive, namely inviting humans subtly. Violence, coercion, intimidation, threats, or terror so that someone implements Islamic teachings cannot be said to be *da'wah*. This understanding is obtained from the meaning of *da'wah,* which means inviting, praying, complaining, calling, asking, and inviting. Tracing the meaning of *da'wah* also shows that these meanings designate a word that requires an object. It shows that there is always a *da'wah* target. There are at least three components in *da'wah* activities: *da'wah* actors (preachers), *da'wah* messages, and *da'wah* targets. In line with the above statement, Qarni et al. (2019), in their Journal Verbal and Nonverbal Factors Influencing the Success of *Da'wah* Communication by Ustadz Abdul Somad, also emphasized the definition of *da'wah* in the meaning of inviting. According to him, *da'wah* literally means "issuing a call" or "making an invitation." It serves to invite people to understand Islam through dialogue. In performing this function, a Muslim with a deep understanding of Islamic teachings is needed, called a religious teacher. In the process of *da'wah,* it is necessary to involve communication that encourages social interaction between preachers and their listeners. For this reason, a religious teacher should have extensive knowledge related to Islamic teachings, human social behavior, and the socio-cultural environment in which they live (Mubarok, 1999, in Qarni et al., 2019).

The essence of *da'wah* from the two previous sources shows that *da'wah* emphasizes the existence of a process that involves three actors: the communicator, the message, and the communicant. Of course, what is called a process requires adaptation efforts. When *da'wah* can be interpreted as an invitation or invitation so that the public can understand the teachings of Islam, the actors in it (or in this case, the active role of preachers) must think of various effective strategies to reach audiences in accordance with existing socio-cultural conditions, including the *da'wa* media used. Abdullah (2019) states that media is a tool or vehicle to transfer messages from source to recipient. Therefore, according to him, *da'wah* can be divided into two: non-media *da'wah* and media *da'wah*. *Da'wah* media can be divided into two: communication using mass media and communication using individual media. Included in the mass media are the press, radio, film, television, and the internet. Meanwhile, the media, which includes individual communication media, are letters, telegrams, telephones, and so on.

Slightly different from Abdullah (2019), Aziz (2017) classifies *da'wah* media into three, namely spoken media, tools that can make sounds, such as radio, telephone, and others, while written media (the printed writing), media in the form of writing or print, such as magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets, paintings, pictures as well as audio-visual media, media containing live images that can be seen and heard, such as films, videos, television and so on. In addition, according to Aziz (2017), some divide *da'wah* media into two points, namely traditional media (without communication technology) and modern media (with communication technology).

From several concepts about the definition of *da'wah,* which emphasizes the process of delivering religious messages from communicators to communicants through certain media (Aziz, 2017; Qarni et al., 2019) and several categorizations of *da'wah* media proposed by Aziz (2017), the operationalization of the concepts used in this study seeks to combine the concept of spoken media, especially radio, with modern media using the latest communication technology. Podcasts represent that combination, where the characters resemble radio and are packaged using digital technology. However, it is undeniable that talking about the *da'wah* process caused an effect, it is necessary to adapt to the existing conditions to produce the desired impact, and one of them is through the adjustment of the *da'wah* media. It does not mean that other *da'wah* media are abandoned. On the contrary, new media alternatives trending in society are needed to expand the distribution of *da'wah* content and reach all elements of society.

## Podcast and Its Role as a *Da'wah* Media

Regarding the concept of the podcast, Abdulrahman et al. (2018) explain that the term "Podcast "was derived from two technologies, "iPod," and "Broadcast." A podcast is the same as radio, but there is a thin line between radio and Podcast. Although it resembles radio in terms of delivery, both emphasize the concept of a theater of the mind; there are still differences. If we want to listen to a program on a certain radio station, we must wait for a predetermined period, and the nature of the delivery is just a cursory hearing. When we miss just one topic, it will be difficult to repeat it. As for podcasts, we can hear any content we like without knowing the time limit. Plus, through podcasts, we can download the content and play it repeatedly according to taste.

With the above facilities, it is only natural that podcasts have several benefits or roles in the message delivery process. Although no one has discussed the role of podcasts in *da'wah's* world, at least some literature shows the importance of podcasts for the education system. It was explained by Sansinadi et al. (2020) who assessed that podcast could help teachers and students to achieve learning goals. Teachers can give assignments outside of class through podcasts, as well as students, where podcasts can help them provide an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. There are many channels and languages available. In addition, the material can be downloaded via mobile phones, so students can listen to it anywhere and repeat it without an internet connection. Not only that, but Dianithi (2017) also adds the advantage of using podcasts as a learning medium, which allows for classes without face-to-face. According to him, podcasts can increase student motivation, help to teach large-scale classes, can be used to teach mixed ability students, and podcasts can pay attention to accuracy. Behind the benefits that can be felt, there are also potential downsides to using podcasts. Scutter et al. (2010) added that some academic staff expressed concern about students who no longer attend the learning process and choose to leave the academic world. It is also relevant to the emergence of the potential for student inactivity.

Referring to the benefits that have been stated above, even though they are in a different domain, it is clear that they can also be felt in the *da'wah* environment. *Da'wah* and the education system, in general, are not much different. *Da'wah* also emphasizes the learning process; it is just based on religious values. By using podcasts, people can indirectly deepen the religious content of their favorite religious teacher, download, and listen to them continuously. They can also have alternative media when the religious teacher carries out the *da'wah* in an area far from reach. They can still follow the material through podcasts. Apart from the benefits that can be obtained, it must be acknowledged that when the facilities for obtaining content become easier, it is also possible for the community to be inactive in various recitation forums. They can tend to listen through podcasts rather than go to the trouble of coming to the show. So that indirectly, the presence of media, such as podcasts, has narrowed the reach of social interaction among the congregation. Therefore, the presentation of the benefits and potential harm caused by podcasts can be used as a basis for analyzing the data findings in the field.

## Theories Relevant to Data Findings

Referring to the grand theory of Littlejohn et al. (2017), the researchers will use theories relevant to this context, namely media ecology, uses and gratifications, and political economy media as a critical study.

## Media Ecology Theory

Neil Postman first coined this theory in 1970. He is interested in how communication media affect human perception, understanding, feelings, and values. Postman chose the term ecology because it denotes the study of the environment: their structure, content, and impact on humans (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The term eventually became a reference for Marshall MC Luhan and several other media theorists so that the concept of medium is the message emerged. The most important thing about the presence of media is not the message or content but the media itself. Euchner (2016) explains that the medium is the message, emphasizing the implications of each new technology (or media) outside the specific context of its use. This message can be summarized into four "laws of media:" any new technology, or "human extension" 1) intensifies or enhances something in the world 2) makes something else obsolete 3) takes on some of the attributes of the past, and 4) and at the extreme, back into the caricature itself.

In essence, media ecology theory emphasizes the role of media as an extension of the human body and even their minds and consciousness (Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019). Therefore, McLuhan and Neil Postman themselves believe that the relationship between media and the environment lies in the function of the media, the impact of media on human life, the dependence between humans and the new media environment (Laskowska & Marcynski, 2019).

According to Mc Luhan's concept, media is an extension of the human body. That way, the media tries to meet the needs desired by humans as an interaction between society and their environment. So, media is an environment, and this environment will adapt to the objects in it. Therefore, although the media has an important role as a message about human civilization, we cannot rule out the role of a human in shaping the desired social civilization. It is relevant to the uses and gratification theory, which also looks at the role or activity of the community in choosing the media. It is not only the media that has a full role in influencing society.

### Uses and Gratification

Mehrad and Tajer (2016) explained that the uses and gratification theory is one theory that focuses on social communication. This theory adopts a functionalistic approach to communication and media and states that the most important function of the media is to meet the needs and motivations of society. Littlejohn et al. (2017) revealed five assumptions in the uses and gratification theory, the audience actively chooses the media they want to use. Second, the audience is active and goal directed. Third, various media compete for the attention of the audience. Fourth, social and contextual elements shape the activities of the audience. Finally, media effects and audience use of media are interrelated. That is, the media will only have an impact on the audience who consumes it**.** These five assumptions will be used by researchers to determine to what extent users are active in using podcasts as a medium of *da'wah.*

### Political Economy of Communication

When media ecology talks about the phenomenon of using podcasts as a message of changing social civilization in society and uses and gratifications analyzes user activity in choosing media, in examining the motives for using podcasts, it can be seen through a political economy theory of communication. The political economy of media is narrowly defined by Mosco (2009) as a study of the power relations that shape the production, distribution, and consumption of sources, including communication sources, and broadly leads to control studies and social survival efforts. From this theory, there are three entrances, namely commodification, spatialization, and structuration. Mosco (2009) explains that commodification is the process of changing or converting the value of goods into exchange rates. There are three types of commodification in the media industry: content commodification, audience commodification, and the commodification of media workers (in Muslikhin et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Mosco (2009), spatialization is related to the extent to which the media can present their products to an audience within space and time constraints. Finally, structuring is described as the process by which social structures are upheld by social agents, which later become part of the structure and act to serve other parts. This structure explains the relationship of ideas between community agents, social processes, and social practices (in Muslikhin et al., 2021). The definition and three entrances of political economy theory can be used not only for the media industry with a certain organizational structure but in other words, it can be personally controlled by anyone. Likewise, the role of podcasts as a medium of *da'wah*. Most *da'wah* content on podcasts does not come from the media industry but can come from modern religious teachers. For senior religious teachers, *da'wa* materials are usually uploaded by followers who have podcast accounts.

## METHOD

This research is based on a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study. Phenomenological studies can be defined as a research approach that intends to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of an experienced subject (Neubauer et al., 2019). This research departs from a trend or phenomenon in Indonesia regarding the increasing use of podcasts. So, from this phenomenon, through a phenomenological approach, researchers will conduct in-depth interviews with several respondents who use podcasts as a medium of *da'wah* to find out and describe their experiences related to it. To determine the sample, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique in which he had determined the direction of the research. The researcher would select informants or respondents who had indeed uploaded Gus Baha's *da'wah* through podcasts. Many accounts upload *da'wah* material of Gus Baha through podcasts, but their identity cannot be known. Only two accounts have identities, names, and cellphone numbers, namely Ngaji Gus Baha and Santri Gayeng. For Ngaji Gus Baha account was initiated by Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto, active followers at the Izzati Nuril Qur'an Bantul

Yogyakarta and for SantriGayeng admin is Rumail Abbas from Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School Sarang. So that, from these two informants, the researchers will dig deeper about the motives for using podcasts as a medium of *da'wah*. In addition, purposive sampling is also aimed at active listeners of Gus Baha's podcast. Similar to the identity of previous communicators, in this case, due to the lack of interactive features in podcasts, researchers are also less than optimal in finding data for active listeners. So far, through the search results, there are two listeners whose identities are known clearly, namely Sudiono and Hilda Royn. Although it is a bit difficult to find the listener's identity, the researcher considers that to find out the effectiveness of using podcasts as a medium of *da'wah*, it is also necessary to study from the side of the communicant. Because, after all, in a communication process, the final goal to be achieved is the effect of the message sent by the communicator to the communicant.

Meanwhile, the data analysis technique includes three processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1992, in Rijali, 2018). First, raw data from the interview process will be selected or sorted according to the focus of the study, then presented in the form of data descriptions, and conclusions can be drawn from this description. The researcher used the data triangulation technique for the verification stage by conducting interviews with various parties, from uploading Gus Baha's *da'wah* through podcasts to direct listeners. In addition, this research is also supported by secondary data in the form of literature studies on relevant theories and previous research.

## DATA FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research focus previously mentioned, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with users or communicators who uploaded Gus Baha's *da'wah* through a podcast, namely Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto as the owner of the *Ngaji Gus Baha* account and Rumail Abbas as the admin of *Santri Gayeng* account. While for the listeners or communicants who consume the content, the researcher will conduct in-depth interviews with Hilda Royn and Sudiono. For the classification of questions, the researcher will ask Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto and Rumail Abbas about their motivations and the advantages and disadvantages of podcasts as a medium of *da'wah*. As for Hilda Royn and Sudiono, the researcher asked about the impact and effectiveness of using podcasts as *da'wah* media of Gus Baha. For more details, Table 1 and 2 are a summary of the results of interviews with users and active listeners.

From the answers of each respondent above, it can be analyzed through several relevant theories. The motivation for using podcasts as a medium of *da'wah* can be related to a critical study from Vincent Mosco. Because from the answers obtained, there is an emphasis on efforts to strengthen the existence and expansion of the audience segment in accordance with the broad meaning of the political economy of communication as control studies and

Table 1

*Summary of interview results with podcast users as Da'wah media of Gus Baha*

| Name | Focus of Research | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto | Motivation for Using Podcasts as a Media of *Da'wah* | Because there is a trend in society, especially in the field of *da'wah,* many religious figures have started to deliver their content through podcasts. So, to strengthen the existence of religious figures from the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (considering the large enough mass base in Indonesia), it is also important to upload Gus Baha's content through podcasts. |
| Rumail Abbas | | To expand the audience segmentation by saving quota and battery |
| Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto | Advantages and Disadvantages of Podcasts as a *Da'wah* Media | The advantages are saving quotas and statistical analysis. So, you can know the number of listeners and their categorization The disadvantage is that podcasts are only audio-based media, which sometimes, Gus Baha's content cannot be understood through this media, such as language problems. |
| Rumail Abbas | | The advantage is also that it recognizes that podcasts can save more on quota and battery The disadvantage is more directed at the lack of interactive features to find out what listeners want for Gus Baha's material uploaded through podcasts. |

Table 2

*Summary of interview results with listeners*

| Name | Focus of Research | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Hilda Royn | The Impact of Using Podcasts as *Da'wah* Media of Gus Baha | The perceived impact is more on the ease of understanding the content because it can be heard anytime and anywhere. In addition, because she likes audio media more than audiovisual media when Gus Baha is present on the podcast, Hilda is more able to follow him than when he is on *YouTube* |

Table 2 *(Continue)*

| Name | Focus of Research | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Sudiono | The Impact of Using Podcasts as *Da'wah* Media of Gus Baha | Like Hilda, the impact that can be felt is when on the go or with high mobility the presence of podcasts makes it possible to listen to *da'wah* of Gus Baha with battery and quota savings compared to listening through *YouTube* or listening to other media. |
| Hilda Royn | The Effectiveness of Using Podcasts as *Da'wah* Media of Gus Baha | For a type like Hilda, who prefers audio content to audiovisual content, Gus Baha's presence is considered quite effective. Because even though it is on *YouTube*, Hilda still does not want to follow. After using this kind of audio media, she is interested and continues to follow the content |
| Sudiono | | Unlike Hilda, Sudiono is more concerned with the content delivered and under what conditions. When the content delivered allows it to be channeled through audio media, podcasts can be quite effective. Especially in any condition. As for material that is not possible through audio, such as prayer movements, how to perform ablution, and others, audio-visual media will be more effective. However, both agree that the presence of podcasts can broaden the audience segmentation. |

social survival efforts (Mosco, 2009). During many religious figures from various sects, especially those who are modern and understand technological developments, who deliver their *da'wah* through podcasts, the effort to do the same with *da'wah* material of Gus Baha can be said as an effort to control and social survival. According to Mosco (2009), the control effort can be seen through the power relations that affect the production, distribution, and consumption processes. However, unlike media institutions, power relations here can also be controlled or dominated by individuals with all their interests, including maintaining their existence in the social environment. Individuals can determine the content that is created, how the content is distributed or through the media to be consumed and get the desired effect from society. Thus, through three entrances, namely commodification, spatialization, and structuration, the use of podcasts as a *da'wah* media of Gus Baha can be said as an effort to control his followers by means of spatialization. According to Mosco (2009), spatialization is related to the extent to which the media can present their products to an audience within space and time constraints (in Muslikhin et al., 2021). There are two types of spatialization, namely vertical and horizontal. Vertical spatialization occurs when the media industry expands its reach by expanding its business to other media platforms. Meanwhile, horizontal spatialization occurs when a media company expands its business to businesses other than media. Moreover, seeing podcasts as an alternative to *da'wah* media of Gus Baha will be relevant to vertical spatialization, where Gus Baha's congregation uploads *da'wah* material via *YouTube, Instagram,* or *Twitter* and with podcasts as an effort to achieve economic and political aspects as previously explained.

In terms of advantages, disadvantages, as well as the impact and effectiveness felt by listeners, are related to each other. It is relevant to the concept of uses and gratification theory. The uses and gratification theory proposed by Elihu Kats in 1959 made five assumptions. First, the audience actively chooses from various media. Second, the audience is active and goal-directed. Third, the various available media compete to attract the attention of the audience. Fourth, social and contextual elements shape audience activity. Finally, media effects and audience use of media are interrelated (Littlejohn et al., 2017). From this explanation, the five assumptions in question can be fulfilled based on the data findings. First, the audience actively chooses from various media. Most informants, both uploaders and listeners, agree that among the various media of *da'wah*, they choose podcasts because there are needs that must be met, namely saving data and battery, the importance of listening to *da'wah* content in any condition, which in this case, cannot be fulfilled by audiovisual media. Second, the audience is active and goal-directed. Just like in the first point, they chose podcasts as a medium of *da'wah* because they had a purpose. So, it can be said that listeners are actively looking for which media suits their wants and needs. Therefore, this theory clearly emphasizes the gratification aspects that users get when they use the media. However, when the media cannot provide the desired needs, users will use other media that can meet that need. As the statement from listeners, for *da'wah* material that does not require movement, podcasts can be quite effective in conveying messages. However, when it comes to prayer movements, ablution, and others, it is still effective using audiovisual media. Littlejohn et al. (2017) assume, "when we look at sitcoms, we are sure that from the sitcom. We will feel entertained because indeed our need right now is entertainment. When we are not in need of entertainment, we need the latest information, for example, we are less likely to watch these shows."

Third, the various available media compete to attract the attention of the audience. In its application, uploaders of material via podcasts also compete to broadcast Gus Baha's *da'wah* to attract the attention of the public so that they are not inferior to other scholars. Fourth, social and contextual elements shape audience activity. Several informants explained that they used podcasts because they were carried away by the growing trend in society. Like Nur Muhammad Dwi Putranto's explanation, he started using podcasts because of trends abroad. Finally, media effects and the use of media by audiences are intertwined with the intention that the media only affects certain audiences who choose the media. Therefore, when informants choose podcasts to save data and battery, so they listen more often to Gus Baha's *da'wah* in any condition and situation as well as auditory type informants, the podcast will also have a profound impact on these kinds of people. It is different from people who like audiovisual content, for example. As with any *da'wah* packaging on the podcast, it will tend not to be interesting.

Seeing the explanation above, the motivation of users to use podcasts as a medium of *da'wah* is an important point in knowing the benefits of new media and as an illustration that the more media used for preaching, the wider community that can be reached. Another point that is no less important from the discussion and being used as material for further research is the need to see the role of the media itself—how new media with all the existing facilities can impact user activeness in following *da'wah* content. This point is also one of the criticisms of the uses and gratification theory, which only focuses on an active audience, regardless of the media side, or the new media users will be more active and have many choices. Steiner and Xu (2018) also confirmed this. Their research on Binge-Watching Motivates Change: Uses and Gratifications of Streaming Video Viewers Challenge Traditional TV Research also criticized the uses and gratifications theory by stating that media technology can affect the gratification received by the audience. It is consistent with the criticism of the uses and gratifications theory, which only emphasizes the activeness of audiences using the media. Such as through their data findings, which show that the navigation and episode control owned by current technology affects binge-watching or binge-watch activity.

Responding to the criticism above, when Steiner and Xu (2018) commented on the uses and gratification theory, which looks more at the activeness of the audience than the role of the media itself, this is answered through media ecology theory. This theory assumes that the development of technology impacts the development of the history of human civilization. So that Mc Luhan said the medium is the message; it is not the message in the media that is important but the media itself, which is the message. As in ancient times, when people began to recognize reading and writing, inscriptions emerged as a medium of communication as well as forming a message that civilization at that time was progressing. Likewise, so on. When the industrial revolution occurred in 1750–1850, it became an important moment to change all aspects of human life, starting from social, cultural, economic, and political. From this change, many modern technologies, such as typewriters, radio, and all kinds, were created because the demands for communication are increasing. As explained by Tufan (2020), the end of the 19th century, which coincided with the first years of the invention of radio broadcasting technology, became a period that opened limitless possibilities for broadcasting to a wide audience. With all its facilities, the radio is enthusiastically welcomed by the community and broadcasts many programs ranging from art education, entertainment, literature, sports, and others. Over time, with the development of broadcasting technology, podcasts emerged, which began to change radio in the early 2000s. However, instead of choosing the term to replace the old radio role, Tufan (2020) calls this changes the podcast role as an extension of the traditional radio function. Unlike the case with Tufan (2020), Overbeek (2016) sees podcasts as a disruptive technology from the traditional radio industry in terms of commercialism and listener reach. That is why he said that perhaps the true sign of podcast shifting into a formidable competitor to AM/FM radio would be mentioned in Nielsen's next quarterly report.

Regardless of the paradox conceptually put forward by some of these experts, whether podcasts are an extension of traditional radio or whether podcasts shift and replace the role of old radio, what is clear is that the presence of podcasts is a message of a change in civilization in humans. People who used to be quite satisfied and felt that they had benefited from traditional radio at the end of the 19th-century now conventional radio seems not enough to meet their information needs. People with high mobility and activity seem to demand the presence of media that is easy to reach, can be accessed at any time, at a low cost, and of course, can provide all the information needed. Thus, the criticism from Steiner and Xu (2018), which suggests looking at the role of the media in shaping audience activeness, needs to be reexamined because it is not only the media that dominates the behavior of the audience but the social conditions or civilization of society, which are also a factor behind the use of media cutting-edge like podcasts. A podcast is present as an alternative media for *da'wah.* It can be said to be a message that the current context in society emphasizes the activities of auditory needs for those who have high mobility or who want to follow *da'wah* messages without excess quota and battery. Because it must be acknowledged that humans create the communication media, they will create something they need. Moreover, what needs to be emphasized here is that nothing is dominant. There is only a cycle that influences each other. We cannot ignore the role of humans to encourage the presence of new media, such as podcasts, and we also cannot deny that the presence of these new media and all the facilities provided triggers user activity in choosing the media they want.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

From some of the descriptions above, the conclusion that can be drawn is the use of podcasts as a medium of *da'wah* in terms of communicators who upload *da'wah* content of Gus Baha. Those who act as listeners alike agree that in certain cases, this media is effective enough to become an alternative for auditory types, save data and battery, and those with high mobility. So that when viewed from the uses and gratification theory, listeners are quite active in choosing media to fulfill these desires. Furthermore, from the theory of media ecology, the presence of podcasts is a message that now people are interested in audio media with more modern features after previously this media was not very popular and instead switched to audiovisual media, such as *television*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Instagram*, and others. Meanwhile, in terms of communicators, it can be said that the presence of podcasts is an adaptive and dominant effort economically and politically to maintain the existence of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization in Indonesia.

From these conclusions, suggestions for further research can be formulated, which simultaneously shows the limitations of this study. When this research is still focused on one podcast media, in the future, there needs to be a mapping of the comparison of the facilities or roles offered by each mass media between conventional and new media as well as among the new media itself. It is important to do to obtain a comprehensive picture in developing a more effective *da'wah* strategy. In addition, when this research is based on a qualitative approach by conducting interviews with several informants about their motives for using podcasts, quantitative-based research is also needed to reach more respondents and find out what media they use and the strengths and weaknesses of each media according to respondents (in the context as a medium for *da'wah)*.

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*Review article*

# A Systematic Review to Comprehend the Cultural Representation in L2 Mandarin Textbooks

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural representation in foreign/second language textbooks has received considerable research attention in recent years. This diachronic study reviews previous studies' methodological trends and research foci on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks from 2005–2020. It systematically searched all relevant publications in three accessible databases: Web of Science, Scopus, and CNKI. A total number of 48 relevant publications were collected and analyzed. The review indicates that most publications are empirical studies, covering qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies and most sampled textbooks are elementary textbooks from China. It also reveals that the main source for collecting data is documented, and the commonly used data analysis methods are comparative, content, discourse, and semiotic analysis. Besides that, examining cultural elements in textbooks seems to be a key research focus among the publications, followed by analyzing cultural orientation, unconventional culture phenomenon, and ideology behind cultural representation in textbooks. The current study contributes to the literature by providing a detailed review of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks and identifying the research gaps. Accordingly, it concludes with recommendations for future research to study cultural representation in textbooks.

*Keywords:* Applied linguistics, cultural representation, L2 Mandarin textbooks, methodological trends, research foci, systematic review

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## INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are closely related. Language is the carrier and part of a culture, while culture is the base of language (Shu & Zhuang, 2008). Culture plays an important role in foreign/second language (FL/L2) education since the shift in the field away from a grammar-translation approach to the development of communicative competence (Bewley, 2018). Scholars have also acknowledged the important role of culture in teaching Mandarin as a FL/L2 since the early 1980s (X. Li & Zang, 2013). As Z. Zhang (1984) and Chen (1992) state, teaching culture is necessary for teaching language, especially the cultural knowledge relevant to language. The importance of teaching culture is also highlighted in the *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* (ICCLE), compiled by Hanban[1] to guide international Chinese teaching practice. ICCLE officially stated that cultural competence is one of the elements of cultivating the L2 Mandarin learners' comprehensive language application ability. Cultural competence refers to "the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures" (Make It Our Business, 2017, para. 7). Based on ICCLE, it comprises four components: cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, intercultural competence, and international perspective (Hanban, 2014). The statement of cultural competence established teaching culture's significant status in L2 Mandarin instruction.

With the emphasis on the teaching culture and cultivation of cultural competence, many scholars (for example, Chan et al., 2018; Hao, 2020; Huang, 2014; X. Lu & Cheng, 2018; D. Wang, 2016) study cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks, since textbooks are the major source of language and culture input in classroom teaching and may influence both learners' and instructors' experiences. These studies document scholars' contributions to literature and shape our understanding of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However, little work has been done to identify the gaps in methodological developments and research focus. As Shen (2019) states, there is a need for a systematic review of the current state of the literature in cultural representation in textbooks. Such a review may help to visualize the current status and distribution of the most researched focus and methodology, show readers about the latest advancements and further research directions in research. Hence, this paper aimed to review the studies of cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks from 2005 to 2020. The cultural representation in this paper refers to the various cultures represented in textbooks, while culture is "ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people" (Brown, 2000, p. 177). As Newmark (1988) proposes, culture can be identified from the following five domains: ecology (flora, fauna), material context (food, clothes, house, transport),

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[1] Hanban is a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education to provide Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide. http://www.hanban.org/

social context (work or leisure), social organizations (political and administrative, religious, artistic), and gestures and habits. The following research questions will guide this systematic review:

(1) What are the methodological trends of the studies on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks?

(2) What are the foci of the studies on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks?

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was a diachronic study that performed a systematic review on methodological trends and research foci in the studies of cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks (2005–2020). It followed the PRISMA framework of Liberati et al. (2009).

### Database Selection

A systematic search was conducted utilizing the following electronic databases: China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Web of Science (WoS), and Scopus (Figure 1). CNKI is "the largest academic Chinese journal full-text database worldwide covering various disciplinary studies" (M. Li, 2020, p. 41). It was selected as the studies of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks are rich in this database. WoS and Scopus were selected as neither is inclusive but complements each other (Burnham, 2006). The former is regarded as the most comprehensive database covering most peer-reviewed journals in social sciences (Steinhardt et al., 2017).

### Study Selection

The review developed a query utilizing particular key terms to fulfill the research questions of the present study. It focused on previous studies of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks in CNKI, WoS, and Scopus during the period 2005–2020 because the year 2005 witnessed a significant event, the First World Chinese Congress, marking the beginning point of promoting the teaching and learning of Chinese language globally (Ma et al., 2017). Therefore, 2005 was selected as the starting year since the studies of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks were sporadic, and most relevant studies were published after 2005. This review utilized the advanced search strategy in the database to retrieve the relevant literature on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. It used the query '("文化, culture/cultural representation/representation of culture") AND ("汉语 OR 华语, Chinese OR Mandarin") AND (" 教材, textbooks").' Figure 1 illustrates the flow diagram of the study selection.

### Eligibility Criteria

This review focused on cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks by including all studies that met the criteria presented in Table 1. A total number of 715 records of studies were initially collected. After excluding duplicate studies, this review excluded studies based on the exclusion criteria (Table 1). Similarly, this review included a study if it fulfilled the inclusion criteria (Table 1). This review mainly focused on journals, conferences,

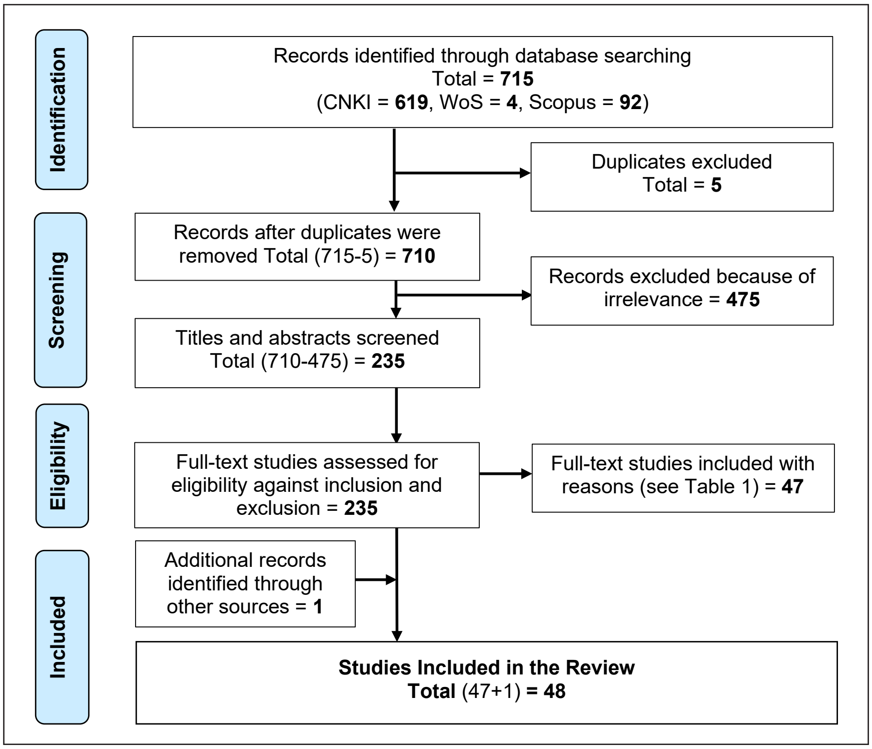
Identification
Records identified through database searching
Total = **715**
(CNKI = **619**, WoS = **4**, Scopus = **92**)
Duplicates excluded
Total = **5**
Screening
Records after duplicates were removed Total (715-5) = **710**
Records excluded because of irrelevance = **475**
Titles and abstracts screened
Total (710-475) = **235**
Eligibility
Full-text studies assessed for eligibility against inclusion and exclusion = **235**
Full-text studies included with reasons (see Table 1) = **47**
Included
Additional records identified through other sources = **1**
**Studies Included in the Review**
**Total** (47+1) **= 48**

*Figure 1*. Flow diagram of study selection process adapted from PRISMA (Liberati et al., 2009)

Table 1
*Inclusion and exclusion eligibility criteria*

| Criteria | Specified criteria |
|---|---|
| Inclusion | 1) Studies relevant to cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks<br>2) Journal papers<br>3) Conference papers and proceedings |
| Exclusion | 1) Unrelated studies<br>2) Thesis, books, and book chapters<br>3) The full-text study is not available online<br>4) Studies that do not focus on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks |

and proceeding papers because they were subject to rigorous review. Consequently, 48 records of studies were identified as relevant between 2005–2020 (Figure 1).

## Inter-rater Reliability

After searching CNKI, WoS, and Scopus databases, two different reviewers who are both academic researchers independently examined the obtained set of studies by title, abstract, keywords, and, if necessary, by full text to exclude studies that did not meet the eligibility criteria. Cohen's Kappa was utilized to test the inter-rater reliability between the choices made by the two independent reviewers in selecting studies.

The obtained inter-rater reliability value of K was equal to 0.89, which indicates a good agreement between the two reviewers (Landis & Koch, 1977).

### Data Extraction and Analysis

The 48 collected studies were imported into ATLAS.ti (9th version) software in which coding can be done by simply dragging codes onto the selected piece of data, and findings can be linked in a semantically meaningful way[2]. Then, each study was reviewed, examined, and coded in ATLAS.ti based on two items, as listed in Table 2. These items provide information to address the research questions mentioned above and to conduct the synthesis.

The analysis of methodological trends started with examining the title, abstract and methodological sections concerning research method, sample selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. Drawing on a categorization procedure adopted by Gao et al. (2001) and M. Li (2020), this study then categorized all collected studies into empirical and non-empirical studies. An empirical study was based on whether its data was systematically collected and analyzed (M. Li, 2020). The empirical studies were further divided into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (using qualitative and quantitative methods) studies. A qualitative method is seen as a data-driven study that applies systematic data collection and analysis techniques (Henning, 1986), such as text analysis and narrative accounts (M. Li, 2020). A quantitative method is characterized by its quantification of data, which relates to research design, several independent variables, and statistical analysis (Henning, 1986; M. Li, 2020). In general, the non-empirical studies discuss theory and application or introduce personal views and experience "without substantial literature review, purposeful research planning, details of operational procedure and solid data" (Gao et al., 2001, p. 3). After categorizing empirical and non-empirical studies, this study then extracted and analyzed the information of sample selection, data collection, and analysis methods of both types of study.

On the rare occasions when the two reviewers were unable to reach a consensus on what methodology and which research topic a study should be categorized under, they followed the category decided based on discussion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the collected studies on cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks.

Table 2
*Items used for analyzing the collected studies*

| Items | Description |
|---|---|
| Methodologies | Description of the research methodology of the study, including research methods, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis methods |
| Research foci | Description of the research focus of the study |

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[2] https://atlasti.com/product/what-is-atlas-ti/

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the 48 collected studies between 2005-2020. Cultural representation in the textbooks is an issue with a continuous concern in L2 Mandarin education. The findings of methodological trends and research foci are presented in the following.

## Methodological Trends

The methodological research trend was analyzed to identify whether there are any new developments in research methodology. It focuses on four aspects: research method, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis.

**Research Method.** With respect to the research methods of collected studies (N=48), there are both empirical studies (N=39) and non-empirical studies (N=9) concerning cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However. unlike the finding reported in Li's (2020) systematic review of research on Chinese character teaching and learning, most publications on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks are empirical studies. Thus, it seems that there is a trend for empirical study overall, especially in the year 2016–2020 (Figure 3).

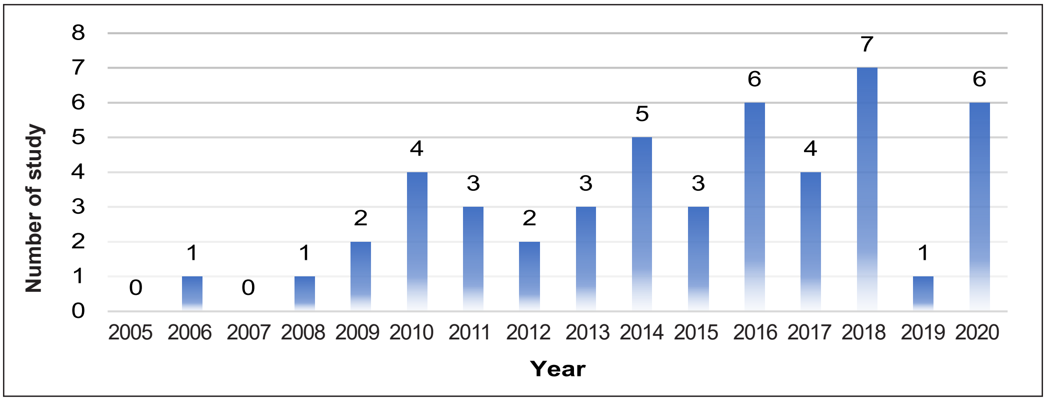

*Figure 2.* Distribution of relevant studies between 2005–2020

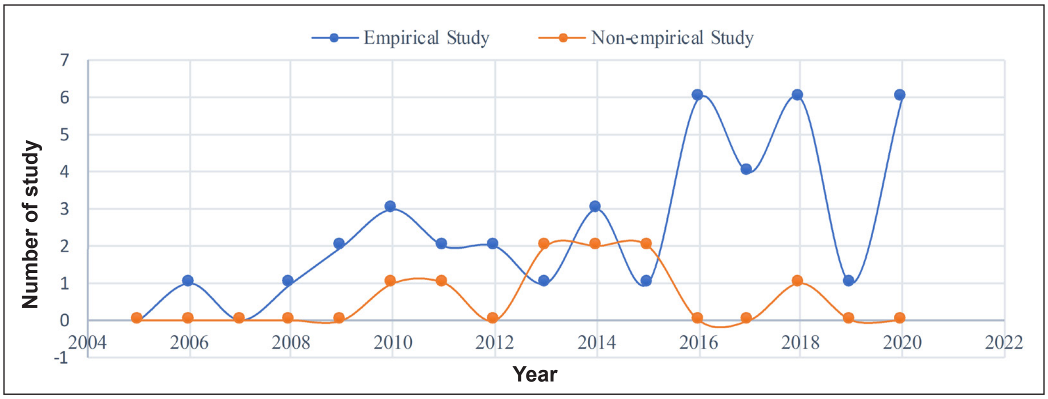

*Figure 3.* Distribution of research methods of previous studies (2005-2020, N=48)

Among the empirical studies, most of them are qualitative study (N=18), followed by quantitative study (N=16) and mixed study (N=5). The qualitative studies generally analyze how the culture is presented and examine whether and to what extent culture is valued. The mixed studies also investigate the views or attitudes of teachers or learners towards the cultural representations in textbooks. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the three kinds of studies from 2005 to 2020.

**Sample Selection.** Based on the description of textbooks sampled in collected studies, sample selection was analyzed in this review, covering the countries/regions where the sampled textbooks come from and the levels of sampled textbooks (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3 shows that most of the collected studies analyze cultural representation in the textbooks from a certain country/region. The most frequently sampled textbooks are from China, followed by America, England, Korea, Japan, Hongkong, Taiwan, France, Italy, Thailand, Malaysia, and Finland. Thus, analyzing cultural representation in the textbooks from China and other countries/regions is helpful to understand the overall situation of cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks in the world.

Table 4 shows that the collected studies mainly focus on the textbooks written for learners at the elementary level of Mandarin, followed by intermediate and advanced levels. However, a few of them focus on cultural representation in all three levels of textbooks. The result reveals that intermediate and advanced language textbooks and elementary textbooks can integrate cultural knowledge for developing learners' cultural competence (Z. Zhang, 1990). Hence, a comprehensive investigation of textbooks at different levels may be conducive to understanding cultural representation in textbooks.

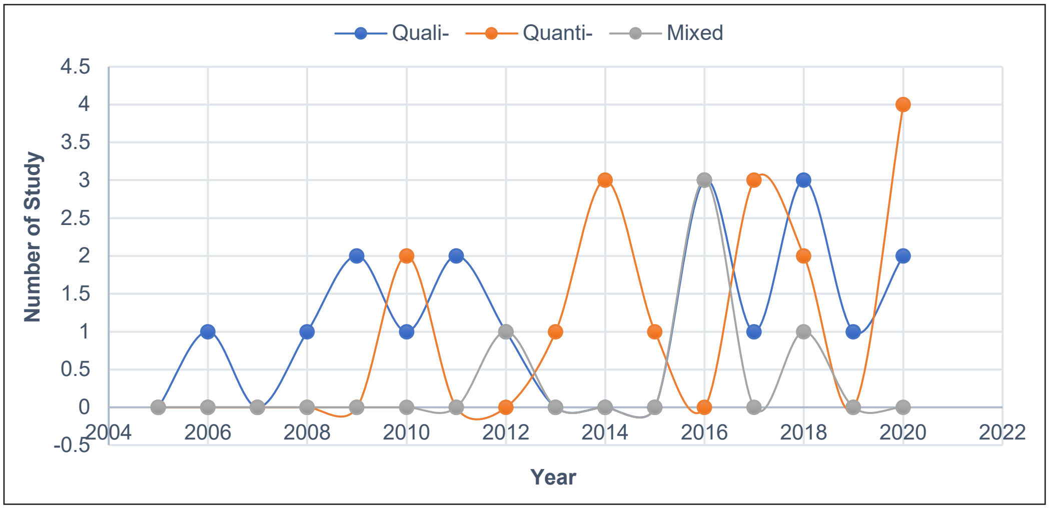

*Figure 4.* Distribution of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies (2005-2020, N=39)

Table 3
*Distribution of country/region of sampled textbooks in collected studies*

| | | Country/Region | Number of study | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Empirical Study | Comparative Study | China & America | 3 | 8 |
| | | China & America & Japan | 1 | |
| | | China & Italy | 1 | |
| | | China & Korea | 1 | |
| | | China & Hongkong & Taiwan | 1 | |
| | | America & England & Italy & Japan & Korea & Thailand | 1 | |
| | Non-comparative Study | China | 20 | 31 |
| | | Hongkong | 1 | |
| | | England | 2 | |
| | | France | 2 | |
| | | America | 2 | |
| | | Malaysia | 2 | |
| | | Korea | 1 | |
| | | Thailand | 1 | |
| Non-empirical Study | | China | 2 | 9 |
| | | Finland | 1 | |
| | | Uncertain | 6 | |
| Total | | | | 48 |

*Note*. Uncertain means that the study does not provide exact information on which country/region the sampled textbook is from.

Table 4
*Distribution of levels of sampled textbooks in collected studies*

| | Level | Number of study |
|---|---|---|
| Empirical Study | Elementary | 13 |
| | Intermediate | 5 |
| | Advanced | 1 |
| | Elementary + Intermediate | 3 |
| | Elementary + Intermediate + Advanced | 5 |
| | Intermediate + Advanced | 1 |
| | Uncertain | 11 |
| Non-empirical Study | Elementary | 1 |
| | Intermediate | 1 |
| | Elementary + Intermediate | 1 |
| | Elementary + Intermediate + Advanced | 1 |
| | Uncertain | 5 |
| Total | | 48 |

*Note*. Uncertain means that the study does not provide an exact description of the sampled textbooks' level.

**Data Collection.** Both empirical and non-empirical studies mainly collected data through the document (textbooks; Table 5). Except for documents, the empirical studies also collect data through questionnaires and interviews with L2 Mandarin learners and teachers (Ge, 2016; X. Li, 2014). It is worth noting that some empirical studies also pay

Table 5
*Data collection of collected studies*

| | Data collection | Number of study |
|---|---|---|
| Empirical studies | Document | 34 |
| | Document + Questionnaire (S) | 1 |
| | Document + Interview (S) + Questionnaire (S) | 1 |
| | Document + Interview (T) + Questionnaire (S) | 2 |
| | Video | 1 |
| Non-empirical studies | Document | 4 |
| | No specific data source | 5 |
| Total | | 48 |

*Note.* S refers to learners, T refers to teachers.

attention to the cultural representations in video materials (Y. Wang, 2016). It suggests that a multi-pile source for collecting data can also be an option in studying cultural representation in textbooks.

**Data Analysis Method.** The present study finds that no specific data analysis methods are reported in the nine non-empirical studies. The most used data analysis methods of the 39 empirical studies are comparative analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis. The result is similar to Weninger and Kiss's (2015) study on analyzing culture in foreign/second language textbooks. A comparative analysis compares cultural representation in textbooks from different countries/regions (for example, Zhen, 2018). Content analysis is usually used to investigate cultural information presented in textbooks' topics, words, and illustrations (Chan et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2020; Ouyang, 2020; Ouyang & Zhou, 2016). It has also been used to sketch out the aspects of national identity that are integrated into textbooks (D. Wang, 2016). Discourse analysis has been employed to analyze Chinese culture's underlying dialogues in textbooks (H. Chen & Yan, 2017; Ran, 2011). Finally, semiotic analysis is utilized to figure out how education-related cultural values are represented in visual images (pictures) in textbooks (Xiong & Peng, 2020). Content analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis offer complimentary methodologies (Weninger, 2018) for exploring visual and linguistic representations of cultural meanings in textbooks.

As the results of methodological trends reveal, empirical study has dominated the previous studies of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are all utilized to study cultural representation, which undoubtedly contributes to understanding the important role of teaching culture in L2 Mandarin education. However, there are some methodological gaps based on the literature. Firstly, with respect to research methods, the counting units in most quantitative studies contain the piece of reading related to culture (Shen, 2019), while many other units such as visual images, music, and listening materials may not be covered. Therefore, a detailed and thorough analysis of every corner of the textbooks is necessary for examining cultural information.

Secondly, in terms of sample selection, the sampled textbooks are mainly selected from China, while selecting more textbooks from other countries/regions is also worthwhile. Thirdly, for data collection, although there are some studies collecting data through questionnaires, interviews, and video materials, most previous studies collect data limited to the documentary source. Therefore, it might make the studies less comprehensive in looking at cultural representation in textbooks. In addition, it seems common for some empirical studies not to provide a detailed description of their methodology section, for instance, lacking information of data analysis method and the trustworthiness (or validity and reliability) of research, which may make their findings less trustworthy (or reliable) to a certain extent. Therefore, a more rigorous and "a more balanced and in-depth integration of quantitative and qualitative techniques" (Gao et al., 2001, p. 8), multiple data sources, and complementary analysis methods are considerable for exploring cultural representation in textbooks multimodal discourses.

## Research Foci

The collected studies on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks mainly focus on cultural elements, cultural orientation, the phenomenon of unconventional culture, and the ideology behind cultural representation in textbooks. The following sections present the findings of each research focus and relevant research methodologies that are employed.

**Cultural Elements in Textbooks.** A total of 44 collected studies analyze cultural representation by investigating cultural elements in textbooks, including empirical and non-empirical studies. These studies can be divided into two groups: general aspect of cultural elements and specific aspect of cultural elements. The former refers to the studies which focus on various aspects of cultural elements, while the latter refers to the studies which simply focus on one aspect of cultural elements. The details are presented and discussed in the following.

***General Aspect of Cultural Elements.*** There are 32 studies focusing on the general aspect of cultural elements in textbooks, mostly empirical studies. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches are employed to examine the general aspect of cultural elements in textbooks. Through applying content and comparative analysis methods, scholars analyze and compare how or to what extent the general aspect of cultural elements are represented in L2 Mandarin textbooks (Chan et al., 2018; Zhen, 2018). These studies can be divided into two sub-groups of studies. The first sub-group is the studies that examine cultural elements without employing frameworks (for example, Fan & Sun, 2018; Y. Liu, 2017;

Xin, 2015; J. Yang, 2014). The second subgroup is the studies that categorize cultural elements based on different frameworks (for example, Chan et al., 2018; Hao, 2020; Huang, 2014; Lin et al., 2020; X. Lu & Cheng, 2018; S. Wang, 2013; J. Wang, 2016). The most commonly used framework (N=9) is proposed by Z. Zhang (1984, 1990) and developed by Chen (1992, 1997).

Z. Zhang (1984, 1990) categorizes culture into knowledge-culture (知识文化, *zhīshí wénhuà*) and communicative-culture (交际文化, *jiāojì wénhuà*) from the functional perspective of culture in L2 teaching. The former refers to cultural background knowledge, which does not affect the understanding and using certain words or sentences when two people from different cultural backgrounds communicate (Z. Zhang, 1990, p. 17). In addition, it contains knowledge of literature and art, history, movies, music, beliefs, value, and the geography of a particular country. The latter refers to the cultural knowledge that directly influences the accuracy and effectiveness of communication between people from different cultural backgrounds (Z. Zhang, 1990, p. 17).

Further, Chen (1992, 1997) divided communicative-culture into three aspects: cultural elements in language structure (语构*, yǔgòu*), semantics (语义*, yǔyì*) and pragmatics (语用*, yǔyòng*). Cultural elements in language structure are embodied in vocabulary, phrases, and sentences and reflect cultural characteristics through the grammatical structure (Chen, 1992). Cultural elements in semantics are contained in lexis and idioms (Chen, 1997). They carry the Chinese's unique meaning, concept, and thoughts (Chen, 1992, 1997). This kind of cultural element may cause misunderstanding in communication if learners do not learn the cultural meaning of the lexis and idioms (Chen, 1997). Finally, cultural elements in pragmatics refer to the cultural norms or conventions in language use in the social context and interpersonal relationships (Chen, 1992, 1997). They are embodied in the speech acts of greeting, leave-taking, praise, apology, appreciation, honorific, and taboos in communication (Chan et al., 2018; Chen, 1992, 1997).

Based on the framework of Z. Zhang (1984, 1990) and Chen (1992, 1997), scholars found that there are some features of cultural elements in textbooks. On the one hand, Hao (2020) and Huang (2014) mentioned that knowledge cultural elements were presented dominantly in elementary, intermediate, and advanced textbooks. On the other hand, some scholars, such as Lin et al. (2020), S. Wang (2013), and J. Wang (2016), stated that communicative cultural elements had been emphasized in textbooks. Additionally, as Huang (2014) reports, the communicative cultural elements in semantics and pragmatics were presented explicitly in textbooks.

However, there are also some problems with selecting and presenting cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks. For instance, as X. Li (2014) and S. Wang (2013) state, the selection and presentation of cultural elements in some sampled textbooks were a bit random. S. Wang (2013) indicated that it was probably because of the lacking cultural syllabus in L2 Mandarin education. Moreover, Huang (2014) revealed that cultural elements relevant to philosophical and religious aspects were not stressed in textbooks. Hao (2020) found that there was also a weak presentation of communicative cultural elements in textbooks, and S. Wang (2013) indicated that the presentation was unsystematic and unproperly leveled. Meanwhile, as the studies of Chan et al. (2018) and Y. Zhang (2009) reveal, these elements were implicitly presented and lack further descriptions in textbook contents. Chan et al. (2018) also indicated that linguistics skills were still the foci in mostly sampled textbooks (elementary level) from Malaysia, while cultural elements were not stressed. The problems mentioned above are not conducive to developing learners' cultural awareness and communicative competence.

These 32 studies had shed light on the general aspect of cultural elements, drawing on the features and problems of selecting and presenting cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However, despite the fact that different categorization frameworks of cultural elements were employed in these studies, the categorization criteria are not always clear-cut, and some categories might be overlapping. This problem is also reported in Shen's (2019) review on studies of cultural contents in English textbooks. Therefore, an inclusive and analytical framework is necessary for categorizing cultural elements.

***Specific Aspect of Cultural Elements.*** There are 12 studies focusing on specific cultural elements and mainly covering cultural words, cultural topics, traditional culture, and regional culture in textbooks. Both empirical and non-empirical studies are conducted to analyze the specific aspect of cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks.

*Cultural Words in Textbooks.* Five studies analyzed cultural elements by examining cultural words in textbooks (Ge, 2016; Lei, 2017; X. Li, 2012; Zhao, 2010; Zhen, 2018). Cultural words related to festivals, food, clothing, idiom, history, and religions, are important for L2 learners. Zhao's (2010) quantitative study compared cultural words in four sets of textbooks (intermediate level) from China. It was stated that some textbooks might fail to pay enough attention to the compilation of cultural words, and some cultural words were too difficult for learners. Lei (2017) and Zhen (2018) also indicated that selecting and arranging the cultural words appropriately and balanced was necessary when writing textbooks. In addition, Li's (2012) qualitative study analyzed and compared the representation of cultural words in three sets of textbooks from China. It was found that most cultural words in textbooks were related to Chinese culture while few of them related to the culture of other countries in the world, which might not be beneficial for L2 learners to overcome cultural resistance and develop multicultural awareness. Moreover, Ge (2016) stated that the cultural words explicitly shown in vocabulary and notes might be easier for learners to understand than those hidden in the oral-knowledge part of textbooks. Whether learners can obtain the cultural words hidden in textbooks depends on how teachers teach to a large extent.

*Cultural Topics in Textbooks.* Four studies analyzed cultural elements by specifically examining cultural topics in textbooks, for instance, the topics related to Chinese food, clothing, being a guest, festivals, digital culture, and internet culture (Fan & Sun, 2018; X. Li, 2014; X. Liu, 2018; H. Zhang, 2011). Most of these studies are empirical studies. For instance, X. Liu (2018) conducted a qualitative and comparative study and found that cultural topics in elementary textbooks from China failed to fully integrate Mandarin culture compared to the textbooks from Korea. Similarly, H. Zhang's (2011) non-empirical study also found that the cultural topics in local intermediate Mandarin textbooks might lack the integration of Mandarin culture. Besides that, Li's (2014) qualitative study indicated that cultural topics in textbooks from China might not fulfill learners' interests and demands. The reason was that the topics did not pay much attention to comparing different cultures because of mono-cultural output and lack of cultural tolerance (X. Li, 2014). In a word, as Fan and Sun's (2018) qualitative study reveals, the problems, such as indiscriminate and random selection of cultural topics and uneven distribution of cultural topics, still existed in the advanced level of textbooks. Therefore, the practicability of cultural topics for learners is considerable in textbooks (Fan & Sun, 2018; H. Zhang, 2011). The attitude of multi-culturalism was also necessary for selecting cultural topics (X. Li, 2014). Foreign and Mandarin cultural topics needed to be integrated properly in textbooks (X. Liu, 2018; H. Zhang, 2011).

*Traditional Culture in Textbooks.* Two studies focused on traditional culture in L2 Mandarin textbooks, including one study of traditional sports culture and one study of Confucianism and traditional culture. In terms of traditional sports culture, a non-empirical study by Y. Yang et al. (2018) indicated that it was not stressed in textbooks from China. For instance, the culture such as 太极拳 (*tàijí quán*, Tai Chi) appeared in textbooks, while many others such as 中国功夫 (*zhōngguó gōngfu*, Chinese kung fu), 赛龙舟 (*sài lóngzhōu*, dragon boat race), and 抖空竹 (*dǒu kōngzhú*, playing diabolo), were not included (Y. Yang et al., 2018). On the other hand, Lu's (2011) qualitative study mentioned that the sampled textbook from England tried to highlight and integrate them into their Confucianism and traditional culture. For instance, learning from a young, as one of the Confucian educational thoughts, was integrated into the text of 幼不学，老何为? (*yòu bú xué, lǎo hé wéi*? If the child does not learn while young, what will he be when old?; Lu, 2011). The two studies suggested that Confucianism and traditional culture were also helpful to develop cultural awareness and increase learners' interests in Mandarin learning.

However, simply focusing on Mandarin traditional cultural elements may not be helpful to develop learners' awareness of intercultural communication.

*Regional Culture in Textbooks.* One study focused on regional culture in textbooks, discussing cultural elements related to a city of a particular country. X. Liu (2020) conducted a quantitative study and indicated that the presentation of Nanjing regional cultural elements is insufficient in seven sets of textbooks from China, Thailand, and Korea. Instead, there is a lot of linguistic content and practice.

The afore-mentioned studies on cultural words, cultural topics, traditional culture, and regional culture had enriched the literature. They provided an insight into a specific aspect of cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However, most of them mainly focused on textbooks from China and few were concerned with textbooks from Hongkong, Taiwan and Korea. Therefore, their findings cannot be generalized to the textbooks from other countries/regions, which may be a gap in the literature.

The 44 collected studies have shed light on cultural elements in textbooks, which reveal the importance of teaching culture in L2 Mandarin education and provide rich information on selecting and presenting cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However, most of these studies mainly focus on the elements of Mandarin culture in textbooks. Only a few studies provide information on other cultures in the world. It seems that teaching culture in L2 education is equivalent to teaching Mandarin culture to a certain extent, while it might ignore learners' own culture or other cultures. It could be a research gap of analyzing cultural elements in the literature. Moreover, the findings of cultural elements in the collected studies are mainly based on analyzing words, sentences, topics in textbooks. In contrast, the cultural elements presented in other sources are less highlighted. Not only language but also visual images, auditory and video materials can represent cultural meanings. It may also be a research gap in analyzing cultural elements in the literature.

**Cultural Orientation in Textbooks.** Cultural orientation here means whether the orientation of the textbook content refers to the culture of the country of target language itself or the culture of other countries or human topics in common (Lu, 2018). It contains two sub-concepts: self-referential orientation (自指取向, *zìzhǐ qǔxiàng*) and other-referential orientation (他指取向, *tā zhǐ qǔ xiàng*). The former means that the textbook content mainly introduces the country's culture of the target language. In contrast, the latter means that the textbook content mainly introduces the culture of other countries or has a broad global university (Lu, 2018). The two sub-concepts of cultural orientation are equal to the three types of culture (target, source, and international cultures) in L2 textbooks proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). As Cortazzi and Jin (1999) indicate, textbooks may integrate three types of cultural information: target culture, source culture, and international cultures. Target culture refers to the culture in which the target language is used as a first language, source culture refers to the learners' own culture, and international cultures refer to cultures that are neither a source culture nor a target culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Self-referential orientation is equivalent to the target culture, while other is equivalent to source and international cultures.

Among the collected studies, two of them focused on the cultural orientation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. Through utilizing a qualitative content analysis method, Ouyang and Zhou's study (2016) found that both the selected sampled textbooks from China and America reflected self-referential orientation, mainly representing the culture of China. In contrast, Lu's (2018) non-empirical study indicated that the cultural orientation of the sampled textbooks from France was other-referential, mainly representing France's culture and also taking universal cultures into account. In addition, Ouyang and Zhou (2016) stated that the textbooks from China and America compared different cultures, while Lu (2018) found that those from France less emphasized this aspect.

The findings of the two studies reveal that cultural orientation (or which culture needs to be represented) in textbooks may still be controversial. On the one hand, scholars (Q. Li & Gong, 2015; X. Liu, 2018; Lu, 2018) indicated that textbooks with self-referential orientation (target culture) could fulfill learners' demands and help them to get a better understanding of China. On the other hand, it is believed that textbooks with other-referential orientation (source culture and international cultures) can make the L2 learning easier, increase learners' interest, and enable them to be communicative effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Q. Li & Gong, 2015). What is more, both self— and other—referential orientation (target and source cultures) are necessary for a successful textbook (Dong, 2014). However, more empirical evidence is necessary for considering whether the cultural orientation of L2 Mandarin textbooks, self- or other-referential orientation or a balance of them, is a benefit for learners and how the learners can benefit from it.

The studies above have shed light on cultural orientation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. However, their findings are limited to a small number of textbooks from China, America, and France, which cannot be generalized to the cultural orientation in textbooks from other countries/regions. Besides that, it is worth noting that source culture is commonly considered equivalent to national culture (Byram, 1997; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). However, most nations nowadays contain different cultural groups within their boundaries, for instance, the United States, Singapore, the U.K., and Malaysia. Hence, it might not be appropriate to regard source culture as a national culture to which the learners belong (for example, Lu, 2018). In addition, both studies collect data from textbooks themselves, while the data of which learners' and teachers' perception of cultural orientation in textbooks content seems to be ignored. Thus, multicultural perspective and a multi-dimension data collection method may be considered in future studies to fill the gaps and expand the research scope.

**The Phenomenon of Unconventional Culture in Textbooks.** There is one study focusing on the phenomenon of 文化违和 (*wénhuà wéihé*, unconventional culture) in L2 Mandarin textbooks. It discusses the phenomenon that the cultural content presented in textbooks is not based on (or conform to) its socio-cultural pattern (or what is generally done or believed) in real life (H. Chen & Yan, 2017). For instance, in a dialogue about inviting people to dinner in a textbook, the invitee initiates the conversation, which does not conform to a socio-cultural pattern in real life of Chinese people (H. Chen & Yan, 2017). Generally, the inviter usually initiates the conversation in the socio-cultural pattern of inviting people to dinner. Chen and Yan's (2017) qualitative study utilized a discourse analysis method to analyze written dialogues in sampled textbooks from China. It was found that the phenomenon of unconventional culture commonly existed in textbooks' content. They recommended using real corpus, explored typical socio-cultural patterns, and developed audio-visual materials in compiling textbooks. Their study highlights the importance of socio-cultural patterns in presenting cultural content in textbooks. However, the discourse analysis of the phenomenon of unconventional culture in Chen and Yan's (2017) study is limited to four examples, which may be weak support of its findings to some extent.

**The Ideology behind Cultural Representation in Textbooks.** One collected study is trying to analyze the ideology behind cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks from China. Ideology, as Woolard (1992, 1998) defines, is dominant or subordinate "ideas, discourse, or signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power" (as cited in D. Wang, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, it is a shared fundamental belief system of a social collectivity (van Dijk, 2006). Based on these understandings, the ideology behind cultural representation in textbooks may concern the dominance of a L2 and its social and cultural consequences; for instance, the orientation of representing target or source cultures and the social-psychological issues of attitudes, awareness, and identity about the status of L2 learning and teaching in a certain context.

D. Wang (2016) utilized corpus-based and qualitative content analysis methods to explore the ideology and national identity in L2 Mandarin textbooks (intermediate level) from China. It was found that the textbooks' discourse mainly covers the contents and topics of Chinese moral and civic education, which may not be of interest to international learners. Open discourse and intercultural understanding of cultural content were recommended to be included in textbooks. To analyze the ideology behind cultural representation in textbooks, D. Wang's

(2016) study mainly focused on ideology embedded in the language of discourse. However, the possibility of conveying ideology by visual images was less focused in D. Wang's (2016) study, which may be a gap in exploring the ideology behind cultural representations in L2 Mandarin textbooks in the literature.

As the results of research foci reveal, the collected studies on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks mainly focus on cultural elements, and few of them focus on cultural orientation, the phenomenon of unconventional culture, and ideology behind cultural representation (Figure 5). This finding is similar to Shen's (2019) study that stated that the compilation and selection of cultural contents in English textbooks are the two major research aspects. However, the importance of teaching culture in L2 education calls for more comprehensive and in-depth studies of cultural representation in language textbooks to develop and raise learners' cultural competence.

## CONCLUSION

This diachronic study aimed to review previous works of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks from 2005 to 2020 to concern methodological trends and research foci. Regards methodological trends, there are both non-empirical and empirical studies of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks, while most of them are empirical studies. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are all employed in the empirical studies in previous studies. Besides, sampled textbooks in previous works contain textbooks from different countries/regions at different levels, while most of them are elementary textbooks from China. Additionally, data of the

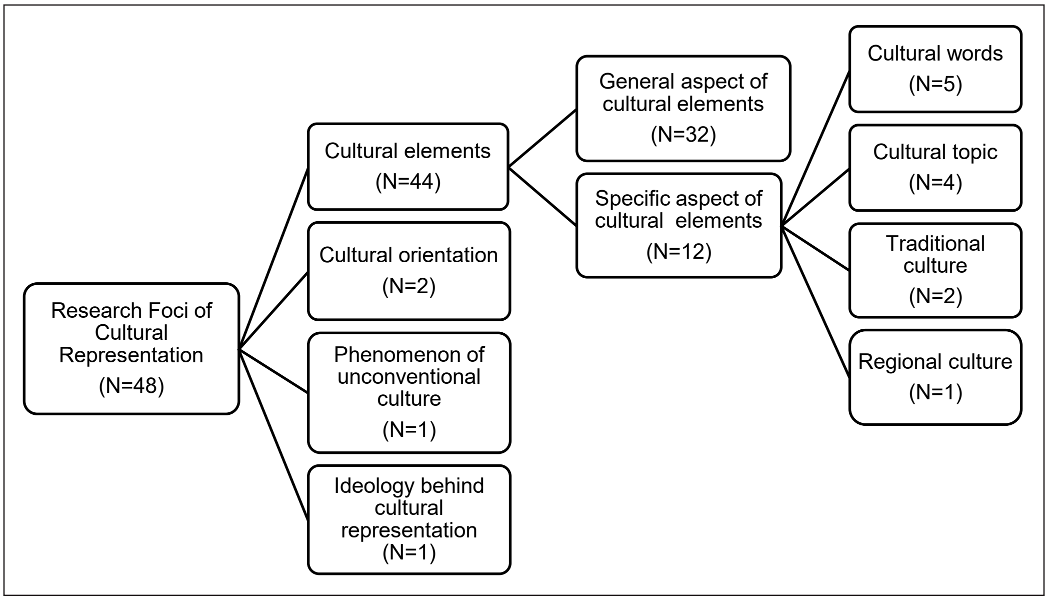
Research Foci of Cultural Representation
(N=48)
Cultural elements
(N=44)
Cultural orientation
(N=2)
Phenomenon of unconventional culture
(N=1)
Ideology behind cultural representation
(N=1)
General aspect of cultural elements
(N=32)
Specific aspect of cultural elements
(N=12)
Cultural words
(N=5)
Cultural topic
(N=4)
Traditional culture
(N=2)
Regional culture
(N=1)

*Figure 5.* Research foci of cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks (2005–2020)
*Note*. N refers to the number of studies

collected studies are collected from different sources such as documents, interviews, and questionnaires, while it is mainly collected from the document, especially for the empirical studies. Four methods are commonly applied for analyzing data in empirical studies: comparative analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis. Regarding research foci, most previous works focus on examining cultural elements in L2 Mandarin textbooks, and few works analyze cultural orientation and phenomenon of unconventional culture and explore ideology behind cultural representation in textbooks. Therefore, different research methodologies are employed to fulfill the research foci. The present review draws on its findings to offer the following suggestions to researchers.

Future researchers can expand their research samples to cover different levels of more local textbooks from different countries to understand better the cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks. Besides, to comprehensively and deeply explore cultural representation, it is worth considering conducting more rigorous research, investigating every corner of textbooks, collecting data from various sources, and employing complemented data analysis methods. Meanwhile, an inclusive and analytical framework for analyzing cultural content in textbooks is needed for future research. The representations of target cultures and the source and international cultures are worthwhile to concern in the analysis. In addition, most previous studies take issue with the insufficiency of cultural contents, but how different cultures are represented in L2 Mandarin textbooks are often not to be covered. Whether there are limited or biased representations in the textbooks, and if so, what are the criteria for a more balanced or desirable representation, are also less focused and unstated in literature. Future researchers may also fill the gaps in how learners and teachers perceive the cultural representations and ideologies in textbooks.

The main contribution of this review is the comprehensive survey and classification of appropriate publications on cultural representation in L2 Mandarin textbooks, in which the particular literature trends are observed, and gaps are indicated. Unfortunately, the present review is limited to the publications that CNKI, WoS, and Scopus collected. Such a limitation may therefore compromise the analysis and interpretation in the review. Furthermore, due to the diversity of topics and subtopics covered in the collected data and the space limitation, the review can only report them with exemplar works. In contrast, some works with nuance could not be included in the discussion. Besides that, other valuable sources of information such as blogs and videos made by influential researchers could also be included in future research.

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# Disciplinary Power, Surveillance, and the Docile Body in Mark Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea*

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## ABSTRACT

Power in contemporary society is a prominent feature in literary works, especially in postmodernist literary works. Mark Dunn is an American novelist who deals with the subject of power prominently in his works, especially his first novel *Ella Minnow Pea* (2001). While previous studies on Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea* focused on aspects of violence, sexuality, and psychological aspects of power, this study concentrates on disciplinary aspects of power, such as surveillance, which is used to subjugate subjects without the use of violence to transform them into productive, docile bodies. The study explores *Ella Minnow Pea* through Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, surveillance, and docile body. In Foucault's view, disciplinary power is used as a conversion method to force individuals into submission to authority characterised by conformity and obedience, or docility. The study examines power manipulation, disciplinary practices, and the effectiveness of surveillance as methods for converting people into productive docile bodies and how the novel achieved this result. In addition, it delves into the characters' responses in the novel to these machinations, which ultimately reveal that the negative impacts of repressive disciplinary power contrast with the benefits anticipated by the authoritarian state. This study provides a valuable insight on the use of Foucauldian concepts in literary criticism as the concepts chosen for this analysis have not previously been applied to this text.

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to his dexterity and prolific production of novels and plays, Mark Dunn has been known as one of the most pivotal American writers of the late twentieth century until our

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present day. An American novelist, most of the prevalent themes of his works have been totalitarianism, power, resistance, freedom of speech, and dystopia. Mark Dunn was born in Memphis, Tennessee. He studied film at Memphis State University and then pursued a graduate degree in screenwriting at the University of Texas. He moved to New York in 1987 and worked in the New York Public Library while creating plays. Since then, Mark Dunn has written more than 25 full-length plays. *Belles* and *Five Tellers Dancing in the Rain* have been produced worldwide, and Dunn has also won several national screenwriting awards. *Ella Minnow Pea*, published in 2001, was Dunn's debut novel. Dunn has also written six other novels: *Welcome to Higby* (2002), *Ibid: A Life* (2004), *The Calamitous Adventures of Rodney And Wayne* (2009), *Under the Harrow* (2010), *American Decameron* (2012), *We Five* (2015).

Dunn draws on the history of many totalitarian and theocratic regimes in *Ella Minnow Pea*, such as the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong, and the Jin Dynasty's Korea. Countries whose governments are controlled by religious leaders such as Iran and Saudi Arabia also fall into the category of theocratic totalitarianism. These regimes are characterized by dictatorship and tyranny. All political institutions and education serve a specific goal, and regardless of the cost, any obstacles to achieving this goal will be removed. As a result, individual freedoms are often restricted, and governments are given broad freedoms to carry out their goals. Dissent is usually branded evil, and internal political differences are not allowed. Thus, Nollop Island is the setting of the novel and falls under theocratic totalitarianism.

Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea* examines betrayal and mistrust under totalitarian governments, in the same vain as Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, Shirley Jackson's short story *The Lottery*, and George Orwell in *1984* and *The Animal Farm*. Charles (2001) credits Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea* as being the first 21st-century political satire. He referred to the novel as a progressive fable that could disrupt the market. Charles further described the novel as a cross between a crossword puzzle and a witty political allegory.

In Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea*, the characters are citizens of a disciplinary society ruled by an authoritarian regime. The disciplinary society refers to a society where one becomes a docile body due to threat or constant surveillance of power (Doolin, 1998). The setting of the novel is the island of Nollop, situated off the South Carolina coast. The island's government, the High Council, implements draconian restrictions on using certain English alphabet characters in writing by its citizens, curtails freedom of speech, and subjects the residents to constant surveillance, including its educational institution setting. In addition, the government establishes penalties for using the banned alphabetical letters, censuring the offenders publicly for their first violation of the ban, punishing them for their second offence, and following that, exiling them from the island. Dunn illustrates these mechanisms of power that exert control over the characters in detailed depictions of life in a disciplinary society.

As can be gathered from the novel, Dunn views schools as disciplinary apparatuses dedicated to the processes of control and homogenisation of society. This notion is exemplified in institutionalisation norms of behaviour and cultural identity enforced through repetitive coercive practices. Dunn reveals the use of surveillance as the main method for changing individuals into docile bodies. Surveillance is present virtually everywhere, especially in prisons, and schools, where individuals are effectively transformed into docile bodies under the gaze of educational institutions.

Foucault has postulated that methods of disciplinary power are developed to facilitate the observation of all aspects of people's lives to make them more productive and profitable. He further explains that discipline regulates both the physical and mental aspects of individuals to produce "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). According to Foucault, disciplinary control is developed gradually in governed individuals so that they eventually become completely obedient to the power structure of the society.

Foucault claims that persistent surveillance and monitoring are essential to achieving the intended docile body effect. According to him, disciplinary power "centres on the body, produces individualising effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile" (Foucault, 1995, p. 249). Foucault considers the normalising effect of disciplinary techniques an important and productive means of reforming individuals and submits that efficacious submissiveness may be achieved by implementing these methods. Disciplinary methods are thus effective in preparing the body for economic exploitation. Therefore, the purpose of the docile body technique wielded by the disciplinary power structure is the production of practised, subjugated, and useful bodies. However, while the docile body method enhances the body's abilities useful in economic pursuits, other politically important abilities are diminished in favour of obedience.

Rook (2016) noted that surveillance, unlike torture or didactic play, is not used to threaten or provide insight into moral behaviour but rather as a subtle means of training subjects by altering modes of behaviour. This training comprises several aspects, the first of which is to acquire minutely detailed information on subjects that is updated constantly and used as a basis upon which to test the surveilled subjects. If the long-term goal of effecting normality is not needed, but rather more average aims for behaviour formation, rewards and penalties may be implemented to motivate subjects to conform to the desired behaviour. However, training systems involving interventions such as these require management by trained experts in behavioural sciences to gradually achieve normalisation aims.

The novel depicts the disciplinary power of the totalitarian High Council government. The High Council restricts all aspects of life on Nolop Island and brings it under its authority and surveillance. Dunne tries in *Ella Minnow Pea* to reveal how restricting freedom of expression interferes with educational institutions' work. Constant monitoring of citizens is part of totalitarian regimes and even governments headed by extremist religious parties. The novel portrays the council's manipulation of power and disciplinary practices to normalise and control individuals who are confined and subjected to surveillance by the authorities. Thus, this study examines the effectiveness of disciplinary power, surveillance, and power manipulation as methods for converting people into productive docile bodies and the extent to which this result is achieved in the novel. Before proceeding further, a brief review of the literature on Dunn's novel, *Ella Minnow Pea*, is needed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Critical Studies on *Ella Minnow Pea*

Mark Dunn's novel *Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters* (2001; henceforth, *Ella Minnow Pea*) has been the subject of detailed research in various academic disciplines. These studies have greatly focussed on the novel's theme of dystopian power. Lorber (2016), for example, compared *Ella Minnow Pea* with Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, finding that although the novels share the commonality of dealing with the political power, violence, physical torture, and social issues resulting from the abuses of totalitarian regimes, *Ella Minnow Pea* stands out by doing this through employing a distinctive epistolary narrative technique. This technique effectively conveys the protagonists' awareness through the epistles (i.e., letters) resulting in a taught relationship between the reader and the narrative. In this way, the novel is elevated above other dystopian novels to become a rarity in the narrative fiction of this genre. Although the study explored political power, physical torture and social issues that resulted from the abuses of despotic regimes, it has neglected the disciplinary power that prevails and its effect in converting the human being into an obedient body.

Bauer's (2018) analysis of *Ella Minnow Pea* was approached from a different perspective. He referred to the novel's narrative as lipogramatic, as the authoritarian government, known as the High Council, prohibits letters of the alphabet from being used in any correspondence between the citizens of Nollop. This practice is seen as akin to other types of restriction on productivity and communication commonly practised by dictatorial regimes. The novel's narrative depicts the effects of a political dystopia on the preservation and expansion of human knowledge and the freedom and ability to communicate. Thus, the study shows the importance of language in subjecting people and converting them into obedient selves. However, the study did not use other techniques that power employs to convert the people into obedient bodies, such as the art of distribution, the control of activity and normalisation. These techniques could significantly affect the subjects in educational institutions.

Malin (2003) ran psychoanalytical research trying to analyse, demonstrate, and represent the mental distortions in *Ella Minnow Pea*. She also examined the pervasive paranoia of the novel, observing how danger is omnipresent in the novel and the connection between the language and culture of the characters and the threats with which they are confronted. Malin draws parallels between the novel and the early American and French authors and filmmakers Georges Perec, Harry Mathews, Raymond Roussel, and Walter Abish. Malin (2003) also explored the themes of power and sexual relations in *Ella Minnow Pea*, noting the narrative's depiction of the efforts of the ruling High Council to exert domination over all the written correspondence between the citizens of Nollop. He further discussed the extension of the council's control to include the sexual relations among the island's populace and this pretext of power becoming a justification for sexual violence. It exemplifies abuse to satisfy the desires of the powerful. When laws exacting harsh punishments for disobedience are enacted, Nollop's citizens become fearful of attempting a revolt as it would be met with horrific reprisals. Thus, the study explored the sexual violence caused by domination and observation that the government exert on the sexual relations of Nollop people yet failed to underscore the disciplinary practices and the constant surveillance that power imposes on educational institutions and its effect on students and teachers.

The notion of totalitarian power is introduced in the first letter in the narrative of *Ella Minnow Pea*. Anderson et al. (2016) observed that the subject of tyranny is brought forward through the protagonist Ella's expression of concern over the council's banning of certain alphabetical letters when she affirms, "We slowly conclude that without language, without culture—the two are inextricably bound—existence is at stake" (Dunn, 2002, p. 4). The study explored the effect of eliminating some alphabetical letters from the language on human communication and knowledge. However, the study did not address the restriction of using some letters in the educational institutions and the disciplinary practices such as surveillance and their consequences on productivity of education and behaviours of teachers and students.

Some research has also been conducted on some other novels with reference to power through Foucault's theory. For example, Isik (2020) examined Dave Eggers' *The Circle*; he argued that disciplinary power that the novel prevails makes the people control and govern themselves as if they were followed by an invisible eye. Moreover, Isik asserts that surveillance as the power of disciplinary society "increases productivity as people, who feel under observation, work efficiently" (2020, p. 155). In contrast, Tian describes the disciplinary power of the novel *1984* and asserts that the power of surveillance "take advantage of people's fear to break them and control their emotional minds and this fear could lead people into maniac states and melancholia" (2018, p. 50). Furthermore, Tian (2018) expounds that the emotional consequences of imprisonment caused by discipline monitoring are similar to symptoms of madness. Although these studies have been conducted on power through Foucault's theory, they have generated controversial discussion on how the power of discipline converts the human into a productive docile body. They are descriptive reviews and need a critical review. Therefore, in this study, we investigate the impact of disciplinary practices on the characters subjected to surveillance and observation power in society's disciplinary institutions in *Ella Minnow pea*.

From the above review of literature, it may be concluded that studies on *Ella Minnow Pea* have discussed power from various perspectives, including dystopia, lipogramatic and epistolary narrative, sexual violence, totalitarianism, and psychoanalytical. However, none of the studies has employed Foucault's views of disciplinary power, surveillance, or the docile body. While previous studies focused on the political aspects of power, violence, physical punishment, sexual relations, the restriction and eliminating some alphabetic letter of the language from being used among people for subjugating the entire society, this study concentrates on another sort of power in the novel which is called disciplinary power. It depends on surveillance in the subjection of the people. The disciplinary power also employs sophisticated techniques such as the art of distribution, the activity control, normalisation and individualising the bodies to convert the entire society into obedient. To analyse such sort of power in *Ella Minnow Pea*, we employ Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, surveillance and docile body to understand how disciplinary power works in contemporary society that the novel depicts in the political and educational institutions of Nollop society and what is the impact of disciplinary power on the subjects in the educational institutions. Therefore, this study examines power manipulation and the disciplinary practices inflicted on the teachers and students of the educational institution in the dystopian society depicted in the novel *Ella Minnow Pea*.

## METHODOLOGY

A close reading of the text has been adopted to investigate and answer the research question. We have related *Ella Minnow Pea* to the study of disciplinary power in the characters of the novel. The analysis of the novel focuses on the main characters subjected to the manipulation of the body through various systems of control. Mittie, for example, is the protagonist and one such character subjected to the discipline of the High Council in the novel's educational setting. Schools are seen by Foucault (1995) as essential disciplinary institutions for the management, control, and homogenisation of students to transform them into productive bodies. Through this concept of disciplinary power and surveillance, we explore the aspects of power manipulation detailed in the novel intended to transform humans into docile bodies. We explore the effect of disciplinary practices on the characters in the novel, such as Mittie and Ella, in the educational setting.

A qualitative study is conducted through textual analysis of *Ella Minnow Pea*. The analysis will be intrinsic. We explain how the characters produce vivid, controlled, manipulated, and surveillance images of Nollop society's disciplinary intuitions, such as a school in abusive and totalitarian control systems. We have also highlighted the High Council's techniques to subject and convert the characters in the novel (i.e., Mittie and Ella) into productive and obedient bodies, "docile bodies". The characters reveal their discontent with these disciplinary practices through nightmares, fear of being observed or monitored, and repetitive re-enactments.

Foucault defines disciplinary power as "a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy of power, a technology" (1995, p. 215) that utilise to train, regulate, and control the individuals in different institutions of contemporary society such as schools, hospitals, families, factories. In the Foucauldian view, social institutions use power to exert control over training individuals for roles within their establishments. Thus, schools in contemporary society rely on many methods of regulating students' behaviour and directing it in compliance with the needs of the institutions. This process, according to Foucault, results in the creation of docile bodies to do the bidding of those in power (Leitch et al., 2018). Thus, Foucauldian theory rejects the view that power is necessarily wielded by particular individuals or institutions and holds that it is distributed among the systems and members of society. However, Foucault regards diverse power systems as productive entities that promote the types of behaviour they desire. Thus, he argues:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'censors,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.' Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1995, p. 194)

Manley et al. (2012) suggested that authority through surveillance constantly targets individuals through distributed networks, and those in power with privileged status may be situated outside the scope of those networks. Furthermore, this mode of power does not rely on domination but instead employs disciplinary techniques to increase the productivity of individuals. Foucault alludes to individuals' relations within the contexts associated with these power dynamics in his assertion that "while the human subject is placed in relations of production and signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex" (1995, p. 47). Thus, individuals are classified, shaped, and individualised by the power relations surrounding them to enhance their utility, efficiency, and the economic value of their actions.

In *Ella Minnow Pea,* the characters such as Mittie and Ella are placed constantly under surveillance, controlled and monitored wherever they go and whatever they do. We have highlighted that the characters in the novel live in a life where daily worry about acts of punishment and violence, not only directed towards themself but also towards people they love and care for. Picture a life where they always live in fear of doing something wrong, of breaking an unwritten rule. Thus, through Foucault's concept of surveillance, we analyse how the characters deal with the High Council (antagonist) exert over them in social institutions (Mittie's school). We also analyse how the characters (i.e., Mittie and Ella) reaction to the constant monitoring and observation in Nollop society.

Nollop's citizens are compelled to be complicit in the methods of control that are deployed against them. These methods may best be explained in reference to Foucault's "panopticism" concept. Jeremy Bentham's notion of the Panopticon extends, a prison encircling a surveillance watchtower at its centre. As the prison cells are arranged along the walls encircling the watchtower, the guards have a vantage point where they can see everything happening in prison surrounding them. The theory of power behind this concept is that the inmates will become responsible for their behaviour as they never know when they may be monitored. Thus, they are compelled to act as if they are being observed even when they are not. As explained by Foucault, the Panopticon is analogous to the domination of people by a system of disciplinary power:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribed in himself the power relation in Panopticism which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his subjection. (1995, pp. 202-203)

As this study considers the role of the body in the disciplinary society depicted in *Ella Minnow Pea*, it is important to discuss the importance of the docile body to the disciplinary authorities. The body is the focal point of the disciplinary systems of contemporary societies, as noted by Foucault in his assertion that "what is essential in all power is that ultimately its point of application is always the body" (Foucault, 2008, p. 14). Therefore, the analysis will discuss the techniques of disciplinary power utilised in the novel to control and regulate the human body. We adopt the Foucauldian concept of the docile body in our textual analysis investigating Dunn's depictions of the conversions of the novel's protagonists into obedient, productive bodies through the art of distribution, control over activities, and the forces of normalisation. We thus apply the Foucauldian concept of the docile body in our assessment of the effects of the systems of control on the bodies of the novel's characters.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Mitti's School as a Disciplinary Apparatus in *Ella Minnow Pea*

Dunn's characters are presented as having dismissive attitudes about their school. The High Council's policy of banning alphabetical letters decreases intellectual expression in the education system. Furthermore, the government expanded the policy to burning books containing banned letters, and the resulting deprivation further diminishes the value of the written word in society. The schools are given instructions that no one can choose what books they want to read, which affects the teachers. Thus Mittie, a schoolteacher, is faced with a dilemma when preparing lesson plans without using the banned letters. Her reaction to this is revealed in the following text from the novel:

> I did not tell you how the slip occurred. She was teaching arithmetic and made mention of a sum of eggs. Twelve eggs to be exact. And described them using a word no longer at our disposal. A right and proper word in times gone by. How does, in any fair and logical way, the Council expect us—all of us—not to make such a simple and innocent slip now and then! (Dunn, 2002, p. 33)

It reveals that Mittie is aware of the homogenisation the government is aiming for in Nollop's schools. It also explains the council's restrictive disciplinary tactics forcing teachers to alter their lesson plans to comply with the new laws. Teachers and students are expected to follow these conventions to become homogenised, sharing the same desires and anticipations. Thus, the government intends that the schools produce socially accepted subjects in docile bodies lacking opportunities to resist.

Power relations can extend beyond the domination of individuals, body and soul, to eliminate personal identity and free speech (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). The characters in *Ella Minnow Pea* are thus deprived of their rights by the High Council. They are denied any right to express opinions and threatened with harsh penalties for doing so. Even a member of the High Council, William Creevy, is removed from the council for criticising the government's repressive policies. Subsequently, Creevy violates the disciplinary policies and is then whipped and banished from Nollop:

> Young Master Creevy was sent away today. When the flogging had ended, he allegedly (I was not there) raised his head and let spew forth a long repetitive illicit-letter-peppered tirade against the L.E.B. officers who had administered his punishment. (Dunn, 2002, p. 25)

The excerpt illustrates the severity of punishment imposed on anyone who would dare disagree with or criticise the government. The threat of such consequences inspires fear in the population, compelling their obedience to the High Council's disciplinary system.

In *Ella Minnow Pea*, this technique of disciplinary power is represented as repressive and not useful against individuals. As a result of their fear of reprisals, the teachers and students appear to become non-productive, and they are forced to follow new disciplinary norms to normalise them. However, Mitte and Ella are not made docile in the face of these challenges as they have realised the purpose of the High Councils' disciplinary policies.

## Surveillance in *Ella Minnow Pea*

Bourke et al. (2013) explain the reason for the effectiveness of surveillance as a means of subjugating the body: "It is the fact of being constantly seen ... that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 89). For example, the students depicted in *Ella Minnow Pea* have been identified as social outcasts with anti-social and self-destructive tendencies; therefore, they are placed under constant surveillance in the school. The educational gaze (i.e., constant surveillance) is used to reshape the students' behaviour to comply with established disciplinary norms. The effects of surveillance ultimately extend to the whole of Nollop society. In the Foucauldian sense, people self-regulate their activities, which effectively changes them into obedient individuals or docile bodies. The prevalence of surveillance can thus normalise behaviour and is supported to great success by the stratification of mind control, machine surveillance, and other disciplinary practices. Moreover, Foucault (1995) asserts that the authoritarian gaze has been influential in regulating, monitoring, and obtaining information about individuals to maintain control.

Through persistent monitoring, the students and teachers are transformed into obedient, robotic entities under the control of the system. Any individual who does not conform to the power system's requirements is considered irregular. The disciplinary authorities exploit individual's incapable of thinking things through to understand themselves or make their own decisions, who control them at will. Therefore, this process eventually normalises them into docile bodies.

Surveillance technology is presented in *Ella Minnow Pea* as being used for another purpose, as well. The High Council establishes a surveillance centre to dominate the residents of Nollop so that they think, write, and behave as they are told. Thus, the centre is equipped to examine and control the correspondence in letters sent by Nollop's citizens. If banned characters of the alphabet are detected in a letter, the person who wrote it is punished. The extent of this surveillance is discussed in letters sent to Ella by her mother:

> While you were at the prison, attempting with your Aunt Mittie yet again to get in to see Tassie, men who were sent here to see me got themselves into our sorry with little struggle at all. They were sent to interrogate me—the grilling about the now exonerate anti-high-priestly movement... It's a weeping shame. Why, I am not

> even given enough time to gather my things! All my possessions, your Pop's possessions are yours now, I suppose. Preserve them. Preserve our memory. I wish you to stay. You must stay. Maintain the struggle. (Dunn, 2002, p. 110)

Subsequently, Ella is charged by the council for using a banned letter in her writing. Faced with the choices of exile from Nollop, imprisonment, or torture as punishment, she chooses prison. The authorities launch a full investigation of Nollop's society, increasing the oppression of the fearful citizenry and quashing their freedoms and rights at all levels, making matters worse. These characteristics make *Ella Minnow Pea* stand out among dystopian novels for its revealing portrayal of government oppression through surveillance as a tool of manipulation and control.

In the novel, the people working for the High Council are aware of the surveillance and allow no one to claim any rights. Individual freedom of expression is effectively abolished, and those whose speech is considered illegal are punished and/or imprisoned. The council thus has absolute control over Nollop's population. Ella, in the following passage, reveals the extent of the council's disciplinary power:

> I cannot help you. Not now. Please tell Tassie: Rory is gone. It began this way: brash Council representatives, upon reaching his northern acreage, gave him papers that gave them authority to appropriate his property. No reason was given other than: "It is the Council's wish." (Dunn, 2002, p. 121)

Like a panopticon prison, the residents of Nollop are constantly under the gaze of the authoritarian powers of the High Council, and any infractions of the council's regulations are met with severe penalties. Thus, although the purpose of the island's institutions and rules is to transform the citizens, such as the schoolteachers and students, into docile bodies, obedient to the government, violations of the rules by the public and abuse of power manipulation represent failures of the system to achieve its goals. Ultimately, the system's failure is in contrast with Foucauldian theory in that the actions of a severe regimen can lead to catastrophic results. There may be no positive results.

## The Art of Distribution, Enclosure, the Control of Activity and Normalisation in *Ella Minnow Pea*

A disciplinary society mainly concentrates on the demarcation between regular and irregular bodies. Regular bodies are useful, while irregular, aberrant bodies that violate societal norms and cannot conform are isolated from regular or normal bodies to be trained for conformity. The first step in this process is usually to confine them in structures dedicated to this purpose. This approach places aberrant members of society, such as prisoners, in a social multiplicity. In *Ella Minnow Pea*, Dunn depicts this by using an encirclement approach to confine non-conformant citizens in facilities such as the L.E.B. and the Nollop schools. There, the council imposes operational rules that differentiate the normal bodies that benefit them from the aberrant bodies that must be normalised. Mittie and her students cooperate with the government rulings and thus represent docile or regular bodies. However, Rederick Lyttle, a High Council member described as "the least moronic of the bunch" (Dunn, 2002, p. 109), is identified as abnormal for opposing a government proposed shorter pangram to replace Nevin Nollop's. Thus, Dunn depicts the effectiveness of the High Council's mechanism of encirclement in its use against Mittie, who is confined on Nollop, and Rederick Lyttle, who is ultimately exiled from Nollop.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault discusses the human body's need for enclosure within a place of heterogeneity about others. It is described as a protected space of "disciplinary monotony" (Foucault, 1995, p. 141), closed in upon itself. Such a segregated space can be useful in facilitating the normalisation of irregular individuals. Foucault has also expounded the encirclement of the body in special architecture as a method "defined to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communications, but also to create a useful space" (p. 143) for the initial steps of exerting power over prisoners. However, Foucault (1995) notes this is insufficient on its own to convert the incarcerated into docile bodies. Additional tools and techniques are needed to subjugate individuals and exert control over their bodies to enslave them to the power structure.

One example of this is that the subjugation of the human body, as theorized by Foucault (1995), may be accomplished through the activity control. In *Ella Minnow Pea*, the High Council uses timetables to control activity. It is a time-proven method of ensuring that people spend their time in activities of benefit to society or its service. Furthermore, the distribution of time is designed to control the activities of obedient prisoners or students so that their time is well invested within disciplinary spaces. The utilisation of time is thus optimized to improve inmates' routines and ultimately make them beneficial to the disciplinary authorities. This exploitation of time is illustrated in the novel when Mittie is prevented from visiting her son Tassie in prison:

> They will not let me into the prison to see you. I have spent the entire post noon … Waiting here on the prison's visitors' lawn to see you. Waiting. Waiting. They tell us nothing ... operate in ways that are not at all as we are. We're anything to happen to you, what then? (Dunn, 2002, p. 109)

The above passage indicates that Mittie understands that the guards have control over prisoners' time. She further explains that the High Council similarly orders students and school staff members to submit timetables to exert control over their activities.

Normalisation is the ultimate goal in a disciplinary society's regulation of individuals. Norms are imposed on individuals to force their acceptance of and compliance with the system. Thus, educational institutions attempt to homogenise teachers' attitudes in accordance with societal expectations. Foucauldian theory regards schools as analytical apparatuses useful in developing normalising influences (Foucault, 1995). Established disciplinary methods are intended to normalise the behaviour of students ultimately. This process depends on surveillance as the main method for the subjugation of teachers and students. Foucault explains the significance of this normalisation method as follows:

> It traces the limit that will define the difference concerning all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal.... The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchized, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes. (1995, p. 183)

When the normalisation process exceeds sensible limits, individuals may become dehumanised by the coercion to follow system requirements. For example, institutions may attempt to benefit from presenting improper ideas as appropriate. This approach to homogenisation may be attempted through enacting laws and regulations, producing mass media such as films or advertising. The process trains individuals to be docile bodies of benefit to those in power. Individuals thus become mere spectres of humanity, behaving as they are directed. For example, the High Council in *Ella Minnow Pea* utilises several techniques and harsh treatment to ensure their control over students, and thus none dare to violate government directives. The normalisation of teachers and students regarded as criminals presents a challenge to the council. It requires various disciplinary techniques in many phases to accomplish, and it usually fails. This failure is depicted in the novel when many students and teachers resign from the school as they cannot function there and would be punished if they failed to cooperate with the council.

Mittie, for example, is constantly under supervising surveillance; however, she remains true to herself. She rejects the High Council's attempts at subordination and subjugation and is not normalised. She, therefore, tries to circumvent the law banning alphabetical letters essential for communication and education. Mittie thus opposes the draconian rules imposed to transform people into obedient, docile bodies and make the students and teachers into robots or ghosts of their former selves.

According to Foucault (1995), disciplinary control within communities is usually exerted through disciplinary organisations and their operatives. Schools are one such type of disciplinary organisation, wherein an analogy by Foucault, docile students are comparable to soldiers in their expected obedience to the rigid disciplinary order of a school:

> Place[s] the bodies in a little world of signals to each of which is attached a single, obligatory response: it is a technique of training, of dressage, … he is ordered to do; his obedience is prompt and blind; an appearance of indocility, the least delay would be a crime. The training of schoolchildren was to be carried out in the same way: few words, no explanation, a total silence interrupted only by signals bells, clapping of hands, gestures, a mere glance from the teacher, or that little wooden apparatus used by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. (1995, p. 166)

Thus, schools perform a crucial function in producing docile students with soldier-like obedience. However, as discussed previously, Mittie opposes the High Council's policies and methods to homogenise individuals. Her opposition is the most striking in the novel as her obvious disobedience in the face of the High Council's disciplinary plans is so definite.

Mittie endures the High Council's rules until they become intolerable. It happens during a classroom lesson as she attempts to explain to students that 12 eggs equal a dozen and commits the crime of using the forbidden letter Z, which a student, Timmy Towgate immediately notices. The frustration of this situation leads her to resign from her job:

> I cannot teach. Without that grammatical unifier. It is impossible. I plan to resign tomorrow. Semicolons are simply not an option. These youngsters are only seven! ... My brain throbs. I have a hangover. Far too much wine last night. The wine. Plus, the loss of that grammatical unifier. It is all too much. Forgive me for my weakness. (Dunn, 2002, p. 52)

Mittie feels compelled to leave her teaching job as the stress of possibly using a forbidden letter or committing some other infraction has become too much to bear. Therefore, after commiting a third infraction, she decides to leave Nollop and Nate Warren and her daughter. Despite the dire circumstances of the Nollopian citizens, Mittie is the only character to take a stand and leave the island. The execution of Dr Mannheim for his refusal to accept exile was a strong influence on her decision to leave. She chooses freedom over oppression, demonstrating her individual power to choose her fate and break free of the oppression of disciplinary rule. Thus, Dunn offers a positive take on the rebellious few in society who confront authority and challenge societal norms and laws many consider to be inviolable.

The power manipulation, and disciplinary practices have been examined in other novels such as Dave Eggers' *The Circle* (2013) through Foucault's lens. For example, Isik (2020) examined *The Circle* with reference to the power manipulation and disciplinary practices exerted on the subjects in the disciplinary setting named the circle (i.e., A big company in the

US). To Isik, the disciplinary power in modern society makes the people control and govern themselves as if they were followed by an invisible eye. Moreover, Isik asserts that surveillance as the power of disciplinary society "increases productivity as people, who feel under observation, work efficiently" (2020, p. 155). Likewise, according to him, disciplinary power "centres on the body, produces individualising effects and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile" (p. 249). On the other hand, Foucault considers the normalising effect of disciplinary techniques an important and productive means of reforming individuals and submits that efficacious submissiveness may be achieved by implementing these methods. However, in this study, we show that power manipulation, surveillance and docile bodies are disciplinary practices and techniques that work on repressing the subjects in the disciplinary setting rather than reforming them and converting them into productive and obedient subjects.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation and effects of power manipulation and disciplinary practices on the characters of *Ella Minnow Pea,* emphasising the teachers and students of the educational facility depicted in the novel. The analysis revealed that although disciplinary methods could be employed to homogenise and normalise individuals, transforming them into docile (obedient) beings, they are not proven to be advantageous to an appreciable level. Even though it is common for educational institutions to increase the potential of teachers and students' by utilising disciplinary techniques in training and educational programmes, no such training is mentioned in *Ella Minnow Pea*. Instead, the students and teachers are compelled into silence through constant surveillance. Surveillance is considered the most widely used means of exerting disciplinary power to subjugate individuals, compelling their compliance with disciplinary order and their normalisation to social and working conditions. Dunn depicts characters' discontent with disciplinary methods, particularly when they involve severe punishments such as the execution of Dr Mannheim. The disciplinary strategies represented in the novel are meant for repression rather than treatment as a means of correction or training of the island's community. The repressive docile body technique used in *Ella Minnow Pea* is proven counterproductive as it is ineffective when used on individuals. Characters in the novel are only compelled to follow disciplinary norms due to their fear of punishment if they do not. The system's failure is proven because neither Mittie nor Ella is made docile despite the threat of punishment.

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# Conceptualization of Kindness among Adolescents of Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

Kindness, a basic element of morality, has been observed to have a greater impact on individuals' general well-being, societal development, and integration of humanity. However, despite its phenomenal acceptance in all religions and cultures worldwide, the concept remained understudied. Therefore, qualitative research was planned to explore the phenomenon of kindness, its enabling factors, inhibiting factors, and to identify the recipients of kindness in Pakistani adolescents. An interview guide was developed in Study 1 through two Focus Group Discussions with eight girls and eight boys of 18 and 19 years to achieve the objectives. The interpretative phenomenological analysis method developed seven questions for the interview guide and then finalized through committee approach and pilot testing. In the main study, in-depth interviews were conducted on a total sample of 14 adolescents. Among which 50% were girls between 18 and 19 years ($M$= 18.5, $SD$= 0.51). The data were collected from Rawalpindi and Islamabad using a convenient sampling technique and analyzed through thematic framework analysis. The results suggested that Pakistani adolescents conceptualized kindness as benefitting oneself and others with goodness and withholding harm. Religion and socialization were reported as the prime enabling factors for being kind. In addition, the availability of resources and the perception of the recipient's deservedness also determined kindness. Among the inhibitory factors, self-detaining tendencies, family and peer pressure, and non-availability of resources emerged. It is hoped that the present study may enhance the understanding of kindness for future research.

*Keywords:* Adolescents, enabling factors, in-depth interviews, inhibiting factors, kindness, recipients

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## INTRODUCTION

A great number of appreciations for kindness can be found in all religions (Goodwin, 2011). Likewise, throughout most human history and nearly all cultures kindness has been regarded as a fundamental capacity of human nature. For example, Darwin (1871, as cited in DiSalvo, 2009) has referred to it as an essential element for the survival of humankind. Similarly, Peterson and Seligman (2004) have also regarded it as one of the top-ranking character strengths.

### Definitional Issues and Factors of Kindness

Despite having its phenomenal use in the literature, kindness has certain significant variations in its definitions as Neff (2003) viewed kindness as self-oriented beneficial actions. In contrast, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) described it as a behavior that benefits others. According to Otake et al. (2006), kindness encompasses recognition, motivation, and behavior.

The very notion of kindness itself is entangled with other concepts such as altruism, compassion, and prosocial behavior. Rowland (2018) elaborates the differences amongst the concepts and states that altruism is a specific exchange in which one loses something for the benefit of others, whereas kindness hardly brings loss to the giver, e.g., passing a smile. It was further asserted that kindness has both behavioral and affective components; compassion is likely an effective aspect of kindness, and prosocial behavior is more a behavioral aspect. However, these do not perfectly overlap with kindness (Rowland, 2018).

It is important to identify its dimensions and measure its degrees to explore how kindness impacts life fully. There is, in fact, just a single research study that has rigorously explored kindness. Recognizing the lack of research defining and measuring kindness, Canter et al. (2017) took a factor-analytic approach to analyze responses to a series of statements relating to kindness. They presented three different dimensions of kindness, including "benign tolerance," "empathetic responsivity," and "principled proaction." According to their conceptualization, benign tolerance involves an emotional and behavioral dimension of kindness, including courteousness, acceptance, and love of one's fellow man. Whereas "empathetic responsivity" is consideration of the specific feelings of other particular individuals, and "principled proaction" is proactive altruistic behavior towards others, driven more by cognition than emotion. Overall, these dimensions cover all three emotional, behavioral, and cognitive domains of kindness.

### Enabling and Inhibiting Factors of Kindness

Several investigations using experimental methods have explored how performing (Otake et al., 2006), recalling (Exline et al., 2012), or observing (Baskerville et al., 2000) of certain kinds of acts can impact a person or others' lives. However, some studies have referred to the factors that enable an individual to be kind and control one's kindness. For example, according to Frank (2010), kindness is inherited, whereas

Kohn (1990) and McGarry (1986) believe that observing a significant adult being kind to others makes the children kind in later life. On the other hand, some studies found that the reciprocal nature of kind acts can also serve as an enabling factor of kindness (Strenta & Dejong, 1981). Haidt (2003) also suggested that moral elevation plays a role in boosting an individual to act out kindly. When experiencing elevation, people describe feelings inspired and uplifted and, importantly, motivated to become a better person (Haidt, 2003). In addition, people specifically report an urge of wanting to do good (Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

Previous studies have also been highlighted numerous inhibiting factors. For example, according to Pagel (2012), people are less kind towards those they consider as out-group members. He also has described the dual moral nature of people, i.e., the capability of being extremely kind at one time and on others instantly abandoning that kindness and treating other people as sub-human (Pagel, 2012). Another inhibiting factor of kindness can be moral-licensing, according to which when people are reasonably sure of their moral integrity, they have little motivation to do further good (Mazar & Zhong, 2010; Merritt et al., 2010; Monin & Miller, 2001; Sachdeva et al., 2009; Zhong et al., 2009 as cited in Schnall & Roper, 2012). Moreover, according to Mischel and Shoda (1995), the situation also plays an important role in controlling kindness, i.e., some children are consistently more prosocial than others, depending on the contingencies of the situation. However, several studies indicate that with increasing age, children emphasize the intentions and constraints related to a kind act (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970; Leahy, 1979).

### Recipients of Kindness

Another interesting aspect is that generally, people are kind to only a few people around them, whereas others are kind to humanity. It is also observed that a particular group is usually found to be more kind than the other. Following the kin-connection law of evolutionary theory, some help only their family members, some help only the person they are acquainted with, and some help everyone, including strangers. These individual differences based on the receptor of kindness are explained by little research. For example, studies confirm that people are more generous towards close ones, particularly family members, than distant others (Cialdini et al., 1997). Even the etymology began within the family; acts of kindness are commonly spread and extended to strangers when the person perceives that a kind intervention will help improve a situation or relieve a difficulty (Cleary & Horsfall, 2016). Some people show kindness because it is the demand of their profession or social role, e.g., helping professionals (Bryan, 2015) or parents (Davey & Eggebeen, 1998). Likewise, one's self can also be a recipient of one's kindness (Neff, 2003).

### Significance of Adolescents' Kindness

The present study on adolescents' kindness hopes to bring several developments. First, by analyzing the Pakistani adolescents' contribution to kindness will be a productive addition to the literature. This addition of elaborating kindness, i.e., universal character strength, may also serve the inexorable rise of 'positive psychology.'

Second, adolescence, being the preparatory phase for psychosocially developed adulthood (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011), when studied, provides a picture of the future generation. According to 2018 estimates, adolescence covers a large portion, i.e., 21.14% of Pakistan's population (Index Mundi, 2018).

Third, the societal need to hear about some hope in new the generation as the events of terrorism in past years have brought economic insecurities, political conflicts, emotional insecurities, and religious extremism to Pakistan's youth (Ahmed & Khan, 2016). Moreover, past researchers have mostly focused on adolescents' problematic behaviors like substance abuse, teen violence, delinquency, suicide, eating disorders, and academic difficulties (Rich, 2003). Therefore, it is also important to highlight this youth's positive potentialities. In the current political, economic, and environmental climate, understanding kindness can play a vital role in creating positivity and hopefulness in adolescents.

### Aim of the Main Study

The present research aimed to understand the phenomenon of kindness through lived experiences of people, specifically adolescents**.** This research-oriented around four research questions that are as follows:

1. What is the indigenous phenomenon of kindness among adolescents?
2. What are the enabling factors of kindness?
3. What are the inhibiting factors of kindness?
4. Who are the recipients of kindness?

Based on these research questions, two studies were designed.

## METHOD

### Study 1

Study 1 aimed to develop an interview guide, grounded in the model of Canter et al. (2017) and previous literature, and establish the tool is the face and content validity. The objectives of the present study were as follows:

1. To develop an interview guide exploring the phenomenon, enabling factors, and inhibiting factors of kindness among adolescents through their lived experiences.
2. To establish the face and content validity of the tool under expert opinion.

In qualitative research, validity refers to the extent that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate (Kvale, 1989). According to Flood and Carson,

> Face validity is where a group of experts or referees assesses whether the measuring instrument measures the attribute of interest. If there is consensus among these judges (which is subjective and not necessarily repeatable), then the measuring instrument can be said to have face validity… this is also called content validity. (1993, p. 46)

In the present study, an interview guide was pragmatically developed in 3 different phases. Four experts reviewed the developed guide on different levels to establish content validity. The experts included a female Professor in Psychology from Preston University, Islamabad (expert 1), a male Professor in Anthropology from Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad (expert 2), a male Assistant Professor in Psychology, from Fatima Jinnah Women University, Islamabad (expert 3) and a female Lecturer in Psychology, from Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad (expert 4). The details of the developmental phases of the interview guide are given below.

**Phase 1.** Open-ended questions were developed based on the theoretical background of the present research to achieve the objectives. The questions were reviewed and verified by experts 1 and 3 according to the research epistemology. An alternate to each question was also added to the interview guide. All the questions were based on critical realism, i.e., social phenomena are only accessible through people's representations (Bhasker, 1978, as cited in Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Furthermore, the present research is planned to be phenomenological, i.e., exploring a construct people use in daily life by strictly focusing on descriptions, toward a greater emphasis on interpretation being inherent in those experiences (Davidsen, 2013).

**Phase 2.** The standard interview guide developed in phase 1 was used in the present phase. In addition, a presentation was prepared for the Focus Group Discussion to validate the interview guide. According to Bader and Rossi (1998), pretesting a newly developed tool through Focus Group Discussion helps determine whether the vocabulary of the question is appropriate and whether the questions can stimulate discussion in an interview. It also helps identify the questions that are not easily understood (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

***Sample.*** Sixteen key informant adolescents (8 Men and 8 Women) were selected through a convenient sampling technique. Their ages ranged from 18 to19 years (*M*=18.5, *SD*= 0.52) with 11 to 14 years of educational background. All the participants were residents of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It was ensured that the selected participants were close enough to the participants selected for the main study.

***Procedure.*** For the present Study 2, Focus Group Discussions were conducted, one for boys and the other for girls, which took 40 and 47 minutes, respectively. Formal permission was sorted from the university authorities, and the library was used for group discussions. The key informants were briefed about the purpose of the research and the time required for an interview, i.e., a minimum of 40 minutes. Verbal informed consent was given in which the participants were assured that in the research, their identifiers would not be disclosed, and their participation/withdrawal would be voluntary.

***Data Collection.*** The data was collected through Focus Group Discussion. The participants were shown a single item at a time through a PowerPoint presentation on a laptop. Moreover, they were asked to give an opinion about each item, i.e., to report what the question is inquiring about or what it means to them (alternate question).

***Data Analysis.*** Two experts analyzed the data. The researcher discussed the collected data in a one-to-one session with the experts. Each item and opinion of the participants were thoroughly reviewed and amended after the experts' consensus, i.e., Expert 2 and Expert 4.

***Results.*** The questions were modified, and the final version of the guide is shown in Table 1.

Items 1.1 and 1.2 are the alternate forms of a question used to make questions more comprehendible to the targeted population and collect more information in responses.

**Phase III.** This phase focused on pilot testing the developed interview guide to be used in the main study. In the pilot study, an interview was conducted with a 19-year-old male with having an educational background of 14 years. First, verbal informed consent was given after briefing about the research purpose. Then the recording of the 57 minutes long was sent to Expert 3 for review. As the participant's responses fulfilled the research objectives, the interview guide was finally approved to be used in study II.

Table 1
*Semi-structured interview questions guide*

| No | Questions |
|---|---|
| 1.1 | What is kindness, in your opinion? Narrate a story from your daily life. |
| 1.2 | Tell us a story from your personal life in which kindness was practiced. |
| 2.1 | How do you think kindness can be practiced through thoughts? Demonstrate it through an incidence of your life. |
| 2.2 | Tell us a story of your life in which you have practiced kindness through thoughts? |
| 3.1 | How do you think kindness can be practiced through emotions? Give an example of an incidence from your life. |
| 3.2 | When do you feel kind? Relate it to any incidence of your life. |
| 4.1 | In your opinion, how can kind acts be performed? Tell us an example of your life experience related to it. |
| 4.2 | Tell us an event of your life in which you have performed kindness. |
| 5.1 | According to you what, makes a person kind? Refer to a story. |
| 5.2 | In your opinion, what made you kind? Tell us a story from your life related to it. |
| 6.1 | What are the factors that stop you from showing kindness? Refer to a story. |
| 6.2 | When and why do you stop being kind? Relate it to any incidence of your life. |
| 7.1 | Who are the recipients of your kindness in daily life? Relate it to previously stated stories. |
| 7.2 | To whom can you be kind in daily life? Share your lived experience with it. |

## Study 2

The purpose of the second study was to explore the phenomenon of kindness, its enabling factors, inhibiting factors, and the recipients of kindness by using the interview guide developed in Study 1.

**Population and Sample.** A homogenous sample of adolescents (N=14), particularly of age 18 and 19 years (*M*=18.5, *SD*=0.51), were selected. Four participants were recruited from Quaid-e-Azam University, five from Comsats University, and five from Bahria University Islamabad. Only the participants who were residents of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were recruited through a convenient sampling technique.

Along with it, two qualitative research experts were also recruited to review the emerging categories and themes, as suggested by Lewis and Ritchie (2003).

### Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The committee gave ethical approval under the ethics approval referral number PSY-1493-116-012018. A notice was circulated in the bachelors' classes of Quaid e Azam University, Comsats University and Bahria University of Islamabad. This notice included information about research topic, nature of data collection and time required for one interview. After the participants' confirmation for voluntary participation, they were contacted to ensure the interview on a particular date and place, preferring their comfort and availability as suggested by Jacob and Ferguson (2012).

Before beginning the interview, a good rapport was first established with the participants to facilitate better responses (Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). After the introductory session, verbal informed consent was given by the participants. On average, each interview lasted for approximately 50 minutes. The interviews followed the semi-structured interview guide that was developed in Study 1. All interviews were recorded, and 114,484 words were transcribed verbatim. The identifying information was removed or altered to keep confidentiality.

**Data Analysis.** The data were analyzed using a thematic framework analysis within a broadly critical realist context of phenomenology. To achieve this, 'the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke's (2006) was followed. That includes (i) familiarization with data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (vi) producing the report.

The kappa test was used, which is a non-parametrical test to compute the inter-rater reliability of themes. At first, the data was analyzed by an expert for coherence and replicability of the themes. Then, after consensus with the coding of the researcher, a thematic map was provided to two judges. Finally, the level of agreement with the researcher for the developed themes was calculated for both judges in the form of kappa value.

## RESULTS

The present study was conducted to investigate the perception of kindness among Pakistan adolescents. For which the study's objectives were to explore the indigenous phenomenon of Kindness, investigate the enabling factors of Kindness, examine the inhibiting factors of Kindness, and explore the receptors of kindness. The data was collected through in-depth interviews using an interview guide developed through the phenomenological research method. Demographic characteristics of participants for the main study are presented in Table 2.

The level of agreements between two analysts for each theme of kindness, its enabling and inhibitory factors, and recipients is shown in Table 3. The correlation for each theme is positively significant, as shown in the table.

The collected data was analyzed through Thematic Framework Analysis. The analysis found 32 categories for the phenomenon of kindness that were grouped into three domains. The findings for the phenomenon of kindness are shown in Table 4.

Overall, the results showed three domains for the phenomenon of kindness, i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive kindness, as shown in Table 4. Each domain of kindness has themes of benefitting with goodness and withholding harm. Overall, *withholding harm* covers a large portion of the phenomenon of kindness, i.e., 11 out of 32 categories.

The behavioral component of kindness covers 50% of the 32 categories. It generally

Table 2
*Demographic characteristics of Adolescents* (N=14)

| No | Age | Gender | Residence | No | Age | Gender | Residence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 19 | Male | Islamabad | 8 | 18 | Male | Islamabad |
| 2 | 18 | Female | Islamabad | 9 | 19 | Male | Islamabad |
| 3 | 18 | Female | Rawalpindi | 10 | 18 | Female | Rawalpindi |
| 4 | 18 | Female | Islamabad | 11 | 19 | Male | Islamabad |
| 5 | 19 | Female | Rawalpindi | 12 | 19 | Male | Islamabad |
| 6 | 18 | Female | Rawalpindi | 13 | 19 | Male | Islamabad |
| 7 | 19 | Female | Rawalpindi | 14 | 19 | Male | Islamabad |

*Note.* The educational duration of each participant was 13-14 years

Table 3
*The level of agreement among judges in coding the themes for the phenomenon of kindness, its enabling and inhibitory factors, and recipients (N=14)*

| | Judge 1 | Judge 2 | Researcher |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Judge 1** | - | .93** | .92** |
| **Judge 2** | | - | .89* |
| **Researcher** | | | - |

**p* < .05, ***p* < .01

Table 4
*Thematic framework analysis of the phenomenon of kindness among adolescents of Pakistan (N= 14)*

| Category | Themes | Domain | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Using resources to fulfill one's own/ others' need<br>• (personal, financial, human)<br>• Taking care of people, plants, and animals<br>• Sharing personals & giving gifts | Overtly benefitting self/ others with goodness using tangibles | Behavioral Kindness | Overtly benefitting with goodness or withholding harm through behavior. |
| • Verbal effort & Auditory attention to make others feel better<br>• Being available to soothe others<br>• Courteousness/ displaying good manners<br>• Spending time with self, people, plants, and animals<br>• Sharing beneficial information<br>• Cooperating with others in their tasks<br>• Asking for help: involving others in personal task | Overtly benefitting self/ others with goodness using non-tangibles | | |
| • Removing harmful objects from a pathway<br>• Providing shelter to refugees | Overtly benefitting self/ others by withholding harm using tangibles | | |
| • Giving a smile while controlling anger/ distress<br>• Opposing bullying/ protective of less powerful<br>• Making an effort to resolve/avoid conflict<br>• Stopping people from harming self/others | Overtly benefitting self/ others by withholding harm using non-tangibles | | |
| • Feeling others' feelings/Empathic feelings<br>• Being humble<br>• Showing gratitude<br>• Staying trustworthy<br>• Giving unconditional love & care | Covertly benefitting self/others with emotional goodness | Emotional Kindness | Covertly benefitting with goodness or withholding harm through emotions. |
| • Tolerance/ controlling aggression<br>• Avoiding gossips about others | Covertly benefitting self/others by withholding emotional harm | | |
| • Positive thoughts<br>• Understanding others view/ Empathic understanding<br>• Accepting one's fault<br>• Reactive and proactive concern<br>• Planning ways to make others feel good<br>• Being justly decisive | Covertly benefitting self/others with cognitive goodness | Cognitive Kindness | Covertly benefitting with goodness or withholding harm through cognition. |
| • Forgiving<br>• Refraining from believing/sharing dispute-causing/distressing information<br>• Praying for wrongdoers | Covertly benefitting self/others by withholding harm cognitively | | |

entails all the forms of kindness that are overt and exhibited through any form of observable behavior. The present study has found behavioral kindness in four different themes, i.e., being kind (i) with goodness using tangibles, (ii) with goodness using non-tangible, (iii) by withholding harm using tangibles, and (iv) by withholding harm using non-tangibles. The tangible categories include benefitting behaviors concerned with adding or removing any concrete object, i.e., money, food, gifts. In contrast, non-tangibles include the benefitting services or behaviors such as listening or cooperation as Table 4 shows, in behavioral kindness the benefitting with goodness using tangibles entail fulfilling personal (giving a discount on personal services, helping other to get a job), financial (monetary assistance), or human (giving physical support in carrying luggage) need using relevant resources. It also involves taking care of people, plants, and animals (especially when they are sick), sharing personal possessions with others, or giving gifts. On the other hand, withholding harm behaviorally to benefit others while using tangibles includes removing harmful objects from pathways and providing shelter to refugees. Whereas using non-tangibles include passing smiles while controlling aggression, being protective of less powerful, trying to resolve/avoid conflict, and stopping people from harming themselves/others.

The emotional component of kindness covers 7 out of 32 categories. It includes the forms of kindness expressed through emotions for the benefit of the recipient of kindness. As shown in Table 4, it has been divided into two categories, i.e., being kind (i) with emotional goodness and (ii) withholding harm emotionally. Emotional goodness benefits contain empathic feelings, unconditional love and care, humility, gratitude, and trustworthiness. While withholding harm from an emotional perspective, kindness can be tolerance/controlling negative emotions towards others and avoiding gossiping about others that may make them feel bad and harm their emotional health.

Table 4 shows the third domain, i.e., a cognitive form of kindness covering 9 out of 32 categories. It comprises the covert kindness that lies in cognitive processes for the benefit of the recipient of kindness. It also has been divided into two categories, i.e., being kind (i) with cognitive goodness and (ii) withholding harm cognitively. As reported by the present study participants, cognitive goodness can benefit from positive thoughts, empathic understandings, accepting one's fault, reactive and proactive concern, planning ways to make others feel good, and being just indecisive. In addition, the cognitive perspective includes forgiving, refraining from believing/sharing dispute-causing/distressing information, and praying for those who have harmed you.

The findings for the enabling, inhibiting factors of kindness and recipients of kindness are given in Table 5.

The enabling factors for kindness can be categorized into two, i.e., benefactor-related and recipient-related factors, as shown in

Table 5
*Thematic analyses for enabling factors, inhibiting factors, and recipients of kindness among adolescents of Pakistan (N=14)*

| Category | Themes | Objective |
|---|---|---|
| **Intrinsic**<br>Nature<br>Nurture<br>Religious Orientation<br>Health<br>Optimism<br>Personal sufferings<br>Positive emotional state | Benefactor-Related Factors | Enabling Factors |
| **Extrinsic**<br>Personal Resources<br>Financial Resources<br>Human Resources<br>Deservedness<br>Profitability | Recipient-Related Factors | |
| **Intrinsic**<br>Personal Characteristics (comfort, loss or self-obsession) | Benefactor-Related Factors | Inhibiting Factors |
| **Extrinsic**<br>Restriction by Significant others<br>Situational Constraints<br>Non-deservedness<br>Non-profitability | Recipient-Related Factors | |
| Self<br>Other People<br>Plants and Animals | | Recipients of Kindness |

Table 5. The benefactor-related factors are further divided into two, i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors contain religious orientation, i.e., people become more aware of religion, practice religion, and strongly hold a belief in prospective reciprocity of actions by divine power. Other intrinsic factors related to the benefactor are nature (innate good nature of humans and kind parental affiliation of a child), good health in some cases, optimism, and personal distress (that one has experienced personally but wants others to be protected from the harm of it). For example, an individual who was not treated kindly in a specific situation knows its real damage, so he/she will show kindness towards others in the same situation. The extrinsic factors of the benefactor are the availability of the resources, whether its workforce, financial, or any other that may fulfill the need of the recipient. On the other hand, the recipient-related factors that may cause a person to show kindness are deservedness and the profitability of the recipient. Thus, any benefactor will be kind towards a person who is more deserving of the particular aspect of kindness, whether behavioral, emotional, or cognitive. Moreover, the present study also found that the benefactors

of kindness are more focused on the benefit of the benefactor, i.e., a child will not be given something that may harm him/her even though he/she needs it, and the parents have resources to get it for him/her.

As shown in Table 5, the inhibiting factors are also divided into two categories, i.e., benefactor-related and recipient-related factors. The benefactor-related factors are further divided into two: one is intrinsic factors that contain personal comfort, self-obsession (an individual who is too focused on his/her personal need would pay less attention to others in need), and two, a personal loss that may stop a person from being kind. However, another factor is extrinsic that contains restrictions imposed by a significant person or situation. Along with these factors, the contraries of enabling factors can also be regarded as inhibiting factors such as not being religion-oriented, bad health, lack of parental affiliation. Finally, the recipient-related inhibiting factors are the opposites of enabling factors, i.e., non-deservedness and non-profitability of the recipient.

The present study also found the recipients of kindness, as shown in Table 5. The identified recipients in the data were self, plants, and animals (reported by few) and other people (reported by most) that included friends, family, less fortunate people, those who have harmed the benefactors particularly, and strangers.

## DISCUSSION

The major contribution of the present study was to present an indigenous conceptualization of kindness among adolescents in Pakistan. According to Rich (2003), adolescence is a remarkable period of development that serves as a gateway to future adulthood. Therefore, the perception of adolescents on kindness was crucial to be studied to understand the future practice. According to Allport (1937), kindness is a central trait found in every person to a varying degree. The present study also found that some participants emphasize one of the perspectives over others. However, in general, all three aspects, i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive kindnesses, are present in every individual.

The findings suggest that Pakistani adolescents perceive kindness as benefitting from goodness and withholding harm through behavior, emotion, and cognition. Despite the aspects present in daily life, the emotional and cognitive kindnesses are not paid much attention as most of the participants have focused on behavioral practices when asked about kindness in general, whereas emotional and cognitive practices of kindness were discussed upon specific inquisition of kind gestures/emotions or thoughts respectively. Moreover, a similar was found in literature, as more than half of the reviewed literature has focused on the behavioral component of kindness, few on emotional and particularly for cognitive kindness, Comunian (1998) has argued that it has not been reported in the literature.

Also, *withholding harm* is a new addition to the literature as the *benefitting with goodness* part has been latently supported by all the literature reviewed above and explicitly by some (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Pollock, 2011). In contrast, *withholding harm* is a new finding of the present research, although it covers a large portion of the phenomenon of kindness. Moreover, present study participants have reported *withholding harm* in daily life, at least in one of the perspectives of kindness. Thus, the *withholding harm* aspect of kindness is inevitable yet overlooked by the previous studies.

While elaborating on the three domains of kindness, the present study found that some participants may emphasize one of the domains over others. However, in general, all three, i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive kindnesses, are experienced by everyone in everyday life. The behavioral domain of kindness covers overtly benefitting with goodness or withholding harm through behavior. These categories can be generally linked back to the definition given by Peterson and Seligman (2004) of doing favors and good deeds for others, yet the self, plants, and animals as recipients of kindness were overlooked. Moreover, Canter et al. (2017) and Pollock (2011) also have specifically discussed courteousness as an essential component of kindness. Emotional kindness can be termed as covertly benefitting through emotions either with goodness or by withholding harm. Some factors like empathic feeling and care have been referred to as kindness in previous studies (Binfet & Gaertner, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and gratitude (Otake et al., 2006). At the same time, the present study results have recently highlighted humility and being trustworthy for other people as a form of kindness.

Moreover, the cognitive components of kindness must orient around covertly benefitting with goodness or withholding harm using cognition. Although cognitive kindness was overlooked by literature (Comunian, 1998), some of the research has referred to 'concern about welfare of other people' as kindness (Canter et al., 2017; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The enabling factors of kindness can be benefactor-related, i.e., religion (religious orientation, teachings, and influential religious figures) and dispositional (empathy, optimism, mood states). Some other intrinsic factors highlighted by the present study include parental affiliation of a child. It also has been supported by literature that a child learns benefitting others from his/her parents (Kohn, 1990; McGarry, 1986), and the more he/she affiliates with a kind parent, the more he/she exhibits it (Rutherford & Mussen, 1968). The enabling factors can also be recipient-related, i.e., perception about the recipient's deservedness and the profitability of kindness for the recipient.

Likewise, the inhibitory factors related to a benefactor can be extrinsic (i.e., constraints by significant others or situation) or intrinsic including personal limitations such as bad health and self-obsession. Some of these factors can be grounded in previous literature, such as Phillips and Taylor (2009), who termed self-serving aspiration as the reason for not being kind to others. However, another factor is extrinsic that contains restrictions from a significant person or situation. According to some research, the benefactor often stops being kind due to the constraints, either situational or personal (Kelley, 1967 as cited in Leahy, 1979). Along with these factors, the contraries of enabling factors can also be regarded as inhibiting factors such as not being religion-oriented, bad health, lack of parental affiliation. In comparison, the recipient-related inhibiting factors include non-deservedness and non-profitability to the recipient.

The present study also found the recipients of kindness, as shown in Table 5. As most of the previous literature has termed kindness as other-oriented except few, like Neff (2003), who has introduced self-kindness, it was necessary to understand the perception of Pakistani adolescents. The recipients of kindness in the present study have been expanded from self to plants, animals, and other people, including those who have harmed the benefactors, particularly and strangers too.

## CONCLUSION

The findings can be concluded in a statement that kindness is benefitting with goodness and withholding harm behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively. The behavioral component of kindness is overtly expressed through behavior, whereas emotional and cognitive kindness is covert benefitting through emotions and cognition. The enabling factors of kindness can be benefactor-related, i.e., religion (religious orientation, teachings, and influential religious figures) and dispositional (empathy, optimism, mood states). Alternatively, it can also be recipient-related, i.e., perception about the deservedness of recipient and profitability of kindness for the recipient. Likewise, the explored inhibitory factors related to the benefactor can be extrinsic (i.e., constraints by significant others or situation) or intrinsic, including personal limitations such as bad health and self-obsession. At the same time, the recipient-related inhibiting factors can be non-deservedness and non-profitability to the recipient. The benefactor of kindness may be kind to oneself, other people, plants, and animals. Therefore, it is dependent on the nature of enabling and inhibiting factors.

### Limitations

The sample size for the present study was very homogenous and small, limiting the phenomenon's exhaustiveness. On the other hand, the availability of the participants and the arrangement of space according to the participant's preference were laborious. Moreover, this research did not look for individual differences based on demographics among participants.

### Recommendation

The findings of this study suggest several fruitful avenues for future research on the exploration of individual differences in kindness based on culture and age. First, the sample size for the exploration can be increased, and a more heterogeneous sample can be studied to obtain a more diverse understanding of kindness. Second, cognitive and emotional aspects of kindness can be further explored to understand better their lesser representation in literature and people's life experiences. Likewise, religiosity, serving as a most representative enabling factor for kindness, can also be studied in detail. Third, future research may also focus on developing a theory on kindness using grounded theory. Finally, a psychometric scale can be developed using the definition of the phenomenon of kindness derived in the present research.

This definition of kindness can be used for developing lessons and stories for the curriculum of schools. This definition can also be used for designing training programs in different organizations and institutes.

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# ‘Music in Film’ for Gifted Students: The Effect of Differentiated Learning on Students’ Motivation

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## ABSTRACT

Music is not only an important subject in general education, but it particularly serves gifted students who face various psychological issues not encountered by their ‘normal’ peers. Nonetheless, it is found that not all schools are implementing proper music lessons due to the focus on STEM subjects. This paper provides an overview of developing music enrichment activities as an approach to meet gifted students’ needs. Differentiated instruction was used as the main approach to developing a comprehensive music enrichment activity, namely ‘Music in Film’, in which gifted students integrated music and computer skills in completing a given task. Furthermore, a research survey was conducted involving 36 gifted students. The MUSIC Inventory was used to measure their motivation and engagement towards the activity to measure the methods. Five domains—empowerment, usefulness, success, interest and caring—were measured on a 6-point Likert scale. Results revealed that all five domains were rated from moderate to high by the gifted students with a minimum 4.5 mean. Although it can be concluded that this enrichment activity is apt and effective for implementation in gifted education, future studies could look at participants with different backgrounds and demographics. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to designing more enrichment activities with a differentiated instruction approach as gifted students possess high potential in various talents that need to be nurtured.

*Keywords:* Differentiated instruction, enrichment, gifted, music education, technology

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## INTRODUCTION

Enrichment experiences outspread, excavate, widen, or supplement an individual's knowledge (Hardman et al., 2017). Music and dance, information technology (ICT), mathematics, and languages are such enrichment courses that may be added to a gifted student's curriculum, which may strengthen or sharpen students' various skills and talents (Phillipson, 2007). Other examples of enrichment include experiences in which the students build sophisticated thinking skills, such as analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation, or have chances to master advanced concepts in a particular field. Some features of enrichment are viewed as types of acceleration. For example, a student whose enrichment involves fully pursuing mathematical concepts that are well beyond his or her present grade level is experiencing a form of acceleration. The two approaches are interrelated.

Enrichment could be the best way to serve gifted students. Eminent enrichment programmes are determined by cautiously designed activities, modules, or books, are challenging but not packed with assignments, and use rigorous yet reasonable assessments (Alabdullatif, 2020; Kamis et al., 2021). Additionally, good enrichment programmes focus on students' considerate and thorough plans and appealing activities that stress high-order thinking and practical skills. The close Assistive Technology type, 'The Renzulli Learning Enrichment Differentiation', shows how a particular database can deliver modified learning options for gifted students (Hardman et al., 2017). Renzulli's work is appropriate as he highlights how the behaviour of gifted individuals contrasts with that of the non-gifted. That is a realisation that has clear and important implications in the field of gifted education.

Enrichment comprises activities, such as exploring thrilling topics not normally included in the general curriculum, group-centred activities that concentrate on mental or affective skills and processes, and small-group studies of actual-life problems (Golle et al., 2018; Wu, 2013). The keys to these activities are high student interest, outstanding teaching, and meaningful mentoring. In the process of teaching gifted students, there are some strategies that teachers may implement to heighten students' interest towards the class activity: active learning; opportunities for choice and flexibility; asking unexpected questions; giving children responsibility for planning and decision-making; opportunities for humour; lateral thinking; and offering new learning experiences (Cathcart, 2020). Additionally, learning materials strengthen students' understanding of a topic as they can significantly increase students' achievement by supporting their learning. This allows the students to explore knowledge independently as well as providing repetition. Learning materials, regardless of form, have their special functions to enrich teaching, occupy students in multi-dimensional learning, and develop students' skills in applying their knowledge (Elliott & Corrie, 2015). Thus, according to Tomlinson and Masuhara

(2017), some factors should be taken into consideration to select proper learning material in conducting a course, which are

- Materials may encourage students to exploit higher-order thinking skills and to become up-to-date learners, to practise freedom of thought and to make independent decisions through evaluation of pertinent information, evidence, and differing perspectives.
- Materials that inspire the development of observation and awareness.
- Materials that are related to precise talent areas.
- Materials that encourage learners to utilize their creative skills.
- Materials that provoke thought about specific concepts and ideas
- Materials that motivate students to reflect on their manners and behaviours and understand their responsibilities, duties, moralities, and rights as contributing citizens in a diverse society.
- Materials that are varied with respect to stages of difficulty, reading level, and which present a variety of information.

Music is found to be important for gifted students. Previous studies proposed that gifted students be exposed to music to strengthen their skills, foster creativity, sharpen talents and bring many other benefits (Md Jais et al., 2018; Tolar, 2016). Gifted education has been introduced in Malaysia since 2009 under the governance of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Md Jais et al., 2021). The gifted education programme will soon be expanded to national secondary schools under the Ministry of Education, according to Iktisas Circular Letter No. 3 2021 *(Pekeliling Iktisas Bil.3/2021)*. Recognising that this is also driven by the online education prevalent nowadays, researchers feel there is a need for music studies integrated with technology to meet the educational needs of gifted students.

Furthermore, as music has emotional and psychological effects on individuals, it heightens the characteristics of self-actualisation and the personality of a gifted individual (Piragasam et al., 2013). Nonetheless, it is found that most schools are focussing on STEM activities and have marginalised music (Brewin, 2016; Pepper, 2019). It is an unfortunate consequence for gifted students to feel and express the allure of music. Those who are only musically talented have a limited time to explore music and sharpen their skills. The implications of these problems have caused discrimination against gifted students, especially those who are musically gifted, through the limitation of students' creativity, lack of fun experiences, and coordination of body movements. Realizing these issues, we reviewed related literature and developed music enrichment activities specifically for gifted students that may guide teachers to conduct an enrichment activity in school. The objectives of this study include i) identifying the effectiveness of differentiated learning towards gifted students' motivation and ii) recommending the activity of 'Music in Film' as a suitable enrichment activity for gifted students.

### Differentiated Instruction for Gifted Students

A popular teaching approach in gifted education is the use of differentiated instruction (Lee, 2018). This trend is indicated by numerous articles and reports on the subject in various journals, courses dealing with gifted educators and educational administrators, and using this method in the standard gifted curriculum series in Malaysia. It was found that differentiated instruction has become a crucial but complex teaching strategy that many teachers have not mastered and feel unprepared (van Geel et al., 2019). Thus, teachers need to be equipped with skills through professional courses and experience of differentiated instruction, especially in gifted education courses (Md Jais et al., 2018). As music is one of the arts subjects taught to gifted students, differentiated instruction becomes a unique teaching approach that triggers music teachers to be creative in the students' learning environment. In other words, differentiated instruction replaces the traditional method of "one size fits all", as explained by Sophia (2019).

Students in a class vary in culture, socioeconomic background, gender, family background, home environment, and skills. By considering every student's ability, teachers need to develop personalized instruction so that all students can master a topic effectively. Gifted students, like other children, need space and time to understand a topic and further develop their skills to the highest level (Ismail et al., 2021). Through differentiated instruction, students may learn within their diverse classroom community of learners to acquire content and process and relate ideas in their ways. This method is also believed to meet the gifted students' readiness level, interests, and learning profiles. Although class learning has been differentiated, this does not mean that students are separated or neglected. On the contrary, it is a method where every student works at their own pace, and the learning process is simultaneously executed. Sargent (2017) emphasised that differentiated instruction is not separating the less able and more able children. Instead, the process allows students to optimise their abilities and further meet a learning target. As a result, every student has a chance to be successful in their field as they may focus on the area that they are interested in. To enable this, teachers should give tasks that sharpen students' talents and set different expectations based on the students' abilities.

As in other fields, there are four ways to form differentiated instruction in music, by differentiating content, process, product, and learning environment (Tomlinson, 2017). Differentiation displays the music strength among learners, how they learn, learning preferences, and individual interests (Kamarulzaman et al., 2017). Therefore, differentiation includes systematic processes whilst offering a platform of practical, flexible teaching and learning approaches to cater to each child's learning needs and strengths to reach their maximum potential as a learner. Assessment through pre-test and post-test is important to comprehend how gifted students learn music and their musicality level. Students could be provided with a lesson rubric so that they may strive to achieve their own goals and decide the grade they require (Winebrenner, 2020). It offers an overview for both teacher and student, with the best target of developing students' skills. The method of traditional instruction practices commonly used is a "one size fits all" approach in which students are unfairly evaluated. In contrast, differentiation is more student-centred, focusing on instructional and evaluation tools that are fair, adaptable, challenging, and which attract students to take part in understanding the curriculum.

## Differentiated Music Contents

Common differentiated music instruction is through adapted content in which the lesson content is differentiated based on what students know. The most essential lesson content should cover the levels of learning set by the educational institution. Students have diverse experiences of music lessons. For example, some students are unfamiliar with music concepts, misunderstanding the ideas and missing some points, while there are students who have already mastered the initial stages. In music lessons, teachers differentiate the content by planning musical activities for students which cover different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Hanna (2007) explained that Bloom's taxonomy is a tool to translate music education outcomes into objective educational criteria. It is relevant to music education as it nurtures creativity as the most complex of cognitive processes, which has constructive effects in music education fields. Thus, the objectives of a music lesson may comprise the elements of cognitive domains, as shown in Figure 1.

In the process, teachers may modify what is essential for students or how students can dig into the concept and further obtain tacit knowledge and skills. At this stage, teachers are not lowering students' performance

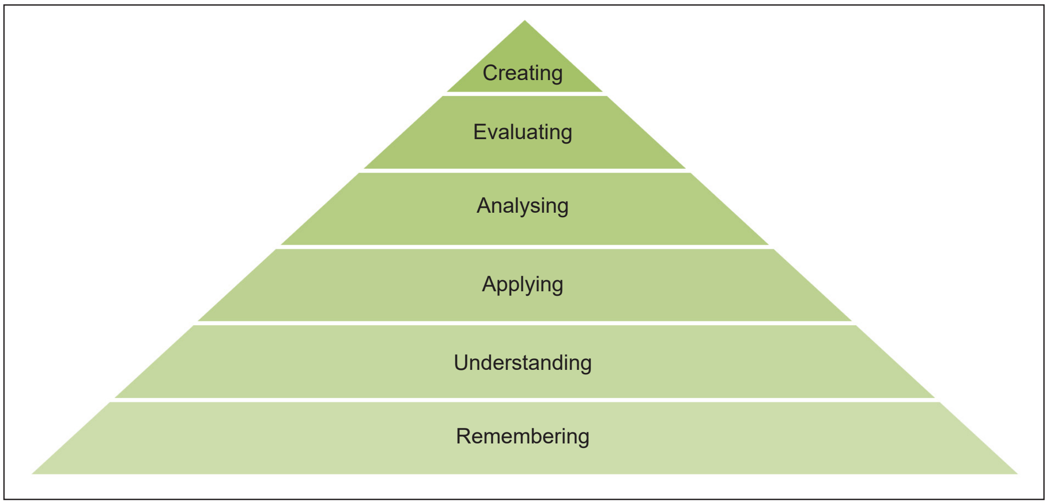

*Figure 1.* Bloom's taxonomy

levels or violating lesson objectives. They use different songs, instruments, or short music scores for each individual or student in a music class. Teachers can use flexible groups and divide them into groups and then watch a music video or search for required sources on the internet. Students should be allowed to choose how they want to work, whether in pairs, groups, or individually. Like other subjects, music content can be mastered by exploring ideas, concepts, information, and facts. It can be adjusted through acceleration, compacting, variety, restructuring, flexible pacing, and the use of more advanced concepts, tasks, and materials. At the first stage, students should be allowed to explore the music contents or skills at their own pace. Once they master a certain skill, it is believed that the entire music skills or contents which are introduced to students could be completed in much less time than by the traditional method (VanTassel-Baska, 1989).

### Differentiated Music Process

Differentiated process refers to the activities designed to allow application and practice of new skills and information involving reciprocity toward the enhancement of thinking skills dependent on prior knowledge (Glazewski & Hmelo-Silver, 2019). Music teachers are recommended to integrate multiple teaching strategies to allow students to have various ways to process new information or practise new skills. For example, supposed students are grouped for a specific purpose or are allowed to choose the most appealing task. In that case, they can process the new information or practise the new skill in a way that matches their skill level, interests, or preferred learning style. Music activities must be reorganised to be more rationally challenging to differentiate processes, such as using tiered activities to create a music video using various apps and different times according to students' ability. It is related to Standerfer (2011), in which students with kinaesthetic ability were given a task to spell music words with their bodies, visually oriented students used a computer to study treble clef notes, and the more creative students used keyboards to compose songs.

Regarding this matter, students need to be challenged by musical reactions of body movements that entail a quick and demanding response or by open-ended questions that encourage discovery, active learning, exploration, and inquiry. The goal of a differentiated process is to inspire students to think about music in a more abstract way beyond conventional practice. Jones et al. (2017) found empowerment is a crucial factor for students to be engaged in class through student-centred activities. Additionally, musical activities should be based on students' interests and encourage self-directed learning. It is directed to ideas in Bloom's taxonomy in which the most common approach to the process is modification. The categorisation level of the cognitive system is arranged from the fundamentals of thought includes imitating and remembering, to more advanced levels of judging, evaluating, and creating. Solo and Dave taxonomies provide additional models for improving music skills and understanding among students (Hook & Mills, 2012; Wesolowski & Payne, 2020). All music teachers should be creative in using various techniques to nurture and stimulate a higher level of thinking skills among gifted students. Group work and practical activities, flexible monitoring, and guided self-management are a few ideas for managing music class activities that support the process of differentiation.

### Differentiated Music Product

The product is the outcome at the end of the lesson that demonstrates the understanding of the topic through tests, projects, reports, or music performance. Based on students' abilities, music teachers may assign students to summarisation activities that develop mastery of a music concept (writing a music outline) or a method the student is interested in (music composition or performing music on instruments). The product is an essential part of the differentiated model which patently shows the readiness towards assessments answering the 'what' and 'how' of the effectiveness of instruction. When teachers modify a product or performance, they are enabling students in many ways to show what they have gained from the lesson. It is done by exhibiting the product through class presentations, digital boards or social media platforms. It is intended to let students demonstrate what they have learnt based on their music skills, interests, and strengths. Kazu and Issaku (2021) added that teachers might help gifted students display their mastery of certain concepts by using technology-based projects. By modifying the learning product, teachers allow students to establish the best understanding of a particular topic and learning objective. Jones et al. (2017) stated that learning products are achieved when students relate them to the real world.

### Differentiated Music Learning Environment

Differentiating the musical learning environment for gifted learners is crucial because it enables the students to achieve optimal learning in a music topic. Differentiating the learning environment for gifted students covers activities beyond the four walls of a classroom, allows them to move at their own pace, and develops social and emotional awareness in facing the process. The learning environment incorporates the physical arrangement of a learning place and the way students utilise the space, including lighting and atmosphere. The teacher's role is to generate an environment that is encouraging, organised, and supportive for each student. The music learning environment should be flexible with various facilities, such as music instruments, gadgets, and technology, by which students can complete a task individually or in a group. It establishes a variety of strategies to engage in a flexible and dynamic music class. Effective strategies may mould students' perception towards learning for success (Jones et al., 2017). Teachers should be open to alternatives, so the learning environment helps students nurture their gifted traits and talents through interaction with the materials, partners, group members, or whole class. Teachers play a role to support and developing a positive relationship with students so that they will feel cared for and grasp the values within the subject. Music educators may create a meaningful music activity by varying the learning environment; for example, students might be allowed to work in a music lab, computer lab or recital room. Students might also be given a choice to determine their preferred place to complete a specific music task. Ludovico and Mangione (2014) added that a music learning environment could be considered meaningful when adaptive technologies improve students' performance. It will eventually heighten students' interest and motivation (Jones et al., 2017). A conceptual framework was developed to indicate the implementation of differentiated learning related to this study, as shown in Figure 2.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A Survey Research was applied to determine the effectiveness of the music enrichment activity. According to Denscombe (2017), survey research is one of the Descriptive Research Designs that aims to collect data on a problem through a set of questionnaires, review of interview documentation, tests, or observation. The school survey, social survey, and public opinion research are models of survey research (Al-Zoubi & Al-Zoubi, 2019). In the present research, the high school survey model known as MUSIC Inventory was used to identify the effectiveness of an enrichment activity based on the domains of empowerment, usefulness, success, interest and caring. This survey was administered after researchers completed the intervention.

### Participants

Respondents were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of 36 gifted secondary level students (18 girls, 18 boys) aged 15 years from Kolej GENIUS@Pintar Negara, Malaysia. The students had passed the gifted screening tests, namely UKM1, UKM2, and UKM3. Students of this age were selected as they have skills

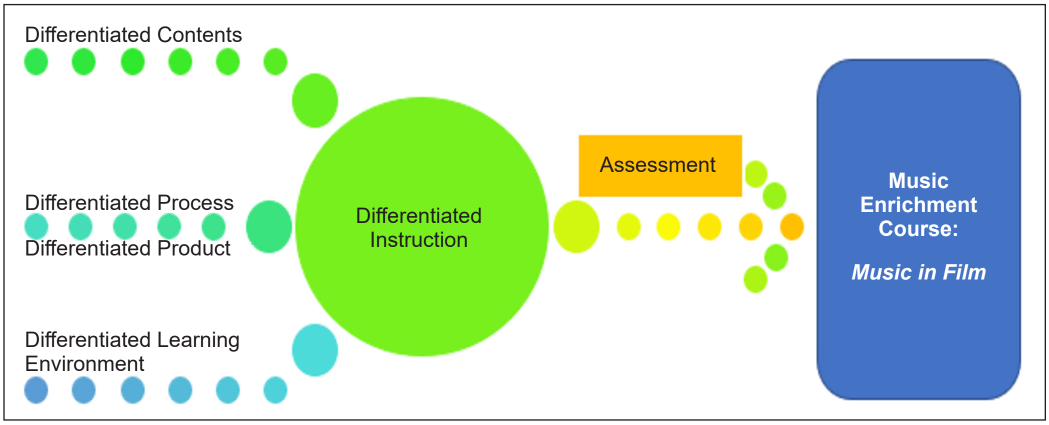

*Figure 2.* Conceptual framework of developing music course

of reasoning and scientific argumentation to be accommodated within the outlined activities (Balchin et al., 2013). In addition, there is a need to develop their skill at this level, so the activities were developed to enrich students' skills, including music, technology, language and interpersonal skills as portrayed in Multiple Intelligence Theory (Jignesh & Parul, 2020). The participants did not have any formal training in music technology, and the only music background they had was gained via the school music modules. The approach included one 40-minute music class per week with basic music theory, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. The distribution of the respondents based on gender is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
*Distribution of research sample*

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 18 | 50 |
| Female | 18 | 50 |
| Total | 36 | 100 |

## Survey

A survey was conducted using instruments based on the MUSIC Inventory adapted from Jones (2017). Permission to use this survey had been obtained. There are five domains in the inventory: empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring. According to Jones (2017), the MUSIC Inventory is designed to assess the level at which high school students feel the presence of each MUSIC model domain in a learning process. It helps teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses based on factors related to student's engagement and motivation. Evidence of the instrument's validity shows a good value of Cronbach's alpha in which all the domains scored above .7 (empowerment $\alpha$ = .72; Usefulness $\alpha$= .80; Success $\alpha$ = .84; Interest $\alpha$ = .77; Caring $\alpha$ = .85) conducted on fifth grade to seventh-grade students in science classes (Jones et al., 2017). A study by Parkes et al. (2017) with fifth grade to twelfth-grade students in music and band ensemble classes shows higher validity evidence of Cronbach's alpha (empowerment $\alpha$ =.73; Usefulness $\alpha$= .86; Success $\alpha$ = .92; Interest $\alpha$ = .91; Caring $\alpha$ = .92) in which the fit indices of a confirmatory factor analysis is acceptable. The instrument uses a 6-point scale with 18 items. The subscale of the item's distribution is shown in Table 2. In determining the level of a mean score, a mean interpretation score for the 6-point scale survey, as Table 3, was developed.

Table 2
*Distribution of item subscale*

| Domains | No. of item | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Empowerment | 4 | 22 |
| Usefulness | 3 | 17 |
| Success | 4 | 22 |
| Interest | 3 | 17 |
| Caring | 4 | 22 |
| Total | 18 | 100 |

Table 3
*Mean score interpretation*

| Score | Interpretation |
|---|---|
| 1.0 - 2.9 | Low |
| 3.0 – 4.9 | Moderate |
| 5.0 – 6.0 | High |

## Procedure

This lesson plan was designed exclusively to provide a music enrichment activity for gifted students. A 6-hour music enrichment activity entitled 'Music In Film', was outlined encompassing the elements of differentiated instruction. The topic of 'Music in Film' was chosen since it considers recommendations from previous studies that found this topic is appropriate in meeting the needs of music education for gifted students (Burnette, 2013; Torkar et al., 2018; Zorman et al., 2018). Teachers could select a day to run this programme as enrichment for gifted students. There were six phases of lesson units, namely Phase 1 to Phase 6. This topic was chosen as it suited 21st-century music skill which integrates technology in music content. Students also had the opportunity to express their creativity through a digital platform consisting of current software and applications. This course was set during the usual music class time to avoid any complications in the schedule of the school and students. Two music lecturers developed a lesson plan of differentiated music instruction as in Table 4 in the field of music education. Activities were outlined by considering the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) proposed by Gagné (2000).

During the process, we followed the lesson plan framework proposed by Cathcart (2020). In order to follow the framework, we answered four major questions, which are: 1. How am I generating a high level of interest in learning? 2. How am I developing the "tools of thought?" 3. How am I developing intellectual and creative potential? 4. How am I fostering emotional, social, and ethical growth? Therefore, we integrated some active learning activities, such as role-play, movie scenes comparison, debate, bookmaking, and film making. Students were able to choose from the lesson activities to complete various tasks. Lessons included were observation, communication, thinking, and organisation learning styles. Through this course, we encouraged new work, created an independent study, and provided support for the exceptionally able reader. Students were also given a chance to prepare themselves with knowledge and confidence to support ideas and respect others' opinions. This course also aimed to develop emotional awareness and understanding of others as a basis for emotional and social maturity throughout the process. The course outline was then checked and verified by an expert in the field of gifted education. Finally, an assessment rubric was prepared based on the recommendation by Cathcart (2020). The planning procedure also followed the guideline by The MUSIC Model Design Cycle recommended by Jones (2018), as in Figure 3.

## Procedure Planning

Topic: Music in Film
Students' Age: 15 years old (Foundation 3 class)
Number: 36 students
Period: 6 hours

**Objectives:** At the end of the lesson, students can apply music techniques to create a film.

This lesson is important to students as it:

a. Develops creativity by making and choosing proper music and sound in film.
b. Challenges thinking skills by creating and matching sounds and actions in the film scene.
c. Inculcates cooperation among each group member.
d. Appreciates the ideas and aesthetics of music elements in the film.

## Concepts:

a. Musical elements: Rhythm, melody, dynamics, harmony, texture
b. Music techniques: Orchestration, Diegetic and Non-diegetic, Syncing, Timing
c. Music moods

## Assessment Rubric

In designing the assessment rubric, we followed the strategies of the five motivation domains recommended by Jones (2018). The strategies include providing choices during class, having students reflect on lesson goals, providing students with honest and specific feedback, designing activities with consideration of students' interests, and showing students that you care to achieve the lesson objectives. After considering all the domains strategies, we mapped it with the assessment rubric for

Table 4
*Music enrichment activity lesson plan*

**Phase 1: Orientation** (estimated time 30 minutes)**:**

1. Students are posed with questions:
   - -Why is music so important in film?
   - -Do you agree music contributes much impact in the film? Why?
   - -How do you determine the best musical usage in the film?

2. Students watch a short blockbuster movie scene (students may choose any movie), for example, video as https://youtu.be/udKE1ksKWDE. Students identify sounds and music elements in the scene.

2. Based on the previous reading material, students list music techniques used in the film scenes.

3. Students share their answers and make conclusions about music techniques used in the film scenes.

4. Students are divided into three groups; Group A, B, and C. Students may choose which group they want to join. Each group will explore three activities (Role-play, Compare Scenes, and Book Making) for three hours. The activities are designed based on Differentiated Learning Environment and Product approach. It can be implied as a rotation activity. The activities are scheduled as below.

1st-hour activity:
Group A: Role-play
Group B: Compare Scenes
Group C; Book Making

2nd-hour activity:
Group A: Compare Scenes
Group B: Book Making
Group C: Role-play

3rd-hour activity:
Group A: Book Making
Group B: Role-play
Group C: Compare Scenes

Table 4 (*continue*)

| **Phase 2** (estimated time 3 hours) | Role play Activity | Compare Scene Activity | Making Book Activity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher facilitates all three groups. Teacher assists students who need help. | 1. Students will have to act and insert live sounds in this activity.<br>2. Students plan their storylines first.<br>3. Some students act, and some will make live sounds to accompany the action. Students may use any musical instruments, audio, and voice.<br>4. Students present their role-play in front of the class. | 1. Students watch two movie scenes provided for them.<br>2. Students analyse music techniques that are used in both films and compare them.<br>3. Students list the strength of each film from the aspect of music techniques.<br>4. Students share their findings in the group and paste the findings on the wall. | 1. Students read and find information in books, articles, and the internet source provided for them.<br>2. Students must find info about what music techniques are used in filmmaking and how to use them.<br>3. Students must collect notes and make a scrapbook.<br>4. Students present and submit their scrapbooks to the teacher. |

**Phase 3** (30 minutes):
These activities are designated by applying the Differentiated Content approach.

1. Students are divided into three debate groups: Modified Group, Extended Group 1, and Extended Group
2. There are two teams in each group which are proponent and opponent.
3. Students may choose the topic to be debated from those below:
   i. Diegetic and Timing are the most basic techniques in film.
   ii. Sync or Orchestration is the most important music technique in film.
   iii. Rhythm and melody could strengthen music in film.
4. The proponent team has to propose and defend the topic given while the opponent has to oppose the topic by emphasising other techniques as more important and justify the answer.
5. Students come up with a consensus on music techniques that are important in making a film.

*Note: Those who do not join as proponents or opponents may become the audience and decide the winning team.

**Phase 4 (**estimated time 1 hour 45 minutes**):**
These activities are designated by applying the Differentiated Process approach.

1. Students are given a task to create a 10-minute short film scene. Students are provided with a rubric alongside completing the task.
2. Students must insert music or sounds in the film using technology. Students may use software, such as MovieMaker, VideoEditor, or Adobe Creative Cloud.
3. Students are given a choice to work in a group, pair or individually. Students may use any materials, such as musical instruments, audio files, laptops, cameras, handphones, iPad, wood, paper, etc., to create sounds.
4. Students broadcast their film in the class.

| **Phase 5: Conclusion** (15 minutes) | **Phase 6: Evaluation** |
|---|---|
| 1. Students complete their video making and evaluate their product based on the rubric provided.<br>2. Students submit their video (film and music) and broadcast it on the students' portal. | 1. Teacher uses a survey or reflection form to evaluate the lesson.<br>2. Teacher uses the assessment rubric prepared by the teacher and students to evaluate students' achievement. |

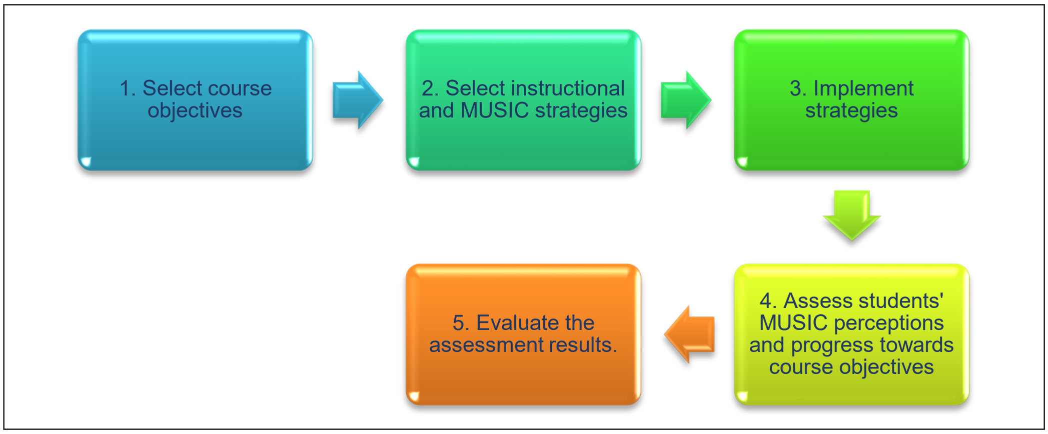
1. Select course objectives
2. Select instructional and MUSIC strategies
3. Implement strategies
4. Assess students' MUSIC perceptions and progress towards course objectives
5. Evaluate the assessment results.

*Figure 3.* The MUSIC model design cycle (Jones, 2018)

gifted students proposed by Catchart (2020). According to Catchart (2020), the effective feedback of assessment for gifted students is through a collective statement that provides information and constructive comments to improve learning. The grading system and marks are not sufficient to portray what the students have done and reflect their learning. Hence, a rubric is recommended to be an appropriate approach to assess what had been learnt by gifted students. Students are given a chance to revise the rubric and discuss the criteria with the teacher. The recommended rubric is as follows:

**Level 1: (Lowest Level).** The student knows that music is important in a film. It is unsure about which techniques can be used to suit the action or situation in a film. Accepts that various music techniques may help to improve a film line. However, it is vague about music elements in the film and techniques to insert proper sounds.

**Level 2.** The student knows music is important in a film. Can specify some major music techniques used in the film. Accepts that various music techniques may help to improve a film line and understands how to apply the techniques. Recognised musical elements in the film, such as rhythm, melody, and dynamic. Has heard or watched about the making of the film by inserting quality music or sound in the film.

**Level 3.** The student knows music is important in a film. Can specify some major music techniques used in the film. Has some knowledge of the research behind this. Accepts that various music techniques may help to improve a film line and understands how to apply the techniques. Strong recognition of musical elements in the film, such as rhythm, melody, and dynamics. Has views on impactful music in the film. Has views on/puts forward ideas for the right techniques to be matched with action in the film. Knows about/discusses the strength or weakness of music/sound quality in film. Recommends some improvements for the film to make it more interesting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the high records in all motivation domains, this revealed that the present enrichment activity has the potential to be included in the gifted programme. Based on Figure 4, it was found that students scored more than 4.5 mean values for each domain. Boys were slightly higher in Usefulness (M=4.80) and Caring (M=5.64), while girls scored slightly higher in empowerment (M=5.25), Success (M=4.94), and Interest (M=5.56). Based on Figure 5, gifted students overall scored high in five domains of the MUSIC Inventory, in which the highest scores are caring (M=5.5) and interest (M=5.39). One possible reason may be that these students were motivated when teachers treated them well along the learning process and therefore heightened interest in engaging with the activity.

To examine if there are any significance differences between female and male for the five domains, an independent T-test was employed. According to Table 5, there

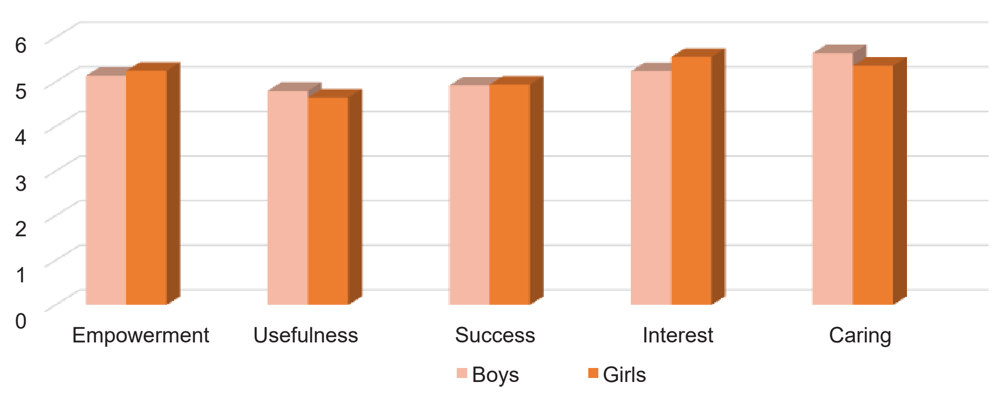

*Figure 4.* Mean score of the effectiveness of music enrichment activity based on gender

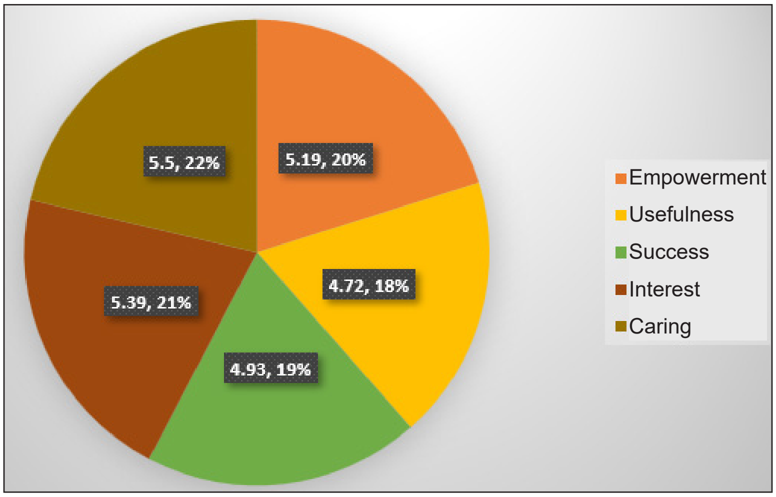

*Figure 5.* Mean score of the effectiveness of music enrichment activity among gifted students

Table 5
*Results of independent t-test*

| Motivation domains | Gender | N | Mean | t | df | 95% Confidence interval of the difference | | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Empowerment | Male | 18 | 5.14 | -0.52 | 34 | -0.54 | 0.32 | 0.60 |
| | Female | 18 | 5.25 | | | | | |
| Usefulness | Male | 18 | 4.79 | 0.59 | 34 | -0.36 | 0.66 | 0.56 |
| | Female | 18 | 4.65 | | | | | |
| Success | Male | 18 | 4.92 | -0.09 | 34 | -0.61 | 0.55 | 0.92 |
| | Female | 18 | 4.94 | | | | | |
| Interest | Male | 18 | 5.24 | -1.39 | 34 | -0.77 | 0.14 | 0.17 |
| | Female | 18 | 5.56 | | | | | |
| Caring | Male | 18 | 5.64 | 1.51 | 34 | -0.09 | 0.65 | 0.14 |
| | Female | 18 | 5.36 | | | | | |

is no significant difference between male and female in all domain; empowerment (t(34)= 0.52, p=0.6, Cl [-0.54, 0.32]), usefulness (t(34)= 0.59, p=0.56, Cl [-0.36, 0.66]), success (t(34)= 0.09, p=0.92, Cl [-0.61, 0.55]), interest (t(34)= 1.39, p=0.17, Cl [-0.77, 0.14]), and caring (t(34)= 1.51, p=0.14, Cl [-0.09, 0.65]).

Overall, students' mean scores are high in empowerment, interest, and caring domains. It reveals that students believed this enrichment activity empowered them to learn music, heightened their interest and sense of teachers' caring and concern while doing the activity. It aligns with Catchart's (2020) statement that activities with various strategies, such as active learning, observations, opportunities for choice and flexibility, and offering new learning experiences as outlined in the lesson are truly effective, especially to attract gifted students' attention. In the lesson, students were given chances to own the learning process, have choices and communicate in a group to solve the task. These are the factors that may empower students to master the skills, as explained by Hoover (2018). It is also due to a student-centred approach in which every student was given a chance to learn at their own pace with guidance from the teacher to assist those who were struggling during the lesson.

In addition, students scored moderate levels for usefulness and success. It means the students still believed that this activity was useful and practical for them as well as able to contribute to their success. It is in line with the research of Md Jais et al. (2018) and Piragasam et al. (2013), in which music is useful for gifted students to sharpen their talents and accommodate emotional problems. 'Music in Film' enrichment activities truly attracted the interest of gifted students' as they are interested to explore new things especially in the field of technology (Mann, 1994). As many gifted students are facing asynchronous development, it is crucial to expose the students to music activities and to enrich their various skills. Through this, gifted students may heighten their potential, manage their emotion quotient, and further realise their abilities and strengths. A rubric reference provided for students shows that teachers are concerned with students' ability and seek improvement. Students may also use the rubric as a benchmark of their skill and try to fulfil the requirement and achieve the highest level as they can, as proposed by Winebrenner (2020).

The results indicate the potential of 'Music in Film' as an enrichment activity for gifted students. The data suggest 'Music in Film' can be implemented for gifted students as respondents believed the lesson contents were useful for them and tended to make them successful. It is also related to the teaching methods embedded in the lesson consisting of differentiated learning styles, which encouraged the respondents to feel the lesson was engaging, in fact challenging and fulfilling their educational needs. The researchers believe that when gifted students enjoy actively participating in a lesson, this will sharpen their skills, especially when utilising technology tools, as outlined in the lesson plan. It correlates with Elliott and Corrie's (2015) opinion that learning materials, regardless of form, have special functions to enrich teaching, occupy students in multi-dimensional learning, and develop students' skills to apply their knowledge. The process allows students to optimise their abilities and further meet learning targets (Sargent, 2017).

The researchers attempted to uphold music to a high standard through this study when integrating technology and music. As music has normally been taught physically and practically (Ismail et al., 2021; Md Jais et al., 2020), this enrichment activity opens a new paradigm to explore music through technology and offer new learning experiences. The researchers believe the product of the present study will serve gifted students in three fields, including computing skills, music skills, and comprehending the element of creative arts. As a result, music as a subject will not be marginalised; it will become an important subject and an enrichment activity in school. It is also a great chance for gifted students to explore music in their way and widen their creativity.

## CONCLUSION

Music is a subject that may fulfil gifted students' needs. Maslow's theory of human needs emphasises music as part of the highest need of self-actualisation, which an individual feels at the peak of his or her ability (Piragasam et al., 2013). As gifted students face asynchronous development where their chronological age is not matched with their mental age, as mentioned by Md Jais et al. (2021), music becomes an intervention to stabilise their emotions and further reduce psychological issues among gifted students. A music enrichment activity is one of the examples that might be effective in overcoming gifted students' psychological issues, enriching their skills and nurturing giftedness traits to make a successful gifted student. The present research indicates the potential effectiveness of music enrichment activity to empower gifted students, make the learning useful for their future, help them succeed, enhance their interest in a specific topic, and realise the presence of teachers' caring during the lesson.

Additionally, the 'Music in Film' topic is found to be a reliable enrichment. Thus, to develop an effective enrichment activity, a teacher should have a careful and thorough plan as gifted students are special in relation to their peers (Ali, 2001). Therefore, their abilities and talents should be nurtured and guided through such programmes to heighten their interest and focus on a topic. As a gifted education programme will be implemented in schools under the Ministry of Education, the findings from this study can be a guideline for the ministry to apply and practise 'Music in Film' as an enrichment activity for the gifted students. We also would like to recommend future studies related to the effectiveness of music activities and the usage of differentiated instruction in music for gifted students.

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# COVID-19 Effects on Students' Teaching and Learning Perspectives in Malaysian Varsities

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had dramatic effects on the socio-economic and well beings of Malaysians. The objective of the study is to find the effects of the pandemic on university students both on the technical side, such as the sufficiency of infrastructure and the internet to support online teaching and learning (T&L), as well as on the social side, such as stress level and focus on the study. The nationwide study on the effect of the pandemic on Malaysian varsities students was conducted at the end of 2020. There are many important issues uncovered in this study ranging from the technical side, such as internet-ready programs, socio-economic side, to the psychological perspectives. It shall provide invaluable insights to the related ministries while preparing appropriate reactions during the recovery period. The survey revealed that almost 74% of students highlighted that internet coverage and connectivity was the main issue in online T&L. Although statistics show that 90% of Malaysian households have access to the internet, 49% of students reported that their internet connections were poor. The effects of the pandemic are far-reaching, students belonging to the most vulnerable category find themselves in the most non-conducive place to learn, and they are disturbed by siblings. The socio-economics impacts brought about by the pandemic cause ripple effects onto their families. The government distribution of relief aids has lessened the burden of many people, including students; nevertheless, much improvement could be made, especially in the internet facility and coverage.

*Keywords:* COVID-19 Effects on teaching, digital learning divide

## INTRODUCTION

On 16 March 2020, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Muhyiddin Yassin, officially promulgated the Movement Control Order (MCO) under constitutional provisions the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967 to be effective on 18 March 2020 for two weeks with provisions for extensions. Locally known as Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP), the order was a *cordon sanitaire,* i.e., restricting people's movements into or out of a defined geographic area, such as a community, region, or country (Rothstein, 2015). These orders, later known as MCO 1.0, covered the following main restrictions ("Covid-19: Movement Control Order", 2020), i.e., no mass gathering, 14 days quarantine, border shut-down, closure of all teaching institutions, closure of all government and public premises except for essential services.

The MCO 1.0 was extended a few times until 3 May 2021. The main purpose was to flatten the curve of new infection cases (Umair et al., 2021). The curve refers to cumulative active cases. During this period, generally, Malaysians adhered to the order, and it was seen as a success because the infections tally were able to be reduced from low triple-digit in early middle May 2020 (Md Shah et al., 2020) to low double-digit in early May 2020. However, since schools and universities were closed for face-to-face teaching and learning (T&L) and many were not familiar with delivering online T&L, there was a period of preparation and reflection for about one month starting on the promulgation MCO 1.0 on 18 March 2021. Eventually, schools and universities found appropriate ways to conduct online T&L.

The Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO or Conditional MCO), a relaxation of regulations regarding the

MCO, with its main goal, was to reopen the national economy in a controlled manner. The CMCO was scheduled to start from 4 May 2021 with the following main orders ("Essence of conditional Movement Control Order", 2020), i.e., economic sectors restrictions were relaxed, non-contact sport in large groups was allowed, social events were still banned, and interstate travels were still banned.

Although faced with initial skepticism against relaxing the movement rules either by some state governments (Joni, 2020), politicians, and even the public, CMCO was implemented gradually throughout the country over then the next few months. The CMCO was reinstated by 17 November 2020. Although MCO 1.0 was welcome by many quarters, MCO 3.0 did not get the same warm welcome, although generally, the latter was seen as the only way forward. The daily positive infection pattern 3 March 2020–15 May 2021 shows unprecedented infection rates as soon as rules (CMCO implementations) were relaxed on 5 March 2021. The important dates during MCO are listed in Table 1, with some notes about the implementation of the MCO-CMCO.

Table 1

*Important effective Movement Control Order (MCO) and Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) dates*

| Dates | Type | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 18 Mar. 2020 | MCO 1 | Promulgation by the Prime Minister on 16 Mar. 2021 for nationwide MCO |
| 17 Nov. 2020 | CMCO | Gradual ease starting on 4 May 2021, the states of Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Sabah, and Sarawak decided not to implement the CMCO by 4 May 2021 initially. |
| 13 Jan. 2021 | MCO 2 | On 11 January 2021, the PM announced that MCO would be re-introduced in many states. It was dubbed as MCO 2.0 widely. |
| 5 Mar. 2021 | CMCO | Selangor, Johor, Penang, and Kuala Lumpur exited the Movement Control Order lockdown and entered the CMCO. It coincided with the launch of the Malaysia National COVID-19 Immunisation Programme, which commenced in the previous week. |
| 12 May 2021 | MCO 3 | The Malaysian Government reimposed a two-week MCO in Johor, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Sarawak, and Selangor to curb the spike of COVID-19 cases. On 11 May 2021, the PM announced MCO to be reinstated starting 12 May 2021–7 Jun. 2021, known as MCO 3.0. |

There are many major impacts when any type of movement control is implemented. The main impacts discussed elaborately are the impacts on the economy and healthcare systems (Ibn-Mohammed et al., 2021). Popularly known as lockdown and border closure, these efforts are aimed to isolate cases and limit the transmission rate of the virus. The education system has not been categorized as the most severely affected, thanks to ongoing distance learning and other online learning initiatives in the last few decades. Notwithstanding, many pressing issues need to be addressed appropriately. An alarming 71% of student-respondents indicated increased stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts among students due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the study on the effects of COVID-19 on college students' mental health at the Texas A&M University, United States (Son et al., 2020). The study further provided other strong data on mental issues, such as respondents feelings on the pandemic; 91% fear and worry about their health and of their loved ones, 89% difficulty in concentrating 86% disruptions to sleeping patterns, decreased social interactions due to physical distancing, and 82% increased concerns on academic performance.

Online learning provides advantages in independent learning and developing new skills leading to life-long learning (Dhawan, 2020). The author further elaborated that online learning reduces the entire learning costs as it is reduced or required no transportation, accommodation costs, and the overall cost of institution-based learning. However, online learning can be challenging for students categorized as underprivileged and marginalized with limited resources and accessibility to technologies (The Regional Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group, 2020). This inability to access and involve in online learning causes disparity and dropout among them (Selvanathan et al., 2020). The UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) highlighted many immediate impacts of the pandemic on the university higher education sector, both for the different actors and the institutions, and the system as a whole (UNESCO IESALC, 2020).

In May 2020, the Malaysian government had imposed T&L to be conducted online starting May 2020 until the end of the year (Landau, 2020). The Ministry of Education said all face-to-face T&L activities were not allowed, and those exceptions will only be given to a few categories of students. It appeared that governments in the entire world must instruct relevant ministries to change from physical classes to online too.

However, online T&Ls have already gained momentum even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United States, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), between 2012 and 2016, online enrollment expanded by 16%, and in 2018 NCES estimates that there were about 6.3 million students enrolled in online courses (Miller et al., 2016). Through these learning methods and environments, students have freedom in learning and get connected with their teachers anywhere they want (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Among the two mains learning methods, the synchronous and asynchronous, Singh and Thurman (2019) further discussed many distinct and overlapping terms, such as e-learning, blended learning, online education, online courses, and the ambiguity and confusion around the interpretation of the concept of online learning.

In the Malaysian context, the government responded to online T&L quite elaborately. There are many instances of examples where the government encourages T&L, and these include the National Caring Aid (Bantuan Prihatin Nasional or PRIHATIN; Md Shah et al., 2020):

1. 15–50% electricity bill discount beginning on 1 April 2020, for six months and
2. Free internet from all telcos from 1 April 2020, until the end of the MCO (when it comes to users, this is practically the 1 GB of data/day from the main telcos),

which benefits B40 (bottom 40%) and M40 (middle 40%). The private sectors' contributions also play significant roles in this testing time. The YTL Foundation gave away free mobile phones to government school students under its Learn from Home Initiative, on top of free Yes 4G SIM cards with 40 GB of data and free learning resources that have already been made available earlier (Shankar, 2020), this helps the B40 group.

In responding to the pandemic, the Malaysian's Engineering Accreditation Council (EAC), the body delegated by the Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) for accreditation of engineering degree programs, has issued a very clear yet accommodative guiding principle EAC/ETAC Guiding Principles on Teaching-Learning and Assessment Implementation During Covid19 Pandemic (2020)– (Engineering Accreditation Council/ Engineering Technology Accreditation Council, 2020). In this guiding principle (GP) circular, it is clear that the EAC ensures that all program outcomes (PO) are attained no matter in which situations the nation is in (e.g., Harun et al., 2017). The GP encourages the implementation of substantial equivalent assessments to the current assessments. Continuous assessments implemented could be continued with take-home exams and assignments. The program is expected to undertake precautionary measures in handling *integrity issues*. The final year project (FYP) can be conducted using computer-based simulation and presenting literature critique, extension of time is allowed to support the government's intention for limited face-to-face interaction with university staff or the industries. e-lab or simulation-based laboratory experiments could replace the course with heavy laboratory content. The teamwork effort and complex engineering activities characteristics should continue accordingly for the Integrated Design Project (IDP, Harun et al., 2016). The scope may be considered complete to the extent of producing prototyping design and equivalent. Precautionary measures in handling integrity issues must be ensured in the final examination (FE). One way to do this is by replacing it with take-home or open-book examinations. Despite the facilitation given by the government and higher learning authorities in assisting students in online teaching and learning during the pandemic, the actual implementation and the effect to students in terms of both technical and psychological are yet to be determined. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effects of the pandemic on university students on both the technical side, such as the sufficiency of infrastructure and the internet to support online T&L, as well as on the psychological side, such as stress level and their ability to focus during the teaching and learning processes. In this study, questionnaires regarding places of study and family member annoyance are added to elaborate discussions on the learning process during the pandemic.

## METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted among students in Malaysia from 10 November 2020 to 20 December 2020. The survey was conducted using an electronic system employing Google Forms, this way, and it would save many resources because a target of 1000 minimum respondents was set. The surveys were conducted mostly during the CMCO period. All public and private HEIs held all their classes virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the survey must get data from all over Malaysia, including in less developed areas like central Sarawak and Sabah as well as Kelantan, many co-researchers were appointed. Co-researchers distributed the survey questions and encouraged students to participate via their learning management system (LMS). Co-researchers also used other promotional methods to get large turnouts. The only inclusion criteria for participation were that participants should be enrolled as undergraduate students in the university at the time of the survey. The objective, time duration, procedure, prospective research benefit, potential risks/discomfort/adverse effects, informed consent declaration, and right to ask a question were available. The following notes were also made available at the start of the survey to ensure the integrity of the study:

1. Incentives for participation

*Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no incentives for participation.*

2. Right to decline participation

*Participation in this study is purely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and withdraw without penalty.*

3. Right to withdraw once participation has begun

*Participation in this study is purely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw participation once participation has begun without penalty. In the case of withdrawal, the information you provided will be destroyed.*

4. Foreseeable consequences of declining and withdrawing from participation

*There are no foreseeable consequences of declining and withdrawing from participation.*

The participant must provide a pin so that their information can be tracked if a participant would like to withdraw from the survey at a later stage.

The survey covers the first two levels in Maslow's Theory of Needs (Maslow, 1943), as outlined in the online education framework (Milheim, 2012). The first two levels are psychological needs and safety needs. In the first level, students need to fulfill psychological needs, such as the appropriate internet infrastructure and LMS system, to have the ability and motivation to learn. These basics must be identified and supplied to students for successful learning to occur. In the second level, it is reasoned that the virtual classroom can also be stressful to students. Other issues, such as getting familiar with online classroom features, knowing each other, and course format, can be matters of concern (Milheim, 2012). These two levels serve as the basis of the questionnaire design because these issues address students' basic needs.

The questionnaires were divided into three categories. In the first category, students were asked basic questions on demography. It was also to ensure the student familiarize themselves with the electronic system. The next section was on the *main learning issue during Movement Control Order (MCO)* and the last one on *participants evaluations on different effects for different subjects (technical versus humanity subjects) or environment (what would it be participant was at campus with better internet facility)*. Before proceeding with the analysis, some statistical analysis shall be performed on the data.

A total of 1410 participants of the survey were received, and the distribution by ethnic composition is shown in Figure 1. The breakdown closely follows Malaysia's ethnic composition. It is important to have substantial responses from Sabah and Sarawak as this will reflect the correct situation. At slightly more than 8% of survey participation, it appears that participation from these two regions does not follow the current national demography—Sabah and Sarawak populations make up 11.95% and 8.62%, respectively, of the national estimated population in quarter four of 2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2019). The total number of student enrolments in Malaysian higher education has increased steadily from 2003–2019; see Table 2 for details.

It is important to establish 'an appropriate response' to a survey, i.e., the minimum response. Table 2 shows the composition of students in the country. The available data is only up to 2019; therefore, a projection for 2020 and 2021 can be made for statistical analysis. According to the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU), the international student population is estimated at 52,000 students by the end of 2020 (92,415 in 2018—a big drop; Y. Sharma, 2020).

Table 2

*Student enrolment at public and private HEIs*

| Year | Public HEI | Private HEI | International student | Postgraduate Private HEI | Postgraduate Public HEI | Postgraduate to overall student enrolment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2003** (Abd Aziz & Doria, 2014) | 294,359 | 314,344 | 30,397 | | | |
| **2011** (Abd Aziz & Doria, 2014) | 508,256 | 428,973 | 71,101 | 17,496 | 5009 | 2.23% |
| **2019** (DOSM, 2019) | 533,946 | 633,344 | 92,415 (Y. Sharma, 2020) | | | |
| Increase 2011-2019 | 5.1% | 47.6% | 30.0% | | | |

However, this drop did not significantly contribute to the overall student enrolment in Malaysia in 2020. Based on Table 2, postgraduate students' enrolment in 2019 is only 2.23%, which would not change much in 2020, although international postgraduate students' enrolments are expected to shrink dramatically due to travel restrictions. The student enrolment population size in 2020 is estimated to be the same as in 2019, i.e., 1.25 million. Therefore, the minimum required sample size of 384 is met (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Interestingly, Table 2 also shows that student registrations at private HEI remarkably outpace public HEI over the 2011–2019 period. It is set to reverse because international students stay away during the pandemic (Y. Sharma, 2020). Despite some closures to some of the private HEIs anticipated (Y. Sharma, 2020), this would not affect the study's outcome as the questions do not differentiate students' countries of origin.

The details of participation according to HEI involvement are shown in Table 3. Apparently, participation from private institutions is low. For example, participation from UNITEN is at 1.21%, and there are only a couple of participation from UTP, Mahsa University, University of Reading, and Sunway College, i.e., other private institutions.

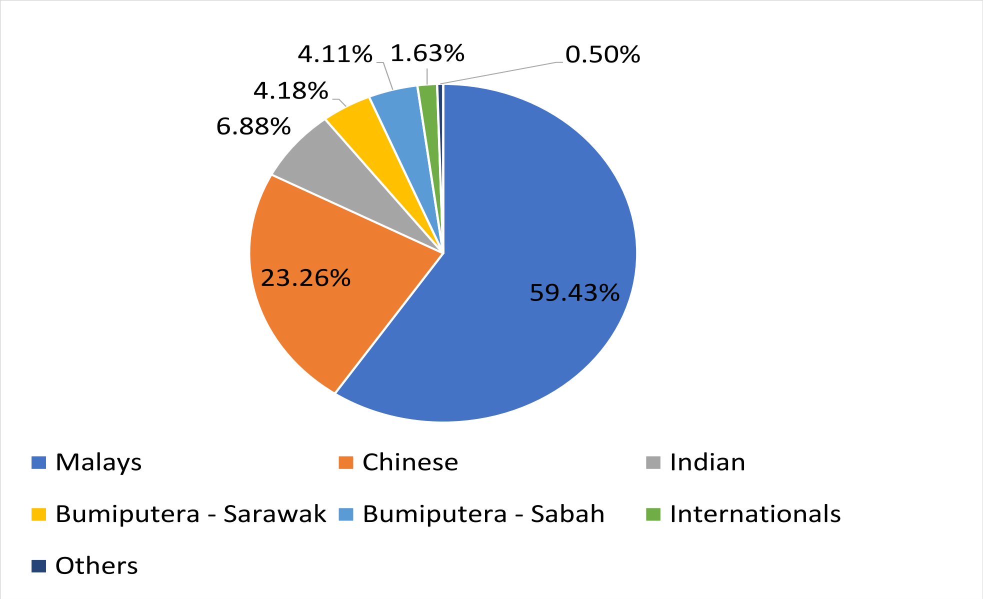

*Figure 1.* Students' participation in the survey by ethnic composition

Table 3

*Student participation*

| HEI | Participation | HEI | Participation |
|---|---|---|---|
| UiTM | 4.04% | UNITEN | 1.21% |
| UKM | 7.59% | UPNM | 8.23% |
| UM | 0.28% | USM | 20.43% |
| UMK | 0.92% | UTEM | 0.21% |
| UMP | 2.13% | UTM | 38.94% |
| UNIMAS | 13.97% | Others | 2.06% |

The reliability of the items is tested, and the results indicate that the internal consistency as the Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.7. A chi-square test is used to determine the significant association between two categorical variables formally. The regions of students and types of internet connection problems are chosen as the two variables in this study.  For a chi-square goodness-of-fit test, the test statistics is defined as:

$$\chi^2 = \Sigma|O-E|^2 / E,$$

where O and E are observed and expected frequency, respectively, the test has approximately a chi-square distribution if the null hypothesis is true. The number of degrees of freedom is one less than the number of possible values for the variable under consideration.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Association of Region and Perception of Internet Connection Problem

Figure 2 shows a segmented bar graph for the conditional and marginal distributions of students' perception of the internet connection problem of two regions in Malaysia. The result indicates that most of the students from both areas agree with the internet problem. The highest number of students agree with the problem, as shown in Figure 2, in which 529 and 108 students are from Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan, respectively. In contrast, only a few students strongly disagree with the internet problem, with 84 and 9 of them being from Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan, respectively.

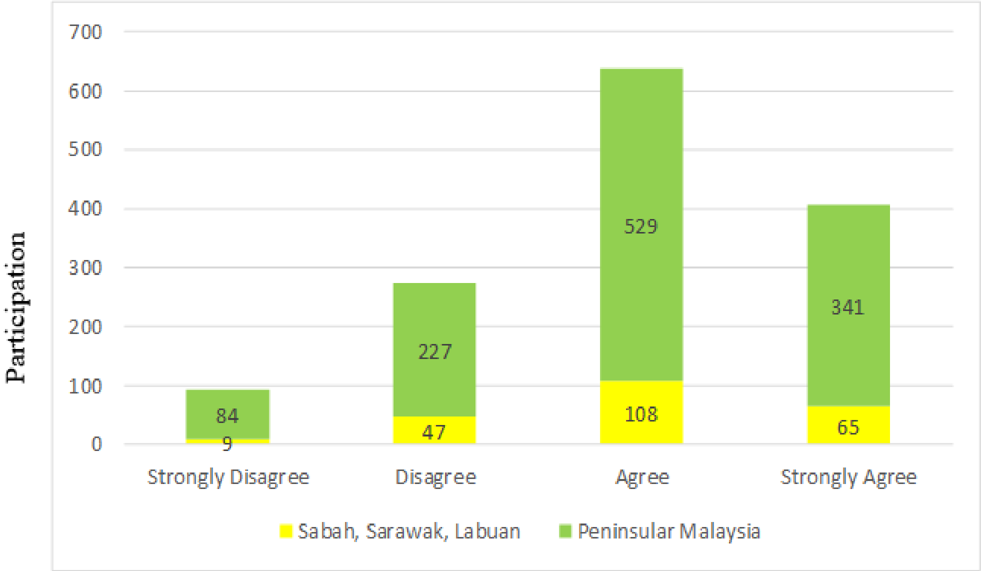

*Figure 2*. Clustered bar chart of perception on internet problem by regions

A formal analysis is carried out to determine the association between the regions and students' perception of internet problems from the above exploratory analysis. A chi-square test is used for the above purpose. The results show that the chi-square statistic is 3.367 with the corresponding *p*-value of 0.338. Therefore, there is no sufficient evidence that region and student perception are associated, which indicates that the level of perception on the internet problem is not influenced by the region of students.

### Main Learning Issues

There are two-level questions in this section on main learning issues during Movement Control Order (MCO). After answering three main questions of main learning issues, which are i) internet coverage, ii) place of study, and iii) focus, respondents must answer each category in detail. The responses for the first three questions are shown in Figure 3, while the responses for the remaining detailed questions are shown in Figures 4–6.

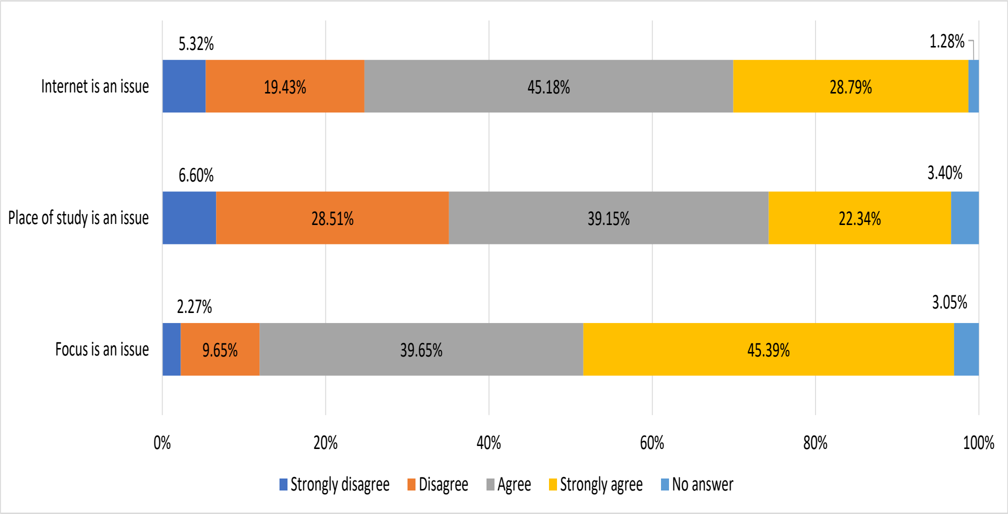

*Figure 3.* Three main issues learning issues during Movement Control Order (MCO)

A Likert scale is used for these questionnaires, and participants could choose not to answer. A small percentage of participants did not answer the three questions comprising 1.28%, 3.40%, and 3.05% for i) internet coverage, ii) place of study, and iii) focus, respectively. 5.32% strongly disagree, and 19.43% disagree that the internet is an issue. It adds up to 24.75%, i.e., a quarter, while participants who agree and strongly agree make up 73.97%. It provides strong evidence that internet connections could cause the implementation of online learning T&L to be affected badly, causing waste of time in waiting and students to lose out. Although it is every government's wish to provide good internet coverage and slogans, such as *online learning serves as a panacea in the time of crisis* and *online teaching is no more an option, it is a necessity* (Dhawan, 2020) seem to be accepted, not only in Malaysia but to many countries, major infrastructural improvements are urgently needed.

The breakdown of internet issues collected from this study is shown in Table 4, and for better visualization, a pie-chart is shown in Figure 4. As mentioned earlier, although the government of Malaysia has pledged *free internet from all telcos from 1*

*April 2020 until the end of the MCO* (Md Shah et al., 2020), the issues of low internet coverage have been plaguing Malaysia. Modernization initiatives in the last few decades have opened many opportunities. Sabah and Sarawak are the two states with low population densities of 52/km$^2$ and 22/km$^2$ against the entire nation at 86/km$^2$ (DOSM, 2020a). It is almost impossible for Telcos to provide any telecommunication infrastructure because such investments are uneconomic. As locals and tourists visit neighboring towns, they will also find many important facilities, such as health care centers and fuel stations, which are missing in many areas, and one thing for sure is internet connectivity.

This situation is similar to many years ago, as there were massive development projects, small towns grew. However, there are just insufficient conditions for these facilities to be provided yet. Therefore, local folks will have to deal with no internet coverage. Weird as it sounds, students' requests to take some examinations, which require an online system on a certain date and time, are usually agreed upon by lecturers (e.g., Selvanathan et al., 2020). As a result, many students whose houses are in longhouses in rural Sarawak need to travel two hours to get to the nearest town where internet coverage is sufficient for an online system. Imagine if the examination finishes at 5 pm, there is simply no return boat trip in the late evening in many areas.

Table 4
*Breakdown of internet issues*

| Internet issues | Percentage |
|---|---|
| No internet | 0.99% |
| Low internet coverage | 48.94% |
| Limited data < 1G/day | 10.43% |
| Limited data < 5G/day | 7.80% |
| No internet problem | 29.72% |
| Sudden disruptions | 1.13% |
| Problem on rainy days | 0.57% |
| Others | 0.43% |

The Government of Malaysia launched the Jalinan Digital Negara (JENDELA) Program as internet traffic increases by 30%–70% due to work from home (WFH) orders during MCO. In comparison, internet speed has dropped by 30%–40% (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2021). Therefore, among the aggressive targets of the JENDELA program are to upgrade 4,589 existing 2G/3G base stations to 4G and expand coverage and increase speed.

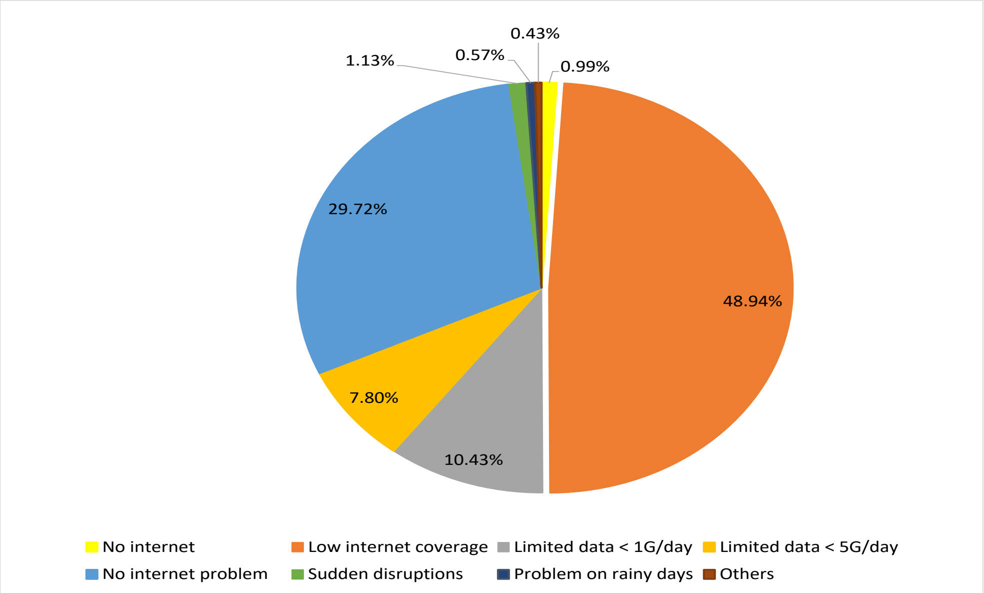

*Figure 4.* Breakdown of internet issues

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia again, household internet penetration increased from 87% in 2018 to 90.1% in 2019 (DOSM, 2020b). The increasing trend of household penetration since many years ago was supposed to be great news for WFH and students from primary schools to tertiary levels. However, the remaining 9.9% who do not have internet access must find ways to deal with no internet access. The scenario faced by the student living in a longhouse in Sarawak is not an isolated case. The scenario of *tree-top* student Veveonah Mosibin who attended the pre-university science program at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), provides a clearer situation for rural areas generally in Sabah and Sarawak. Ms. Mosibin hails from Kampung Sapatalang, Pitas, Sabah. She had to sit for examinations at 9 am and at 2 pm on 9 June 2020. Therefore, early on the day, she checked a hut she had prepared a few weeks earlier at a hilltop to get a good internet connection. To her dismay, the hut was broken, most probably because of strong winds and rains over the weeks. Therefore, she took the online examination on a big tree, to get a good internet connection using broadband data from her handphone, thus earning herself a *tree-top* student (BBC Monitoring, 2020). After setting a mosquito net, she took the chemistry examination for the morning session and Malaysia Studies for the evening session. The entire activity was recorded and was apparently made for a challenge, including an overnight outing, alone at the hilltop—it was viral for many reasons. Although the immediate response was to have telecommunication facilities improved in the area—this certainly will not increase the remaining 9.9% of households who have no internet access -discussed earlier (DOSM, 2020b). In this study, we allocated questions addressing issues regarding the internet quite sufficiently.

Participants who chose 'limited data < 1G / day constitute 10.43%' of the overall respondents. Many synchronous lectures last about two hours. Many of the LMS employed by universities offer exchanges of video transfer as well. It is normal that if a student allows a complete video transfer in one hour, which is usually required to get a full grasp of the lecture, the 1G data is fully utilized (Rohan-pal, 2020). The 1G data by the major telcos in the PRIHATIN pledge will support the first-hour usage but not after that. 'Sudden disruptions'— 1.13% and 'problem on rainy days'—0.57% are seemingly low but should not be neglected. Many reports have been made by students who highlighted that there they could not submit their examination in time because there were 'sudden disruptions.'

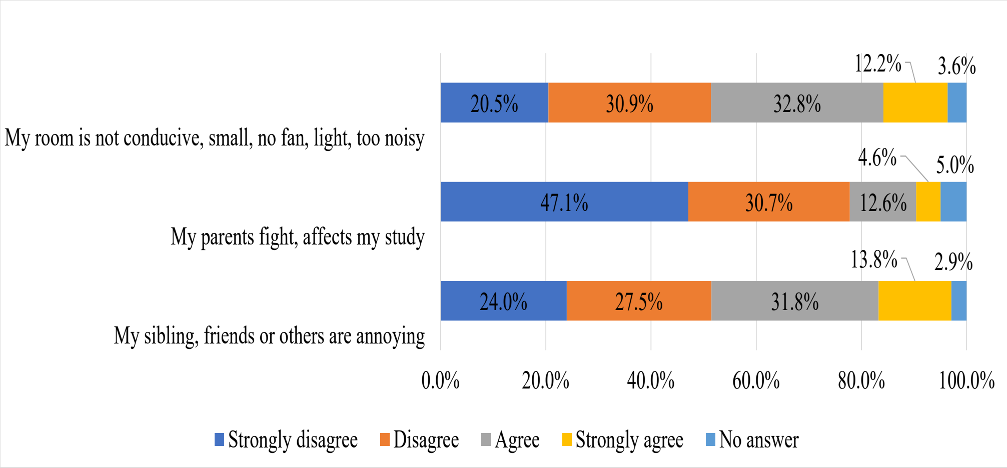

*Figure 5.* Disturbances at the place of study

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of the disturbances at the place of study. Generally, students stay in dormitories in the first year, and the majority rent accommodations in nearby areas in subsequent years until the completion of their studies. 3.6% did not provide an answer. 32.8% and 12.2% of students agree and strongly agree that their rooms are not conducive, small, has no fan, have appropriate lighting, or are too noisy. Generally, family size in Malaysia is relatively large. In rural areas, although rare, there are many places where electricity supply is not available, just like in Ms. Mosibin's case. Rural folks can rely on generator sets for electricity for essential items, but is it too costly to run generator sets into midnight.

As MCO periods are entended, stress levels among family members increase. The second results in Figure 5 show the extent of the MCO effect on relationships among family members. 12.6% and 4.6% chose to agree and strongly agree with the question 'my parents fight, affects my studies,' with 5.0% not choosing an answer. The total number here, 17.2%, is annoying, but it reflects the situation among the lower-income groups. Women's rights groups in Malaysia have reported a substantial spike in domestic violence and abuse. The MCOs and increased economic and social stresses combined with conditions in crowded homes, substance abuse, limited access to services, and reduced peer support exacerbate the conditions for violence and abuse (Lim, 2020). Interestingly, a study conducted at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia conducted at about the same time revealed 78% of students are of the view that activity increased online learning load is among the factors that cause students stress to spiral out (W Zamri et al., 2021). The addition of online learning activities worsens students' already unmanageable stress level due to crowded places of stay and other issues described above.

The most immediate effect of MCO is a contraction in economic activities. Having learned the hard way from the freeze in economic activities in the first implementation of MCO, which caused the GDP in 2020 to contract by 5.6%—the worst performance since 1998, the government is seen to only resort to the same freeze order as the last option. 3.8% and 18.1% of the total Malaysian labor force are *unpaid family workers* and *self-employed/own accounts*. A freeze in economic activities quickly finds its way to affect these categories officially classified most vulnerable employments. *An unpaid family worker* is a person who works without pay or wages on a farm, business, or trade operated by another member of the family. As the rate of domestic violence rises, support has been less forthcoming. Judicial, police, and health services that normally are the first responders for women are overwhelmed, have shifted priorities, or are otherwise unable to help (Lim, 2020). These cause much stress among family members. Through various statistics gathered by A. Sharma and Borah (2020), clear evidence is established to relate the significant reduction in economic activities due to COVID-19 and domestic violence occurrences. Two examples of cases from A. Sharma and Borah (2020) are rewritten here on how disturbances at places of study can directly impact losses of incomes and domestics violence. Firstly, even in a family with no history of domestic violence, economic distress due to financial strain and a lack of social support can fuel violence. Secondly, having too much time among family members during the pandemic can be the source of domestic's violence, especially when it is not compatible with the family setup. These authors added that this environment causes student education and their development to be affected; adding the related questions on these items will shed some light on the extent of COVID-19 effects.

A total of 45.6%, i.e., 31.8% and 13.8%, chose to agree and strongly agree that 'my sibling, friends or others are annoying.' Generally, the entire online T&L and the broader WFH concept are new. At the start of the first MCO implementation, the government announced a 15–50% electricity bill discount beginning on 1 April 2020 for six months (Md Shah et al., 2020). It has since been extended. Therefore, a lot of middle-income earners had to accept the new concept of WFH. However, many households did not have a separate room for works and T&L, thus the disturbances from most likely kids for working adults or younger siblings for school-going children and teenagers.

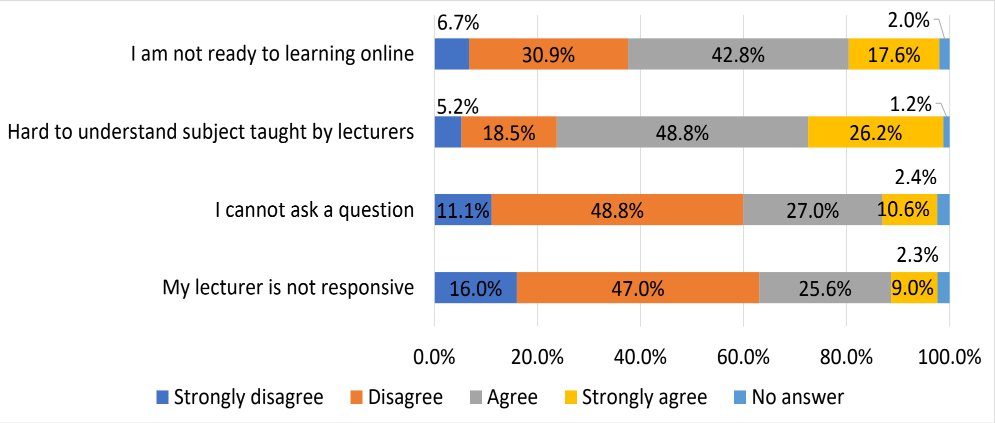

*Figure 6.* Focus of study

Figure 6 shows the detailed breakdown for the focus on studies. The students could choose to skip the questions; however, a very small number of them skip the question, ranging between 1.2%–2.4%. 42.8% and 17.6% choose to agree and strongly agree with the question 'I am not ready to learn online.' It is alarming because there are many assumptions and webinars on online teaching techniques and approaches. Gonzales et al. (2018) revealed that roughly 20% of students have trouble with basic technology needs. Their data plans are capped, outdated devices and internet connectivity. The lower socio-economic group and students of color disproportionately experienced hardships, and reliance on old devices was associated with lower grade point averages (GPA).

The shift toward the non-conventional pedagogical method, although necessary, should not yet be accepted as a *victor ludorum* as in Dhawan (2020). More than two-thirds of students, i.e., 48.8% and 26.2%, chose 'hard to understand subject taught by lecturer' in online modes. There are many reasons for that; students need that access to lecturers like in the old-school model, open hours tutorials, face-to-face explanation sessions where constructing calculations surrounded by friends in a tutor's room and performing other learning activities were possible. Notwithstanding, most students chose strongly disagree (11.1%) and disagree (48.8%) with 'I cannot ask a question.' It is probably a relief to learn that 16.0% and 47% of students choose strongly disagree and disagree with the question 'my lecturer is not responsive.' The guideline released by EAD Malaysia clearly supports students' difficulties during this painful period; a student can send in their final year report later than the normally prescribed times for the final year report (FYP). It will assist students who need to undertake their project in the laboratory, which is mostly closed during the pandemic. Computer-based simulation and presentation of critical design problems can replace the traditional prototype and are considered to have met complex problem solving (CPS) requirements (EAC/ ETAC, 2020). Adding questions on non-conventional teaching methods would greatly provide important information on the COVID-19 effects on education.

## CONCLUSIONS

The nationwide study on students' difficulties during pandemics revealed that the digital divide, such as access to the appropriate device, internet access, and knowledge to use these techniques, are not only the main issues. More complex issues that need to be addressed, such as students' readiness for this non-conventional pedagogical approach. Students still need that old-school approach, such as meeting with tutors during open hours. Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic have far-reaching effects on the socio-economics; students belonging to the most vulnerable groups found themselves in the least conducive place to study, their rooms are small with few basic facilities, such as fans and adequate lighting. In addition, they face disturbances among family members. The impacts on increased stress levels are also discussed, although beyond the main objectives of the study. Although the past year has seen increased effectiveness of online T&L, its way toward *victor ludorum* may face many more obstacles than earlier thought. With appropriate coverage of the study regarding the number of HEIs, students' location, and region, this study shall provide HEIs and the relevant ministries with the appropriate responses.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# The Partnership of Patriarchy and Capitalism in Cho Nam-joo's *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*

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## ABSTRACT

Socialist feminism, which emerged in the 1970s, aims to solve female oppression and make a comprehensive and innovative understanding of gender, class, capitalism, and male domination. As the mainstay of the socialist feminist school, the ideas of Hartmann and Young make significant contributions to the development of the theory. Hartmann first proposed dual systems theory, and Young published her single system response shortly after. To a certain extent, Young's new thinking and questioning of dual systems theory also supplement and go into some of the arguments by Hartmann that are not clear enough. *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* is an English-translated novel written by contemporary South Korean writer and screenwriter Cho Nam-joo. The novel was translated into English by award-winning translator Jamie Chang in 2020. The plight of women highlighted in this novel caused widespread controversy in the international community, especially in East Asian countries. This article examines the oppression of women in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982,* by the long-term interaction between patriarchy and capitalism. This study adopts a research method combining theoretical interpretation and close reading of the text. It addresses the research gap by focusing on a new perspective on the causes of Cho's female characters' oppression through the dual systems theory by Hartmann.

*Keywords:* Capitalism, Cho Nam-joo, dual systems theory, Hartmann, *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, patriarchy, socialist feminism, South Korean literature

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## INTRODUCTION

*Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* (82년생 김지영) is a feminist novel written in Korean by Cho Nam-joo in 2016. It was translated into English by Jamie Chang and published in 2020. Cho graduated from the Department of Sociology at Ewha Womans University, and *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982,* is her third novel. The novel narrates the life process of the protagonist Jiyoung from birth to motherhood. Cho captures Jiyoung's life in a few sentences on the back cover of the book,

> Kim Jiyoung is a girl born to a mother whose in-laws wanted a boy. Kim Jiyoung is a sister made to share a room while her brother gets one of his own. Kim Jiyoung is a daughter whose father blames her when she is harassed late at night. Kim Jiyoung is a model employee who gets overlooked for promotion. Kim Jiyoung is a wife who gives up her career and independence for a life of domesticity (2020, p. 164).

Different social identities confer different responsibilities on Jiyoung. However, the same dilemmas for her remain constant in various aspects, such as working situations, household chores, close relationships, inter-generational communication, and friendship maintenance.

When the narrative of a certain stage of Jiyoung's experience is completed, the story begins with phrases like "t[T]his was a time when…" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 18) at the next stage. Cho tries to express not just a fictional story but an authentic experience in a broader context. Data from the magazines, Korean statistics, news, reports, internet media, and other aspects are inserted to support the social and historical context closely related to Jiyoung's growing experience. Although the narrative subject of the novel is Jiyoung, it tells the situation of three generations of women, including Jiyoung's mother Oh Misook, and her grandmother Koh Boonsoon. These expanded materials provide a new generation of South Korean youth and foreign readers with the necessary background knowledge for reading and give this novel a unique characteristic of non-fiction.

*Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* has received mixed reviews from the public since it was first published in South Korea in 2016. On the one hand, it has tremendous positive social influence. Cho won the 41st Today's Writer Award in South Korea for this novel. People from all walks of life in South Korea, especially President Moon Jae-in and the supreme leader of the Justice Party Roh Hoe-chan, have made recommendations for the book and called on society to do more to support women. On the other hand, most South Korean men had extremely negative reviews of the book, according to Cariappa's (2020) research. They denounced the content of the novel for making groundless accusations against men. Even after a female idol singer publicly recommended the book, male netizens committed a series of online violence, such as verbal abuse and boycotts of her performances against her (Cariappa, 2020, p. 14). The fundamental reason for the polarization of reviews is that the content of this work reflects the difficult situation of women in South Korean society, which poses an unprecedented query for South

Korea's deep-rooted patriarchy. Both the author and translator of *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* are women. Therefore, the novel's narration introduces female voices and perspectives on a large scale to restore women's experiences. Its publication refocused attention on women's issues in South Korea and created a huge ripple effect.

Reviews of previous studies on this novel reveal that most researchers focused on reader discourse analysis and translation studies. The research focused on women's issues for this book is as follows. Rahmah et al. (2020) mentioned the oppression of South Korean women in a patriarchal society. Their article uses feminist literary criticism study as a research method to explore the gender oppression issue through text and data analysis. From the aspects of Jiyoung's family, school, workplace, public places, and her in-law's family, this research conducts a comprehensive analysis of the oppressed status of Cho's female characters. In addition, Ahmed Lahsen et al. (2020) published an article in the same year. With the selected novel, Ahmed Lahsen et al.'s article applies the data provided by the labor market in South Korea, discusses male and female employees' income and life satisfaction. It concludes that overeducation is widespread in South Korean society, especially for female employees. By starting from different points of concern, these two studies clearly explained the status quo of the South Korean female group represented by Jiyoung and the continuing harm of these circumstances. However, for the time being, no research focused on the causes and solutions of this situation. From the perspective of socialist feminism, which is committed to solving the issues of female oppression, this study combines Hartmann's (1976, 1979) dual systems theory to examine the injustice suffered by Cho's female characters.

## METHODS

This study adopts a research method combining theoretical interpretation and close reading of the text. First, the research places the interpretation of the theory in the context of modernization, industrialization, and globalization and pays attention to the real problems presented in the selected novel. This approach helps to understand better the complexity and diversity of today's women's issues and its new characteristics and rules. Next, in discussing the selected novels, this study combines the trajectory of the roles' lives with the historical reality in which the novels are written. Thus, to some extent, the experiences of Cho's female characters reconstruct the living conditions and environment of South Korean women in that era.

By analyzing patriarchy and capitalism in Hartmann's dual systems theory, this study examines the root causes of the predicament encountered by female characters in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982,* and the way out to break their plight. Hartmann proposed and developed her dual systems theory in her works in 1976 and 1979. According to Hartmann, the subordinate status of women is maintained under the long-term mutual influence of patriarchy and capitalism. Patriarchy predates capitalism, controlling women within the family and manipulating women's labor rights within all social structures that exclude the family. Capitalism's leading role in oppressing women is to restrict women's access to the labor market. In the process, the patriarchal system also supported the growth of capitalism. This study first explores the negative impact of the patriarchal system on women by combining the constraints and imprisonment of patriarchy experienced by Cho's female characters within the family and other social structures. Secondly, through the interpretation of the image of professional women that appeared in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, this study investigates how capitalism controls and oppresses women by restricting women's entry into the labor market. The contribution of this study lies in the systematic and innovative understanding of the unfair treatment suffered by the female characters in the selected novel from the perspective of socialist feminism, which provides a presupposition for the practice of Hartmann's dual systems theory.

## Theoretical Framework

From the 1970s to the late 1980s, the theory of socialist feminism absorbed the ideas related to Marxism and feminism and criticized patriarchy and the power system derived from it. Ehrenreich attempted to popularize the term "socialist feminism" to the public in her 1976 essay. She combined the traditional Marxist thought with the existing feminist ideas at that time to create a worldview–socialist feminism–to solve the oppression and exploitation of women. The pure Marxist theory lacks the interpretation of sexual oppression, while the single feminist thought does not pay attention to the problems of capitalism. Therefore, the emergence of socialist feminism has made an outstanding contribution to solving women's issues; it offers new systematic thinking on gender, class, capitalism, and male domination.

Theories of socialist feminism in this period advocated that capitalism and patriarchy jointly produced the oppression of women. However, there are two viewpoints and analysis methods in western academic circles on how the two operate. One is the dual systems theory, which considers that women are oppressed and enslaved by the capitalist and patriarchal systems. The other is the single system theory, which holds that the capitalist system itself is patriarchy. The representatives of the dual systems approach mainly include Juliet Mitchell and Heidi Hartmann. Mitchell (1984) published her ideas of the dual systems approach in her 1984 paper *Women, the Longest Revolution*. The spokespeople of single system theory mainly include Iris Young and Alison Jaggar. Young elaborated on her single system response from the perspective of gender division of labor. On the premise of insisting on the standpoint of the single system, Jaggar (1983) made a comprehensive critique of the phenomenon of alienation of women. Her representative work is *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983). All these theories focus on one problem: the criticism of the realistic elements of capitalist society that restrict the development of women. They all point to a goal, that is, women's self-liberation and development.

Different understandings of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy also lead to differences in cognition within dual systems theory, represented by Mitchell and Hartmann. Mitchell lays more emphasis on understanding patriarchy as an ideology and psychological structure. She believes that patriarchy acts on capitalist society through ideological reinforcement, which worsens the situation of women. Another group represented by Hartmann maintains that society is composed of a patriarchal system and a capitalist system, which are separated from each other but closely linked. Among them, each system has its material basis and development power.

Hartmann analyzed the dominance of men over women/the relationship between men and women based on the material base. Meanwhile, she also explored the social situation of women's oppression by the combination and cooperation of patriarchy and capitalism. Hartmann's paper "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union" was published in 1979. In this paper, Hartmann analyzed the limitations and advantages of traditional Marxism and radical feminism. She advocated combining the outstanding theories of the two schools to explore the development of capitalism and women's issues. Her claim arouses the so-called dual systems theory about the relationship between feminism and Marxist theory. She believes that traditional Marxist feminism is the marriage between Marxism and feminism. Many Marxists believe that women's issues are not as important as class conflicts, or at most are part of class issues and could be incorporated into class issues. Such marriages are destined to be unequal. In the face of such a situation, feminists must establish a more progressive union of Marxism and feminism. Only in this way can most women's interests be satisfied, and women can be truly liberated. Hartmann emphasized that both capitalism and patriarchy must be challenged to realize a society under the ideal of socialist feminism. In addition, Hartmann first proposed in her article "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex" (1976) that patriarchy and capitalism as two independent systems are interwoven inseparably for a long time, exerting a decisive influence on the oppression of women. Hartmann also pointed out the harm of the division of labor by sex. She advocated eliminating its impact at all levels of society and maintaining job segregation by sex to liberate women. Hartmann's dual systems theory assumptions will be interpreted and discussed in more detail along with Cho's novel in the next section.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Partnership of Patriarchy and Capitalism

Hartmann believed that the composition of patriarchy is determined by the socio-economic structure of specific production relations at the time, so she summarized patriarchy as "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (1979, p. 11). In Hartmann's view, patriarchy is the main reason for androcentrism and female subordination. Men unite to maintain their dominance over women to sustain this benefit. Weedon mentioned that "b[B]iological differences between the sexes are a major material ideological support and guarantee of patriarchal social structures, from the sexual division of labor and the structure of contemporary forms of femininity, to women's position in society at large" (1995, p. 126). The biological characteristics of the sexes cause men and women to undertake different social and domestic work. The critical feature of the patriarchal system is that it exaggerates the physical differences between men and women. It believes that the gender role of men determines that they are always in the active dominant position, always associated with the qualities of courage and justice. Correspondingly, women are asked to be submissive and kind-hearted, and they are always in a dependent and disadvantaged position in society. Under the influence of this social concept, the standard that men identify with is the social consensus. Then with this logic of thinking dominated by men, the notion that men are superior to women arises.

The three families related to Jiyoung in the novel all reflect the negative influence of patriarchy. The first is Jiyoung's new family with her husband and child. Although Jiyoung's husband Daehyun showed support for his wife with an open mind, he still retains the ideology of a patriarchal society in essence. Jiyoung is still enjoying the happy time of the couple after marriage; however, she has realized the predicament that she will face in the future from previous experiences of former generations. She was urged to marry when she fell in love, have children after marriage, and have a son after she had a daughter. It seems that endless requests deprive women of their freedom. They are imprisoned in the family and do not have enough liberty to pursue their dreams and realize their values. Before giving birth, Jiyoung discussed with Daehyun about raising the child and proposed that she continue working. However, she finally reluctantly quit her job and became a housewife. Jiyoung offers to take a part-time job while her daughter is in school, but Daehyun also vetoes that. Day after day of housewife life made Jiyoung feel disconnected from society, and this increasing pressure eventually led to her mental problems.

The second type of family is Jiyoung's nuclear family, made up of her parents and siblings. Two of Jiyoung's siblings and herself live with their parents and grandmother, Koh Boonsoon. For the so-called giving birth to boys to pass on the family line, Jiyoung's parents believe that giving birth to a daughter is "the devil idea[s]" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 18), and only sons are the hope of the family. Koh Boonsoon has a fondness for her grandson since the three siblings were children and even "smack Jiyoung[her] on the back, so hard powder exploded from Jiyoung's[her] mouth and nose" (p. 14) just because Jiyoung ate the little brother's formula. Although among the four sons of Koh Boonsoon, only Jiyoung's father fulfills the obligation of supporting the elderly, Koh Boonsoon still demands Jiyoung's mother Oh Misook, "y[Y]ou should have a son. You must have a son. You must have at least two sons" (p. 17). Jiyoung, who grew up in such a family immersed in patriarchal thoughts, has always resisted the additional demands society imposes on women. However, her childhood education has imprinted itself in the depth of her mind, hindering her pursuit of personal ideals.

The third type of family is Jiyoung's in-laws' family. The pressure brought by Jiyoung's mother-in-law is the source of the oppression Jiyoung feels in this family. After Jiyoung's daughter Jiwon was born, her mother-in-law thoughtfully comforted her, "I don't mind" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 129). It seems to imply that Jiyoung, who gave birth to a daughter instead of a son, should have been guilty. When Jiyoung's family of three returned to her in-laws' home for the *Chuseok* harvest holidays. Jiyoung spent all day preparing *Chuseok* food for the whole family while worrying whether her mother-in-law would be dissatisfied. Daehyun's sister Suhyun takes on heavier housework at her in-laws' family than Jiyoung. However, she does not show any consideration to Jiyoung, who is in a similar situation with her. Instead, Suhyun enjoys special treatment in her parents' house and pushes all the chores to Jiyoung. As an outsider from her in-laws' family, Jiyoung's accumulated pressure broke out, and for the first time, she showed her demon-possessed symptoms in public. Jiyoung seemed to have become another person. She talked to everyone in her mother's tone, told about Jiyoung's difficulties, and asked everyone to treat her poor daughter Jiyoung well. These three families seem to be a firm net, imprisons Jiyoung in the shackles of patriarchy.

Hartmann believed that patriarchy exists in the material base, which is reflected in "men's control over women's labor power" (1979, p. 11). This control takes place in two areas: production resources and sexuality. Hartmann believes that the domination of men over women in these two fields is realized in the following two forms.

The first is monogamous heterosexual marriage (Hartmann, 1979). This kind of marriage structure controls and exploits women with the family as a unit. Women are required to serve men in personal and sexual ways and are forced to take on the critical task of raising children. Jiyoung's grandmother Koh Boonsoon raises her four sons alone while her husband "never worked a day in his life" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 16). She "worked someone else's field, peddled someone else's wares, took care of domestic labor at someone else's home" (p. 16) to run her own homes. Koh Boonsoon, meanwhile, genuinely believes she married a good husband simply because he is “not sleeping around and not hitting her” (p. 16). In the generation of Jiyoung’s mother, Oh Misook, women are often deprived of the right to education for the sake of their brothers’ future. Oh Misook begins to help the family farming after she finished elementary school. At the age of 15, she gives up her dream of being a teacher and becoming an ordinary textile worker. She must help her brothers pay for school. By the generation of Jiyoung, the negative influence of patriarchy on women has not improved. Jiyoung faces an unprecedented blow during college graduation and job hunting when women are discriminated against in the job market. During this time, Jiyoung’s father admonishes her, “just stay out of trouble and get married” (p. 93). In her father’s view, the workplace does not belong to women. Getting married and having children is the best way out for women. Not only the conservative father, but Daehyun, the seemingly supportive husband of Jiyoung, also hands over the child-rearing task to his wife imperceptibly. He said to Jiyoung, “I’ll help you out” (p. 131); when they are faced with parenting responsibilities, such as childcare and education, both husband and wife should share that. This patriarchal ideology does not change with the change of time but is maintained and strengthened through generations as a family unit.

The second form is to take over “all the social structures that enable men to control women’s labor” (Hartmann, 1979, p. 12). Women serve men in the home, but they also experience the shackles of patriarchy in all social structures outside the family. Since elementary school, the position of the monitor in Jiyoung’s class has always belonged to men. Although there are many intelligent and capable female students, they can only be appointed by teachers “to run errands for them, grade quizzes, and check homework” (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 37). This situation persists after Jiyoung comes to college. Most members of the hiking club are men, and there never appears a female president. In the eyes of the male members, the female members are just decorations to “brighten up the club with their[your] mere presence” (p. 78). Not only do women not have a voice in these social structures, but they also face the potential risk of being harassed, just like Jiyoung’s female classmates are harassed by male employers and male customers while doing part-time jobs. “Employers harassed them for ‘being inappropriately dressed’ or ‘not having the right attitude,’ and held their wages ransom. Customers thought the right to harass young women came with their purchase” (p. 52). This case is also reflected in school, where some male teachers take advantage of their age and status to harass female students sexually. In the novel, some male teachers “reached up and pinched the soft flesh of the underarm, patted students on the bottom, or ran their hands down the spine over the bra strap” (p. 52). The family is the primary place but not the “exclusive locus” (Hartmann & Markusen, 1980, p. 89) for women to experience patriarchal social relations. To synthesize these two forms, the principal basis of patriarchy lies in controlling women's labor force by property-owning men using the state and a set of hierarchical social relations among men. They prevent women from accessing any economic resources and deny women control over their sexuality, even fertility.

When analyzing the partnership of patriarchy and capitalism, Hartmann specifically identified the disadvantages of a sexual division of labor. She also pointed out that "[T]the creation of a wage-labor force and the increase in the scale of production that occurred with the emergence of capitalism had in some ways a more severe impact on women than on men" (1976, p. 147). The development of capitalism relies on the patriarchal power structure, which keeps women out of the labor market. In other words, the role of male employees and capitalists in limiting women's entry into the labor market cannot be ignored. Although male employees consciously maintain the sexual division of labor, many of them are deliberately guided by capitalists. Hartmann pointed out that capitalism utilizes patriarchy to intentionally exacerbate gender differences to "serves to obfuscate the basic two-class nature of capitalist society" (1976, p. 166). At the same time, capitalists take advantage of the lack of skills and low salary of female labor to reduce the salary of male employees to achieve the exploitation of male labor.

There is no doubt that the role of capitalists in limiting the position of women in the labor market cannot be underestimated. South Korea's economic system belongs to the peculiar *chaebol* capitalism–the norm at most *chaebols* in South Korea is the "family control" (Witt, 2014, p. 6) giant group. The management model of this type of enterprise is considered to be "authoritarian and top-down in nature, personalistic and paternalistic" (p. 7). In the *chaebol* entrepreneurs, the "'owner' interests supersede those of employees" (p. 14). As a result, society lacks innovation vitality, job competition is fierce, and unemployment is high. *Chaebols* crush small businesses, and small enterprises squeeze their employees. It exacerbates the disadvantages of women in the job market, causing women to voluntarily or be forced to give up their jobs and concentrate on taking care of their families. Jiyoung wanted to continue to work after her daughter was born, but she could not find a nanny to take care of her child, and "even if they[we] found someone suitable, the cost would be considerable" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 72). She may not afford a full-time nanny on her salary, so eventually, she must give up the job. Kang Hyesu, a former colleague of Jiyoung, takes an entirely different path from Jiyoung. She temporarily gives up her personal life and childbirth plans and focuses on working hard for her career. However, her promotion journey is bumpy–her male colleagues who entered the company simultaneously have achieved higher positions than her. Since capitalists "did not think of female employees as prospective long-term colleagues" (p. 111), female employees often need to make more tremendous efforts to gain the same recognition as men.

In addition, male employees also made a significant contribution to restricting women's entry into the labor market. In Jiyoung's era and after, a growing number of South Korean women choose "delayed marriage and childbearing," (Yoo & Sobotka, 2018, pp. 552, 566) even live a single life without marriage or children to remain competitive in the job market. Many talented women are more popular with employers than men. In the context of economic downturn and limited employment opportunities, the contradiction between capitalists and job seekers has been transformed into the dichotomy between male and female job seekers, as well as between men and women.

Men and women are in a tense and contradictory relationship. Many South Korean men worry about women taking their jobs, but they also despise full-time mothers with no salary. Jiyoung's team leader, Kim Eunsil, delegates parenting and housework to her mother. She is only responsible for working and making money. Although she is serious and responsible at work and has outstanding ability, she still cannot avoid the sarcasm and accusation of male staff and is considered that she "had a heart of stone" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 98). Instead, her husband is recognized as "an obliging person" (p. 98) simply because he is willing to live with his mother-in-law, even though he never shows up in the company. Jiyoung is taunted by several male passers-by as "mom-roaches" while drinking coffee in a park with her daughter (p. 153). Several young male office workers whispered, "I wish I could live off my husband's paycheck ... bum around and get coffee ... mom-roaches got it real cushy ... no way I'm marrying a Korean woman …" (p. 153). It is an insulting term to describe a young mother who leaves her children undisciplined in public and lets them make noises that disturb others. These male passers-by belong to the middle and upper-income groups with higher education. Their abuse of this term reflects the harshness of society towards women.

Men's contempt and disrespect for women even develops to the point that when they saw the secretly filmed videos of their female colleagues on pornographic websites, they did not come forward to stop or inform the women but chose to circulate the videos privately. Hidden cameras were found in the women's restroom of Jiyoung's former company. The male colleagues circulated these candid videos and pictures privately, and "[N]no one yet fully knows how many men passed the pictures around, what kind of conversations they had about them, how many photos, or for how long" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 142). The exclusion of women by male employees in the workplace is not only their conscious action but also, to a certain extent, by the guidance and indulgence of capitalists. The male director did not take any countermeasures after the privacy of female employees was exposed but waited for the matter to be forgotten by the public. The male staff did not receive any punishment, and the female staff did not even receive an apology. The male director's handling of this affair exacerbates the disadvantaged position of women in the workplace, and their fundamental rights and interests are not even guaranteed.

## "Way Out" for Cho's Female Characters

Jiyoung performed well and received unanimous praise from the leaders and colleagues after joining the company. However, when the opportunity came up for a promotion, Jiyoung lost out to two less-competent male employees. Jiyoung found out later,

> the men were picked because the planning team was a long-term project. The head of the company knew that the nature and intensity of the marketing agency job made it difficult to maintain a decent work-life balance, especially if childcare came into play, and therefore he did not think of female employees as prospective long-term colleagues. He had no intention of giving employees better hours and benefits, either. He found it more cost-efficient to invest in employees who would last in this work environment than to make the environment more accommodating. That was the reasoning behind giving the more high-maintenance clients to Jiyoung and Kang Hyesu. It wasn't their competence; management didn't want to tire out the prospective long-term male colleagues from the start. (Cho, 2016/2020, pp. 111-112)

After hearing the inside story of unequal hiring in the company, Jiyoung "was standing in the middle of a labyrinth. Conscientiously and calmly, she was searching for a way out that didn't exist to begin with" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 112). The so-called "way out" is actually a possibility to break through the dilemma of the female group represented by Jiyoung. Jiyoung's demon-possessed symptoms can be treated as a "way out," allowing her to express her pain and needs in the mouth of others instead of saying what others want to hear. Cho set up a group of caring family and friends around Jiyoung and a group of women who bravely speak for themselves in a patriarchal society. Oh Misook actively participates in family decision-making and does not blindly follow her husband's views; Kim Eunsil and Kang Hyesu, who struggles for their career; the professional woman who chased down the bus to protect Jiyoung from harassment and bullying. Cho tries to bring comfort and hope to millions of women who are in the same predicament as Jiyoung in this way, and it is perhaps another meaningful "way out."

Ironically, the novel ends unexpectedly. After the male psychologist in charge of treating Jiyoung learned about her situation, he realized "what it means to live as a woman, especially as a mother, in Korea" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 86). He recalled his wife, a former "professor of ophthalmology" (p. 157) and "math prodigy" (p. 160), who now become a "stay-at-home mummy" (p. 159). While tutoring her son, she took an interest in elementary school math problems and thought it was challenging and fun, initially puzzled the male psychologist. After treating Jiyoung, he decided to care more about his wife in the future. The novel would be a healing and heartwarming story if it ends here, but the plot development is more realistic than idealistic. Lee Suyeon, one of the counselors at the same clinic, came to declare her resignation due to pregnancy. The male psychologist believes that Lee Suyeon is "undoubtedly [been] a great employee," but he still cares most about the loss that her resignation may bring to the clinic and make a decision in his mind to "make sure her replacement is unmarried" (Cho, 2016/2020, p. 163). Because of the determination of this male counselor who claims to understand the struggles of female groups in the same situation as Jiyoung, many women who have or will become mothers lose their job opportunities and the possibility of integrating into new social groups. This kind of ending does not provide a "way out." Instead, the emphasis on "way out that didn't exist to begin with" (p. 112) highlights the difficulties that cannot be solved by individual efforts or temporary pity. As Jiyoung despairingly discovered, "the world had changed a great deal, but the little rules, contracts, and customs had not, which meant the world hadn't actually changed at all" (p. 119).

Hartmann argued that from the perspective of socialist feminists, women should not believe in men's promise to liberate them after the bourgeois revolution but should "organize a practice which addresses both the struggle against capitalism" (1979, p. 24). For women to obtain their ultimate liberation, to achieve the full development of their potential, to end male dominance, "it is necessary to eradicate the sexual division of labor itself" (p. 168). To eradicate sexual division of labor, "they must fight against both patriarchal power and capitalist organization of society" (p. 168), with the prerequisite that eliminates gender differences imposed by society. Among Cho's female characters imprisoned by patriarchy and capitalism, Kim Eunsil and Oh Misook's performance aligns with Hartmann's proposal. Kim Eunsil, Jiyoung's team leader, supported other victims to maintain legal rights for the candid camera incident in the ladies' toilet. After knowing the handling of the male director, she plans to start her own company and take all the female employees with her. Jiyoung's mother, Oh Misook, is not a woman of the old times who sticks to traditional ideas. Although she must be constrained by the existing gender order, she tries to exert her initiative in the limited family space. She actively participates in critical decision-making in the family, and it is with her intervention, her family does not fall into the crisis of economic downturn.

## CONCLUSION

Hartmann's dual systems theory holds that the oppression of women stems from the effects of capitalism and patriarchy. She regards patriarchy and capitalism as systems that are both different and mutually conditional. There is neither pure capitalism nor pure patriarchy. Capitalism acts in the field of production, while patriarchy acts in the area of family, which together constitute the institutional root of women's oppression. Patriarchy is a system of social relations in which men have authority over women. Capitalism promotes the control of production for capitalists to workers. In capitalist societies, there is a strong and positively related partnership between patriarchy and capitalism. These two different systems constitute the current social, political, and economic system. In *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, the oppression suffered by Cho's female characters comes from the dual influence of patriarchy and capitalism. These dual systems give men the power to control and exploit women in the field of production and the family. The union between men promotes the maintenance of this system, which is a vicious circle of oppression for women. Capitalists take advantage of the sexual division of labor to exacerbate gender differences intentionally. They guide male employees to marginalize women in the workplace and benefit from this way. To break this status quo and gain freedom, women must unite to eliminate the sexual division of labor and bravely challenge patriarchy and capitalism.

Although Jiyoung does not find her "way out" at the end of the novel as readers expected, we can see the hope of women breaking the shackles of capitalism and patriarchy in several other female characters. According to Hartmann, the blind confrontation and tearing between the sexes cannot solve the current problems, let alone make women out of the dilemma of being disciplined. Hopefully, women in the same situation as Cho's female characters will learn from this book to speak up for themselves and no longer need to make difficult family, career, and marriage choices.

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# University Students' Perceptions of Motivation, Attitude, and Self-Efficacy in Online English Language Learning

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## ABSTRACT

The study examines university students' perceptions of their motivation, attitude, and self-efficacy in online English proficiency classes. Existing research indicate that these individual differences directly affect learning especially during the period of online instructions; as students may suffer from the feeling of isolation and loneliness, being far away from an immediate learning community. A set of questionnaire score was created from the adaptation of five existing surveys to measure the individual differences. It was distributed to 270 participants via convenient sampling at a university in Malaysia. The results of this study demonstrate the students' perception of a strong self-efficacy of their digital and technical ability in managing, completing, and submitting English language tasks via online medium. Relatedly, students perceive a high positive attitude and decent motivation for online English learning. Furthermore, the students demonstrate a preference for a synchronous session, which is linked to forming a community of learners as an academic support system. The findings are discussed in relation to human factors and pedagogy. It considers students' needs for engaging sessions, and teachers' limitations in creating content while emphasising creative and fun language activities.

*Keywords:* Attitude, motivation, online learning, self-efficacy, university students

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## INTRODUCTION

Students' motivation, attitudes and self-efficacy as individual differences have been researched and debated in English language education. Furthermore, these aspects are of the utmost importance in any learning environment and catalysed students' good performance across English courses (Alberth, 2019). In Malaysia, a good mastery of the English language, besides Bahasa Malaysia, is fundamental in securing good employment. However, Selvaratnam (2019) found that 50% of Malaysian graduates performed below par in their English language competency, communication and writing skills, and work attitudes. Studies indicated that students' poor competency and achievement was often related to low motivation due to insufficient English language practice opportunities and non-conducive environment (Jalleh et al., 2021). In Malaysian education system, English language is a compulsory subject for all students from primary schools to tertiary institutions; and, at university, students are required to pass specific units of English courses to qualify for graduation. As Malaysian students have been introduced to English language as early as 6 years old, their inability to keep pace with the current demands for English-relevant job markets must be addressed. Of late, the incorporation of technological and digital tools into the English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, i.e., blended learning and flipped learning, have proven effective in boosting students' interest to master the language and assisted learning process (Radia, 2019).

While educators accept the idea of a blended and flipped environment, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world has instantly transformed tertiary education into fully online instruction. As a result, students do not get to physically meet their lecturers and peers during teaching and learning sessions; and, they rely heavily on synchronous and asynchronous digital tools to emulate this. Synchronous learning is conducted in real-time, i.e., live sessions, where students can directly interact with their lecturers, while asynchronous learning is conducted in non-real-time, and students can complete the task or activities in their own time (Lee, 2021). Both synchronous and asynchronous learning are seen to have specific advantages of fostering a stronger sense of community via interaction and discussions, allowing students to attend to lessons at own pace, and stimulating active lecturers-students-peers communication (Lin & Gao, 2020). In learning a new language, social interaction, feedback, and co-creation of new knowledge within a community of learners are essential (Stern & Willits, 2011); and these processes may be facilitated and enhanced via synchronous and asynchronous modes.

In Malaysia, the COVID-19 cases have reached their highest cases, and in mid-August 2021, the cases rose to more than 20,000 (Reuters, 2021). Therefore, many academic institutions are expected to remain close for physical activities for an indefinite period. Online learning seems to be the way forward under the circumstances, but there are issues. Students from the lower socioeconomic background, rural areas and developing countries often encounter difficulty securing digital gadgets and maintaining a good internet connection at all times (Alatas & Redzuan, 2020; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020). Nevertheless, students reported readiness and satisfaction in online learning instructions (Chung et al., 2020; Mohd Yasin et al., 2020; Selvanathan et al., 2020). Despite the students' positive and negative responses, their motivation and attitudes in online language classes are still undetermined. This study investigates university students' individual differences that are motivation, attitudes, and self-efficacy in online English courses, as literature have reaffirmed intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy as the two most critical variables in foreign language learning (Alberth, 2019). Mohd Yasin et al. (2020) found that students' attitude indeed mediated technology access, technical usage self-efficacy, online communication self-efficacy and online media that led to an increase in blended learning readiness; thus, this study would like to extend these factors to a fully online environment. The findings would provide educators information of students' interest and enthusiasm and possible methods of teaching and learning that may further elevate learning experience, despite being miles away from their lecturers and peers. While an extensive number of studies have looked at students' experience in online learning in general, there is limited research on English language learning per se.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the aspects of motivation, attitudes and self-efficacy in English language learning and online instructions. Past studies have reaffirmed individual differences such as personality traits, learning styles, learners' beliefs, strategies, aptitude, age, and motivation as predicting success in language learning (Raoofi et al., 2012).

### Motivation in ESL/EFL Instructions

Motivation is the key factor in explaining the success or failure of any learning undertakings (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). Motivation refers to the combination of attempts and desire to obtain the objective and desirable attitudes towards learning the language. In language instructions, motivation refers to the extent to which the individual works or tries to learn the language out of desire and contentment (Alizadeh, 2016). Gardner (1985) posited motivation as the most critical internal factor in determining the effectiveness of language learning and divided motivation into three components—the effort to achieve a goal, the desire to learn a language, and satisfaction with the task of learning that same language (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013).

The two basic types of motivation are integrative and instrumental (Gardner, 1985). Integrative motivation refers to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment, i.e. learning a language to enter into the target language society successfully; while instrumental motivation arises from the need to learn the language for functional or external reasons and involves aims like passing the exams or getting rewarded financially (Alizadeh, 2016). Integrative and instrumental motivation often exist concurrently instead of exclusive of each other; hence, it is impossible to attribute language learning success to certain integrative or instrumental causes (Alizadeh, 2016). These two types of motivation can further be divided into four more specific ones—intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative. Intrinsic motivation is internally initiated and often deemed as the most powerful form of desire, as students themselves decide to initiate or act on something. It is signified by the feeling of enjoyment when performing a task (Alberth, 2019). Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation refers to the influence of external factors that lead students to do something (e.g., teacher's instructions, family encouragement or peer support). Dörnyei (2001) further divided motivation into a model of three stages, namely, choice motivation, executive motivation, and motivation retrospective. Choice motivation takes place at the beginning of the learning process, which involves getting started and setting goals where one usually set wishes, hopes, desires and opportunities; to determine the practicality and workability based on an individual's degree of competence (Reeve, 2009). Reeve (2009) proposed that the set-out goals are challenging and specific to improving performance by producing motivational effects. In the second stage, executive motivation relates to maintaining motivation while correctly doing a specific task. Students in this phase often need strategies and resources to sustain motivation while completing an activity (Dörnyei, 2001). At the third stage, the motivation retrospective acts as a reflective phase, whereby performance is evaluated and reviewed after a task is completed and the goal achieved (Dörnyei, 2001). The primary objective of this stage is to assess the achieved action-outcome and consider potential inferences for future actions. By having all the stages of motivation, students will benefit from the learning process, improve motivation, and enable internal support.

## Attitude in ESL/EFL Instructions

Motivation and attitudes go hand-in-hand in language learning. Gardner (1985) posited that L2 learners with positive attitudes towards the learning of the target language could learn the language more effectively than those who do not; and that learners' attitudes in language learning are highly influenced by the learners' feelings and emotions (Choy & Troudi, 2006). For example, students have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they want to learn or the people who speak it (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). Citing various scholars, Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013) divided attitude into three components—cognitive (related to the beliefs, ideas, or opinions about the object of the attitude); affective (the feeling and emotions that one has towards an object like or dislikes, with or against); and behavioural (made up of one's actions or behavioural intentions towards the object). Therefore, it places attitude as a changeable, non-fixed trait that can be developed within complex elements; and is defined as a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing, such as an idea, object, person, or situation (Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). It may, hence, change in the rapid progression of the online learning environment.

### Self-Efficacy in ESL/EFL Instructions

Self-efficacy is related to motivation to learn; whereby, learners with a high self-efficacy are more motivated to participate in learning activities and vice versa (Wong, 2005). Self-efficacy is the judgment about one's own ability to plan, manage, and conduct activities to succeed in a certain performance (Alberth, 2019; Altunkaya & Topuzkanamış, 2018). It plays a vital role in predicting learners' performance in educational context and can predict performance better than actual abilities (Raoofi et al., 2012). An individual's perceived self-efficacy is believed to influence the choice of tasks, the level of task performance, the amount of effort put into performing chosen tasks, and perseverance while conducting the tasks (Bandura, 1997). The effect of self-efficacy on students' success has been well established across several behavioural domains (Arkes et al., 1989), including academic achievement by college students. According to Bong and Clark (1999), the nature of self-efficacy is one-dimensional in that it is predominantly cognitive. Bandura (1977) accounted for the claim that students contemplate numerous aspects when assessing their level of competency, which will then shape their self-efficacy beliefs. Bandura (1977) justified those variations in self-efficacy are owing to effort and ability, and for self-efficacy to improve, success should come from skills instead of luck. Otherwise, students would not place as much value on success. Scholars, therefore, saw self-efficacy as critically important in the studies of academic achievement, motivation, and learning (Pajares & Schunk, 2005).

### Issues Related to Language Learning in Online Environment

Online learning is no longer a foreign concept to educators and students. It is now bigger than ever and provides numerous advantages to the overall teaching and learning process, especially in the context of universities. Prior to exclusively online instructions, e-learning was also known for its adjunct (assistant) and blended (a combination of online and face-to-face instructions) orientations. With the recent changes in instructions, Malaysian students reported readiness for online learning (Chung et al., 2020), satisfaction with instructors, course management, and teaching dimension; and were generally coping with the situation, despite some dissatisfactions (Selvanathan et al., 2020), especially on technical issues (Wai Yee & Cheng Ean, 2020). However, students did not perceive technological increase as improving their learning attitude directly but enhancing readiness to experience a blended environment (Mohd Yasin et al., 2020). Likewise, the Saudi undergraduates echoed the positive aspects of online instructions, such as cost-effectiveness, safety, convenience, and improved participation (Hussein et al., 2020). Given a choice, however, many students wished to resume face-to-face instructions (Chung et al., 2020).

Present-day online platforms cater to mainly synchronous channels, such as WebEx, Zoom, Microsoft Team and Google Classrooms, while supported by many asynchronous media, such as institution-linked e-learning platforms. In this sense, social media seem to offer another solution for teachers as platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube support both synchronous and asynchronous interactions (Sobaih et al., 2020). Synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction have their pros and cons. The pros allow learners to learn at their own pace and be flexible with their time, and essentially promote active engagement with teachers and classmates. Accordingly, Malaysian students reported a preference for online learning via pre-recorded lectures uploaded to Google Classroom and YouTube (Chung et al., 2020). On the other hand, the cons were the feeling of loneliness due to distance, distractions during learning sessions, low connectivity, technical difficulty, family members, and so forth (Lin & Gao, 2020). Students with lower socioeconomic ability were also at a disadvantage in digital skills ability (Welser et al., 2019). Wu and Nian (2021), therefore, substantiated the criticality of students' existence and validation into a network or community of learners in online environment as it gives them a sense of belonging and support within a group of people who are working together to achieve a common goal. In support of this, Lasekan (2019) justified the need for learners to be immersed in a supportive network due to a finding that reported early immersion ESL learners' low motivational intensity.

Social media and other online platforms are often cited as offering solutions when students face the number one issue in language classrooms—insufficient authentic opportunities to practise their target language skills (Jalleh et al., 2021). Students generally demonstrated positive attitudes towards social media and felt more confident, less anxious, more competent, and more willing to communicate in English on the platforms (Sharma, 2019). However, an exclusively online learning environment may also pose a lot of problems to students and educators who suffer from communication anxiety and apprehension (Martin & Alvarez Valdivia, 2017), which may lead to a lack of focus and non-attendance to the online session.

In addition, unsatisfactory platform or medium of learning, unstable internet connectivity, heavy workload, insufficient support from educators and peers, and inadequate materials and resources also affected their learning progress (Hussein et al., 2020; Jalleh et al., 2021). Nonetheless, some media can be utilised to address learners' concerns, such as demonstrated by Ali and Bin-Hady (2019), who used WhatsApp in an EFL class to enhance the impact of the language, motivate EFL students and reduce anxiety; and

Kruk (2019) who introduced Second Life virtual platform to address willingness to communicate, motivation, boredom, and anxiety issues in an English course. In addition, students who were satisfied with the implementation of online learning felt an elevated sense of motivation to pursue the method further (Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2015).

### Past Studies on Motivation, Attitude and Self-Efficacy in Language Instructions and Online Learning

Studies on motivation, attitude, and self-efficacy are often presented together and have been continuously conducted in the ESL and EFL fields, and are particularly pertinent in the times of blended, flipped, and online learning. It is undeniable that learners acquire language best in an online environment when they feel a sense of belonging to a specific community (J. Wong et al., 2019). Kundu (2020) mentioned that the key factor for successful online learning is by inducing self-efficacy, which is enhanced by role modelling, verbal persuasion, and self-mastery; thus, the stakeholders involved in online education should play crucial roles in its implementation. Lasekan (2019) termed self-efficacy, anxiety, willingness to communicate, culture, and human motivational influence (from parents, teachers, and peers) as individual difference factors that affect learning. He reported a significant positive relationship between high motivational intensity and other motivational factors, such as self-confidence and human influence; and the positive impact of self-confidence and intrinsic motivation on students' English proficiency; which exemplifies the benefit of students' immersion in the target language community and intrinsic motivation on English acquisition.

Likewise, Cocca and Cocca (2019) discovered the positive association of students' achievement with their motivational intensity, attitude towards English, desire to learn it, opinion of English native speakers, and the quality of the English course. However, realising the cultural difference and, often, boundaries in ESL classes, Cocca and Cocca (2019) called for more culturally enriching, student-centred classes to further enhance students' proficiency, which echoed Kassem's (2018) assertion that student-centred tasks directly affected learners' English performance, motivation, attitude, level of anxiety, autonomy, self-efficacy and beliefs. It is due to these cultural differences that, at times, there was no clear, direct relationship between the factors in online learning motivation, such as observed by Rafiee and Abbasian-Naghneh (2019), who reported complex relationships between the perceived usefulness and ease of use, e-learning motivation, online communication self-efficacy, and acceptance and readiness of e-learning. Essentially, students' perceived enjoyment and usefulness did not directly indicate students' e-learning acceptance and readiness towards a medium (Rafiee & Abbasian-Naghneh, 2019).

Notably, self-efficacy is directly related to learning strategies adopted, as presented by Petchinalert and Aksornjarung (2016) in their study, whereby reading self-efficacy was significantly, strongly, and positively correlated with Thai students' overall learning strategies. Similarly, Wong (2005) reported a significant positive relationship between language learning strategies and self-efficacy, whereby the higher a learner's self-efficacy, the more number and frequency of language learning strategies they adopted. Thus, it is indeed an important point for educators to not become complacent in their pedagogy and choice of digital tools (Chung et al., 2020; Wai Yee & Cheng Ean, 2020).

The incorporation of Web 2.0 tools of social media has been presented as a motivating factor in language learning due to the affordances they bring in easing synchronous and asynchronous interactions, creating a community of interest, and supporting various forms of multimedia (Alberth, 2019). It was evident in two English writing studies on Facebook among Indonesian and Turkish learners. The activities increased their intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, attitudes, and English language achievement; and emphasised the negative relationship between self-efficacy and writing anxiety (Alberth, 2019; Altunkaya & Topuzkanamış, 2018). Radia (2019), who integrated Moodle e-learning platforms with face-to-face reading instructions, reported participants' positive attitudes towards the blended learning experience as they improved their reading ability and boosted learning motivation. Salikin and Tahir (2017) found that students who were initially bored with their inability to master vocabulary managed to complete assigned tasks with the integration of WhatsApp in daily learning.

Past studies on motivation, attitude and self-efficacy in English learning have concluded various results and outcomes. While many of the findings positively established the relationship between students' motivation, attitude, self-efficacy and English achievement, some research also argued complex and negative relationships; due to the dynamicity and influence of culture, socio-educational system, milieu, facilities and equipment, and human factors (Lasekan, 2019; J. Wong et al., 2019). Due to these differences and the current eminence of online learning, this study reasons that it is important to identify Malaysian university motivation, attitudes, and self-efficacy in online English classes to match the most suitable learning strategies to their different factors. Furthermore, the instrumentality and utilitarian need for the English language has never been prevalent, especially in the threatened global job market. Therefore, students must be equipped with excellent English communicative ability to place themselves at par with graduates worldwide for a chance at decent employment opportunities (Selvaratnam, 2019).

This study, therefore, aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are the university students' perceptions on their attitudes towards online learning for English proficiency classes?
2. What are the university students' perceptions on their motivation towards online learning for English proficiency classes?
3. What are the university students' perceptions on their self-efficacy towards online learning for English proficiency classes?

## METHODOLOGY

This section describes the instrument of data collection and data collection procedure, participants, and data analysis.

### Instrument of Data Collection

The questionnaire was adapted from five existing surveys on motivation, attitude, self-efficacy, willingness, and online readiness to suit the current needs in learning (Brown et al., 2014; Hung et al., 2010; Ullah et al., 2017; Williams, 2021; Yavuzalp & Bahcivan, 2020). The adapted questionnaire is divided into five main sections – Section A: Demography, Section B: Attitude; Section C: Motivation; Section D: Self-Efficacy, and Section E: Digital Tools and Apps. The items in Section A are multiple-choice questions. The items in Sections B to E were presented using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. The questionnaire also included three open-ended questions that gauged the challenges students faced in learning English online, the preferred method of English language learning, and suggestions to improve the online learning experience. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Form.

### Participants

The participants of this study were undergraduate students from a public university in Malaysia who were enrolled in various English proficiency classes. The participants were selected conveniently via their class teachers and consented to take part in the study. Two hundred seventy responses from 12 Science and Non-Science classes were gathered for three weeks, after nine weeks of fully online instructions. Three teachers distributed the questionnaire during their class hours. Most participants of this study were—female, within the age range of 21–22, in Year 1, of Malay descent, from the Science and Non-Science programmes, and moderate English users (Band 3 in MUET). The students' demographic information is presented in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1
*Students' demographic information*

| Attributes | | Frequency (N=270) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 201 | 74.4 |
| | Male | 69 | 25.6 |
| Age | 19-20 | 82 | 20.4 |
| | 21-22 | 165 | 61.1 |
| | 23-24 | 3 | 1.1 |
| | 25-26 | 20 | 7.4 |
| Ethnicity | Chinese | 60 | 22.2 |
| | Indian | 22 | 8.1 |
| | Malay | 177 | 65.6 |
| | Other | 11 | 4.1 |
| Year of study | Year 1 | 162 | 60 |
| | Year 2 | 80 | 29.6 |
| | Year 3 | 22 | 8.1 |
| | Year 4 | 6 | 2.2 |
| Malaysian University English Test (MUET) | Band 1 | 1 | 0.4 |
| | Band 2 | 28 | 10.4 |
| | Band 3 | 141 | 52.2 |
| | Band 4 | 93 | 34.4 |
| | Band 5 | 5 | 1.9 |
| | Band 6 | 2 | 0.7 |
| Discipline | Science | 140 | 51.9 |
| | Non-Science | 130 | 48.1 |

### Data Analysis

This study gathered quantitative data from the close-ended items and qualitative data from the open-ended items of the questionnaire. The quantitative data were analysed descriptively for percentages, mean scores and standard deviation (SD) using SPSS 27. The qualitative data were analysed deductively based on the questions asked. Both types of data were used to triangulate and corroborate the findings. The questionnaire's Cronbach's alpha is .884, which indicates a high internal consistency and reliability of the items.

### Ethical Consideration

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the students were briefed about the purpose of the study and asked to participate voluntarily. Upon their verbal consent, the questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp. Students who did not wish to participate and students who decided to opt out halfway were allowed to do so. The participants' personal information is kept private and confidential and only accessible to the research team.

## FINDINGS

The findings are presented quantitatively and qualitatively and discussed based on existing literature to address the research questions. The items in the tables are arranged in descending order, from the highest mean score that indicates strong agreement and the lowest mean score that indicates strong disagreement. All close-ended items were tested using a one-sample t-test and gave the value of p< .001; hence, are significant. In addition, some items were compared using the paired sample t-test, and the results are presented below.

### Attitudes Towards Online English Class

Table 2 shows the students' perceptions of their attitudes towards online learning for English proficiency classes. Again, the Cronbach alpha for attitude items is .775, which indicates a high internal consistency.

Table 2

*Students' perceptions of their attitudes towards online learning for English classes*

| No. | Items | Percent (%) | | | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | | |
| a. | I attend all my online English classes. | 2.2 | 8.9 | 88.9 | 4.54 | 0.8 |
| b. | I learn from my mistakes in online English classes. | 4.0 | 19.3 | 76.7 | 4.00 | 0.8 |
| c. | Online learning makes me too dependent on technology. | 10.8 | 16.3 | 72.9 | 3.93 | 1.1 |
| d. | I share my ideas with others during online English lessons. | 9.6 | 30.0 | 60.4 | 3.70 | 1.0 |
| e. | My overall experience with online learning is positive. | 12.9 | 28.9 | 58.2 | 3.60 | 1.0 |
| f. | I feel excited learning English online. | 12.6 | 33.7 | 53.7 | 3.56 | 1.0 |
| g. | I feel comfortable learning English online. | 14.1 | 30.4 | 55.5 | 3.56 | 1.0 |
| h. | Online learning improves the quality of English classes. | 18.1 | 39.3 | 42.6 | 3.34 | 1.0 |
| i. | I manage my time effectively through online learning. | 23.7 | 30.0 | 46.3 | 3.33 | 1.1 |
| j. | Online learning suits my learning styles. | 22.6 | 39.6 | 37.8 | 3.17 | 1.1 |
| k. | I prefer online English learning compared to face-to-face classes. | 36.0 | 34.4 | 29.6 | 2.91 | 1.2 |
| l. | It is difficult to learn English online. | 38.5 | 31.1 | 30.4 | 2.89 | 1.2 |

Students seemed to have positive attitudes towards learning English through online mediums. It was exemplified by their strong agreement on attendance to class, learning from their mistakes in online classes, sharing ideas with others during online English lessons and feeling excited and comfortable in online English classes. These findings are substantiated by students' disagreement that it was difficult to learn English online. Having said this, the students did not strongly indicate that online learning suits their learning style, nor that they preferred online learning compared to face-to-face sessions. Likewise, they neither agreed that online learning improves the quality of English lessons nor that their time management was effective. Naturally, online learning makes students highly dependent on technology.

### Motivation Towards Online English Class

Table 3 shows the students' perceptions of their motivation towards online learning for English classes. Again, the Cronbach alpha for motivation items is .699, which indicates a high internal consistency.

Table 3

*Students' perceptions of their motivation towards online learning for English classes*

| No. | Items | Percent (%) | | | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | | |
| a. | I am always motivated to complete online tasks given by my English teacher. | 1.1 | 11.5 | 87.4 | 4.29 | 0.7 |
| b. | Online tasks and assignments boost my confidence to use English language. | 2.6 | 20.0 | 77.4 | 4.12 | 0.8 |
| c. | I am satisfied with the online English learning experience this semester. | 6.0 | 17.4 | 76.6 | 4.00 | 0.9 |
| d. | I am open to new ideas in online classes. | 4.1 | 25.9 | 70.0 | 3.90 | 0.9 |
| e. | I personally contact my English teacher when I have difficulty in understanding given task. | 9.3 | 27.4 | 63.4 | 3.84 | 1.0 |
| f. | I am willing to access the online platforms daily for announcements from my English teachers and other students. | 9.6 | 25.9 | 64.5 | 3.79 | 1.0 |
| g. | I am motivated to learn English in online classes. | 8.5 | 28.1 | 63.4 | 3.70 | 0.9 |
| h. | I am more likely to participate in online English classes if my responses were anonymous and not graded. | 11.1 | 36.7 | 52.2 | 3.60 | 1.0 |
| i. | I am happy to continue with online English learning next semester. | 19.6 | 32.2 | 48.1 | 3.41 | 1.2 |
| j. | Online learning makes me feel lonely. | 38.2 | 20.7 | 41.1 | 3.04 | 1.4 |

Compared to the items measuring perceptions on attitudes, the mean scores for the items measuring motivation are slightly lower. Nonetheless, the students indicated a strong motivation to complete online English tasks, and they believed that online English tasks boosted their confidence to use the language. The students would have participated more in online classes if their responses were ungraded and anonymous. However, it did not deter their spirit, as they were happy to continue with online learning for English classes in the following semester. Noticeably, however, the students were undecided on whether online learning makes them lonely, which may be attributed to the ways teachers conducted their sessions. In essence, the students indicated agreement towards motivation to learn English in the online environment.

### Self-Efficacy Towards Online English Class

Table 4 demonstrates the items measuring students' perceptions of their self-efficacy towards online English classes. The Cronbach alpha for self-efficacy items is .831, which indicates a high internal consistency.

Table 4

*Students' perceptions of their self-efficacy towards online learning for English classes*

| No. | Items | Percent (%) | | | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | | |
| a. | I am able to submit my English assignments successfully through email/ FB group/WhatsApp/eLearning/etc. | 0.7 | 3.7 | 95.6 | 4.69 | 0.6 |
| b. | I complete all my English tasks on time by proper planning and management. | 2.6 | 8.9 | 88.5 | 4.40 | 0.8 |
| c. | I learn to use new technology efficiently for my online English classes. | 1.5 | 10.0 | 88.5 | 4.40 | 0.7 |
| d. | I am able to overcome technical difficulties on my own. | 2.6 | 15.9 | 81.5 | 4.23 | 0.8 |
| e. | I participate in English discussions by leaving messages/comments to other students. | 3.0 | 18.1 | 78.9 | 4.18 | 0.8 |
| f. | When a problem arises, I promptly ask questions through available channel (e-mail, WhatsApp, discussion board, etc.) | 3.3 | 14.8 | 81.9 | 4.17 | 0.8 |
| g. | I successfully add audio or edit videos for English presentation slides. | 6.3 | 16.7 | 77 | 4.16 | 1.0 |
| h. | I use synchronous technologies (live) to communicate with my teachers and classmates (e.g., Zoom, WebEx, WhatsApp video call, etc.) effectively. | 3.4 | 19.3 | 77.3 | 4.09 | 0.9 |

Table 4 *(Continue)*

| No. | Items | Percent (%) | | | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | | |
| i. | I focus on my English schoolwork even when I am faced with distractions. | 6.3 | 19.3 | 74.4 | 4.00 | 0.9 |
| j. | I communicate using asynchronous (non-live) technologies (e.g., discussion boards, e-mail, etc.) with my teacher and classmates effectively. | 5.5 | 33.7 | 60.8 | 3.78 | 0.9 |
| k. | I can stay focus during English classes without face-to-face interactions with the lecturer. | 12.9 | 24.4 | 62.7 | 3.72 | 1.1 |

Compared to attitudes and motivation, the students demonstrated the strongest agreement towards the items measuring self-efficacy in online English classes, suggesting commendable digital and technical skills. Likewise, English assignments and tasks items scored the highest scale of agreement and mean scores among the students. The students strongly reported that they successfully submitted their English tasks via various social media and Learning Management System (LMS) platforms, followed by their ability to plan and manage time for their English tasks properly, and efficiently adapt to new technology for online classes. The students indicated a high agreement towards synchronous communication with teachers and peers, compared to asynchronous mode. However, the students did not strongly agree that they could maintain their focus in class without face-to-face interactions with the lecturers.

### The Challenges Students Faced During Online Class

The three main challenges students faced during online English classes were internet connectivity, time management, and distractions.

According to students, they sometimes miss their classes (synchronous and asynchronous) due to poor internet connection. They were also frustrated when they faced problems completing and submitting assignments on time.

> *R10: The main problem I had during online classes is Internet connection.*
>
> *R20: Internet access is too slow in my house. So, I need to go outside of my village to submit tasks or assignments.*
>
> *R30: My hometown did not have a good coverage of Internet connection. Thus, I need to sit on the rooftop.*

Timely online assignment submission was also an issue due to the additional workload the students experienced in a fully online environment. Besides meeting deadlines, the students must also complete house chores. Consequently, the students overlooked some important announcements and information from their teachers.

> *R269: Sometimes I forget to check my phone as I am busy with house chores and missed something important such as announcements and so on.*
>
> *R256: Too many tasks to be completed for every week when I have tons of other subjects' assignments, but I manage to settle everything on time.*

The students also faced distractions from their surroundings when sitting for their synchronous online sessions, family members, and background noises (e.g. thunder, social media notifications). They wished for more conducive synchronous settings, hence, expressed a preference for face-to-face interactions.

> *R59: The challenges that I faced during online are requiring self-motivation to start, doing the task because almost or no study vibes at home.*
>
> *R200: Distractions from family members.*
>
> *R240: Some noise from surrounding and weather sometimes.*

### Students' English Learning Preferences

Most of the participants indicated a preference for fun, creative ways of learning English. Many preferred to learn English by watching movies, shows, motivational talks, informative YouTube videos, and drama series; without subtitles; though, some admitted that reading subtitles enriched vocabulary. This strategy also enhanced their speaking skills and imparted good values. Besides movies, the students enjoyed listening to English music and studying the lyrics.

> *R99: I prefer watching English shows as it helps to improve my communications skills and learn the correct pronunciation.*
>
> *R136: Studying lyrics, evaluating movies/ shows, playing interactive games like 'Kahoot'.*
>
> *R195: Watching English show such as 'Mind your language', an old show about learning English or listening to music.*
>
> *R200: Watching motivational movies and what can you gain from the content. It is exciting.*

To further emphasise oral English skills, the students liked to interact with their friends and lecturers via online group discussions on Zoom or other platforms. They were less worried about making grammatical mistakes this way.

> *R65: Talking to friends helps me. It is because they can correct me if I make any grammatical mistakes while talking and vice versa. It also helps to boost my confidence while speaking.*
>
> *R98: I prefer interactions with my friends and lecturers to understand better on certain topics as it helps me to view the topics from different aspects through the discussions.*
>
> *R201: Discussion together using Zoom meeting.*

These challenges and suggestions are not unexpected and are further discussed in the Discussions section.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study suggests that the students perceived a high self-efficacy towards online English classes, followed by positive attitudes and motivation. Furthermore, the students indicated high motivation to complete online English tasks in relation to self-efficacy in carrying out online submissions via various social media platforms. The findings from the items on self-efficacy indicated students' technical and digital ability in managing their online learning. Students' exposure to blended and flipped learning environments prior to the fully online uptake may have familiarised them with some extent of digital tools and skills. In the same breadth, Kassem (2018) underlined student-centred tasks that enhance learners' self-efficacy, language performance, motivation, attitude, level of anxiety, autonomy, and beliefs. Welser et al. (2019) added an interesting observation to this finding; students who have access to social support were associated with higher skill assessment and improvement in digital abilities; which is missing among students from the more rural areas. This, therefore, grounds the importance of social or community learning and co-creation of the experience in online learning (Lasekan, 2019; Sobaih et al., 2020; Stern & Willits, 2011; J. Wong et al., 2019; Wu & Nian, 2021) to enhance English language learning experience. Importantly, Kaufmann and Vallade (2020) argued that while online learning can be a lonely experience, social presence and interaction activities practiced by instructors may build and maintain students' rapport and create a sustainable learning environment.

Relatedly, the participants seemed to prefer synchronous learning compared to asynchronous sessions for English lessons; perhaps, due to the opportunities for more meaningful online and in-person interactions with peers and lecturers; as they develop content knowledge, language skills and self-confidence. The finding contradicts Chung et al. (2020) and Lin and Gao's (2020) earlier observation that the Malaysian and Chinese university students preferred pre-recorded lecture videos uploaded to Google Classroom and YouTube; they had a stronger sense of community in asynchronous courses via interaction, discussion, and sharing ideas. In an asynchronous environment, students can learn at their pace but feel isolated at times. However, the findings of this study indicate that students were impartial about their feeling of loneliness in online learning. It certainly shows students flexibility, familiarity, and adaptation to new learning environments; hence, might contradict Chung et al.'s (2020) earlier finding that many students wished to resume face-to-face instructions. This finding substantiates Kaufmann and Vallade's (2020) assertion that the loneliness of online learning may be reduced by the presence and interactive activities between instructors and students in the formation of a sustainable learning environment. On the other hand, while students felt stimulated via active interaction in a synchronous environment, they were often distracted by classmates (Lin & Gao, 2020).

Self-efficacy is one of the contributing factors to successful online learning (Kundu, 2020; Taipjutorus et al., 2012). Alberth (2019) concurred with the criticality of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation for English language learning. The self-efficacy items mainly measured the technical digital ability the students possessed in managing learning. It implies the establishment of students' pathway to autonomous learning by being able to overcome technical difficulties by themselves. These findings resonate with that of Dörnyei's (2001) and Reeve's (2009) assertion about the three stages of motivation model, with students indicating their ability to be systematic and timely in planning and managing their tasks and submission. Essentially, self-efficacy is tied to the learning strategies students adopt, whereby the higher the self-efficacy, the more learning strategies are employed (Wong, 2005). Chung et al. (2020), Kundu (2020), and Wai Yee and Cheng Ean (2020), therefore, urges educators to be mindful of pedagogical strategies and choice of digital tools, as efficacy is also induced by role modelling, verbal persuasion, and self-mastery, which emphasises teachers' roles in learning.

The findings on attitude resonate with many students across the globe who were equally impacted by the pandemic. Other than solely focusing on schoolwork that became much heavier due to the change in assessment structure (Hussein et al., 2020), they had to make time for household chores like preparing food and helping their parents (Henaku, 2020; Suryaman et al., 2020). It is not an easy feat as they are often exhausted mentally and physically at the end of every day. Despite this, the participants generally perceived strong positive attitudes towards online English language classes. It would perhaps be further emphasised if creative, fun activities like watching English shows and movies, listening to music, and guessing lyrics are conducted, as it provides them with a relaxing learning session, compared to a serious, intense one.

## CONCLUSION

Students' efficacy is very much related to human factors (Wong et al., 2019). There is no better time than now for community of learners to be formed in supporting, facilitating, and engaging with each other's learning experience (Lin & Gao, 2020). Students' preference for synchronous learning is a strong indication of their request to be part of a learning community that may reduce the feeling of isolation and, at the same time, provide a target language practice platform. Therefore, the current and immediate teaching and learning environment boils down to teachers' ability to catch up with these technological advancements, online pedagogy, and students' enhanced skills (Chung et al., 2020; Wai Yee & Cheng Ean, 2020).

Teachers' perceptions, attitudes and motivation are directly related to their readiness for technology-integrated classrooms (Zamir & Thomas, 2019). However, students felt disappointed with their teachers' limited digital knowledge and online pedagogic capability, which compromised a smooth learning experience (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020; Vandeyar, 2020). While complete adaptation is called for, Kellerman (2021) argued against the burden placed on teachers' shoulders to rapidly adjust to online learning and transformed all materials and assessments instantly, while simultaneously jumping onto the bandwagon of becoming content creators to assist students' learning. Instead of a leap forward, it may be regressive to place such expectations on teachers without proper training. Higher institutions must, therefore, ease collaborations between educators and professional content creators.

This study underlines Malaysian university students' high self-efficacy, positive attitude, and decent motivation in fully online English proficiency courses. Students indicated great technical and digital efficacy, good attendance, proper planning, management and submission of their English language tasks and assignments. However, like their global counterparts in many developing countries, they experienced challenges with connectivity issues and distractions in online learning, valued synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning afforded by an institution and commercial digital platforms, and enjoyed the fun, creative activities.

Future learning may further examine students' intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative motivation, as well as self-efficacy in an online English language environment, in identifying better teaching and learning strategies. A community of learners may also be examined to further provide students with an academic support system during online instructions.

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# Adaptation of *Asma'ul Husna* in Existing Design Practice

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## ABSTRACT

Until now, industrial designers are solely educated with the epistemology of dialectical materialism; meanwhile, the spiritual aspect is often segregated from education affairs. Many kinds of literature highlighted that this segregation could lead to negative impacts. Supposedly as a Muslim, learning about our Creator through *Asma'ul Husna* is an essential trait to develop designers' value, also known as *sahsiah* or characteristic of excellence. Therefore, this paper attempted to study the adaptation of *Asma'ul Husna* in the existing design practice among Muslim designers and at the same time devote the existent designer's knowledge and awareness to this understanding. A set of questionnaires were distributed using stratified sampling. The result showed that the majority of the respondents did not adapt *Asma'ul Husna* in the existing design practice due to limited knowledge on ways to integrate *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process. Designers who claimed to use *Asma'ul Husna* in design are either still confused with the usage or only limits the usage to motif and zikr. As an overview, this paper highlights the general view of an adaptation of *Asma'ul Husna*'s among designers and emphasises the urgency to develop a guideline for designers to implement the values in their design process.

*Keywords: Asma'ul husna* in designing, industrial design, industrial design curriculum, secularism

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## INTRODUCTION

Gardiner and Rothwell (1985), Hicks (2014), Tovey (1997), World Design Organisation (2017), Yliris and Buur (2007) and Cuffaro et al. (2013) define industrial designer as

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an individual who practises professionally, applied secular design process in producing good design product through fulfilling human wants and need focussing on profit maximisation.

Therefore, it is understandable that a designer should learn the concept of customer preference (perceptions toward evaluation of good design product) to improve profits. In relation to design education, according to Lawson (2005) and Liu (1991), since then, industrial designers must equip themselves with the epistemology of dialectical materialism, various kinds of knowledge and undergo training in designing school with various practices in order to educate, cultivate and improve the quality of the designer's work.

It is terrifying to discover that implicitly, designers are being taught to encourage consumers to seek and establish worldly paradise through materializing in consumption. As being pointed out by Richins and Dawson, the Oxford English Dictionary refer to materialism as "a devotion to material needs and desire, to the neglect of spiritual matter; a way of life, opinion or tendency based entirely upon material interests" (1992, p. 891).

As pointed out by Saeed et al. (2001), for an instant, encouraging customers to pursue satisfaction through materials will turn them into the slaves of the marketing firms. Ramadan (2011) did remind; an autonomous Muslim should not be a slave of material but a servant of God. However, unfortunately, as Abdul Razzaq Naufal (1982) highlighted, the pleasure and joy that humans find in this world gradually pull them away from Allah.

Referring to Aydin (2013), when the existing design curriculum focuses on profit maximisation and materialism aspect, it is contradicting with Islamic teachings, and Norzaman et al. (2018) considered the secular design approach as incomplete because it only covered *duniawi* and left no option for designers to prioritise consumer over Allah. It refers to intention (*nawaitu/ niat*) of designer while designing. In Islam based on Alserhan (2010), all actions are judged by their intention behind their action, thus this includes design practice.

Walker (2013) added and clarified that, contemporary design practice limits spirituality solely to the individual's private domain. Hence, resulting it to becomes a less important aspect in education, professional practices, public decision making. Not only that, history also showed that obtaining materialism, modernity, advancement, sophistication will inevitably be accompanied by degradation of the natural environment or in other word, pollution and unsustainability.

Whereas according to Aydin (2013) and Sheikh Munawar Haque (2021), Allah purposely creates human as caliphs (Allah's vicegerent) as the best mankind amongst all and His other creations in this universe to facilitate and be responsible in managing the world. Even in the Quran, Allah repeatedly reminded humans to abstain from practising corruption in this world.

> "You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for

> (the good of) mankind. You enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil and you believe in Allah. If only people of the Scripture had believed, it would have surely been better for them. Among them are true believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient." (The Quran, 2012, 3:110)

> "When they are told,' Do not cause corruption in the land, they say; "we are only promoters of peace, but it is they who are really causing corruption though they do not realize it." (The Quran, 2012, 2:11-12)

> "Eat and drink what God has provided and do not act wrongfully in the land, spreading corruption" (The Quran, 2012, 2:60)

> "Do not defraud people of what is rightfully theirs and do not spread corruption in the land" (The Quran, 2012, 26:183)

In addition, according to Noor Fazreena and Mohd Zuhdi (2015) today's education structure is based on dualism system that poses multiple worldview, couples with different values and beliefs to a point it isolates divinity element in the modern sciences.

To further highlight the problem with the existing design curriculum, Noor Fazreena and Mohd Zuhdi (2015) mentioned that today's education structure is based on dualism system that poses multiple worldview, couples with different values and beliefs to a point it isolates divinity element in the modern sciences. Isolating the spiritual or divinity element could lead to a negative impact because we believe Islam is the way of life. Based on El-Bassiouny (2014) and Zarabozo (2009), Islam covers *tauhid, iman, ibadah,* Sharia law and the most important part is way of live to humanity.

Supposedly, according to Halstead (2004), useful concept of knowledge based on Muslim perspective is able to help users acknowledge God, live in accordance to Islamic Law and fulfil the purpose of God's creation. Therefore, it is really important to integrate the divinity element which is through *Asma'ul Husna* into the existing design process and re-orientate the designer's design process.

Briefly, Haque and Keshavarzi (2014) define *Asma'ul Husna* as the beautiful names of Allah and Murtadho (2012), Zakaria and Mat Akhir (2017) explained that *Asma'ul Husna* consist of 99 names of Allah and El-bassiouny (2016) classified them as Divine attributes.

According to Ali (2006)*, Asma'ul Husna* embodies the concept of *tauhid* that is described as the consciousness of the oneness of Allah. It is the only source of knowledge that could save humanity and foster excellent *ummah* as mentioned in The Quran,

> "Remember Allah abundantly, in order that you become successful." (The Quran, 2012, 8:45)

## Designer as *Khalifah*

With the idea of *tauhid,* a designer must strive to reorient every action and move towards Allah or *Asma'ul Husna* especially in their design practise. Even Muslim (2018) agree that, there is a lack of exploration in linking the design process with *Asma'ul Husna*. Hence, this study intends to look on the existing design approach used especially among the Muslim designers. The main question is, do the designers ever use *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process?

Abd Rahman (2005) also highlighted in Table 1, example of design courses needed to be learned by a designer in relation to knowledge conversion process. He classified designer model into four types: designer as imitator, designer as apprentice, designer as a collaborator and designer as thinker.

In Islam, we do have another type of designer; designer as *Khalifah*. Designer as *khalifah* is a mediator between consumer, Allah, and organisation. In integrating this idea into the conventional design process, the integration of *Asma'ul Husna* should embark at early part of the design process which is within the industrial designer.

Figure 1 visualises the idea in integrating *Asma'ul Husna* into conventional design process in relation to knowledge conversion process. As the vicegerent (*khalifah*) of Allah on earth, the believers are advised to implement *Asma'ul Husna* in every aspect of their life and this is considered as the greatest deed as mentioned in the Quran

> "The remembrance of Allah (swt) is the greatest." (The Quran, 2012, 29:45)

Apart from that, El-Bassiouny (2014) also highlighted that maintaining good consciousness by remembering *Asma'ul Husna* is the main purpose of our life and it can be considered as a form of worship to Allah. Designers who integrate *Asma'ul Husna* in their design process will have a

Table 1
*Design pedagogy*

| **Designer model** | **Knowledge conversion process** | **Learning goals** | **Design studio/ Lab activities** | **Examples** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Designer as Imitator | **Integration**<br>Explicit to Explicit | Acquisition of know-what | Learning by doing, practice, exercise, repetitions | Workshop, CAD training, drawing |
| Designer as Apprentice | **Assimilation**<br>Explicit to Tacit | Acquisition of know-how | Book, magazines, lectures, factual and principles | Design Principles, history, manufacturing process |
| Designer as Collaborator | **Reciprocation**<br>Tacit to Tacit | Collaboration and negotiation, management know-why | Discussion groups, reciprocal learning, management | Field research, interaction with user and producer, industrial training |
| Designer as Thinker | **Exteriorization**<br>Tacit to Explicit | Critical and reflective thinking for innovation, care-why | Discovery learning, management | Degree project, experiments, design competition |

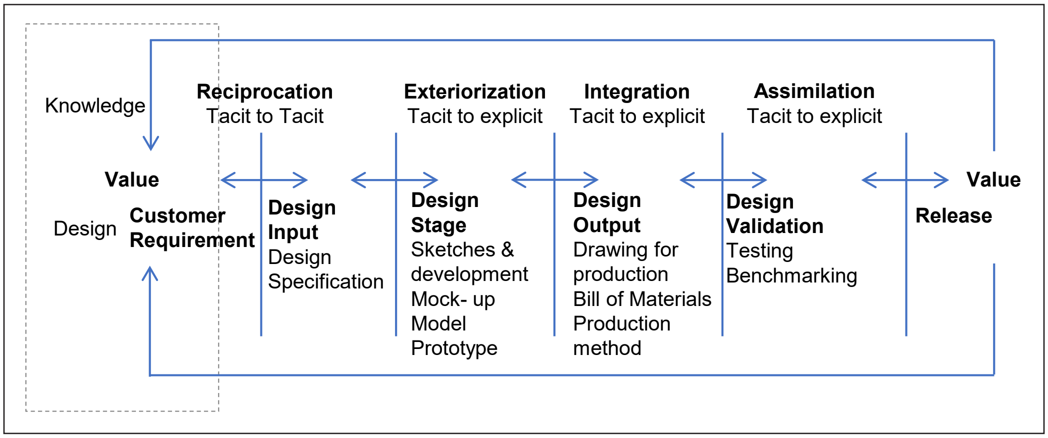

*Figure 1.* Integration of Asma'ul Husna into ISO 9001 design process

more wholesome approach as they are not only satisfying the consumers' demands but doing it purposefully with good *niat.* Therefore, as pointed out by Lundgren (2017), it's really important to have special attention in the design process since, a good design process will guarantee a good result. This is further emphasized by Norzaman et al. (2017), who mentioned that an excellent design process will not only please humans, but also please Allah and ultimately helps a person serve the purpose of life.

## Benefit of Reorienting Designers' Designing Practice towards Allah

Assimilating spiritual element into design process is not something impossible. Other religion also did have their own interpretation of religious belief into design. For example, Vasstu Shahstra assimilation of an ancient Indian architecture knowledge with ancient Hinduism; Vedic (Patra, 2009), Zen interpretation of Buddhism (Walker, 2013) and not to mention Feng Shui originally from Chinese belief (Ng, 2016). From Islamic perspective, *Asma'ul Husna* relatively a new concept in design which is yet to be thoroughly explore.

The best way to integrate is through *Asma'ul Husna* since it embodies concept of *tauhid*. Omer (2020) defined *tauhid* as the concept of monotheism and opined that understanding the concept is crucial as it also gives a unique identity to Islamic civilization and able to binds all constituents together, making them integral, harmonious and supportive to each other to serve ontological purposes.

Furthermore, Murtadho (2012) also mentioned that, prophets also encourage us to imitate the moral attributes of Allah as reflected in *Asma'ul Husna* and apply in real life. Not only that, Ahmet and Akdogan (2012) believe that having faith in Allah able in providing inner peace and satisfaction in both worlds.

Shuhari and Hamat (2017) highlighted the importance of understanding *Asma'ul Husna* among Muslim designer which is clearly indicate in hadith of the prophet and proven have significant benefits to individual where appreciation of *Asma'ul*

*Husna* able to develop characteristic of Trustworthiness (*Amanah*).

Not only that, Shuhari and Hamat (2011) also agree that understanding *Asma'ul Husna* is an important value in order to be caliphs in this world. In addition, according to Hamat and Shuhari (2010), understanding *Asma'ul Husna* is a basic requirement in achieving *makrifatullah* and developing individual characteristic (for example Al-Sidq) to become *insan robbani* (Shuhari, 2020).

Furthermore, Rosmani and Zakaria (2018) highlighted lack of understanding and appreciation toward the *Asma'ul Husna* value will eventually effect their favourability in learning Islam and effect their faith towards Allah since they unable to feel and see the greatness of Allah. Therefore, the effort in integrating *Asma'ul Husna* into conventional design process should not be neglected as the integration in the design practice is believed to be beneficial for mankind.

Shuhari et al. (2019) stated that education plays a vital role in building character or personality and an important step in projecting man as a role model in doing good. Integrating *Asma'ul Husna* into design curriculum is not possible since producing student with holistic personalities through Islamic integrated curriculum is the common vision of Malaysian university, such as in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Islamic Science University Malaysia (USIM), Islamic Academy of Science (ASASI) as well as Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA, Rahimah et al., 2015; Kamal Hassan, 2009; Rahimah et al., 2016).

Thus, it is important to make sure design education today is able to nurture and develop excellent design characteristic aligned with values of *Asma'ul Husna*. Inevitably designers will produce design which prioritise spiritual aspects and practice values that pleases Allah. Prior to coming up with the guideline for designers in integrating the *Asma'ul Husna* values in the design process, a study needs to be carried out to observe the existing practise among Muslim designers.

## METHOD

This paper utilized quantitative approach in collecting the data, which is through survey. In order to find out the usability of *Asma'ul Husna* in the existing design practice, a survey is distributed among Muslim designers, academician and final year students who have art and design background. 163 samples of respondent are sufficient as the findings are equivalent to achieving 85% confidence level by RASOFT calculator.

Figure 2 categorises the percentage of respondents based on the survey with 34.4% of the respondents are designers, 20.2% are among the design academician and the rest are final year students. Final year students are also included in the survey due to their acquired design knowledge and experience in the real working environment while undergoing industrial training.

Meanwhile, Figure 3 breaks down the respondents' area of specialization. It can

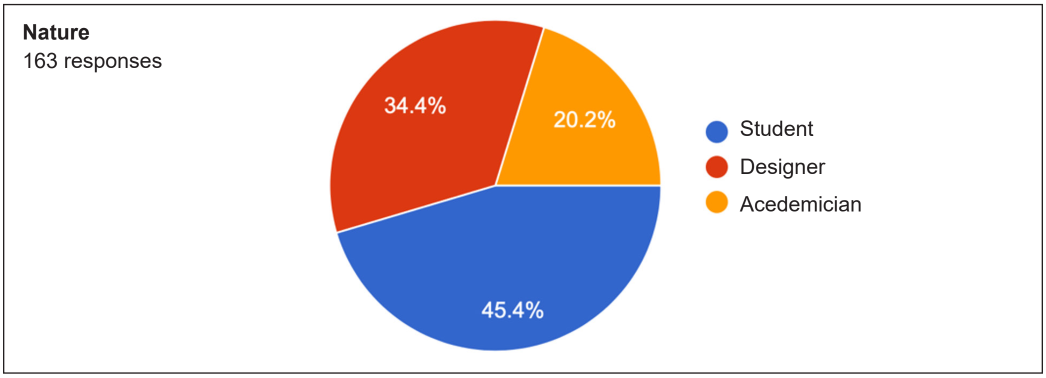

*Figure 2.* Respondents of the survey

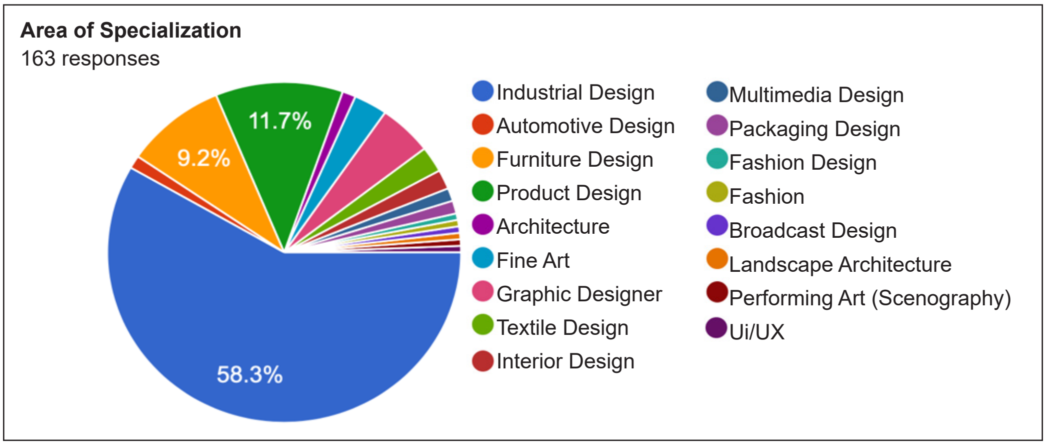

*Figure 3.* Specialization of respondents

be seen that majority of the respondents are from industrial design which encompasses 58.3% from the total number of respondents.

## RESULTS

In question 1, researcher inquired about any respondents who have ever used *Asma'ul Husna* in their design process. Figure 4 indicates that 87.7% of them did not use *Asma'ul Husna* in designing. It is eccentric for a Muslim designer to neglect the use of *Asma'ul Husna* in a design process as it is mundane to apply the values in daily tasks and while designing. This further rectify the claim that existing design curriculum successfully manage to segregate the spiritual aspect from design practice.

Question 3 probes the reason why majority of them did not use *Asma'ul Husna* in design (Figure 5). Most of them did not apply *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process due to limited knowledge on how to use *Asma'ul Husna* followed by; being afraid to use them since *Asma'ul Husna* are Allah's sacred names. The rest of them are content with the existing design approach and have little interest to use *Asma'ul Husna* in design. The finding supports the need

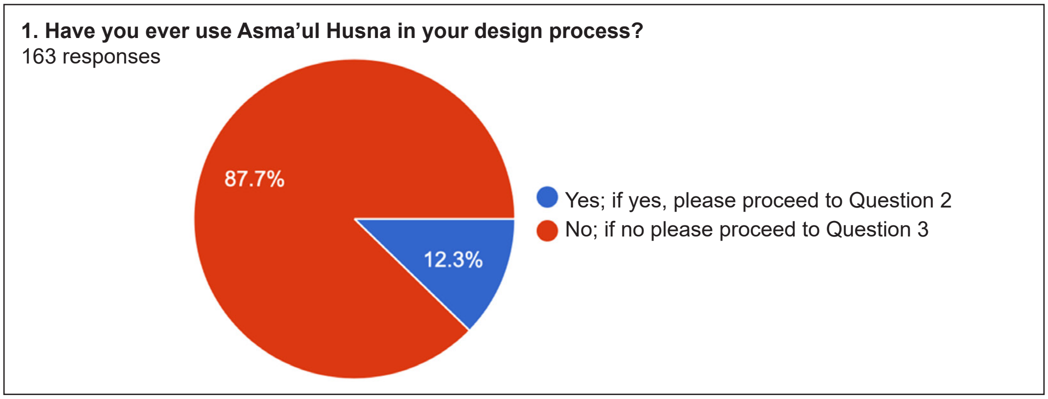

*Figure 4.* Percentage of respondents who use asma'ul husna in design practise

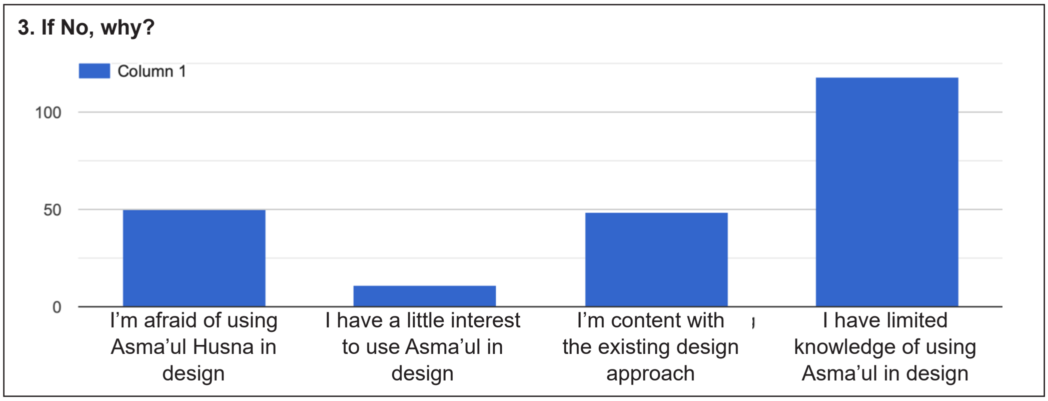

*Figure 5.* Reason why respondents did not use asma'ul husna in design

in designing proper guideline on how to implement and integrate *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process.

Furthermore, some of the respondents have a false assumption that the integration of *Asma'ul Husna* in design practice is not similar to their existing practice (Figure 6). Even in Table 2, R18 point out that integrating *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process is possible and being practise by them indirectly.

The data in Figure 7 reassured the purpose of this study as it shows a satisfying level of respondents' openness and readiness in integrating *Asma'ul Husna* in design process. Hence, it is timely to develop a guideline for designers on how to integrate Asma' ul Husna in the design process.

In order to develop the new guideline, Question 2 was curated purposely to understand how designers use *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process. Although only 12.3% of the respondents claimed that they use *Asma'ul Husna*, it still shows the possibility to integrate *Asma'ul Husna* in the design process. Table 2 explains how they apply *Asma'ul Husna* in designing.

Analysing the answers in question 2, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents integrate *Asma'ul Husna* in

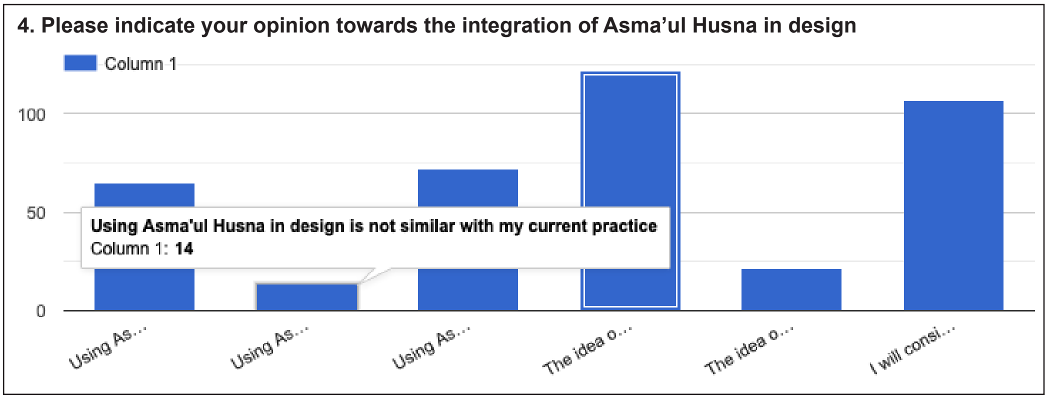

*Figure 6.* Assumption of respondent that integration of asma'ul husna is not similar with the existing practice

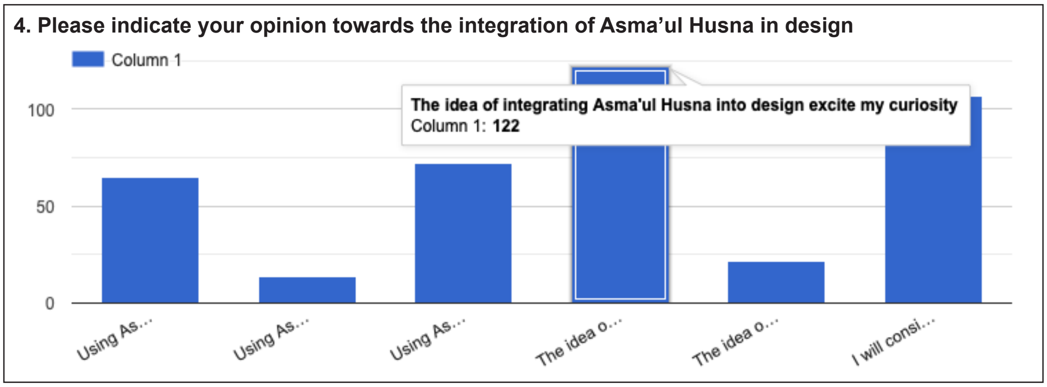

*Figure 7.* Level of respondents' openness and readiness toward the integration of asma'ul husna in designing

Table 2

*How respondents apply Asma'ul Husna in designing*

| Respondent (R) | Highlighted keyword from the respondents' answer | Category of the keyword |
|---|---|---|
| R15. | Use Asma'ul Husna as **guideline** in every aspect. As Muslim we should never disregard our creation in everything, we do | Sharia Compliance, Asma'ul Husna Value |
| R18. | **Honest** in making any new idea | Asma'ul Husna Value |
| R19. | Yes, I'm plan for my design on fabric to create the base on this especially when I started to design on **motif** of Islamic design | Motif |
| R24. | Concept & **motif**. In fashion design, adhered towards the ***aurat* guideline** is also one of the ways applying **Asma'ul Husna value** in design. | Motif, Sharia Compliance, Asma'ul Husna Value |
| R29. | Try to **plan** project as thorough as possible | Asma'ul Husna Value |
| R35. | It must reflect the **limitations** and guidelines in Islam and sunnah | Sharia Compliance, Asma'ul Husna Value |
| R48. | By giving the best | Self- Conscious, Asma'ul Husna Value |

Table 2 *(continue)*

| Respondent (R) | Highlighted keyword from the respondents’ answer | Category of the keyword |
|---|---|---|
| R56. | For me asma ul husna is not apply in just for design process. As muslim better apply asma ul husna in all the thing to get what we want. Cz asma ul husna is 99 names of Allah. In terms of design, we can maybe recite our **dua** early with name (ya Hadi) means giving guidance. Thus, it is more related with the name of the dua we make. Also, if we had problem in design we can use as zikr; ya hadi repeatedly to seek for the guidance. Cz sometimes we get stuck in the design process. Not just ya hadi...many more name related we can use, suit with the situation we had. | As Zikr |
| R59. | Asmaul husna in designer's life (esp. Muslim) start with *niat* to have a good outcome, during process development, heart and soul always connected to the idea (brain) and transferred it into tangible things. This is how we feel **grateful** with what ALLAH given to us. | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R63. | Work with heart, passion and **sincerely** | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R70. | Come out with new design **inspired from Allah's creation** | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R71. | in many ways, such as create the **beauty and ergonomic of design** | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R73. | Being **honest** in design process, ***amanah*** in charging customer, **providing the best design service** regardless design charge. | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R140. | If I was trusted to do something I would **do the best** that I can do since I know **Allah *Maha Melihat lagi Maha Mengetahui*** | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R145. | I'm **work in team**, and I try my best work with them. | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R152. | **Always remember** Allah every time | Islamic Spirituality |
| R159. | **Honest** while designing, **Allah is All Knowing** | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R161. | I believe I do, but indirectly. Because as Muslim, it is ingrained in our practices to **practice good deeds** in everything that we do and planned to do. | Asma’ul Husna Value |
| R162. | Considering **Spiritual values** toward design works | Asma’ul Husna Value |

design process through the values reflected from each name of Allah. Only 3 out of 19 respondents use *Asma’ul Husna* as zikr and motif in their design artwork. R18 particularly highlighted an interesting answer and the keyword used is ‘indirectly’. This indicates that integrating *Asma’ul Husna* in design process is possible and had been practised by them subconsciously. By coming up with a well-structured guideline, it will be possible to encourage more designers to integrate *Asma’ul Husna* in their design process.

## DISCUSSION

Results from the survey shows that only 12.3% from the respondents use *Asma'ul Husna* in design. The remaining respondents did not integrate *Asma'ul Husna* due to reasons, such as limited knowledge and no proper guideline to be referred to. Findings from this survey also indicates the general view on usability of Asma 'ul Husna and emphasizes the urgency in developing guideline for designers in integrating *Asma'ul Husna*'s values into the design process.

In addition assimilating divinity element especially Integrating *Asma'ul Husna* values into the design process believed able to improved their faith to Allah and at the same time cultivate good personality according to Islam. Rahimah et al. (2016) also agree that exposing undergrad students with the holistic integrated curriculum able to attain personal's firm belief, accustomed to righteous deed and nurture behavioral skill.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this study not only intend to look on the adaptation of *Asma'ul Husna* in existing design practice, it also wants to find out the reason why designer did not use *Asma'ul Husna* and at the same time seek an overall view on existing ways of adapting *Asma'ul Husna* in the design practice. It is hope that this study to some extend able to create awareness among designer on the possibilities of integrating *Asma'ul Husna* in their design practice. Finding from this paper also rectify the claim that existing design curriculum successfully manage to segregate the spiritual aspect from design practice and highlights possibilities and needs in developing guideline especially for Muslim designers.

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# Rethinking Ecological Subalterns in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of subaltern and how its meaning has evolved over the years within the broader scope of postcolonial theory. The study shall trace the concept of subaltern from its anthropocentric meaning in Antonio Gramsci's writings to Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak's ideological perspectives. We shall also trace its inroad into the ecocritical study in the works of Michael Egan and Sergio Ruiz Cayuela while maintaining its anthropocentric leaning. The study shall further attempt a redefinition of the subaltern concept to accommodate non-humans in the class of the subordinated social group. Bearing in mind the anthropocentric leaning of the concept of the subaltern, which excludes non-human members of the ecology, we shall redefine the term from its previous usage in environmental literary studies and expand it to include non-humans as a subordinated group. The study shall analyse the relationship between humans and non-humans to determine if non-humans are treated as subordinates or worse than subordinated humans. The study shall draw instances from Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006) to justify the classification of non-humans as the ultimate ecological subalterns of the Niger Delta Environment. We shall consider human relationships with non-humans (land, air, water, animals, vegetation, sea lives) to determine their status as subalterns. The crux of the study is basically to expand the scope of the subaltern theory by analysing the environmental despoliation prevalent in the oil-rich Niger Delta environments of Nigeria.

*Keywords:* Environment, environmental subaltern, Niger Delta, postcolonial ecocriticism, subaltern

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## INTRODUCTION

Like every other postcolonial country of the world, Nigeria is besieged with environmental challenges of various degrees and magnitude. The exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria comes with environmental challenges that devastate the entire region, especially the non-human members. Why are the non-human members of the region most affected by the activities of humans in the region? Is it because they are of no worth or value? Or is it because they are considered objects to be exploited for human gains like every other subordinated group? Arguably, the exploitation of non-humans has its roots in colonialism, as envisaged by many literary scholars. DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) note that before colonialism in Nigeria, environmental devastation was almost non-existent because industrial activities and mineral exploration and exploitation were minimal. Walter Rodney reiterates that "the institutionalisation of colonialism in Africa brought about capitalism" (1972, p. 107). Lock affirms that "it was during colonisation in Africa that exploration and exploitation of environment (human and non-human) began for commercial and economic purposes" (2000, p. 5). Literary writers and critics have been very vocal in expressing their concerns over the environmental devastation of the Niger Delta region due to unregulated oil exploitation by multinational oil companies, which have turned the region into a wasteland. Some of their concerns and advocacy for environmental justice are reflected in literary productions like Kaine Agary's *Yellow Yellow* (2006), Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* (2012), Lawrence Amaeshi's *Sweet Crude Odyssey* (2017), and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006). This study shall adopt Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006) as a primary text and draw instances to justify the exploitation of non-human members of the Niger Delta based on their subaltern status as captured in the novel.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Critical Framework

Postcolonial ecocriticism is a literary theory that concerns itself with humans and their relationships with the environment. Literature no doubt reflects society; therefore, it represents societies along with their environmental situations and attributes. Huggan and Tiffin (2009) set the foundation for postcolonial ecocriticism in their text *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animal, Environment*. In the introductory note, they point out that the bourgeoning alliance between the two fields is difficult to read because of their contradictory and conflicting contexts and the insurmountable problems that bedevil the fields in terms of the difficulty in defining them even by their practitioners. They, however, suggest that a way out of it is that the subject of postcolonialism must be colonialism, as well as to look out for "colonial underpinning in environmental practices of colonising and colonised societies" (p. 3). Here they emphasise the importance of dismantling the "species boundary" (p. 6) between humans and non-humans. They relate environmental issues to racism and imperialism, where the perceived inferior races must be exploited just like nature. They opine that environmental issues are inherent in the ideas of imperialism and racism, and the Eurocentric perception of these ideas are used as a justification to continue exploiting different races just like nature. They also identify some major tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism to include aesthetics and its advocacy role and activism, which aims at providing alternatives to the Western concepts of development, as well as serving as an ecological lens to earlier postcolonial discourses in social, cultural, and political components that are related to the environmental crisis. They lay bare some of the conflicts that exist between human and non-human species. They insist that there are struggles for dominance between humans and non-human habitats of the universe. Most of these conflicts came about due to capitalists' ideals that emanated from colonial experiences. They also raised questions of rights and wrongs in the past and presented them through the focal point of representation. They question the very essence of granting rights as purely anthropocentric.

In the introductory part of *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) highlight and foregrounds postcolonial ecological concerns that reaffirm humans as part of nature. They traced the relationship before colonialism between humans and non-humans in different societies in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. They drew instances from writers of these regions to validate their claims. They contend that it was "colonialism that altered the relationship which existed between human and land from "earth" and "landscape" to "property", and also "commercialized nature at large" (p. 5). In order to recover the relationship with nature that existed before colonialism, there is a need to establish another relationship of alterity that will upturn the present one. According to Haraway, as quoted in DeLoughrey and Handley, we must find "another relationship to nature beside reification and possession" (2011, p. 8) through imagination, which marks the central common ground between ecocritical and postcolonial criticism. In *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment,* DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) aims at outlining a broader, more complex genealogy for thinking through ecocritical and postcolonial discourses as relating to the representations of alterity, human, and nature. At this point, it becomes obvious that the proposed genealogy will be a complete deviation from (Green Imperialism) the popular one that projects North American and Europe at the centre of ecological concerns, thereby bringing colonised societies from the margins to the centre. Having drawn attention to the poem of Martin Carter "Listening to the Land" (1951) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which raised ecological concerns of colonised peoples long before the advent of North America and British experiments in the field, DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) propose to represent what colonised societies was before colonialism as well as show how these societies were altered by colonialism and imperialism, and this can be achieved by engaging a global perspective of the environment as against the national perspective of Anglo-American critics. DeLoughrey and Handley, therefore, agree that postcolonial environments are "internally complex" and "demand a necessary flexible approach;" they are motivated by different concerns from the mainstream American environmentalism, postcolonial ecologies emphasise issues related to "access to arable land and potable water, public health, threats of militarism and national debt, and reflect social planning for cultural, economic and national sovereignty" (2011, p. 16). Postcolonial and decolonising nations have debated these issues for decades in a way that firmly placed humans as part of nature, which distinguishes it from Anglo-American environmentalism.

Cajetan N. Iheka (2018), in *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* lay more emphasis on African environmentalism. Drawing from a large body of literary works in the African continent, he draws attention to the devastating environmental challenges that bedevil various parts of the African continent. Using the concept of agency, Iheka draws attention to people's environmental attitudes all over the world. He contrasts the Shell BP oil spill of 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico, United States of America, the rapid responses it got from the Barrack Obama administration and the then CEO of Shell BP in solving the problem to those of similar and worst scenarios in the Niger-Delta of Nigerian and how it has been left unattended to since 1958. The contrast between handling similar situations in the United States of America and Nigeria is worrisome and a thing of concern to literary and environmental advocates in Nigeria. Hence, Iheka calls on all environmental writers to increase their efforts in terms of awareness as well as to pay equal attention to how environmental crises affect non-humans and the symbiotic relations between humans and non-humans. He avers that placing a premium on human lives to the detriment of non-humans will only amount to the reifying of anthropocentrism that led to environmental crises in the first place.

He, however, shifts his focus from the effects of these crises on human species to non-human species. He moves away from the prevalent anthropocentric view to a more biotic view. Drawing attention to non-human species, he also states that he does not intend to favour nonhumans over humans but rather draw attention to the interdependence of both or what he terms as "Proximity." Finally, he argues that the relationship between humans and other life forms in African literature has a significant implication for rethinking the question of agency and resistance in postcolonial literature. This study shall therefore concentrate on non-humans as the major subaltern members of the Niger Delta Environment.

## Non-Human Subaltern

To elaborate on the history and concept of Gramscian concept of the subaltern, Buttigieg (2013) traces it to Gramsci's prison notes. The term 'subaltern' or 'subalternity' was used by Gramsci in his pre-prison and prison writings, sometimes in a conventional way and sometimes figuratively. His use of the term in *Prison Notebooks* marks the beginning of distinguishing the dominant class and the subordinated social or economic groups in a political and civil society. Gramsci consolidated on the histories and characteristics of the subaltern social groups in his Notebook 25 during his incarceration. The use of the term by Gramsci is quite eclectic and, therefore, difficult to pin down a definition attributive to Gramsci. It is because he does not regard them as a single, much less homogenous entity. Therefore, he refers to the subaltern groups in the plural term. For Gramsci, the subaltern social groups or classes comprise the working class or the proletariats and other component groups. Gramsci identified fragmentation as a distinguishing characteristic of the subaltern groups. He identifies that multiple subaltern groups are disconnected and quite different from one another, and there are also marginal and subaltern groups within the group (Buttigieg, 2013). The core interest of Antonio Gramsci in all his writing is "how to bring an end to subalternity, that is, to the subordination of the majority by the minority" (Buttigieg, 2013, p. 37). Therefore, the subaltern is a term used to refer to an officer in a subordinate position or 'of inferior rank'. Antonio Gramsci used the term to refer to the working masses that needed to be organised by left-wing intellectuals into a self-conscious political force (Habib, 2005). The term was used by Gramsci to refer to all the groups in a society that are subject to the hegemonic ruling classes. The subaltern classes may include workers, peasants, and other subordinated groups denied access to the 'hegemonic' power.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (2007) in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* note that Gramsci was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes since the prevailing and existing history were those of the ruling classes and an extension of that of the state. For Gramsci, the history of the subaltern social groups is always episodic and fragmented because they are always subjected to the activities of the ruling groups and because they lack access to cultural and social institutions. Therefore, he concludes that only a revolutionary class adjustment can break that pattern of subordination (Ashcroft et al., 2007). The term 'subaltern' was adopted into postcolonial studies from the works of the Subaltern Studies group of historians, whose aim was to promote a systemic discussion of subaltern themes in South Asian Studies. The group was formed by Ranajit Guha and initially included Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Gyan Pandey.

Spivak (1994) in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" takes the idea of the subaltern further by identifying the exclusion of women, especially poor, black/colour, uneducated, rural women from colonised societies, as the most subjugated, most oppressed and the most subordinated group in a capitalist society. For her, these women, just like the peasants and other subordinated groups, cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Moreover, their representatives often appear as their master, authority over them, and unrestricted government power to protect them from other classes. She maintains that "there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation" (p. 80). Spivak (1994) makes it clear here that though as subaltern, the female suffers more because she endures subjugation from the elite or capitalist or oppressor and from a subaltern male to whom she must also submit. Furthermore, as a result of this double submission, the subaltern woman is further relegated and more oppressed.

The term has also found its way into environmental studies. Michael Egan (2002) used the term to refer to the "victims of environmental injustice" (p. 22). For Egan, these are social and environmental victims, mostly poor and minority groups who suffer environmental hazards and unequal distribution of ecological resources. From Egan's description, non-humans can also fall into these categories of victims of environmental hazards. However, he seems to neglect them as well, as though they are inconsequential. Sergio Ruiz Cayuela (2018) used the term to designate marginalised communities who suffer environmental discrimination by the political and economic elites. It is also sometimes referred to as environmentalism from below. It is overwhelming that all the available references to the environmentalism of the subaltern, Subaltern Environmentalism, or what Nixon calls "Environmentalism of the Poor" are all anthropocentric in their theories. They all refer to humans: either men or women, marginalised or oppressed. In this study, we shall take a biocentric posture to capture the real subaltern, the ultimate victims of environmental pollution perpetrated by humans. We shall refer to them as "ecological subalterns". Environmental subalterns, for us, are the non-human members of nature that are mostly affected by human activities that cause environmental pollution. The subaltern here includes the land, air, water, trees, animals on land and in the sea, and the entire non-human members of the biosphere that is in one way or the other affected negatively by human environmental activities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Ecological Subalterns in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*

The Niger Delta area and people of Nigeria are mostly referred to as "minorities" (Darah, 2011, p. 4), that is, subaltern groups in Nigerian. Worst still is the non-human species of the area. It will be insensitive to say that humans have suffered as much as non-humans in the Niger Delta society. Each has been affected in a different proportion.

However, non-human appears to be the most affected because they are oppressed and exploited by human exploiters and the exploited among humans. Thus, they suffer doubly from humans' exploitative activities. In this regard, we consider non-humans of the Niger Delta as subalterns and will further justify this claim by citing instances from Ojaide's (2006) *The Activist* to substantiate the claim. As a protest novel against the despoliation of the Niger Delta by oil exploration multinational companies; *The Activist* mirrors the state of the environment as occasioned by oil prospecting and exploitation activities of the companies. The oil companies, especially Bell Oil, are most culpable for destroying the environment with chemical wastes, leakages from worn-out pipes, and unconventional oil prospecting and exploitation procedures. The military government of Nigeria is a worthy accomplice in this crime against the non-human subaltern and the environment in general.

The narrator in *The Activist* reveals that Bell Oil Company has seriously damaged the Niger Delta. Succinctly put, the Niger Delta "had been seriously scarred by Bell Oil Company whose emblem of a red-rimmed shell of yellow flames was seen all over the area" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 53). For the locals of the Niger Delta, the emblem of bell oil Company is symbolic of its destructive tendencies. It is unrelated to the oil "company's inordinate hunger for more barrels of oil to ship out to increase yearly record profits" (p. 53); consequently, they turned the area into a wasteland. The once lush Delta was reduced to an unyielding and unproductive wasteland in terms of vegetation and palm trees that used to be the pride of the people of the area. The situation has continued to worsen because the government had "given a free hand" (p. 54) to the oil companies to do all it can to increase production. Although, according to the narrator, "meant more money in the government coffers to sustain the dictatorship, it also meant total disregard of the Niger Delta people and their environment. Due to the unending circle of exploitation of the environment, the Activist realises that he had returned to a "Niger Delta that had a new face, an ugly or rather sick face that was different from the pristine one he used to know" (p. 54). The burgeoning indiscriminate destruction of the Niger Delta environment is attributive to the subaltern status and the disregard for non-humans by humans. As such, humans tend to trample on the non-human members of the environment to satisfy their unending desire and quest for more wealth, as depicted by the oil companies and the government.

To further identify and attribute the subaltern status to non-human members of the Niger Delta societies, we shall examine how humans treat non-humans as depicted in *The Activist*. The indigenous peoples of the Niger Delta perceive the oil companies, ran, and operated by humans, as harbingers of death. The indigenous peoples who protest the despoliation of their environment are majorly the proletarian minorities whose major occupations are farming and fishing. They do not have the financial and media capacity to challenge the capitalist oil companies and the military government sustained by the proceeds from the unregulated oil exploitation. The multinational oil companies, their foreign allies, and the military government are formidable forces against the poor, proletarian, agrarian, subaltern indigenous peoples and much more against the twice subaltern non-humans in the environment. According to the narrator, "America had joined hands with their local enemies, the oil companies and the military government, whose activities destroyed the people and their environment by spreading fire all over the oil-producing region" (p. 77).

Consequently, the perpetual fire outbreak in the area has hindered the survival of non-human lives in the area. Trees are burnt to ashes, rodents, animals (flying and creeping) are all destroyed, the land is rendered unproductive, vegetation is no longer in existence, the surrounding rivers are equally polluted, and ultimately, the air is polluted. Hence, the entire area is rendered desolate and inhabitable for both humans and non-humans. Non-humans are eventually the most affected because most non-human lives cannot escape the force and speed of such inferno and are most likely to lose their lives in such situations. These are some of the reasons behind the agitations of some environmentalists in the Niger Delta communities. The Activist intensifies his agitation because:

> the poisonous methane gas from gas flares, leaking old oil pipes, blowouts, and spillages in the area that had rendered the evergreen wetlands poisoned, the wildlife dead, the aquatic life also dead, and humans in these areas suffering from undiagnosed diseases (Ojaide, 2006, p. 224).

The narrator in *The Activist* reveals that constant fire outbreak due to sharp practices in the Niger Delta has greatly contributed to climate change. Its effects on the environment and especially on non-human is overwhelming. The air is polluted, the rainwater is polluted, and vegetation dries up due to pollution from the water and oil spills and even fire outbreaks. Consequently, the animals and plants that depend on the vegetation, water and air for survival will ultimately die because humans are bent on maximising profits by engaging in inappropriate and unconventional methods of oil exploitation. The oil companies care nothing about the effects of their activities on the subaltern human talk less of the ultimate subalterns- the non-humans. As the narrator in *The Activist* highlights these issues, he is certainly more concerned about their effects on the subaltern humans and not the non-human subalterns. According to him,

> The air used to be cool because of constant rain and the luxuriant forest, but oil slicks, blowouts, and gas flares had destroyed that life. Even the rain that fell was so soot-black that no more did anybody drink rainwater, which, of all waters, used to be described

> as God-given water. The people had lost their green refuge as well. Their forests used to have deep green and lush foliage, the pride of the tropics, but that had changed since fires often followed oil and gas accidents. (Ojaide, 2006, p. 82)

The narrator is obviously lamenting over the loss of the forest that provides luxury and refuge for humans, which manifests in the form of economic trees and wilderness experience for human sustenance. However, unfortunately for non-humans, they do not have alternatives in terms of reverse osmosis purified water to live on. Either way, they will either die drinking the polluted water or die from thirst for not drinking the polluted water. Therefore, it is a double tragedy for nonhumans in this environment because they are either destroyed by human-induced fire, polluted water or oil spill in an environment that they are major stakeholders in due to human's quest to subordinate and exploit the environment.

Ebi and The Activist appear to show genuine concern about the disappearance of the fishes in the river. However, the concern is not unrelated to the splendour and warmth that comes with the sight of the fishes flying out of the water occasionally and somersaulting back into the water. The thought, however, disappears as soon as it comes. They are surprised at the magnitude of the desolation of the water. They question the whereabouts of the variety of fishes that inhabited the water, the birds that filled the air space, and the supposed healing power of the water. Lo, the reason is not far-fetched, pollution from oil installations, which had either killed them all or forced them to migrate downstream into the ocean. The fishes are also victims of human commercial activities as they are caught and traded in large quantities. Ebi reveals that the small town of Enekerogha "used to be famous for fishing" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 101) in large quantities that are transported to Warri and Port Harcourt for sale.

With the discovery of more oil in the Niger Delta, The Activist expresses deeper concern on the fate of humans and, worst still, nonhumans in his community if nothing is urgently done to curtail the excesses of the oil companies. He affirms that "we are in for disaster, if nothing is done to save our waters, land, and air" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 103). The use of "our" designates possession. It does not present the waters, land, and air as independent and intrinsic members of the ecology but rather subordinate appendages possessed, acquired, or owned by humans. This further highlights the subordinated condition of non-humans in a human-dominated society. The concern expressed here is not basically for the survival of non-humans but, rather, the effect of pollution on non-humans in relation to humans. It appears that The Activist's concern is basically motivated by the fact that he sees the environment as his possession to exploit and that the destruction of non-humans will negatively affect human sustenance. He recounts how his mother sustained her family by living off non-humans which is a pointer to the fact that humans depend on non-humans for survival.

Notwithstanding his anthropocentric leaning, The Activist acknowledges that destruction of the non-human subaltern in the environment is tantamount to the destruction of humanity and ecology at large because all constitutes the integral parts of the ecology. According to him, "the Niger Delta was part of its people and just as the land, air, and rivers were being poisoned so were the residents themselves," (p. 104). Obviously, non-humans subaltern cannot speak for or represent themselves; they must be represented by one who often appears as their master, as postulated by Spivak. Hence, the Activist assumes the position of human speaking for non-humans.

There are other instances from *The Activist* pointing to human's careless attitude towards the non-human subalterns as the major reason for their destruction in society. One of them is the shoddily laid oil pipes in Roko Village and across other adjoining communities, not minding the possible implication of such dangerous installation on the environment. Unfortunately, there was a blowout in Roko Village due to oil pipe leakages and weak and worn-out pipes used to transport crude from one point to another. Consequently, the entire village was burnt to the ground leaving the vegetation destroyed, animals dead, waters, and air polluted. Worst still, the bourgeoisie multinational oil companies fail to take responsibility but rather blame the unfortunate incident on the native proletariat population for sabotaging the oil pipes. This conspiracy further validates humans seemingly determination to annihilate completely nonhuman population in their indecent and irresponsible quest to acquire wealth. Owing to the fire incident, The Activist, Pere and his area boys, and the Student Union stage protests to demand compensation to cater to the village's refugee human population, leaving out the non-human population affected the most. Unfortunately, there is no plan to replenish the destroyed trees, vegetation, animals or clean up the waters and the environment because the protesters' demands are just for the benefit of humans and not the silenced subalterns (non-humans).

Perhaps, because he had attended conferences and symposiums on environmental protection and climate change, The Activist is the only consistent character in the novel that speaks out against human's domination, oppression, and destruction of non-humans in his society. The narrator reveals his reasons for constant agitations and protests the government and the oil companies thus, "—the poisonous methane gas from gas flares, leaking old oil pipes, blowouts, and spillages in the area that had rendered the evergreen wetlands poisoned, wildlife dead, the aquatic life also dead, and humans in these areas suffering from undiagnosed diseases" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 224).

The Activist's agitation is essentially motivated by his desire for wholesome living. Therefore, he shows concern for the non-human, though not as much as he does for the sustenance of humans. However, he understands that the continuous existence of humans cannot be wholly and completely divorced from the sustenance of non-humans and, therefore, strives to speak out for them because they cannot speak for themselves.

On the contrary, in the women's meeting organised by Titi in Warri, Umutor highlights the inability of women to conceive as one of the negative effects of human-induced environmental pollution. Corroborating her view, some members of the women group like Titi, Matije, Maomi and Mrs Taylor point out that environmental pollution has not only affected fertility in women but also men. In so many cases, when women conceive, they give birth to deformed children whom they will end up putting through mercy killings to end their suffering. They also suggest that oil pollution had affected women's lives to the point that it triggers the early menstrual circle at the age of ten and early menopause before forty, which were aberrations before the discovery and exploitation of oil. They also reel out a litany of other health and medical issues caused by the inappropriate exploration and exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta. In their meeting, the women who are human subalterns did not mince words in enumerating and highlighting how they have been affected negatively by the pollution of their environment occasioned by the exploitation activities of the oil companies in the area. However, they fail to consider the fate of non-humans in their environment if they, as humans, can suffer this much. If the proletarian subaltern woman can suffer this much, the non-human subaltern will suffer much more than we can imagine.

In articulating the women's concerns and demands, the narrator captures these in terms that suggest neglect and further validate the subaltern status of non-humans. All the allusions to the destruction of non-humans are made because of their multiplier effect on humans. The intrinsic values of non-humans are jettisoned and can only be considered if it has any consequence on humans. The narrator explains that:

> Pipes had been laid across groves, villages, and towns, intruding into the private spaces of animals, plant, and human populations. All the storks, kingfishers, weaverbirds, sunbirds, and many others had disappeared. The herbs and flowers were almost gone and only the old remembered them by their names. Simple herbs that cured many ailments had disappeared with coming of oil. Now the human population was suffering from ill health because of the disappearance of the sources of their medicines. In addition to loosing curatives for known ailments, new sicknesses had come in without known cures. (Ojaide, 2006, pp. 242-243)

The extract above shows that the people of the area are majorly interested in how oil exploitation and consequential environmental pollution affect the human population. Non-humans are mentioned because their destruction will only amount to scarcity for human wellbeing. The narrator reveals this fact when he says:

> The communities of the oil-producing areas wanted to breathe fresh and clean air; they wanted to drink clean water; they also wanted to swim and fish in their streams and rivers. They did not want to eat fish that harboured poisons in them. They wanted to farm their own crops to be self-reliant on food. They wanted to live a healthy life. And they wanted the damage already done to the environment to be treated seriously. (Ojaide, 2006, p. 243)

It is an indictment on humans in their desire to subdue non-human members of the environment. They are not agitating for a clean air environment because it will benefit non-humans who produce oxygen. The emission of carbon monoxide and other deadly toxic gases can cause harm or even death to humans. They demand clean water, healthy fish, and unpolluted soil because they either serve as drink, food or source of sustenance for them and not because of the intrinsic values they have or for the sustenance of these non-human members. Sadly, they are at the mercy of human exploitation and subordination.

There is also another incident of oil blowout in Ekakpamre village similar but worse than the one that occurs at Roko village. This oil blowout which turns the community into a wasteland, was "exacerbated by a pipe leakage and fuelled by gas flares" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 260). This fire incident is worse than any ever witnessed by the communities, for it rages for days without any effort by Bell Oil to put it out. Consequently, it burns down the entire environment without the intervention of any sort. It destroys the land, animals, vegetation, pollutes the air and even the river. The narrator captures the callousness of the oil company very aptly. In his words, "Bell Oil knew very well that there was a blowout but did not ask its fire-fighting team to put out the fire" (p. 261). This act from the capitalist oil company, managed by humans, caused devastating damage to the non-human habitats of that environment. In a similar manner, human subalterns were equally affected owing to the fact that their houses and properties were destroyed as well as their lives. On the part of non-humans, they were destroyed and killed beyond imagination. The narrator captures the devastation as follows:

> The Uto River was literally burning. Evergreen plants, dry leaves, and shrubs that stood by the river all became combustible materials. The poisonous methane gas fumes engulfed plants, wildlife, and humans around for days. (Ojaide, 2006, p. 261)

From the passages that follow, the narrator reveals that the oil company, driven by their greed and desire to appropriate the entire community for their oil exploitation, will not mind destroying the entire environment to achieve their oppressive capitalist desire. Unfortunately, the ultimate subalterns, the non-human members of the environment, must pay dearly, mostly with their lives and existence. Animals that managed to escape the devastation were badly deformed. *The Patriot*, a local newspaper owned by The Activist, captures some of the non-human survivors of the arson as 'deformed'. The newspaper reveals that "the only frogs seen were deformed-one-eyed or one-legged. Blind turtles were caught on land" (Ojaide, 2006, p. 293). And for the rivers, they become dumpsites for chemicals from oil companies. A good example is the Ugunu River which became "brown from Chemicals of oil exploration" (p. 300).

Ironically, the wanton destruction and oppression of non-human subaltern perpetuated by multinational oil companies are only prevalent in the Niger Delta and other postcolonial environments. In The Netherlands, the international headquarters and homeland of Bell Oil, non-humans are treated and related with respect and care. Non-humans in The Netherlands are respected and accorded the right to life, unlike in the Niger Delta. On a fun ride with Erika in The Netherlands, Dennis observes that the environment is completely different from the reality in his Niger Delta. The rivers and lakes they drove past are fresh, clean, and beautiful as they were thousands of years ago. Erika reveals to him that boats that emit dangerous fumes are not allowed on the lakes and rivers to avoid polluting the environment and poisoning the inhabitants of the lake and rivers. As they drove further and stopped by a park for a momentary rest, Dennis was astonished by the difference between his Niger Delta and The Netherlands. He observes that:

> Rabbits, squirrels, deer, and different types of birds were not scared by walkers around. Many of the trees must be hundreds of years old and yet looked fresh. A stream flowed through the park; it was shallow but its water was silvery clean. Dennis was surprised at the pristine beauty of the waters compared what had happened to the creeks, streams, and rivers of the Niger Delta. Dutch forests were still fresh despite the centuries the trees had grown, unlike the dying forests of his native Niger Delta. (Ojaide, 2006, p. 318)

The above passage sums up the complex situation of the environmental subalterns of the Niger Delta. The subordination and suppression of non-human subaltern in the Niger Delta are caught up and submerged in complex capitalist and exploitative oil cartels sanctioned by the Nigerian government. The condition of non-human subalterns in the Niger Delta is pitiable because the government and the multinational capitalist class do not care about them and perceive them as objects of gains and exploitation. Their condition is further exacerbated because the human subalterns who sometimes strive to speak for them end up exploiting and subordinating them the more to survive. Therefore, the non-human subalterns are twice and doubly exploited by the capitalist and the subaltern humans, and as such, they are the ultimate subaltern.

## CONCLUSION

Postcolonial eco literature is beginning to gain more attention as the years go by. However, there should be a paradigm shift from concentrating on humans to paying considerable attention to non-humans as members of our common ecology. Attention should be paid to the fact that they may be obliterated and extinct if their exploitation and destruction by humans are not checked. The purpose of classifying non-humans in this study as the ultimate subaltern is to draw attention to their exploitation and, therefore, call for care, protection, and preservation on their behalf— speaking for. Humans must realise that we cannot go on with destroying non-humans but rather love, care, nurture and be responsible to them. It is to say that humans must adopt a biocentric attitude in their dealings with nature. As vividly articulated in *The Activist,* the consequences of widespread neglect and destruction of non-humans must be redressed as a matter of urgency to continue living in a sustainable environment. Therefore, humans must respect nature, especially non-humans and treat them with utmost care and love. In turn, nature and non-humans are expected to reciprocate the gesture to attain harmony and balance.

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# The Role of Religiosity, Ethnicity and Gender Identification in Individual's Moral Judgments; The Mediation Effect of Self-transcendence

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## ABSTRACT

Most recently, corporate financial scandals, and unethical behaviour cast doubt on investors and raised public concern globally. It is due to the weak corporate governance structure and low ethic awareness amongst the people. The purpose of this research is therefore to justify the factors that influence an individual's moral judgement. This study also seeks to provide practical recommendations to corporations and different associations. As such, to evaluate the proposed hypotheses, 300 self-administered questionnaires were distributed in five universities in Malaysia using a non-probability sampling approach. As a result, the findings demonstrate that ethnicity has the highest impact on self-transcendence and moral judgement, followed by religiosity and gender identification (gender difference). The contribution of this research is to evaluate the relationships between religiosity, ethnicity, and gender identification towards moral judgement with the intervention of mediating variable (self-transcendence). In essence, ethical values and moral obligations should be highlighted in corporations, and these values should be practised and embraced into the organisational culture. Thus, organisational decision-makers should highly emphasise the role of ethicality and morality in corporations because ethical competence aligns with an employee's responsibility as a whole.

*Keywords:* Ethics, ethnicity, gender difference, moral judgment, religion, religiosity, theory of basic human values, theory of planned behaviour

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## INTRODUCTION

Ideally, it is presumed that every firm follows corporate governance measures and practices globally. However, recent financial reports revealed the financial scandals and failure of attaining companies' objectives by some high-profile companies like Dick Smith, China Medical Technologies (CMED), Banco Espirito Santo (BES), Volkswagen AG and Dynegy (Hamzah et al., 2018; Ivan, 2019; Lei & Chen, 2019). It is unremarkable that the existence of these global ethical debacles cast doubt on stakeholders and investors' confidence, which afflict firm value and potential investment decision making (Godlewska & Pilewicz, 2018; Nakpodia et al., 2018; Primec & Belak, 2018).

It is evident that insufficient accountability, unethical behaviour, and inefficiency of corporate governance structure has led to the corporations' financial failure (Karaca et al., 2018; Nikolić & Zlatanović, 2018; Surbhi & Vij, 2018). Consequently, a U.S. federal law called Sarbanes-Oxley Act was enacted in 2002, and ethical standards are primarily interested in every firm within the context of corporate governance logic. In contributing to this, accounting fraud, poor disclosure and transparency had stimulated regulatory interest in ethics and subsequently, the International Accounting Education Standards Board (IAESB) was developed in the year 2003 by establishing standards that prescribe technical competence and professional skills, ethics, and attitudes to strengthen public trust.

Although there is a rich body of literature in understanding corporate governance, it has become too centred and, in turn, pays less attention to the individual intention towards unethical individual behaviour. In addition, influential studies report the inconsistency of literature review in ethical behaviour. Thus, the purpose of this study seeks to underpin the conceptual framework towards ethical judgement and to delineate better the relationships between personality traits and morally ethical behaviour. Furthermore, this research also seeks to provide suggestions for the firms on selecting key personnel to ensure success therein. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Moral norms work with this construct, followed by research methodology, findings, and key contributions for future studies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theory of Planned Behaviour

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is a social-psychological theory used to explain and predict an individual's intentional behaviour. As such, this theory is well-known and widely applied to the studies among attitude, relativism, consumer ethics and behaviour (Bairaktarova & Woodcock, 2017; Ferencz-Kaddari et al., 2016; Hashim et al., 2018). To further illustrate, TPB consists of three main constructs: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude toward a behaviour is defined as an individual's perceptions towards an event or activity based on his/her perceptions, beliefs, observations, past experiences, and availability of information (Chang & Chou, 2018; Ferencz-Kaddari et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2018). On the other hand, subjective norm refers to an individual's perceptions towards the expectations of recommended behaviour from the third parties (family members, friends, peers, and society). Finally, as for perceived behavioural control, it explains the perception of an individual on his/her ability to overcome the difficulties and consequences (legally or reaction from society) of the suggested behaviour.

In relation to this research, attitude toward TPB behaviour accounts for the influence of an individual's moral judgment in engaging in ethical/unethical intention in decision making (Baden, 2014; Zaman et al., 2018). To further describe, ethics (moral philosophy) refers to the moral principles that govern the concepts of right and wrong conduct. Thus, an individual with a low level of ethical concern is highly likely to engage in unethical behaviour.

## Moral Norms and Moral Judgement

Moral norms are the rules and obligations of morality that people ought to follow. The norms provide people with the breadth and depth for moral judgement by adequately guiding people what is right and good in moral dilemmas (Maffini & Kim-Ju, 2018; Mansori, Rezaee et al., 2015; Yusupova, 2018). In the same vein, moral norms can be applied with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (attitude) to predict an individual's intentional behaviour better. With that being said, an individual with a high level of moral obligation may exhibit ethical decision making and vice versa.

On the other hand, moral judgement is defined as a state of belief, a judgement of moral values that can be used to evaluate an individual's ethical behaviour in a given situation (Breakey, 2018; Moncrieff & Lienard, 2018; Proctor et al., 2017). From the broader viewpoint, moral judgement is accompanied by moral obligation and moral sentiment. It is, therefore, safe to consider that an individual perceives a particular behaviour as right when he/she feels that there is a moral obligation (moral norms) beneath (Henrich et al., 2017; Maffini & Kim-Ju, 2018; Ward & King, 2018; Wegner et al., 2019). Thus, along with the feeling of approval (moral judgement), eventually, the individual tends to exhibit morally salient behaviour.

Regarding the above, TPB and moral norms advocate that attitude and moral obligations might be influenced by personality traits (people's characteristics), which in turn can influence moral judgement and potential intended behaviour (Grosby, 2015; Yacob et al., 2018). However, little research focuses on the ethical and moral factors influencing an individual's moral judgement and behavioural intention. As a result, this study seeks to evaluate the relationships between religiosity, ethnicity, and gender identification towards moral judgement with the inclusion of self-transcendence as a mediator.

## Religiosity

In essence, religiosity portrays the degree of an individual's belief in God, his/her adherence to the religious practices and values applied in his/her daily routine (Breakey, 2018; Yacob et al., 2018). Different studies have revealed that religiosity significantly impacts an individual's attitude and intended behaviour (TPB) to enhance this provision. Correspondingly, religiosity is validated as an integral role in influencing an individual's level of religiosity adherence towards moral judgement and ethical decision making (Hashim et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2018). In this context, if a person has high religiosity, he/she may tend to exhibit more ethical behaviour. Thus, to test the relationship between religiosity and moral judgement, the hypothesis is developed below:

> *H1:* There is a relationship between religiosity and self-transcendence towards ethical, moral judgement.

## Ethnicity

Ethnicity can be defined as an individual's behaviour and self-concept, which is directly influenced by his/her membership of a social group and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Grosby, 2015; Moncrieff & Lienard, 2018; Yusupova, 2018). By and large, ethnicity is presumed to have a crucial role in influencing a person's ethics and moral obligations. However, little research proposed the impact of ethnicity on a person's attitude and ethical-moral judgment. As opposed to this viewpoint, the concept of the social norm social in Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) explains that a person tends to engage in a recommended behaviour which is suggested by his/her social group or close ones (family members, friends, siblings; Bairaktarova & Woodcock, 2017; Ferencz-Kaddari et al., 2016; Zaman et al., 2018). Hence, it is argued that ethnicity might be linearly associated with ethical decision making. In brief, to justify the relationship between ethnicity and moral judgement, the following hypothesis has been derived:

> *H2:* There is a relationship between ethnicity and self-transcendence towards ethical, moral judgement.

## Gender Identification

Gender identity can be defined as an individual sense of own self-identified gender. Gender identity can have a high level of correlation with the person sex at birth as in many societies; the underlying assumption is that a man should be masculine, and a woman should behave in a femininely. However, pioneer scholars such as Stoller (1964) tried to differentiate natural sex labelling from gender-based behaviour's related behavioural and psychological aspects by introducing gender identity terms (Turban & Ehrensaft, 2018).

Recently, the question of measuring gender differences in ethical decision making has raised research interest worldwide. In this concept, rigorous studies reported that moral issues arise due to the different modes of thinking between men and women. For example, some studies show that men tend to justify moral issues in terms of rules and rights (Nguyen et al., 2016; Wang & Calvano, 2013; Zayer & Coleman, 2015). In contrast, women tend to justify moral issues in terms of feelings and relationships.

A group of researchers proposed that women are more unselfish, emphatic, exhibit higher moral sensitivity and, thus, have lesser intention to engage in unethical behaviour than men (Bossuyt & Van Kenhove, 2016; Chen et al., 2016; Jereb et al., 2018). Also, other studies found that there is no gender difference in moral beliefs. It is, therefore, safe to consider that there is an inconsistency of conceptual framework towards ethical, moral judgement. Based on the findings, to test the relationship between gender difference and ethical-moral judgement, the hypothesis is conducted below:

*H3:* There is a relationship between gender difference and self-transcendence towards ethical, moral judgement.

## Basic Human Values

Theory of Basic Human Values (TBHV) is commonly used to measure universal values recognised by almost all individuals. Utilising this theory encompasses ten motivationally distinct values, and these values are divided into a total of four dimensions: openness to change (stimulation, self-direction), self-transcendence (benevolence, universalism), conservation (security, conformity, tradition) and self-enhancement (hedonism, achievement, power; Magun et al., 2017; Seddig & Davidov, 2018; Tevrüz et al., 2015). In addition, self-transcendence is emphasised in this study to enhance this explanation. Given that, it epitomises the attitude of tolerance, appreciation, the values of concern and protection for the welfare of others.

By considering TBHV and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), individuals generally should be motivated by their social groups (social norm and benevolence), and it is presumed that they tend to appreciate and accept the values/beliefs (universalism) shared by those who are in the same social group (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017; Pohling et al., 2016; Różycka-Tran et al., 2017). It is being said that values affect attitude, perceptions, intention and subsequently, behaviour. Likewise, if the behaviour of a person in the group shows the value of self-transcendence, he/she will facilitate others' moral cognition processes (benevolence) and eventually influence their attitude and intended behaviour (Baden, 2014; Jiang et al., 2018). The following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship between self-transcendence and ethical-moral judgement:

*H4:* There is a relationship between self-transcendence and ethical-moral judgement.

## Mediation Effect

Self-transcendence is employed in this research as a mediating variable to examine key attributes' impact on ethical moral judgment. To further illustrate, a mediating variable is termed as an intervening variable that seeks to justify the mechanism of the relationships between the independent variables (religiosity, ethnicity, and gender identification) and the dependent variable (moral judgement; Figure 1). As such, its intervention will affect the significance between these variables. However,

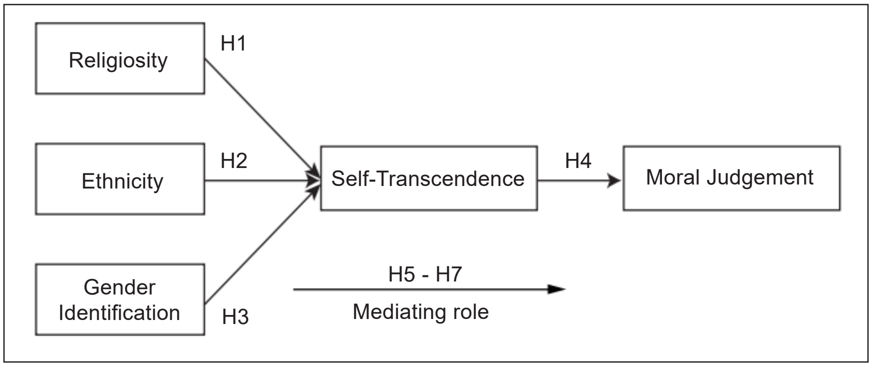

*Figure 1.* Proposed conceptual framework

inconsistent findings were found with the limitation in using self-transcendence as a mediator for moral-salient behaviour. As a result, it is hypothesised that self-transcendence should trigger a person's ethical, moral judgement and thus, the following hypotheses have been designed:

*H5*: Self-transcendence mediates the relationship between religiosity and ethical-moral judgement.

*H6*: Self-transcendence mediates the relationship between ethnicity and ethical-moral judgement.

*H7*: Self-transcendence mediates the relationship between gender identification and ethical-moral judgement.

## METHODOLOGY

During the data collection process, 300 self-administrated questionnaires were distributed. Students pursuing an undergraduate degree in Business, Recourse Management, Marketing, Human Management Finance and Accounting programmes from three private and two public universities in Malaysia were selected using non-probability convenience sampling.

The developed questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A is inquiries about religiosity, ethnicity, gender identity, self-transcendence, and moral judgments (please see Table 2 for more details). Section B asks for participants' demographic information. As authors tried to minimise any over-generalisation of findings by creating any prejudice, the nationality, ethnic group and religious affiliation of participants are not asked and not included in this part.

To measure the level of religiosity, gender identity, and ethnicity, participants rated their disagreement and agreement level with the statements (1; "Strongly Disagree" and 6: "Staringly Agree"). The self-transcend measurement is adapted from the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001). In this part, participants were asked to rate their similarities with the provided statements (1; "Not Like Me at All" and 6; "Very Much Like Me").

Five potential scenarios developed by Reidenbach and Robin (1990) were adopted to measure the moral judgment of participants. This part evaluated four moral judgement's dimensions (Contractualism, Moral Equity, Relativism and Universalism). The value of each dimension was calculated based on the mean score (reversed) of all five scenarios (Please see appendix A). As the used questions for some constructs have male and female versions and to avoid confusion for participants, two copies of the questionnaire (Male and Female) were passed to participants, and they have full liberty to choose the version that their wish to answer based on their preference (unused questionnaires were discarded.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Some of the returned questionnaires were filtered out due to the missing values and incomplete answers. As a result, a total of 251 samples were finalised for data analysis. According to Table 1, 39.8% of the participants are majoring in accounting, whilst finance stands for 29.5%, followed by other majors (11.2%). Similarly, the fourth ranking falls to management (8.4%), and the fifth is marketing (4.0%). On the other hand, more than half of the participants are in year 2 (57.8%), and 21.9% are in year 1. Additionally, the data shows that approximately 76.5% of the participants have learnt about ethics whilst 23.5% have not.

Based on the reliability and validity analysis shown below (Table 2), the developed measurement model has presumed to fit as it is within the acceptable level of reliability and validity measurement. To further explain, the Factor Loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all variables are more than 0.5 respectively (0.643- 0.865 and 0.526- 0.674) and thus, it is within the acceptable range. On the other hand, Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) are within the level of acceptance as both values exceed 0.7 (ranging between 0.816- 0.912 and 0.726- 0.880, respectively).

By adhering to this, the path model below (Figure 2) exhibits three independent variables (religiosity, ethnicity, and gender identification) towards moral judgement with the mediation effect of self-transcendence.

According to Table 3 below, religiosity presents a significant direct relationship

Table 1
*Demographic information*

| **Major** | **%** | **Academic Year** | **%** | **Pass any Ethics Course** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accounting | 39.8 | Year 1 | 21.9 | Yes | 76.5 |
| Finance | 29.5 | Year 2 | 57.8 | No | 23.5 |
| Marketing | 4.0 | Year 3 | 14.3 | | |
| Human Resource | 1.6 | Year 4 | 6.0 | | |
| Management | 8.4 | | | Gender | % |
| Business | 3.2 | | | Male | 49.0 |
| Law | 2.4 | | | Female | 51.0 |
| Other | 11.2 | | | | |

Table 2
*Reliability and validity analysis*

| Religiosity | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0.674 | 0.912 | .880 | |
| Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life | | | | 0.768 |
| I try to follow my religious beliefs in all aspects of life | | | | 0.865 |
| Prayers and reflections of my religious thought make me calm | | | | 0.806 |
| Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life | | | | 0.831 |
| I enjoy spending time reading and learning more about my religion | | | | 0.832 |
| *Adopted/Adapted from:* Mansori, Sambasivan et al. (2015) | | | | |
| Ethnicity | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's Alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
| | 0.597 | 0.898 | .867 | |
| I feel a strong attachment towards my ethnic group. | | | | 0.773 |
| I have often talked to other people to learn more about my ethnic group. | | | | 0.855 |
| I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better. | | | | 0.819 |
| I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. | | | | 0.834 |
| I have a strong sense of belonging to my ethnic group. | | | | 0.690 |
| I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic groups, such as their history, traditions, and customs. | | | | Removed |
| *Adopted/Adapted from:* Phinney & Ong (2007) | | | | |
| Gender Identification | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's Alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
| | 0.526 | 0.816 | .726 | |
| When I'm with women, I want to impress, I try to act very feminine.<br>When I'm with men, I want to impress, I try to act very masculinely. * | | | | 0.751 |
| I prefer to defer to a man rather than trying to be his equal all the time.<br>I prefer a woman who defers to me rather than trying to be my equal all the time. * | | | | 0.765 |
| When there's an important job to be done, I'd prefer to have a man take the lead than a woman.<br>When there's an important job to be done, I'd prefer to have a man as a leader than a woman. * | | | | 0.713 |
| When men and women are in the same organisation, women should let the men take the lead and not try to take over. | | | | 0.669 |
| When I'm with women, I want to impress, I try to act very feminine.<br>When I'm with men, I want to impress, I try to act very masculinely. * | | | | Removed |
| *Adopted/Adapted from:* Spence & Helmreich (1980)<br>**For Male Participants.* | | | | |
| Self-Transcendence | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's Alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
| | 0.543 | 0.892 | .859 | |
| She thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. She believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.<br>He thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life. * | | | | 0.667 |

Table 2 (*continue*)

| Self-Transcendence | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's Alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0.543 | 0.892 | .859 | |
| It is important for her to respond to the needs of others. She tries to support those she knows.<br>It is important for him to respond to the needs of others. He tries to support those he knows. * | | | | 0.725 |
| She wants everyone to be treated justly, even people she doesn't know. It is important to her to protect the weak in society.<br>He wants everyone to be treated justly, even people he doesn't know. It is important to him to protect the weak in society. * | | | | 0.739 |
| It's very important to her to help the people around her. She wants to care for their well-being.<br>It's very important to him to help the people around him. He wants to care for their well-being. * | | | | 0.708 |
| It is important to her to be loyal to her friends. She wants to devote herself to people close to her.<br>It is important to him to be loyal to his friends. He wants to devote himself to people close to him. * | | | | 0.805 |
| Forgiving people who have hurt her is important to her. She tries to see what is good in them and not hold a grudge.<br>Forgiving people who have hurt him is important to him. He tries to see what is good in them and not hold a grudge. * | | | | 0.780 |
| It is important to her to adapt to nature and to fit into it. She believes that people should not change nature.<br>It is important to him to adapt to nature and to fit into it. He believes that people should not change nature. * | | | | Removed* |
| She strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her.<br>He strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him. * | | | | Removed* |
| *Adopted/Adapted from:* Schwartz et al. (2001)<br>**For Male Participants.* | | | | |
| Moral Judgement | Average extracted Variance (AVE) | Composite reliability (CR) | Cronbach's Alpha (CA) | Factor loading |
| | 0.593 | 0.879 | .830 | |
| Contractualism | | | | 0.812 |
| Moral Equity | | | | 0.772 |
| Relativism | | | | 0.673 |
| Universalism | | | | 0.786 |
| *Adopted/Adapted from:* Reidenbach & Robin, 1990 | | | | |
| *Items with factor loading below 0.60 are removed.* | | | | |

towards self-transcendence, and thus, it is supported (*H1*) (β= 0.243, T-value= 3.408). Given that, this hypothesis 1 concludes that the higher level of religiosity and self-transcendence, the higher tendency of a person to perform ethical, moral judgement. In relation to hypothesis 2 (*H2*), there is a significant positive relationship (supported) between ethnicity and self-transcendence (β= 0.253, T-value= 2.883). Specifically, if a

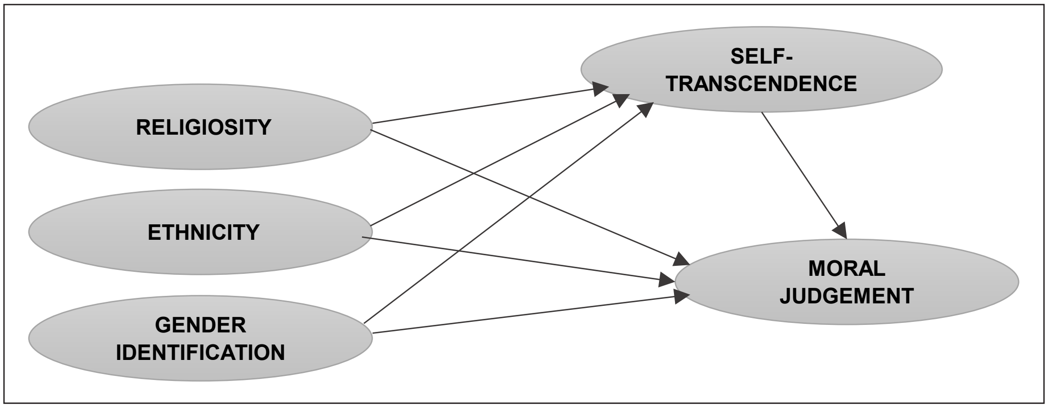

*Figure 2.* Path model with self-transcendence as mediating variable

Table 3
*Hypothesis testing*

| Hypothesis (Direct relationship) | Sample mean β | Standard deviation | T statistics (T> 1.96= p< 0.05) | Supported |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *H1*: Religiosity→ Self-transcendence | 0.243 | 0.072 | 3.408 | Yes |
| *H2*: Ethnicity→ Self-transcendence | 0.253 | 0.086 | 2.883 | Yes |
| *H3*: Gender Identification → Self-transcendence | 0.140 | 0.061 | 2.208 | Yes |
| *H4*: Self-transcendence → Moral Judgement | 0.290 | 0.065 | 4.487 | Yes |
| R-square:<br>Self-transcendence: 0.263, Moral Judgement: 0.356 | | | | |

person has a high degree of ethnicity, he/she will most likely exhibit ethical behaviour. Along with this table, gender identification (*H3*) also shows a significant positive relationship towards ethical decision making with the values of β= 0.140, T - value= 2.208 and hence, it is supported.

Associated with *H3*, it is assumed that males (masculinity) have a higher tendency of engaging in unethical moral judgement than females (femininity) due to the different modes of moral justification. As for hypothesis 4 (*H4*), there is a significant direct relationship between self-transcendence and moral judgement (supported with β= 0.290, T-value= 4.487). Thus, it can be explained that the higher level of self-transcendence in a person, the higher level of ethical engagement of him/her.

To achieve better understanding, the $R^2$ for self-transcendence is 0.263 (26.3%), whilst moral judgement's $R^2$ is 0.356 (35.6%). It illustrates that a 26.3% variance of self-transcendence can be justified by the independent variables (religiosity, ethnicity and gender identification), and a 35.6% variance of modal judgement can be explained by self-transcendence.

In addition, to test the mediating effect of self-transcendence, the bootstrapping

Table 4
*Test of total effect using bootstrapping*

| Path c’ | Sample mean β | Standard deviation | T statistics (T> 1.96= p< 0.05) | Supported |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *H5*: Religiosity  Moral Judgement | -0.119 | 0.108 | 1.067 | No |
| *H6*: Ethnicity Moral Judgement | 0.360 | 0.105 | 3.429 | Yes |
| *H7*: Gender Identification  Moral Judgement | 0.354 | 0.057 | 6.044 | Yes |

Table 5
*Test of the indirect effect*

| Total indirect effect | P-value | T statistics (T> 1.96= partial) | Mediation effect |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnicity  Moral Judgement | .007 | 1.765 | Yes- Full mediation |
| Gender Identification  Moral Judgement | .015 | 2.731 | Yes- Partial mediation |

method was employed. The results (Tables 4 and 5) show that self-transcendence mediates the relationship between ethnicity, gender identification and moral judgment. With that being said, both *H6* and *H7* propose significant relationships for ethnicity and gender identification towards moral judgement (β= 0.360, T-value= 3.429; β= 0.354, T-value= 6.044 respectively). Relatively, this reveals that self-transcendence mediates in these hypotheses with a partial mediation effect (T-value= 2.731 for ethnicity; T- value= 5.278 for gender identification). Opposed, *H5 is not supported as* there is an insignificant relationship between religiosity and moral judgement (β= -0.119, T-value= 1.067).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The above findings show that there is a strong direct correlation between ethnicity and self-transcendence. This result can be explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as based on TBP person’s moral judgement can be influenced by attitude, social norm(s) and perceived behavioural control of his/her ability to perform moral obligations. In other words, if a person has a strong tight with his/her ethnic group that holds the value and belief of ethical judgement, highly likely, he/she will follow and maintain this group’s common values.

This result can be used as a guideline for corporations and universities to design and develop training programmes that highlight unethical behaviour’s the negative impact and detriments towards society and the community. Additionally, the benefits of engaging in ethical behaviour should be nudged to the public to build a moral direction therein. Given that, ethics awareness will grow and spread among the society in the long term.

On the other hand, the current results show that the level of religiosity has a direct association with the level of self-transcendence. It is important to be considered that there is a difference between religiosity/spirituality with some extreme interpretations of religions which can be observed in some societies. The main focus of this study's instrument to measure the participants' religiosity is intrinsic (the use of religion without social pressure and/or gain) than extrinsic religiosity (use of religion to gain social acceptance). These results can enhance programmes/modules in ethics and corporate governance fields by adding more spirituality related content into the developed curricula.

Furthermore, the current results reveal that gender identification has a positive relationship with self-transcendence and moral judgment. Gender identification in this study refers to an individual sense of own self-identified gender. In this study, participants have full liberty to choose the type of questionnaire that they wish to answer based on their sense of identification towards their gender. Thus, there is a possibility that some individuals that chose to answer the male (or female) version of the questionnaire were from the opposite birth sex. As a result, these findings should be interpreted in a way that higher gender identification based on self-identified gender has a direct and positive relationship with self-transcendence and moral judgment (not simply are interpreted as masculine males or feminine females may show a higher level of self-transcendence and moral judgment). As a result, training and professional development programmes should be provided in the corporations to train both male and female employees. In addition, hypothetical ethical scenarios should be included in the training sessions to learn through the different modes of thinking and moral obligations.

Positive psychology and the moral conation process should be emphasised in future research to enhance understanding of taking a person to make a moral judgment. Secondly, employers should seek value profiles during interviews. Given an example, knowing which values (personal traits) should be endorsed by a potential employee so that these ethical values could assist his/her working performance if he/she is successfully hired. In essence, ethical values and moral obligations should be highlighted in corporations, and these values should be practised and embraced into the organisational culture. Thus, organisational decision-makers should highly emphasise the role of ethicality and morality in corporations because ethical competence aligns with an employee's responsibility as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

Several business scandals have occurred in the recent years mainly because of a weaker corporate governance structure and lack of sufficient accountability. Some studies argued that more restricted regulations and governance procedures can reduce the chance of unethical behaviour at the corporate level. While other research highlighted that more restricted regulations pre se might not be effective and discussed the contribution of moral and ethical educations in reducing the chance of corporate wrongdoing. The findings of this study indicate that ethnicity has the highest impact on self-transcendence and moral judgement, followed by religiosity and gender identification. In essence, ethical values and moral obligations should be highlighted in training and professional development programmes, and these values should be practised and embraced into the organisational culture.

Same as any other empirical study, this study's results should also be generalised by considering the below-mentioned limitations. In addition, the provided suggestion can be useful to improve the further studies' results in this field. 1) the samples in this study were selected based on non-probability sampling and from a limited number of universities in Malaysia. Therefore, it is advisable if further studies can have a multinational approach and collect samples from different countries and test the moderating effect of other cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism/collectivism, and long-term/short-term orientation. 2) the coefficient of determinations of the study are $R^2_{(\text{Self-transcendence})} = 0.263$ and $R^2_{(\text{Moral Judgement})} = 0.356$, which shows that the current model can predict 26.3% and 35.6% of Self-transcendence and Moral Judgement. As a result, further studies can consider including other variables from the Theory of Basic Human Values to improve predictability. 3) As exploratory and quantitative research, this study could not deeply explore the means and justifications of provided responses by participants. Accordingly, having more exploratory qualitative studies in the future can shade more light on this phenomenon.

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## APPENDIX

### Moral Judgment Scenarios

In the following section, you will read five (5) scenarios. Please read each scenario carefully and rank your judgment regarding each taken action. **(Please circle the appropriate number)**

**Scenario 1:** Misleading the appraiser
An automobile salesman is told by a customer that a serious engine problem exists with a trade-in. However, because of his desire to make the sale, he does not inform the used car appraiser at the dealership, and the problem is not identified.

**Action:** The salesman closes the deal that includes the trade-in.

1 2 3 4 5 6

| | |
|---|---|
| Unfair *(Moral Equity)* | Fair |
| Unjust *(Moral Equity)* | Just |
| Unacceptable *(Moral Equity)* | Acceptable |
| Morally wrong *(Moral Equity)* | Morally right |
| Traditionally unacceptable *(Relativism)* | Traditionally acceptable |
| Culturally unacceptable (*Relativism)* | Culturally acceptable |
| Violates an unspoken promise *(Contractualism)* | Does not violate an unspoken promise |
| Violates an unwritten contract *(Contractualism)* | Does not violate an unwritten contract |
| Ethically unacceptable *(Universalism)* | Ethically acceptable |

**Scenario 2:** Over-eager salesperson
A young man, recently hired as a salesman for a local retail store, has been working very hard to favorably impress his boss with his selling ability. At times, this young man, anxious for an order, has been a little over-eager. To get the order, he exaggerates the value of the item or withholds relevant information concerning the product he is trying to sell. No fraud or deceit is intended by his actions, he is simply over-eager.

**Action:** The owner of the retail store is aware of this salesman's actions, but has done nothing to stop such practice.

1 2 3 4 5 6

| | |
|---|---|
| Unfair *(Moral Equity)* | Fair |
| Unjust *(Moral Equity)* | Just |
| Unacceptable *(Moral Equity)* | Acceptable |
| Morally wrong *(Moral Equity)* | Morally right |
| Traditionally unacceptable *(Relativism)* | Traditionally acceptable |
| Culturally unacceptable (*Relativism)* | Culturally acceptable |
| Violates an unspoken promise *(Contractualism)* | Does not violate an unspoken promise |
| Violates an unwritten contract *(Contractualism)* | Does not violate an unwritten contract |
| Ethically unacceptable *(Universalism)* | Ethically acceptable |

**Scenario 4:** Failure to honor a warranty
A person bought a new car from a franchised automobile dealership in the local area. Eight months after the car was purchased, he began having problems with the transmission. He took the car back to the dealer, and some minor adjustments were made. During the next few months, he continually had a similar problem with the transmission slipping. Each time the dealer made only minor adjustments to the car. Again, during the 13th month after the car had been bought, the man returned to the dealer because the transmission still was not functioning properly. At this time, the transmission was completely overhauled.

**Action:** Since the warranty was for only 1 year (12 months from the date of purchase), the dealer charged the full price of parts and labor.

1 2 3 4 5 6

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unfair *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Fair |
| Unjust *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Just |
| Unacceptable *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Acceptable |
| Morally wrong *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Morally right |
| Traditionally unacceptable *(Relativism)* | | | | | | | Traditionally acceptable |
| Culturally unacceptable (*Relativism)* | | | | | | | Culturally acceptable |
| Violates an unspoken promise *(Contractualism)* | | | | | | | Does not violate an unspoken promise |
| Violates an unwritten contract *(Contractualism)* | | | | | | | Does not violate an unwritten contract |
| Ethically unacceptable *(Universalism)* | | | | | | | Ethically acceptable |

**Scenario 5:** Disclosure information
A chartered accountant of a public company knows about the highly positive results that will be shown to the stockholders.
**Action:** A company's chartered accountant, before the public disclosure of the corresponding results, called a personal friend advising him to buy stocks of that same company.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unfair *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Fair |
| Unjust *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Just |
| Unacceptable *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Acceptable |
| Morally wrong *(Moral Equity)* | | | | | | | Morally right |
| Traditionally unacceptable *(Relativism)* | | | | | | | Traditionally acceptable |
| Culturally unacceptable (*Relativism)* | | | | | | | Culturally acceptable |
| Violates an unspoken promise *(Contractualism)* | | | | | | | Does not violate an unspoken promise |
| Violates an unwritten contract *(Contractualism)* | | | | | | | Does not violate an unwritten contract |
| Ethically unacceptable *(Universalism)* | | | | | | | Ethically acceptable |

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# The Role of Religiosity to Address the Mental Health Crisis of Students: A Study on Three Parameters (Anxiety, Depression, and Stress)

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## ABSTRACT

Religiosity is a construct that has interesting implications in the mental health issues of youths. This study examines the role of religiosity on anxiety, depression, and stress using 148 Muslim students studying Islamic studies at undergraduate provision in an Islamic University as sample. Results indicated that the level of religiosity among the participants ranged from moderately religious to highly religious. The mean levels of anxiety, depression, and stress among the participants were moderate, and a significant number of students suffered from severe psychological distress. Female students were reported to experience significantly slightly more stress than male students. Furthermore, the relationship between religiosity, anxiety, and depression was significantly negative but not stressful. Further analysis found that religiosity serves as a protective factor for depression. Meanwhile, some religiosity components (i.e., avoidance of sinful acts and frequent conduct of recommended acts) were found to be a significant protective factor against anxiety and depression, respectively. Thus, in retrospect, mental health and religion appear to converge on managing psychological distress. As so to speak, this is a vital point in the emerging mental health services in which the incorporation of religious components into clinical practice may show good promising results in aiding the recovery process of psychological health issues. Likewise, embedding religiosity

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in one's life, or being religiously minded, reflected in daily life manifestation, is linked with better mental health outcomes.

*Keywords*: Islam, Malaysia, mental health, religious studies, young adults

## INTRODUCTION

Mental disorders have incapacitated almost a million people across the globe. A recent report by World Health Organization (2019) revealed that depression causes the leading worldwide disability, followed by 800 000 suicide-death cases involving youths and adults (15-29 years old). Furthermore, more than one billion people are affected by mental illness throughout their lifetime. Hence, mental disorders are considered one of the major contributors to the Global Burden of Disease (Rehm & Shield, 2019).

Young adults in higher education's mental health conditions were persistent due to life transitions from adolescence to adulthood (Royal College Psychiatrists, 2011). The university's daily demands exceptionally require students to squish their emotional, intellectual, financial, and great energy to fulfil the tasks and achieve excellent academic performances (Saleem et al., 2013). It was documented in the literature that there was an exacerbation in the onset of psychological symptoms and an increase in the number and severity of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among university students (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Pedrelli et al., 2015). Storrie et al. (2010) systematically analysed 11 articles with 18,580 participants on the prevalence of mental health issues among students from English-speaking countries globally. They found that depression, anxiety, and psychotic disorders were highly prevalent among university students.

Statistics have shown that the number of Malaysian adults suffering from mental health issues is depressing. For example, the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 revealed that about 29.2% of Malaysian adults aged 16 years and above experienced mental health problems (Institute for Public Health, 2015). Some other studies also share similar results whereby the prevalence of psychological distress among university students in Malaysia are higher in anxiety, depression, and stress (Md Nordin et al., 2010; Shamsuddin et al., 2013). Additionally, senior students in some universities reported experiencing more anxiety symptoms than freshmen and sophomores (Rashid et al., 2021).

The Malaysians' stigma on mental health conditions and misperceptions of mentally ill individuals remain high in society. People with mental health problems were viewed as 'crazy' and triggered them to stay in silence than seek help from institutionalised mental health care and professionals (Hanafiah & Van Bortel, 2015). The demand to seek Muslim faith healers for Muslims with mental illness is also at its peak due to the belief in the metaphysical existence virtue (i.e., *jinn*/demons) which caused the mental illness (Razali & Tahir, 2018). This desire to meet the complementary or alternative healers instead of conventional health providers may be developed and maintained by cultural inclusion of religious teachings such as predestined matters, have shaped a belief on the attribution of the mental illnesses were originated by supernatural elements (Choudhry et al., 2016). Moreover, it was found that the belief in the effectiveness of faith or traditional healers strengthened the hindrance of conventional help-seeking services in low- and middle-income countries (van der Watt et al., 2018), including Malaysia.

Spirituality and religiosity were used interchangeably in academic papers and various public debates. The close relationship is understandable since all the main traditional world religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Jews does not essentially differentiate those two constructs. Islam, for example, considers religiosity and acts of worship as parts of spirituality. However, in modern psychological research and treatment, more refined definitions and understandings are paramount to promote greater research and, more importantly, to help culturally diverse mental health clienteles. Pargament (2011) stated that spirituality is the heart and soul of any religion. It describes personal connectedness with transcendence and generates a more individualistic meaning of life. Religion is the organised system that includes ways of worship, worldview, sacredness and spiritual components shared by a group of people. Spirituality does not necessarily need a religion to be manifested in a person.

Many research examined the associations between religiosity and psychological disorders, and there is evidence signify the importance of religion, religiosity, and religiousness in dealing with uprising issues in mental health globally (Weber & Pargament, 2014). Levin (2010) highlighted extensive scientific research on the study of religion-health connection portrays several promising evidence as primary preventions in the psychiatric population. The literature review showed several studies on the relationship between adolescent religiosity or spirituality and mental health. The evidence showed that nearly all studies demonstrated that adolescents with higher religiosity or spirituality were associated with good mental health (Wong et al., 2006). Meanwhile, Moreira-Almeida et al. (2006) found that frequent involvements in religious activities lead to positive psychological well-being. Furthermore, they discovered that mediators such as social support, belief system or cognitive framework, religious practices, spiritual direction, words to express stress, and religious multi-dimension explanations were fathomed to influence the health-promoting effects by the construct of religiosity.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the relationships between religiosity and anxiety, and mixed results were found when the two variables were correlated. For example, Koenig (2009), in his review paper, studied the relationship between religion, spirituality, and mental health and reported that 36 studies have found that higher religious involvements were significantly associated with lesser anxiety or fear. On the other hand, ten studies in the review documented greater anxiety, and the rest had no significant association. Moreover, many studies have been conducted to examine the relationships between anxiety and college students. For example, Forouhari et al. (2019), in their systematic review and meta-analysis of 13 articles (sample size of 5,620), found a negative relationship between anxiety and religious orientation alone, but an inverse result in internal religious orientation. Meanwhile, a significant negative relationship was found in the trait of anxiety when religious commitments were observed (Harris et al., 2002) and religious service attendance produced a significant negative correlation with, and a lower level of anxiety (Gonçalves et al., 2018; Jansen et al., 2010).

A large volume of published studies describes the association between religiosity and depression, and the results found were also mixed in nature. For example, in the review paper by Koenig (2009), he found that two-thirds out of 93 correlational-based studies reported significantly low rates of depression (i.e., either disorder or symptoms) among more religious people. The rest of the studies found no significant association between religiosity and depression, and only four studies reported a negative relationship between being religious and depression. Another study by Bonelli (2017), who systematically reviewed 43 studies on religiosity and/or spirituality among patients with psychiatric illnesses, found that 72% reported a positive association between religiosity/spirituality and mental health, 19% found mixed (positive and negative) results, 2% indicated no relationship, and 5% found a negative relationship.

Correspondingly, many studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between religiosity and stress. According to Ross (1990), strong religious belief is associated with lower psychological distress. In their meta-analytic of 35 studies on the relationship between religiosity and everyday psychological adjustments, Hackney and Sanders (2003) found that religiosity was associated with low distress when religiosity was considered a personal devotion. Furthermore, a higher level of religiousness intertwined with the exercise of positive religious copings was reported to reduce the stress among international Muslim students in New Zealand (Gardner et al., 2014). Similarly, in Malaysia, more young people in medical school engage with religion to cope with stress (Salam et al., 2013; Yusoff et al., 2011).

With the advent of science, especially psychological medicine, mental health issues have become almost exclusively under the purview of mental health professionals grounded on empirical evidence and scientific traditions. In conservatively religious societies, this situation might pose a challenge in caring for and treating psychiatric illnesses. Their respected *ustadz* or religious scholars lead the community. Unfortunately, there are not many studies investigating the mental health issues of religious scholars and students in religious studies. This kind of investigation might pave the way for understanding further the mental health issues in relation to religiosity and the presence of mental health problems among people of religion.

Consist of more than 60% of the multi-religious population, Muslims are the majority in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the data on Muslims mental health in Malaysia is insufficient and under discovery. Moreover, the authors observed that studies on the association of religiosity and mental health among Muslim students in Southeast Asia are scarce. Furthermore, studies on mental health among university students in Malaysia were mostly done on medical students, while there were few findings on students who took religious courses as their major. Therefore, the current study aims to investigate the relationship between religiosity and mental health issues (i.e., anxiety, depression, and stress) among Muslim university students specialising in Islamic studies in a Malaysian context to understand this phenomenon further and contribute to the body of knowledge. Additionally, to explore the level of religiosity and identify specific religiosity components that act as psychological aid towards psychological distress.

By understanding the status of religiosity of Muslim students who are formally studying religious courses daily, the current study may provide insights into how religious knowledge and activities signify as protective roles for psychological problems.

It is important to emphasise that the assessment of religiosity in this study understands that it will infer to the spiritual level and spirituality.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were undergraduate students who enrolled in religious studies at one of the Islamic universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. They were recruited through purposive sampling since the study's inclusion criteria need Muslim participants who specialise in Islamic studies. Around 170 students were approached.

### Measures

**Sociodemographic Items.** Information on age, gender, nationality, marital status, year of study, school of study, and two questions regarding their mental health status and help-seeking behaviours were asked: i) if they have experienced meeting mental health professionals (i.e., psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, counsellor) and ii) if they have met any religious practitioners for their mental health or psychological issues.

**Religiosity.** Olufadi (2017) established the Muslim Daily Religiosity Assessment Scale (MUDRAS) to access Muslim's conduct that is in line with the Islamic teaching. It is a 21-item self-report measure of daily religiosity with three components (i.e., sinful acts, recommended acts by Allah (i.e., God) and prophet, and engaging in bodily worship of Allah). The component of sinful acts brings the connotation of major and minor sins that Allah strongly prohibits, and the items are rated as "Never do this today =3" to "More than three times today =0". Next, recommended acts component is positive recommended acts commanded by Allah and advocated by the Prophet Muhammad. The last component caters for religious activities' items obligated by Allah. The global score for this scale ranges from 0 to 10. Greater values posit a good relationship with Allah for the day. This scale has high internal consistency (α=.89; Olufadi, 2017). The current study has an acceptable internal consistency (α=.69) of the scale.

**Anxiety.** Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) was used to measure anxiety in this study (Beck, Epstein, et al., 1988). This instrument consists of 21 items rated from 0 (Not at all) to 3 (Severely-It bothered me a lot). Each item is descriptive of subjective, somatic, or panic-related symptoms of anxiety. The anxiety level severity is measured according to the total score ranges from 0 to 63 (Minimal=0–7, Mild=8–15, Moderate=16–25, Severe=26–63). The BAI scale has high internal consistency in the original (α=.92) and current study (α=.95).

**Depression.** The Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) was used to measure depressive symptoms. The BDI-II consists of 21 items with a total score ranging from 0–63. The severity level of depressive symptoms is interpreted as minimal depression=0–13, mild depression=14–19, moderate depression=20–28, and severe depression=29–63. The scale depicted good internal consistency, with alpha coefficients of .86 and .81 for clinical and non-clinical populations, respectively (Beck, Steer & Carbin, 1988). The present study obtained an excellent internal consistency of α=.90.

**Psychological Stress.** Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used to assess how people perceive how stressful their lives are. It consists of 10 items with a total score ranging from 0–40. The low degree of the perceived stress is ranged 0–13, moderate stress is 14–26, and high perceived stress is 27–40. The original PSS administered to college students demonstrated good Cronbach's alphas ranging between .84 and .86 (Cohen et al., 1983) and acceptable alphas of >.70 for a wide range of populations (E. H. Lee, 2012). The present study revealed an acceptable internal consistency of α=.77 in measuring the stress level of the participants.

### Procedures

Ethical clearance was sought from the institution before the study commenced. Two approaches were used in the participants' recruitment. First, through social media (e.g., university Facebook's group), and second, only Islamic studies students were invited through closed events. For the first method, Google survey forms were used. Meanwhile, the second method used a paper-and-pencil survey. All the participants have been informed either in a written or verbal form on the study's objective and the benefits and risks of involving them before they agreed to be involved. Furthermore, the assurance on anonymity and privacy of data, their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences were informed.

### Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics to describe the sociodemographic profile. An independent *t*-test was used to compare male and female respondents in their level of religiosity, anxiety, depression, and stress. One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the year of studies and the psychological distress (i.e., anxiety, depression, and stress). Pearson *r* correlation was used to analyse the association between the variables. Finally, multiple linear regression was employed to estimate the role of religiosity and its component as a protective factor for anxiety, depression, and stress.

## RESULTS

### Sociodemographic Profile of the Participants

Out of 170 participants approached, 148 students had participated (87.06% response rate). The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 28 years old (*M*=22.9, *SD*=1.57). Equal number of males and females completed the survey (i.e., *n*=74, 50% for both gender). Students from different nationalities participated; Indonesian (*n*=1, 0.7%), Singaporean (*n*=2, 1.4%), Malaysian (*n*=142, 95.9%), Bruneian (*n*=2, 1.4%), and Thai (*n*=1, 0.7%). Majority of the students participated were single (*n*=144, 97.3%).

Participants were majoring in Islamic Jurisprudence and its Principles (41%; *n*=61; 30 males, 31 females), Qur'anic Studies and Prophetic Tradition (29.7%; *n*=44, 20 males, 24 females), and Fundamental Belief on Islam and Comparative Religion (29.1%; *n*=43; 24 males, 19 females). In terms of levels of study, 20.3% of first-year students, 18.9% second-year students, 27% third-year students, and 33.9% fourth-year students had participated in the studies.

In terms of mental health status and help-seeking behaviours, 14.2% of the participants had experience meeting with mental health professionals. The majority consulted the experts on their daily life's issues, career advice, and existential crisis. Around 5% of them consulted the expert due to psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia. The help-seeking trend from the religious practitioner for mental health issues is common among the participants. Around 12.1% of the participants indicated they had met religious practitioners, and 3.5% of them asking help due to stress, anger, depression, autism, and the impact of black magic and evil spirit (i.e., *jinn*). The results show that the help-seeking behaviours in relation to mental health consultations were similar for both mental health service providers and religious practitioners in this sample.

### Descriptive Data on the Variables Measured

The scores of the Muslim Daily Religiosity Assessment Scale (MUDRAS), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) for all the samples were presented in Table 1 below.

Overall, the mean value of MUDRAS' score indicates that the students possessed a very good relationship with Allah for the

Table 1
*Means and standard deviations of the variables*

| Variables | *M* | *SD* | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MUDRAS | 7.84 | 1.09 | 5 | 10 |
| BAI | 16.00 | 12.91 | 0 | 46 |
| BDI-II | 16.68 | 11.88 | 0 | 56 |
| PSS | 21.18 | 5.34 | 0 | 40 |

*Notes.* MUDRAS = Muslim Daily Religiosity Assessment Scale, BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory, BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II, and PSS = Perceived Stress Scale

day. Hence, it was presumed that they were moderate to highly religious. The mean scores for BAI, BDI-II, and PSS elucidated that the participants had moderate anxiety, depression, and stress levels. However, based on further analysis, 23.6% (*n*=35), 18.2% (*n*=27), and 13.5% (*n*=20) has severe level of anxiety, depression, and stress, respectively.

### Differences between Genders and Year of Studies on Religiosity, Anxiety, Depression, and Stress

Independent sample *t*-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse for the comparison of the mean scores of the variables between genders and year of studies. The results showed that there were no significant differences between male and female participants in religiosity, anxiety, and depression scores, but not stress (Cohen's *d*=0.34). However, female students were significantly more stressed than male students, and the effect size was moderate. Meanwhile, no significant difference was found between the year of studies on the level of religiosity and mental health status. Please refer to Table 2.

### Relationship between Religiosity, Anxiety, Depression, and Stress

In Table 3, only depression has a significant negative correlation with the total score of religiosities. In other words, the more religious someone is on that day, the lower their symptoms of depression. However, further analysis on the subscales of MUDRAS and its relationship with other measures was carried out. It was found that involving in recommended acts and engaging in bodily worships of God are negatively associated with depression symptoms. On the other hand, avoiding sinful acts are negatively associated with anxiety. In other words, the more someone prohibits himself from doing sinful acts, the lesser anxious he will be. Despite the fact that the relationships were significant, it is important to note that they were small. Furthermore, no significant relationships were found between the total score of religiosities or its subscales with stress.

In order to see if religiosity can be a protective factor for anxiety and depression, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed (Table 4). Based on the results, avoiding sinful acts is a significant protective factor of anxiety, and the variance accounted for is 18% (*p*=.03). Meanwhile, being religious may significantly protect someone from depression. The global score of MUDRAS found that the variance accounted for is 31.2% (*p*<.001). Further analysis on the subscales found that involvement in recommended acts (but not engaging in bodily worships of God) may protect someone from depression and the variance

Table 2
*Differences between gender and year of study on religiosity, anxiety, depression, and stress*

| Variables | Gender | | | | | | | Year of Study | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* | Male | | Female | | ***t*** | ***p*** | Year 1 | | Year 2 | | Year 3 | | Year 4 | | ***F*** | ***p*** |
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | |
| **Religiosity** | 148 | 7.72 | 1.08 | 7.97 | 1.10 | -1.44 | .15 | 7.87 | 1.22 | 8.00 | 0.94 | 7.93 | 0.92 | 7.68 | 1.22 | 0.64 | .59 |
| **Anxiety** | 148 | 15.51 | 12.94 | 16.49 | 12.96 | -0.46 | .65 | 14.73 | 12.17 | 18.14 | 14.45 | 16.02 | 12.66 | 15.54 | 12.89 | 0.37 | .78 |
| **Depression** | 148 | 17.69 | 12.02 | 15.66 | 11.74 | 1.04 | .30 | 13. 23 | 9.64 | 19.82 | 13.70 | 17.50 | 13.13 | 16.32 | 10.70 | 1.59 | .19 |
| **Stress** | 148 | 20.27 | 5.48 | 22.08 | 5.07 | -2.09 | .04 | 19.63 | 5.39 | 23.04 | 4.56 | 20.63 | 6.42 | 21.50 | 4.51 | 2.22 | .09 |

Table 3
*Correlation between religiosity, anxiety, depression, and stress*

| | **Global Score MUDRAS** | **Sinful Acts** | **Recommended Acts** | **Engaging in Bodily Worships of God** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BAI** | -.13 | -.19* | -.06 | -.11 |
| **BDI-II** | -.31** | -.14 | -.29** | -.20* |
| **PSS** | -.10 | -.03 | -.08 | -.08 |

*Notes.* Global Score MUDRAS = Global Score Muslim Daily Religiosity Assessment Scale; BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory, BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 4
*Multiple regression analysis for prediction of anxiety, depression, and stress by religiosity*

| Dependent variables | Independent variables | *B* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BAI** | SA | -.18 | .03 |
| | RA | -.02 | .81 |
| | EBW | -.09 | .29 |
| **BDI-II** | SA | -.12 | .13 |
| | RA | -.25 | .004 |
| | EBW | -.11 | .19 |
| **PSS** | SA | -.02 | .79 |
| | RA | -.05 | .55 |
| | EBW | -.07 | .45 |

*Notes.* SA = Sinful Acts; RA = Recommended Acts; EBW = Engaging with Bodily Worship of God; BAI = Beck Anxiety Inventory; BDI = Beck Depression Inventory; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; $p < 0.05$

accounted for is 25% (*p*=.004). Thus, there is no significant impact between religiosity components and variables associated except for sinful acts and recommended acts, which have showcased inverse patterns.

## DISCUSSION

The current study examines the roles of religiosity on anxiety, depression, and stress among students who specialise in Islamic studies in an Islamic university. The results found that the status of religiosity among students of Islamic studies was considered moderate to high during the day they were assessed. Looking at their mental health status, participants had moderate anxiety symptoms, mild depression, and a moderate level of stress. Despite the mental well-being outcome, religiosity shades light of fascinating nuanced associations among the investigated symptoms.

No gender differences were significantly found in terms of the religiosity level. Though religion is known to be a patriarchal gendered, women were found to be more universally religious than men (Miller & Stark, 2002; Schnabel, 2017), and they have a strong tendency toward extrinsic personal religious orientation (i.e., people who pursue social acceptance and well-being through religiousness; Buzdar et al., 2014). This outcome provides an insight into the religion of Islam that Muslims, both men and women, shared an identical attitude in striving for the fulfilment of religious obligations and prohibitions. Moreover, it is in line with the statement from *Qur'an,* "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (The Qur'an: English Meanings, 2004, 49:13).

The previous study found a commonality for which psychological symptoms appeared greater in females than males (Altemus et al., 2014). Incongruent from the literature, the current study revealed no significant difference between male and female students on anxiety and depression scores, thus implying both genders are potentially prone to psychological dismalness. However, there was a significant difference between male and female students on stress scores. This stress's result matches those observed in earlier studies, whereby female students were documented to have higher scores for stress than male students (Al-Sowygh, 2013; Pozos-Radillo et al., 2014). Aside, students in the third or fourth year were more anxious than first, or second-year students (Rashid et al., 2021) provided a different insight from this paper which found no significant difference between the year of studies and psychological distress. The researcher assumes that it may be due to the similar nature of courses taken by the students who specialised in Islamic studies throughout their four-year undergraduate degree (i.e., they were involved in taught courses and no compulsory capstone course in their final year). Hence, the students may share similar experiences in their different levels of studies, adapt well, and maintain their mental health status (i.e., no significant differences between the levels of studies). There was a significant, negative relationship between religiosity, anxiety, and depression for the association between variables, though no significant relationship was observed between religiosity and stress. The construct of religiosity, in which the ethics and Islamic values lies, transcending in the daily conducts, has actively engaged the Muslims in their day-to-day activities was operationalised in the study. These sacral activities benefit better mental health and likely hinder Muslims from begetting mental health issues. Studies in psychiatric and non-psychiatric samples support a frequent religious involvement buffers the stressor's effects of leading causes to mental health problems (Brown et al., 1990; Lorenz et al., 2019; Strawbridge et al., 1998). Hence, it clarifies the current results on the status of explored symptoms, which religiosity plays an incremental part in Muslim's well-being constitution.

Based on the regression analysis, the wholeness of religiosity has a big role in protecting a person from depression. It is in line with what has been found in Koenig's (2009) systematic review whereby most of the correlation studies significantly low rates of depression (i.e., either disorder or symptoms) among more religious people. Another study that conducts similar research among Muslim university students supported that religious conduct helped to reduce students' depression (Nadeem et al., 2017). Replicating the notion of religiosity on mental health, two dimensions, namely recommended acts and prohibiting oneself from involving in sinful acts, may protect someone from depression and anxiety, respectively. These behaviours seem to operate as rehabilitative maintenance to the students under this study. At any rate, this study strengthens and complements other dimensions that may contribute to Muslims well-being, such as internal forgiveness (Abu-Raiya & Ayten, 2020), prosociality (Ayten & Korkmaz, 2020), personality factors (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018), and spirituality (Hodge et al., 2016). Notwithstanding, the results may not be generalised to every population because the sample in the current study is homogeneous. Future studies may want to test this with a more heterogeneous sample.

However, religious activities largely incorporate communal indulgence; hence there exist values of socialisation and togetherness, which understandably enhance the individual participants' mental health well-being. Religiosity scales are bound to have criticism in terms on how it measures comprehensively one's religious propensity and belief as well as its close cousin, spirituality. Spirituality, unlike religiosity, is a difficult construct to be measured by a quantitative scale. It is a larger and broader concept which, according to Pargament (2011), is defined as 'a search for the sacred'. It is not limited to the scope of organised religion but can be expressed individually in various ways, theistically and atheistically. The frequency of one going to mosque does not necessarily reflect his total confidence in God's compassion. Organisational religiosity, such as attending prayer service, could have an adverse relationship with depression, according to some studies (Strawbridge et al., 1998). The motivation of the religious behaviours should be explored further along the line of extrinsic versus intrinsic forms of religiosity (Power & McKinney, 2014). In the pursuit of understanding spirituality within the context of religion (i.e., Islam), a religiosity scale is used. In this study, the scale is being inferred to spirituality as well.

Most of the time, a large number of the literature has been concerned with the mental health status of medical students, since medical students were reported more persistent in the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress for its severity (Fawzy & Hamed, 2017; Hope & Henderson, 2014; Pacheco et al., 2017; Yusoff et al., 2011). This study contributes to the body of research by studying mental health status among students majoring in religious (i.e., Islamic) studies and its relationship with religiosity. Moreover, the data of the current study exemplified that students who take religious courses experience a manifestation of psychological disturbances due to the nature of the studies, which required the students to adhere to certain requirements for qualification, as it in line with previous literature (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008; M. F. Lee & Syaid, 2017) though they are non-medical students. In other words, many of our young adults in this country suffer from psychological problems, regardless of their gender, the discipline of study, or even religion.

An appropriate intervention such as integrated treatment, which devises an Islamic-conventional framework, is beseeched in tackling the rising mental health problems among religious studies students. Within the intervention program, the unremitting prejudices concurred by public opinions that individuals diagnosed with mental health problems as having a kind of punishment from God because of weak

*Iman* (i.e., faith), and issues or challenges faced by Muslims individuals usually are being stigmatised as being possessed by *jinns* (demons) or evil-spirit can be minimised. As a result, this intervention will encourage Muslim students to seek treatment and share the problems with mental health professionals.

The current study showed an almost similar percentage of religious study students who sought mental health professionals or religious healers for their psychological issues. The Malaysian Muslim community largely tends to seek Islamic faith healers or *Ustadz* for psychological problems. However, despite the potential of integrating spirituality in the treatment, these healers might pose certain issues. Some of the healers discourage the usage of psychotropic drugs and are likely to diagnose *jinn* possession in severe treatable mental illness such as schizophrenia and bipolar mood disorders (Md. Sa'ad et al., 2017). This difficulty has brought mental health researchers to suggest that Muslim mental health professionals themselves should equip themselves with psycho-spiritual knowledge and change of attitude to have integration, rather than a complementary, form of mental health treatment in place (Razali et al., 2018). In treatment and therapy, the broader concept of spirituality is the main focus rather than religiosity alone. Spirituality is an encompassing approach that includes the meaning and connectedness with the transcendence (i.e., God), as well as the internal and external focus of religious copings. Further study might be needed to follow up these findings in inculcating awareness regarding mental health services among non-medical students. Specific for students specialising in religious study, exploring the intention, motivation, and outcome needs to be done when seeking religious healing treatment.

The integration of treatment requires the application of four components in approaching any mental health condition: biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. Spirituality as part of mental health treatment has been studied and elaborated on by many scholars. Spirituality does not necessarily equate to religiosity, but it does represent sacredness (Pargament, 2011). In Islamic tradition, there is an abundance of discussion on the spiritual approach in dealing with psychological distress with various emphases by different scholars. For example, the traditional Islamic scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali emphasised on theological-psycho-spiritual approach while Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Miskawayh proposed the ethico-religious approach in handling psychological issues (Ssekamanya, 2016). There were other medieval scholars' approaches who were not as popular as the above named, such as Abu Zayd Muhammad Al-Balkhi. Al-Balkhi's form of therapy for depression and anxiety resembles modern rational-emotive and cognitive-behavioural therapy. Furthermore, he brought in psycho-spiritual value based on the Islamic creed in the treatment without emphasising ritualistic activities (Badri, 2013).

Despite the contributions of the current study to both body of knowledge and clinical implications, there are limitations. First, the present research used a purposive sampling from the faculties of Islamic studies only from one Islamic university in Klang Valley of Malaysia, so caution should be considered when generalising the results. Second, pertaining to the religiosity scale that significantly contributed to the protective factors towards depression and anxiety, it is favourable to add more variables to the model. Religiosity is considered multi-facets in nature; therefore, the future researcher should broaden the usage of religiosity domains rather than religious practices alone, as measured by the scale used in the current study.

Finally, the present research was cross-sectional; thus, the result provided no causality on the intended variables in the study. Therefore, we could not ascertain the direction of the relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being scores. They become religious because of their anxiety or their intense ritualistic behaviour, partly the reason for their psychological distress. Abu-Raiya (2017) has discussed at length the studying of religiosity and spirituality in mental health. The area that has proved difficult to rectify is the clear definition of religiosity and spirituality and the methodological issues such as self-report and cross-sectional design. Therefore, it is recommended to investigate the underlying reasons, including the bio-psycho-socio-spiritual aspects, in the comparison between the causes of female and male students' stressors across the cultural interest. Reliance on the statistical study solely is inadequate to address the concerns regarding religion's specialty. Thus, a comprehensive and longitudinal study on religious studies' students, involving qualitative study to further explain to what extent attending religious studies has been helpful to individuals. Getting religious, associated with a sense of spirituality, has prevailed in better mental health.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study found that the students who specialised in Islamic studies in an Islamic university struggled with different degrees of psychological problems, although they were religious. However, the current study found that religiosity and its component was found to be a protective factor against depression and anxiety. In other words, religious lifestyle is closely related to lower levels of psychological distress. Therefore, the current study results also support the literature on the usefulness of religious-based intervention in psychotherapy. Therefore, we are promoting the mental health care service providers to be well-equipped with religious-based training intervention for young Muslim adults with mental health problems.

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# University Students' Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) towards COVID-19 in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Covid-19—associated with the human-to-human transmission is recent medical concern which also associated with public health concerns. A cross-sectional online survey was conducted among clinical year veterinary and medical students studying in a university in Malaysia to determine the students' knowledge, attitude, and practice towards COVID-19. The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections, namely, socio-demographic characteristics (6 items), knowledge (14 items), attitude (10 items), and practice (24 items) towards COVID-19. The collected data were subjected to descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H, and Spearman's correlation analysis. A total of 219 students participated in this study, and they consisted of 52.1% and 47.9% of veterinary and medical students, respectively. The total scores were categorised into poor (<60%), moderate (60-79%), and high (>80%) based on Bloom's cut off point. Overall, the students acquired high knowledge (80%), moderate attitude (76%) and high practice (86%) against COVID-19. In the attitude section, the veterinary student scored significantly higher than medical students (U=3791, p= .001), and female students scored significantly higher than males (U=3183, p= .001). The analysis revealed a statistically significant association between attitude and practice (P< .05) despite no association

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between knowledge to attitude and practice variables. Overall, the results indicated that both veterinary and medical students had high knowledge with moderate to high attitudes towards COVID-19. Thus, they were practising good preventive measures in limiting the spread of the disease.

*Keywords:* Attitude, COVID-19, knowledge, medical students, practice, veterinary students

## INTRODUCTION

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 is an enveloped, non-segmented, positive-sense RNA virus, a member of the family Coronaviridae. It is an aetiology of the deadly infection named Coronavirus disease 2019 originating from Wuhan, Hubei, China which mainly affects humans and some mammals, causing a high mortality rate. According to Yu et al. (2020), the infection initially spreads via zoonotic or environmental exposure and the infected person may transmit the disease to other people outside of the market, thus causing clusters of cases. Since 2019, the virus has spread rapidly among humans in various continents; therefore, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

The reason behind this wide virus spreading might be due to its rapid transmission via direct and indirect contact with the infector. The primary transmission of COVID-19 is mainly through both respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces; however, the airborne transmission may also occur under certain conditions such as enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces or due to prolonged exposure to respiratory particles. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), the incubation period varies within 14 days. A positively infected person usually shows the clinical manifestation of fever, dry cough, dyspnoea, chest pain, tiredness, and myalgia, rarely headache, conjunctivitis, diarrhoea, nausea, and vomiting. An asymptomatic carrier is known as a silent spreader. Based on a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, both symptomless and pre-symptomatic individuals are typically not quarantined, thus spreading the virus.

COVID-19 replicates in the upper respiratory tract after five days post-exposure, and nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal swabs or saliva is taken to diagnose the virus through antigen rapid test kit (RTK-Ag) for quick detection and real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction for a more accurate result. Currently, there is no specific treatment to cure COVID-19 disease. Nevertheless, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020b), it can be managed via prevention, control measures, and supportive care. However, obedience to the preventive measures is crucial and highly dependent on knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) towards COVID-19.

In terms of the educational system, especially the undergraduate students, they are experiencing a tough situation where these students are gaining autonomy and freedom of life (Peng et al., 2020). Therefore, a few studies have been conducted to evaluate the knowledge, attitude, and practice towards COVID-19 among undergraduate students in China (Peng et al., 2020), medical students in India (Maheshwari et al., 2020), and Jordan (Alzoubi et al., 2020). Overall, the students acquired good knowledge and practised towards COVID-19. In addition, Olaimat et al. (2020) stated that medical students are familiar with low-risk practices, and thus they have less fear than other students.

As education plays a vital part in preventing the disease’s spread, this study was conducted to determine the knowledge level, attitude, and practices (KAP) towards COVID-19 among veterinary and medical undergraduates at the Universiti Putra Malaysia and how they took preventive measures to reduce exposure to COVID-19 infection and maintain an optimum level of health.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects from the Universiti Putra Malaysia. Permission from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences was granted before the survey.

### Study Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted online via Google Form and distributed through WhatsApp and email.

### Study Location

This study was conducted in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

### Study Population and Sample Size

This study involved the participation of respondents from veterinary and medical major programmes at the Universiti Putra Malaysia. The selection of respondents was based on the subject criteria. Two proportion formula, $n= \{[Z (1-\alpha/2)* \sqrt{2P (1-P)}] + [Z (1-\beta)*\sqrt{P1 (1- P1) +P2 (1-P2)}]\}^{2} / (P1-P2)^{2}$ was used to calculate the sample size. Since the pilot study was done among Veterinary and Medical students, the minimum calculated sample size was 155 by considering a 95% confidence interval.

### Subject Criteria

Respondents consisted of undergraduate students pursuing a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or Doctor of Medicine at the Universiti Putra Malaysia. Both medical doctoral candidates were in their clinical years (Veterinary: Year 4, 5 and Medical: Year 3, 4, 5). Respondents must be able to understand and read English for the completion of the questionnaire. Respondents who refused to participate in the survey and were not in the clinical years were excluded from the study.

### Sampling of Subject

A consent request was obtained before the respondent answered the questionnaire.

Respondent data was kept confidential and remained anonymous for privacy assurance. Participation in this study was voluntary, and withdrawal from the survey was permitted without any repercussions and explanation.

## Research Instruments

### Questionnaire.

The survey was divided into four sections: to wit, the respondent's socio-demographic data, knowledge, attitude, and practice towards COVID-19. There were five questions in Section A mainly consisting of data collection about the respondents' background. Section B comprised 14 closed-ended questions about the respondents' knowledge of COVID-19. The third section of the questions evaluated the respondents' attitude towards COVID-19 by designing a Likert scale comprised of 10 items. Finally, the last section of the questionnaire explored respondents' practice in controlling the spread of COVID-19. There were 24 items in the practice section, and thus, the total number of items was 53.

## Data Analysis

The data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) (IBM Corp. Released 2016. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 24.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.

## Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted using ten students from each veterinary and medical course (n=20). The Cronbach alpha was calculated using the SPSS to measure the scale reliability of the survey, wherein more than 0.6 was considered an acceptable value (Hulin et al., 2001). Students who participated in the pilot study are excluded from the main study.

## Score Calculation

The data was calculated and assessed based on the summated score obtained by the student individually. There were 13 multiple choice questions in the knowledge section wherein incorrect answers were scored as 0 points, and the correct answer was scored as 1 point. In the attitude section, the same scoring method used in the KAP study towards COVID-19 among health care providers in Yemen was applied in the present study, where the summated score was calculated (Alrubaiee et al., 2020).

## KAP Statistical Analysis

A descriptive test was applied in which the significant level, alpha=0.5 with 95 % confidence interval and p-value < 0.05, was set as statistically significant. Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H tests compared the mean scores between knowledge, attitude, and practice by different demographic characteristics. Spearman's correlation was used to determine the correlation between knowledge, attitude, and practice towards COVID-19.

## RESULT

Twenty students participated in this pilot study, and the result of the Cronbach alpha revealed an acceptable value of internal validity of more than 0.6, which were 0.654, 0.640, and 0.941 for knowledge, attitude, and practice questions, respectively.

## Socio-Demographic Characteristic

A total of 219 participants took part in the survey wherein 114 (52.1%) and 105 (48%) were veterinary and medical students, respectively. The demographic characteristics of the participants were then tabulated based on the programme, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Socio-demographic of veterinary and medical students*

| Socio-demographic | | | Respondents | Percentage (%) | Total, N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Programme | | Veterinary | 114 | 52.1 | 219 |
| | | Medical | 105 | 47.9 | |
| Veterinary | Year of study | 4 | 86 | 75.0 | |
| | | 5 | 28 | 25.0 | |
| | Age | 21-25 | 110 | 96.0 | |
| | | 26-30 | 4 | 4.0 | |
| | Gender | Male | 25 | 22.0 | |
| | | Female | 89 | 78.0 | |
| | Race | Malay | 74 | 65.0 | |
| | | Indian | 8 | 7.0 | |
| | | Chinese | 24 | 21.0 | |
| | | Bumiputera Sabah | 7 | 6.0 | |
| | | Siamese | 1 | 1.0 | |
| Medical | Year of study | 3 | 37 | 35.0 | |
| | | 4 | 51 | 49.0 | |
| | | 5 | 17 | 16.0 | |
| | Age | 21-25 | 103 | 98.0 | |
| | | 26-30 | 2 | 2.0 | |
| | Gender | Male | 25 | 33.0 | |
| | | Female | 89 | 67.0 | |
| | Race | Malay | 74 | 67.0 | |
| | | Indian | 8 | 14.0 | |
| | | Chinese | 24 | 19.0 | |

*Note.* N=Total number of students participated in the study

## Mean Score of KAP

Total scores of knowledge, attitude, and practice were calculated, and the mean scores were obtained to compare the scores among different demographics. The Mann-Whitney U test was used, and the result showed a significant difference in the mean scores between Veterinary and Medical students in the attitude section with the p=0.001, (U=3791) as shown in Table 2. The mean scores between genders in the practice section were also statistically significant with p=0.001, (U=3183). However, there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores on knowledge among different socio-demographics with an overall P>0.05.

Table 2

*Mean score obtained by students with different socio-demographic characteristics*

| **Variables** | | **Knowledge** | | **Attitude** | | **Practice** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Mean ± SD** | **p** | **Mean ± SD** | **p** | **Mean ± SD** | **p** |
| Type of study | Veterinary | 10.97 ± 1.47 | .455 | 38.96 ± 3.97 | .001 | 103.63 ± 10.01 | .943 |
| | Medical | 10.74 ± 1.75 | | 36.45 ± 1.07 | | 103.10 ± 10.88 | |
| Year of study | 3 | 10.57 ± 1.59 | .217 | 37.03 ± 3.09 | .219 | 105.54 ± 8.55 | .380 |
| | 4 | 10.82 ± 1.74 | | 38.01 ± 4.33 | | 102.39 ± 11.57 | |
| | 5 | 11.22 ± 1.13 | | 37.69 ± 4.55 | | 104.60 ± 10.24 | |
| Gender | Male | 10.68 ± 1.94 | .563 | 37.33 ± 4.74 | .572 | 98.73 ± 12.47 | .001 |
| | Female | 10.93 ± 1.48 | | 37.95 ± 3.97 | | 105.13 ± 9.70 | |
| Age | 21-25 | 10.88 ± 1.61 | .133 | 37.75 ± 4.17 | .758 | 103.29 ± 10.84 | .501 |
| | 26-30 | 10.17 ± 1.60 | | 39.00 ± 5.10 | | 106.50 ± 13.07 | |

*Note.* SD=Standard deviation; p= P-value

## Outcome of Knowledge

A total of 13 questions were used to measure the knowledge level of Veterinary and Medical students. As a result, most students (87.2%) obtained information regarding COVID-19 from relevant authorities (KKM, WHO, DVS), 86.3% of the student obtained information from mass media (TV, Radio, Internet) and social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram; Figure 1).

Overall, 68.0% of the participants scored high in knowledge, with a mean score of 10.86 ± 1.61 (83.5%). Figure 2 shows the difference between correct and incorrect percentage rates for each question in the knowledge section. The correct percentage rate is higher than the incorrect percentage rate on all questions. About 79% of participants correctly answered that COVID-19 is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). Most participants (95%)

were correct about the virus's transmission from an asymptomatic person, and only half of the participants (55%) correctly answered that an animal could acquire the virus from an infected person. Out of 219 students, 200 of them (91%) were aware of the common symptoms of COVID-19, which includes fever, dry cough, sore throat, and difficulty in breathing. Each response related to COVID-19 was scored and recorded, as shown in Table 3.

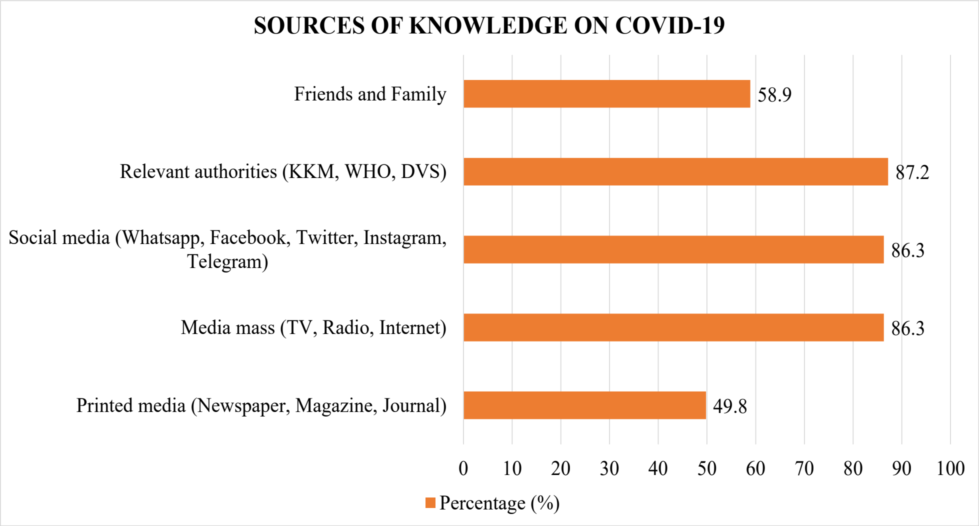

*Figure 1*. Sources of knowledge on COVID-19 disease obtained by the participants

The students obtained the information regarding COVID-19 from reliable sources where 87.2%, 86.3%, and 86.3% of them gained the knowledge from information relevant authorities, social media, and media mass, respectively. On the other hand, only 58.9% and 49.8% were acquired from friends and family and printed media.

## Outcome of Attitude towards COVID-19

The ten items in this section shown in Table 4 were assessed to determine the students' attitude towards COVID-19. A five-point Likert scale was used to calculate the score, and 61.2% of the participants acquired a moderate attitude towards COVID-19 with an overall mean of attitude score of 36.7 ± 4.57 (75.6%).

## Outcome of Practice

In this section, the pattern of the questions resembled the attitude section wherein a five-point Likert scale was used to calculate the overall score. The mean practice score was 103.38 ± 10.88 (86.1%), and 78.5% of the participants scored high in the practice section, suggesting that participants were practicing the preventive measures towards COVID-19. Each response regarding preventive measures towards COVID-19 was scored and demonstrated in Table 5.

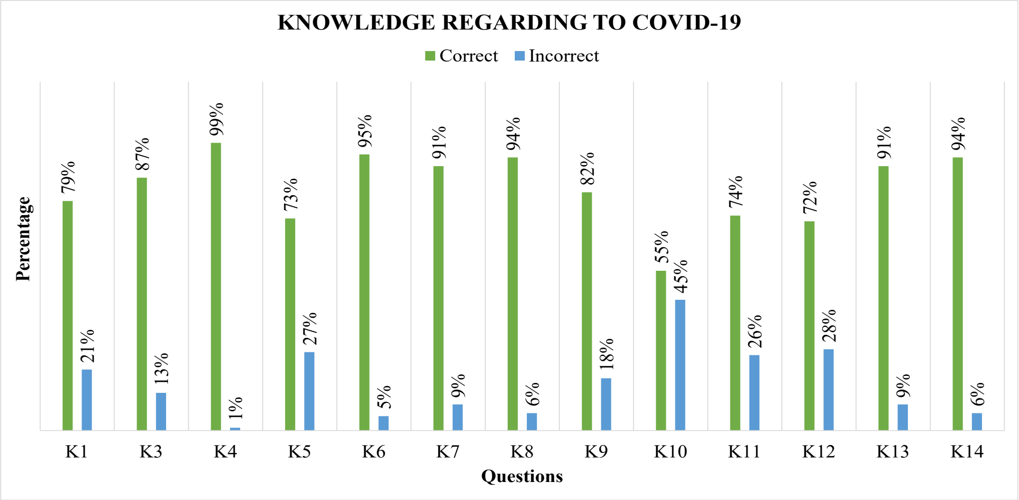

*Figure 2.* Percentage rate in knowledge section regarding COVID-19.

Table 3

*Percentage score of students in the knowledge section*

| Questions | Correct (n, %) | Incorrect (n, %) |
|---|---|---|
| K1. Which is/are correct about COVID-19? | 172 (79.0%) | 47 (21.0%) |
| K3. COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China infecting the human respiratory system and originated from bats. | 190 (87.0%) | 29 (13.0%) |
| K4. How COVID-19 is being transmitted between humans? (You can select more than one option) | 218 (99.5%) | 1 (0.5%) |
| K5. How does a person get infected with COVID-19? (You can select more than one option) | 160 (73.0%) | 59 (27.0%) |
| K6. Can COVID-19 be caught from a COVID-19 positive person who has no symptoms? | 209 (95.0%) | 10 (5.0%) |
| K7. What are the common symptoms of COVID-19 positive patients? (You can select more than one option) | 200 (91.0%) | 19 (9.0%) |
| K8. Older persons and person with pre-existing medical conditions (high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) are at risk of developing severe illnesses such as difficulty in breathing or chest pain when they are infected with COVID-19. | 205 (94.0%) | 14 (6.0%) |
| K9. How long is the incubation period of COVID-19? | 179 (82.0%) | 40 (18.0%) |
| K10. Animals/pets can become infected from positive COVID-19 patients. | 120 (55.0%) | 99 (45.0%) |
| K11. If your pets are diagnosed positive of COVID-19 infection, is there any possibility that you can get infected from them? | 163 (74.0%) | 56 (26.0%) |
| K12. What is the importance of implementing Movement Control Order (MCO) in controlling the spread of COVID-19 in Malaysia? | 158 (72.0%) | 61 (28.0%) |

Table 3 *(Continue)*

| **Questions** | **Correct (n, %)** | **Incorrect (n, %)** |
|---|---|---|
| K13. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Health categorise districts into three zones: red, yellow, and green zones to define active cases. If you happen to be in any area in the green zone, what is the risk of you catching COVID-19? | 199 (91.0%) | 20 (9.0%) |
| K14. Vaccine availability in Malaysia. | 206 (94.0%) | 13 (6.0%) |

*Note.* K=Knowledge question; n=Number of students answered correctly/incorrectly; %=Percentage of students answered correctly/incorrectly

Table 4

*Percentage score of students in attitude to COVID-19*

| Questions | Strongly Disagree (n, %) | Disagree (n, %) | Not sure (n, %) | Agree (n, %) | Strongly Agree (n, %) | Total (n, %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A1. COVID-19 infection makes you feel fearful and afraid, especially when going out of the house. | 5, 2.3% | 28, 12.8% | 12, 5.5% | 137, 62.6% | 37, 16.9% | 219, 100.0% |
| A2. You are willing to change your lifestyle to adapt to a new norm. | 1, 0.5% | 3, 1.4% | 10, 4.6% | 91, 41.6% | 114, 52.1% | 219, 100.0% |
| A3. If you have flu-like symptoms, you will immediately seek medical attention to avoid the virus from infecting other people. | 2, 0.9% | 14, 6.4% | 23, 10.5% | 100, 45.7% | 80, 36.5% | 219, 100.0% |
| A4. Disclose yourselves via social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp status when you feel unwell or after travelling back from overseas/affected areas. | 37, 16.9% | 31, 14.2% | 71, 32.4% | 61, 27.9% | 19, 8.7% | 219, 100.0% |
| A5. Mammals such as cats, dogs, ferrets, or tigers can transmit SARS-COV-19 to humans, and thus people should prevent having close contact with them, especially pet animals. | 51, 23.3% | 63, 28.8% | 68, 31.1% | 27, 12.3% | 10, 4.6% | 219, 100.0% |

Table 4 *(Continue)*

| Questions | Strongly Disagree (n, %) | Disagree (n, %) | Not sure (n, %) | Agree (n, %) | Strongly Agree (n, %) | Total (n, %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A6. Considering the current situation of COVID-19 in Malaysia, you think that you are at risk of getting infected with COVID-19 in university. | 3, 1.4% | 27, 12.3% | 58, 26.5% | 99, 45.2% | 32, 14.6% | 219, 100.0% |
| A7. Movement Control Order (MCO) affects your study due to the lack of face-to-face interaction classes with lecturers. | 7, 3.2% | 7, 3.2% | 22, 10.0% | 81, 37.0% | 102, 46.6% | 219, 100.0% |
| A8. Difficulty in practicing social distancing, especially in university makes you feel insecure about the possibility of getting infected with COVID-19. | 5, 2.3% | 23, 10.5% | 43, 19.6% | 101, 46.1% | 47, 21.5% | 219, 100.0% |
| A9. Vaccination is the best preventive measure to control COVID-19. | 6, 2.7% | 17, 7.8% | 47, 21.5% | 81, 37.0% | 68, 31.1% | 219, 100.0% |
| A10. COVID-19 can affect your future career as a front-liner. | 15, 6.8% | 26, 11.9% | 48,21.9% | 85, 38.8% | 45, 20.5% | 219, 100.0% |

*Note.* A=Attitude question; n=Number of students react on each question; %=Percentage of students react on each question

Table 5

*Percentage score of students in practice related to COVID-19 infection*

| Questions | Never (n, %) | Rarely (n, %) | Sometimes (n, %) | Very often (n, %) | Always (n, %) | Total (n, %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P1. What are the preventive measures that you practice reducing the chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19?** | | | | | | |
| • Regularly and thoroughly clean my hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or sanitizer. | 0, 0.0% | 3, 1.4% | 20, 9.1% | 103, 47.0% | 93, 42.5% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Wash my hands with soap and water frequently. | 2, 0.9% | 4, 1.8% | 32, 14.6% | 90, 41.1% | 91, 41.6% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) distance between anyone who is coughing or sneezing. | 1, 0.5% | 2, 0.9% | 25, 11.4% | 95, 43.4% | 96, 43.8% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Wearing face mask. | 1, 0.5% | 0, 0.0% | 3, 1.4% | 51, 23.3% | 164, 74.9% | 219, 100.0% |

Table 5 *(Continue)*

| Questions | Never (n, %) | Rarely (n, %) | Sometimes (n, %) | Very often (n, %) | Always (n, %) | Total (n, %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P1. What are the preventive measures that you practice reducing the chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19?** | | | | | | |
| • Avoid touching or rubbing the eyes, nose, and mouth after touching any surfaces. | 0, 0.0% | 12, 5.5% | 51, 23.3% | 76, 34.7% | 80, 36.5% | 219,100.0% |
| • Self-quarantine if I feel unwell/after travelling back from overseas or affected areas. | 2, 0.9% | 4, 1.8% | 15, 6.8% | 91, 41.6% | 107, 48.9% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Bathing after going to the supermarket. (If you are the one who buys groceries) | 7, 3.2% | 12, 5.5% | 53, 24.2% | 74, 33.8% | 73, 33.3% | 219, 100.0% |
| **P2. If you have signs and symptoms of flu-like illness, what is your practice in using face masks?** | | | | | | |
| • Use mask when I am in crowded places (supermarket). | 1, 0.5% | 2, 0.9% | 2, 0.9% | 19, 8.7% | 195, 89.0% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Change the mask every time I use it. | 1, 0.5% | 3, 1.4% | 24, 11.0% | 59, 26.9% | 132, 60.3% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Bring the mask wherever I go. | 1, 0.5% | 2, 0.9% | 5, 2.3% | 39, 17.8% | 172, 78.5% | 219, 100.0% |
| **P3. If you have signs and symptoms of flu-like illness, when will you use hand sanitizer?** | | | | | | |
| • Sanitize my hands whenever I touch any surfaces. | 3, 1.4% | 2, 0.9% | 30, 13.7% | 73, 33.3% | 111, 50.7% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Use sanitizers whenever it is freely available. | 2, 0.9% | 1, 0.5% | 22, 10.0% | 65, 29.7% | 129, 58.9% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Keep hand sanitizer in my bag. | 3, 1.4% | 6, 2.7% | 30, 13.7% | 43, 19.6% | 137, 62.6% | 219, 100.0% |
| **P4. If you have signs and symptoms of flu-like illness, when will you wash your hands?** | | | | | | |
| • Wash my hands whenever I touch anything. | 4, 1.8% | 3, 1.4% | 39, 17.8% | 72, 32.9% | 101, 46.1% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Wash hands whenever it is available. | 2, 0.9% | 6, 2.7% | 24, 11.0% | 78, 35.6% | 109, 49.8% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Wash hands whenever it is dirty. | 19, 8.7% | 36, 16.4% | 36, 16.4% | 47, 21.5% | 81, 37.0% | 219, 100.0% |

Table 5 *(Continue)*

| Questions | Never (n, %) | Rarely (n, %) | Sometimes (n, %) | Very often (n, %) | Always (n, %) | Total (n, %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P5. What are the precautionary measures that you take if you have pets at home?** | | | | | | |
| • Wash my hands before and after touching pets. | 1, 0.5% | 9, 4.1% | 38, 17.4% | 69, 31.5% | 102, 46.6% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Avoid touching pets as I may have the possibility of transmitting the virus to them. | 20, 9.1% | 44, 20.1% | 56, 25.6% | 48, 21.9% | 51, 23.3% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Disinfecting objects and surfaces and keeping the environment in good hygiene. | 3, 1.4% | 13, 5.9% | 52, 23.7% | 53, 24.2% | 98, 44.7% | 219, 100.0% |
| **P6. What would be your new norm practices in the university to control the spread of COVID-19?** | | | | | | |
| • Practice strong personal hygiene. | 0, 0.0% | 1, 0.5% | 11, 5.0% | 62, 28.3% | 145, 66.2% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Avoid unnecessary personal contact with friends and other people. | 0, 0.0% | 2, 0.9% | 40, 18.3% | 68, 31.1% | 109, 49.8% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Immediately seek medical attention if you are feeling sick or unwell. | 0, 0.0% | 6, 2.7% | 19, 8.7% | 58, 26.5% | 136, 62.1% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Wear a face mask when you feel unwell and always prepare extra face masks in the bag. | 0, 0.0% | 3, 1.4% | 5, 2.3% | 40, 18.3% | 171, 78.1% | 219, 100.0% |
| • Avoid attending any mass events until the outbreak has been successfully controlled. | 2, 0.9% | 1, 0.5% | 7, 3.2% | 58, 26.5% | 151, 68.9% | 219, 100.0% |

*Note.* P=Practice question; n=Number of students responded to the question; %=Percentage of students responded to the question

## Statistical Analysis of KAP towards COVID-19

Spearman's correlation test was used to identify the relationship between the variables. The results in Table 6 show no statistically significant association between knowledge to attitude and practice variables with p= .114, r=0.093, and p= .016, r=0.818, respectively. Nevertheless, there was a statistically significant association between attitude and practice variables with p= .001, r=0.325.

## DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the overview of various views from different sources (WHO, 2020). In addition, most youths face mental and physical uneasiness

Table 6

*Correlation between knowledge, attitude, and practice score variables*

| **Spearman's rho Correlation** | | **Knowledge score** | **Attitude score** | **Practice score** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge score** | Correlation Coefficient (r) | 1.000 | 0.114 | 0.016 |
| | p | . | .093 | .818 |
| **Attitude score** | Correlation Coefficient (r) | 0.114 | 1.000 | 0.325 |
| | p | .093 | . | .001 |
| **Practice score** | Correlation Coefficient (r) | 0.016 | 0.325 | 1.000 |
| | p | .818 | .001 | . |

*Note.* p=P-value

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they use social media as an information source. Therefore, this cross-sectional study was carried out among the veterinary and medical students to assess their source of information, level of knowledge, how they reacted to the current situation, and the preventive measures they took to reduce COVID-19 disease.

This assessment research has revealed that most veterinary and medical students have good knowledge, moderate attitude, and good practices towards COVID-19. A total of 191 students (87.2%) relied mostly on authorities such as KKM, WHO, DVS to learn about COVID-19 related information, which guaranteed the reliability of the sources. However, out of 219 students, 86.3% of them utilise social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, and mass media such as TV, Radio, Internet as a second medium to keep them updated about the virus. A study on the impact of social media during the COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq revealed that it has a significant emotional and psychological impact on individuals, especially between ages 18-35 years (Ahmad & Murad, 2020). Furthermore, Cinelli et al. (2020) noted that individuals could get inaccurate or misleading information from social media platforms. Thus, the source of information is important, especially during the pandemic. Therefore, the result corresponded with the assessment of information sources among the students, in which most of them scored high in this section.

Based on the data, almost half of the respondents (53.9%) score in the knowledge section, which corresponds with studies conducted among medical students in India (Maheswari et al., 2020), undergraduate students in China (Peng et al., 2020) and medical and non-medical students in Jordan

(Alzoubi et al., 2020). This result might be because veterinary and medical students have clinical health knowledge and, more generally, a relevant background. According to Peng et al. (2020), students with medical backgrounds tend to have more in-depth knowledge regarding COVID-19 as they were trained well in clinical surroundings and public health-related issues.

Attitude assessment revealed that 61.2% of respondents had a moderate attitude towards COVID-19. This result sheds some light on why students are hitherto failing to maintain physical distancing. Students probably felt fearful of COVID-19 since this was their first pandemic (Sari et al., 2020). In addition, students were hesitant about self-disclosure via social media when they were sick or travelling back from overseas or affected areas. It could be because social media might help alert family members and friends of their health status. Furthermore, Sahni and Sharma (2020) claimed that social media might create unnecessary panic and anxiety about other people, engender misinformation. On the other hand, Nabity-Grover et al. (2020) believed that the pandemic changed people's views on self-disclosure through social media. They claimed that people tend to avoid disclosing information about their activities because it could cause negative evaluations by others. Individuals tend to share more informative content, especially about health care, during this current situation.

At the same time, students were unsure about the possibility of animals such as cats, tigers, and ferrets transmitting the SARS-CoV-2 virus to humans. Although OIE reported no evidence that animals could transmit the virus to humans, owners should take precautionary

measures when handling animals diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 to reduce the possibility of transmission. Besides that, 46.6% of students claimed that the virtual online class system might negatively affect their studies due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Nevertheless, according to Mukhtar et al. (2020), the online learning platform is a manageable, easy medium to access teaching materials, and students can replay sessions via recorded lectures which are not typically done in the conventional, face-to-face class classroom setting. Therefore, students should adapt to the new norms and take advantage of the benefits of the online learning platform. These students were also asked about their opinion regarding the ability of the vaccination to prevent COVID-19, and 37% and 31.1% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the vaccination would be the best preventive measure for controlling the spread of COVID-19. Currently, several vaccine trials are being conducted, and the CDC (2020a) revealed that the vaccines prevent individuals from developing serious illnesses when exposed to COVID-19.

Students' practice and studies towards COVID-19 were evaluated, and the results revealed that veterinary and medical students from UPM were practicing good preventive measures. Approximately 78.5 % of the participants obtained a high score in the practice trial, which aligns with the study conducted in Jordan (Alzoubi et al., 2020) among medical (and non-medical) students. Basic preventive measures such as washing hands with soap, using hand sanitizer, wearing face masks, avoiding hand-to-face contact after touching surfaces, and practicing self-quarantines when feeling unwell, have all been practiced, which are indicated as a good routine. As future medical professionals, Peng et al. (2020) stated that these students tend to display a positive attitude and good practices as it becomes their responsibility during a public health emergency.

Overall, veterinary students obtained higher scores than medical students in the attitudes section. Since this study was carried out during the recovery movement control order (RMCO), medical students believed they were at a lower risk of getting the COVID-19 infection. Females also scored higher in practice scores relative to male students. This finding supported other research wherein females practised good preventive measures against infectious diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) relative to male students.

## CONCLUSION

There were no significant differences between veterinary and medical students as they acquired the same COVID-19 related information. Both sets of students also share similar attitudes and practicing good preventive measures. Thus, both groups are expected to play a significant role in spreading awareness and educating the public on staying safe and maintaining an optimum level of health during the pandemic.

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# Halal Tourism to Promote Community's Economic Growth: A Model for Aceh, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This study designs a halal economic model of tourism within the framework of Islamic sharia enforcement in Aceh to boost economic growth within community. This study used an expert system approach, which collects key data and information in the formulation of model design through interviews, questionnaires, direct observation, and synthesis of data in the field. A conceptual model of the development system included planning, analysis, design, verification, and validation; each was used to analyze the data. The present study suggests that the proposed formulation of the halal tourism model in Aceh must consider three key factors. First, the key principle of the halal tourism model industry is designed based on Islamic principles, the national legal foundations, and the local regulations. Second, the halal tourism industry is expected to address two important issues: halal certification in hospitality and gastronomy services and empowerment in amenity, human resources, and events. Third, it is also hoped that halal tourism management can focus on the object, marketing, industrial, and institutional developments. These three factors must be fully support by government policy and the Islamic finance industry. The present study is expected to provide essential, inclusive, and wide-ranging aspects for developing the halal tourism industry and encouraging community economic growth. This study also provides insights into how an inclusive conceptual framework can boost the halal tourism industry without defying its basic principles.

*Keywords:* Aceh, community, economic growth, Halal tourism model

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## INTRODUCTION

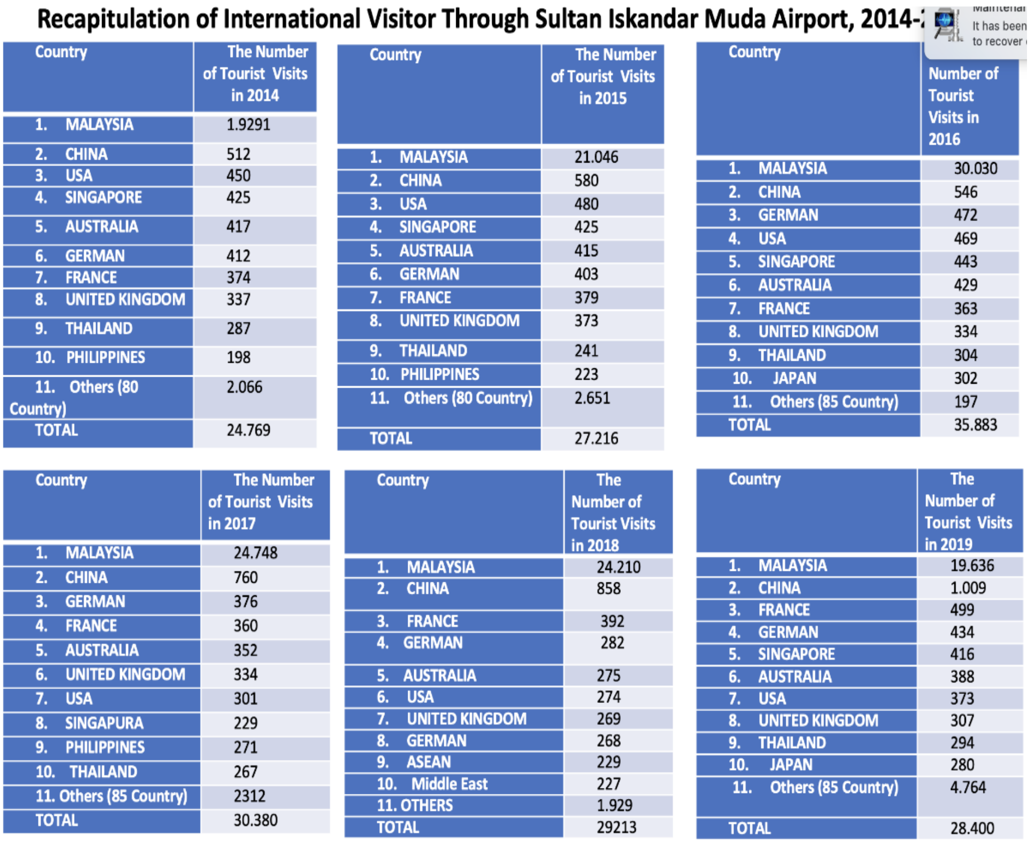
Tourism plays an imperative part in the economic growth of a nation. Increasing wealth and community prosperity encourage the growth of tourism activities as an inseparable part of modern human lifestyles. Chandra (2014) describes the halal tourism trend as a new goldmine for the tourism industry, while Biancone et al. (2019) claim halal tourism is an opportunity for the global industry. Moreover, the lifestyle in the tourism sector has an impact on sustainable economic growth and development of localities, nations, and continents (Aref et al., 2009; Durbarry, 2008; Fayissa et al., 2008; Lee & Chang, 2008). It has made service-based industries the key player and contributors in the wake of world economic growth (Allen et al., 1988). As a result, tourism activities can improve the financial welfare of the indigenous community with the presence of tourists through transportation services (Davenport & Switalski, 2006), accommodation (Bastakis et al., 2004), and consumptive lifestyles (Shaw, 2006).

At present, the idea of halal tourism in business continues to develop globally (Iberahim et al., 2012; Nurrachmi, 2018). The halal tourism industry is a concept that adapts and integrates Islamic values into all aspects of tourism activities. This concept provides a Muslim-friendly environment in accordance with the Sharia principles while traveling (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2020). At the international level, the concept of ‘halalification of tourism’ (Khan & Callanan, 2017) has become a popular trend recently. The trend occurs not only in Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, the Middle Eastern countries, and other North African Muslim countries, but also it has begun to grow in other non-Muslim countries like China (Akhtar et al., 2019), Vietnam (Battour & Ismail, 2016), Russia (Gabdrakhmanov et al., 2016), South Korea (Han et al., 2019), Japan (Yasuda, 2017), and Thailand (Nurdiansyah, 2018).

The development of Muslim tourists has become one of the new markets for the tourism sector, which is very important to be optimized by a government such as Indonesia through its related agencies. The focus is to encourage local and national economic growth through halal tourism. Based on data from the Global Islamic Economy Gateway from the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning (2019), it was noted that there was a growth in the value of the halal tourism sector, which consists of halal food, halal travel, modest fashion, and halal media & recreation. Overall, the consumption of the halal industry in Indonesia in 2017 reached more than USD 200 billion, equivalent to 36 percent of total household consumption.

Indonesia’s National Medium-Term Development Plan (locally called RPJMN) 2020-2024 explicitly recommends policies for sustainable tourism and the halal industry. As for the GMTI 2019 results, Indonesia’s major highlight is moving to be the joint top destination with Malaysia. Indonesia’s ranking has been steadily increasing in the last few years. To be specific, Halal Tourism is one of the Aceh National Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMA) for 2017-2022 with a mission to build and develop production centers, competitive creative industries through supportive policies.

In response to this call, halal tourism also has a special place for Aceh, the northernmost province in Indonesia, especially aftermath 2004 tsunami earthquake and calamity (Rindrasih, 2019). Based on data obtained from Aceh Culture and Tourism Office (2019), the number of tourist visits to Aceh has also increased from year to year. The visitors gradually scaled up from 24.769 in 2014, 27.216 in 2015, 35.883 in 2016, 30.380 in 2017, 29.213 in 2018, and 28.400 in 2019. The increase in tourist entrances in Aceh cannot be separated from the growing popularity of Aceh and the tourists' curiosity, especially about the unique adoption of Islamic law and the historical Tsunami. The following are the statistics of international visitors who enter the Sultan Iskandar Muda airport gates: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to recover

Recapitulation of International Visitor Through Sultan Iskandar Muda Airport, 2014-

| Country | The Number of Tourist Visits in 2014 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 1.9291 |
| 2. CHINA | 512 |
| 3. USA | 450 |
| 4. SINGAPORE | 425 |
| 5. AUSTRALIA | 417 |
| 6. GERMAN | 412 |
| 7. FRANCE | 374 |
| 8. UNITED KINGDOM | 337 |
| 9. THAILAND | 287 |
| 10. PHILIPPINES | 198 |
| 11. Others (80 Country) | 2.066 |
| TOTAL | 24.769 |

| Country | The Number of Tourist Visits in 2015 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 21.046 |
| 2. CHINA | 580 |
| 3. USA | 480 |
| 4. SINGAPORE | 425 |
| 5. AUSTRALIA | 415 |
| 6. GERMAN | 403 |
| 7. FRANCE | 379 |
| 8. UNITED KINGDOM | 373 |
| 9. THAILAND | 241 |
| 10. PHILIPPINES | 223 |
| 11. Others (80 Country) | 2.651 |
| TOTAL | 27.216 |

| Country | Number of Tourist Visits in 2016 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 30.030 |
| 2. CHINA | 546 |
| 3. GERMAN | 472 |
| 4. USA | 469 |
| 5. SINGAPORE | 443 |
| 6. AUSTRALIA | 429 |
| 7. FRANCE | 363 |
| 8. UNITED KINGDOM | 334 |
| 9. THAILAND | 304 |
| 10. JAPAN | 302 |
| 11. Others (85 Country) | 197 |
| TOTAL | 35.883 |

| Country | The Number of Tourist Visits in 2017 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 24.748 |
| 2. CHINA | 760 |
| 3. GERMAN | 376 |
| 4. FRANCE | 360 |
| 5. AUSTRALIA | 352 |
| 6. UNITED KINGDOM | 334 |
| 7. USA | 301 |
| 8. SINGAPURA | 229 |
| 9. PHILIPPINES | 271 |
| 10. THAILAND | 267 |
| 11. Others (85 Country) | 2312 |
| TOTAL | 30.380 |

| Country | The Number of Tourist Visits in 2018 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 24.210 |
| 2. CHINA | 858 |
| 3. FRANCE | 392 |
| 4. GERMAN | 282 |
| 5. AUSTRALIA | 275 |
| 6. USA | 274 |
| 7. UNITED KINGDOM | 269 |
| 8. GERMAN | 268 |
| 9. ASEAN | 229 |
| 10. Middle East | 227 |
| 11. OTHERS | 1.929 |
| TOTAL | 29213 |

| Country | The Number of Tourist Visits in 2019 |
|---|---|
| 1. MALAYSIA | 19.636 |
| 2. CHINA | 1.009 |
| 3. FRANCE | 499 |
| 4. GERMAN | 434 |
| 5. SINGAPORE | 416 |
| 6. AUSTRALIA | 388 |
| 7. USA | 373 |
| 8. UNITED KINGDOM | 307 |
| 9. THAILAND | 294 |
| 10. JAPAN | 280 |
| 11. Others (85 Country) | 4.764 |
| TOTAL | 28.400 |

*Figure 1*. International visitors through Sultan Iskandar Muda Airport in Banda Aceh

Statistic on international visitors entering Sultan Iskandar Muda airport (in Figure 1) shows a reduction in the number of visitors in 2017–2019. This decline needs to be studied in depth because the Banda Iskandar Muda gate is one of the entrances for tourists to the Aceh Province. Although some countries such as China and Europe experienced an increase, the growth was still not significant. After the Earthquake and Tsunami in 2004, Aceh was visited by some foreign tourists in the context of rehabilitation and reconstruction. So, there are allegations that halal tourism is still not well developed despite the potential for halal tourism development and policies. Based on a study conducted by Saleh and Anisah (2019), tourists who come to Aceh are more dominant because business interests are not for halal leisure purposes. Thus, it is necessary to explore models such as those that are suitable to promote Aceh, one of Indonesia's halal tourism areas.

In line with the high potential for disasters in Aceh, community development-based halal tourism management is very important. A systematic review about crisis and disaster management for halal tourism conducted by Sofyan et al. (2021) found that the advantage for halal tourism is that Muslims uphold Islamic teachings as the foundation of social and community resilience in the face of disasters. Principles, behavioral and psychological responses to crises and disasters must achieve the objectives of *Maqashid Sharia* in decision making.

Aceh also won three categories in the National Best Halal Tourism Award: The Best Muslim Tourist Friendly Airport Category, the Best Muslim Tourist Friendly Destination, and the Best Travel Attractions. This series of achievements led to another award at the World Halal Tourism Award 2016 in Dubai, in which Aceh won two nomination categories, namely World's Best Airport for Halal Travellers and World's Best Halal Cultural Destination. In 2018, seven destinations in Aceh were nominated for the 2018 Indonesian Enchanting Award. In addition, the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (CrescentRating, 2019) has reported that Lombok, Aceh, and Jakarta were the top three leading regions in 2018, with scores of 58, 57, and 56, respectively.

Halal tourism development has several positive and negative impacts. First, the positive impacts can be seen from serious efforts to preserve the culture of local communities, such as religious activities, customs, and traditions, in conjunction with the development of tourist infrastructure (Amalia & Yahya, 2018). In addition, it encourages local economic growth, both in terms of accommodation, transportation, and souvenir sales. Second, the negative impact of tourism can be comprehended from our initial observations of the response of local communities towards the presence of tourism. As the results of research conducted by the

Institute for Economic and Social Research–Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia (LPEM FEB UI, 2018) shows that the halal tourism sector, in general, has an important role in the Indonesian economy, which is described by a multiplier effect such as tourist spending, investment spending, government spending in the form of additional economic output, added value, income, and job opportunities.

Negative impacts such as heated discussion or conflicts of interest among stakeholders, dislike, and refutation of tourism development plan because it violates Islamic Sharia norms are also there. Such negativity might be triggered by the presupposed assumptions that tourism activities are identical to immorality. Similarly, the emergence of social problems, such as gambling, and prostitution were also viewed as the blemish of tourism. Alternatively, to some extent, halal tourism was considered a political populism instrument by the elites to win the heart of their electorates (Akmal et al., 2020).

A study on the loyalty of Millennial Muslim tourists in Indonesia conducted by Suhartanto et al. (2021) using the Partial Least Squares approach has proven that the Halal experience is an important factor in determining the satisfaction of Indonesian Millennial Muslim tourists to visit domestic destinations. However, halal experience is not considered important when visiting international destinations. Furthermore, perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty are more influenced by experience with tourism attractions than by Halal experience when visiting domestic or international destinations. Therefore, Aceh Province needs to build a halal tourism model to create a halal experience to increase tourist loyalty.

The development of halal tourism in Aceh, as the Islamic region, needs to find proper formula for adopting and implementing the concept of halal tourism. Given that the concept of halal tourism is still relatively new, it is essential to do in-depth and measurable studies to find the right concept for the development of Aceh's halal tourism that is distinctive to other regions in Indonesia in particular and in other countries worldwide in general. Furthermore, tourism development in Aceh must be placed within the corridor of the implementation of Islamic law on the one hand and in line with the locals' wisdom and economic growth on the other hand.

Such potential exceptionalities are exclusively governed and explicated in local regulations in Aceh, known as *Qanun Sharia*. This potential is what distinguishes Aceh from other provinces in Indonesia. This present study aims to formulate and find an applicable model of the halal tourism industry to the framework of Islamic sharia in Aceh to encourage community economic growth departing from the abovementioned backgrounds.

## METHODOLOGY

Referring to the research objective to formulate a model of halal tourism in Aceh, this research is a descriptive analysis. This study used an expert system approach, which collects key data and information in the formulation of model design through interviews, questionnaires, direct observation, and synthesis of data in the field. Experts who are competent to provide ideas and thoughts have expertise based on formal education (bachelor) in the field studied, based on experience and work history, as well as practitioners in fields related to Halal Tourism Management and Islamic economics.

Expert system approaches in qualitative modeling design have been widely applied, such as structural models, policies, military, environment, teaching methods, social issues, energy issues, innovations, and so on (Bjerke, 2008; Cox, 2010; Fadhil et al., 2018). The advantages of using an expert system, according to Delbridge (2008), are:

1. Improve the holistic understanding of the parties explored in a case study
2. The use of expert systems makes the learning process available to all actively involved parties
3. The Innovation of problem-solving can be explored together to produce many alternative solutions.

Competent experts and practitioners were selected based on their formal education, professional experiences, and work history. The experts selected in this study were 12 participants that consist of members of the National Sharia Council, the Indonesian Halal Tourism Acceleration Team from the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, the Aceh Culture and Tourism Office, the Aceh Halal Tourism Acceleration Team, Lecturers at Syiah Kuala University and Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, The Cosmetics, Drugs and Food Assessment Division of Indonesian Ulema Council, and Aceh Tourism Practitioners. In addition, the following are expert participants in this study (in Table 1):

Table 1

*Key informant based on the field of expertise*

| No | Expert participants | Field of expert |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Expert academics | Sharia Muamalah Expert/Lecturer of the Faculty of Sharia and Law UIN Ar Raniry |
| 2 | Practitioner | Head of the Aceh Halal Tourism Acceleration Team |
| 3 | Expert academics | Sharia Branding Expert/Lecturer from Syiah Kuala University Banda Aceh |
| 4 | Government | The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism |
| 5 | Government | The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia |
| 6 | Government | Head of the Aceh Culture and Tourism Office |
| 7 | Ulama | The Cosmetics, Drugs and Food Assessment Division of Indonesian Ulema Council |
| 8 | Ulama | The National Sharia Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council (DSN-MUI) |

Table 1 *(Continue)*

| No | Expert participants | Field of expert |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | Practitioner | Tourism activist |
| 10 | Practitioner | Travel Agency (Musafir Travel) |
| 11 | Practitioner | Travel Agency (Imam Travel) |
| 12 | Practitioner | Tour Guide (Fortuna Travel) |

*Source*: Authors Compilation

The disadvantages of this expert system do not reflect the large sample size in a study. Instead, it means that the limit on the number of samples is determined from the level of ability to access sampling in the field of halal tourism as a key informant. This approach collects key data and information in formulating concept designs through interviews, direct observation, and data synthesis. This study used a conceptual model development system in formulating expert opinions, as shown in Figure 2. This system is a development of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM; Dalkin et al., 2018; Fadhil et al., 2018; Torres, 2018; Warren et al., 2019) and System Development Life Cycle (SDLC; Dawson et al., 2019; Fadhil et al., 2017; Moore, 2015).

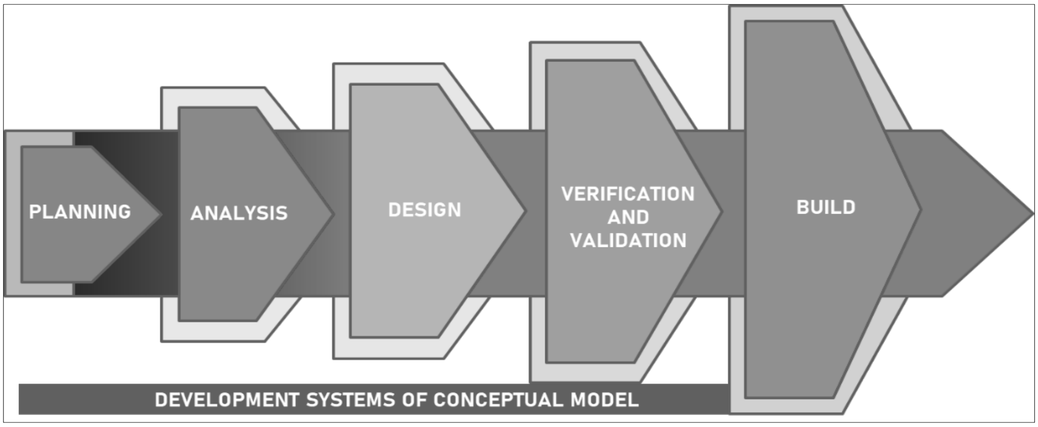
PLANNING
ANALYSIS
DESIGN
VERIFICATION AND VALIDATION
BUILD
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

*Figure 2.* System of conceptual model development

The next activity is translating each stage based on the conceptual model development system, including Planning, Analysis, Design, Verification, Validation, and Building concepts. The planning stage is the process of formulating the problem and the purpose of the research. At this stage, we studied the existing problems and possible future challenges. The next stage of analysis and design is to study various policies, collect references and expert consultations, obtain various studies, research, views of experts, and conduct a SWOT analysis. These are conducted before designing the system, namely the application of halal tourism within the Islamic implementation framework in Aceh. Finally, the Observations to build a halal tourism model are carried out using a qualitative expert system approach with the variables in Table 2.

Table 2

*Observation of operational variable*

| Observation | Actors | Limitation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Hospitality<br>2. Halal Food<br>3. Infrastructure<br>4. Amenity<br>5. Human Resources<br>6. Tourism Event | Government, Public, Travel Agency, Cleric/ Ulema, Expert academic | Al-Daruriyyah (essential), Al-Hajiyyah (necessary), and Al-Tahsiniyyah (luxury). |

*Source*: Authors

Then the next stage is the verification and validation process stage, which has been formulated through public and expert consultations. This activity includes public dissemination through policy briefs and media briefings, analyses of the expert focus group discussions (FGD) in the form of consultative critiques and internal criticisms. The final stage is to formulate a model of the application of halal tourism within the framework of Islamic sharia implementation in Aceh. These stages are shown in Figure 3.

Based on Figure 3, the framework of the research concept begins with a strategic planning process regarding the existing condition of the halal tourism sector in Aceh based on regulation/policy, stakeholder perceptions, and literacy. Furthermore, the perspective of the experts will build the design of the halal tourism model, which is limited to the aspects of shariah compliance and regional economic growth. The halal tourism modeling process is obtained from the observations and SWOT mapping of policies, regulations, and expert consultations to design modeling of the implementation of halal tourism to encourage economic growth in Aceh.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aceh is now a region that provides convenience for tourists in fulfilling Islamic religious obligations when traveling and offers all forms of creative tourism (Rosmery, 2019). In addition, various kinds of literature classify Aceh in the context of tourism, such as rural tourism (Ningrum et al., 2019), tsunami tourism (Nazaruddin & Sulaiman, 2013), coastal tourism (Fadillah

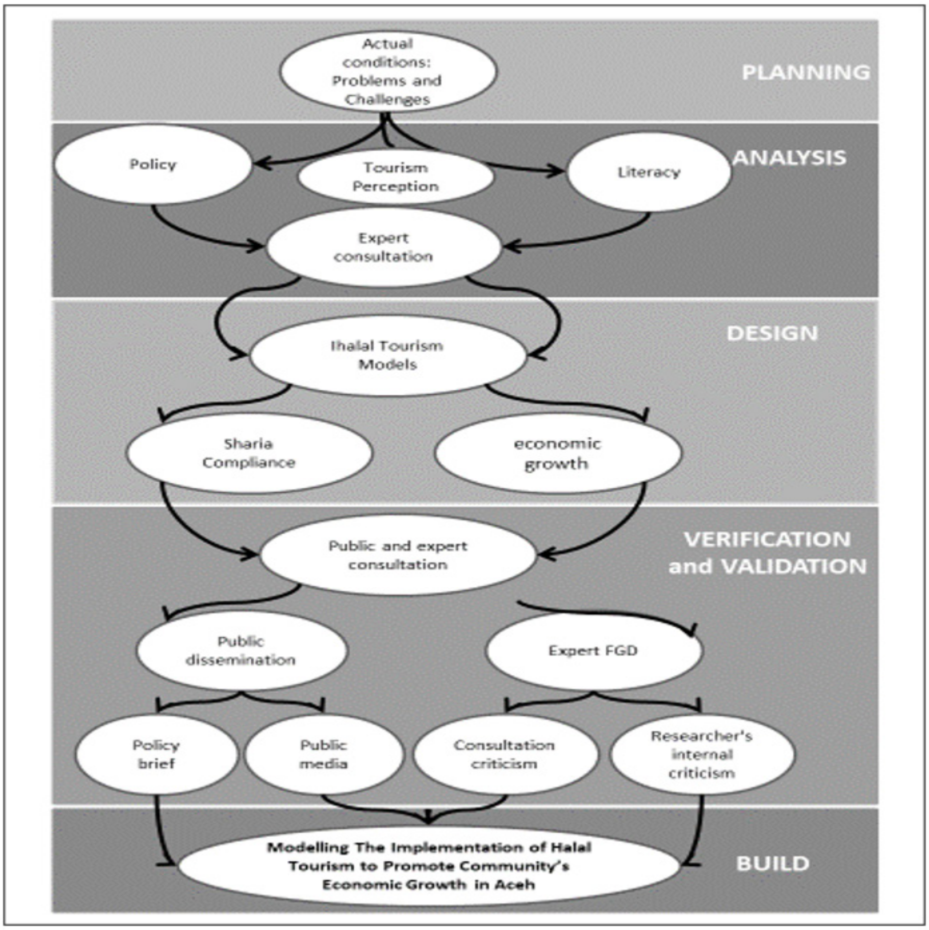
Actual conditions: Problems and Challenges
PLANNING
Policy
Tourism Perception
Literacy
ANALYSIS
Expert consultation
Ihalal Tourism Models
DESIGN
Sharia Compliance
economic growth
Public and expert consultation
VERIFICATION and VALIDATION
Public dissemination
Expert FGD
Policy brief
Public media
Consultation criticism
Researcher's internal criticism
Modelling The Implementation of Halal Tourism to Promote Community's Economic Growth in Aceh
BUILD

*Figure 3.* The framework of the research concept

et al., 2012), cultural tourism (Novarisa et al., 2019), religious tourism (Satria & Ali, 2018), adventure tourism (Wiharjokusumo, 2018), agro-marine tourism (Wahyuningsih et al., 2019), marine tourism (Herlina & Hamzah, 2015), eco-tourism (Quimby, 2015), and heritage tourism (Winarso, 2010).

The basics of halal tourism include halal hotels, halal transportation, halal food places, halal logistics, Islamic finance, Islamic travel packages, halal spas, and so forth. As an illustration, the halal hotel provides halal services to Muslim travelers. Hotels of this type are not restricted to serving halal culinary, but their halal operations will also be managed based on Islamic principles. Halal food places, food products, and beverages served in restaurants must be halal. Meats from chickens and cows, for example, must be slaughtered according to Sharia principles. The Halal Tourism Model is described below.

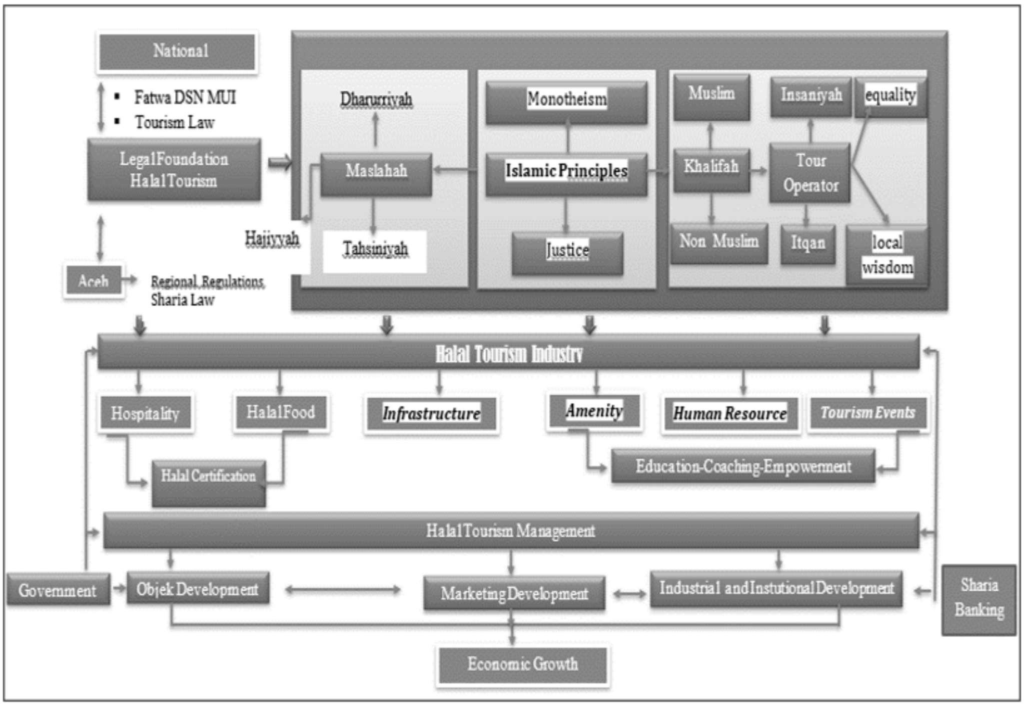

*Figure 4.* Model for promoting community economic growth in Aceh through halal tourism

Based on the halal tourism model framework in Figure 4, the implementation of tourism activities must be guided by national and local legislations. Some regulations governing aspects of halal tourism can be described in the following Table 3:

Table 3

*Regulations of tourism activities in Indonesia and Aceh*

| Law/Goverment Regulation | Local Regulation/Qanun Aceh |
|---|---|
| 1) **UU No. 9 Tahun 1990 tentang kepariwisataan.** | 1. Qanun Provinsi Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam No. 11 Tahun 2002 tentang Pelaksanaan Syariat Islam Bidang aqidah, Ibadah dan Syi'ar Islam |
| 2) **PP No. 67 Tahun 1996 tentang Penyelenggaraan Kepariwisataan** | 2. Qanun No. 9 Tahun 2008 Tentang Pembinaan Kehidupan Adat dan Adat Istiadat |
| 3) **Perpres No. 2 Tahun 2007 tentang Pengesahan ASEAN *Tourism Agreement* (Persetujuan Pariwisata ASEAN)** | 3. Qanun No. 8 Tahun 2013 Tentang Pariwisata |
| 4) **UU No. 10 Tahun 2009 Tentang Penyelenggaraan Kepariwisataan** | 4. Qanun No. 6 Tahun 2014 Tentang Hukum Jinayah |
| 5) **UU No. 33 Tahun 2014 tentang Jaminan Produk Halal** | 5. Qanun No. 8 Tahun 2015 Tentang Pembinaan dan Perlindungan Aqidah |

Table 3 *(Continue)*

| Law/Goverment Regulation | Local Regulation/Qanun Aceh |
|---|---|
| 6) **UU RI No. 11 Tahun 2006 tentang UU Pemerintah Aceh** | 6. Qanun No. 8 Tahun 2016 Tentang Jaminan Produk Halal |
| 7) **Fatwa Dewan Syariah Nasional-Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor 108/DSN MUI(X) 2016 tentang Pedoman penyelenggaraan Pariwisata** | 7. Qanun No. 11 Tahun 2018 Lembaga Keuangan Syariah |
| 8) **UU No.10 Tahun 2009 Tentang Penyelenggaraan Kepariwisataan** | 8. Qanun No. 8 Tahun 2015 Tentang Pembinaan dan Perlindungan Aqidah |
|  | 9. Qanun No. 9 Tahun 2018 Tentang Pembinaan Kehidupan Adat dan Istiadat |

*Source*: Compilation of regulations on tourism

In line with the regulations governing halal tourism in Table 3, the model framework for developing halal tourism must refer to the principles of Maslahah.

The concept of maslahah implies that tourism development aims to create prosperity and equity, which refers to the five dimensions, namely maintaining religion (al-din); maintaining the soul (al-nafs); guarding the mind (al-`aql); maintaining offspring (al-nasl); and maintain wealth (al-mal). Al-Syatibi and al-Ghazali divide the benefit to be achieved by the shari'ah into three stages (al-Ghazali, 1970; Asy-Syathibi, 1982); first, al-daruriyyah (essential), al-hajiyyah (necessary), and al-tahsiniyyah (luxury). The integration of maslahah values comprehensively will grow the halal tourism industry in implementing hospitality, halal food, infrastructure, amenities, human resources, and tourism events. Maslahah also means that halal tourism activities in relation to economic growth must produce an even distribution of income between tourism actors and the local community. Therefore, the economic growth centers of the halal tourism sector will have an impact on community welfare. According to Nizar (as cited in Subarkah, 2018), the causality between halal tourism and economic growth can be divided into three model hypotheses: tourism-led economic growth, economy-driven tourism, and the reciprocal causal hypothesis.

## Halal Tourism in The Framework of Islamic Principles

The principles of halal tourism carried out in Aceh within the framework of Islamic Sharia enforcement shall include the principle of monotheism (Choudhury & Rahim, 2016), the principle of morality and justice (Chapra, 2014), the *Khalifah* principle (Hassan, 2005) which gave birth to the principles of *insaniyyah* (humanism; Arham, 2010), *itqan* (professionalism and perfection work ethic), equality/egalitarianism (Asutay, 2007), and *uruf* (localism/local wisdom; Bello et al., 2015). All these principles lead to the realization of the last principle: the implementation of halal tourism to generate the community's economic growth based on Islamic values (Mohsin et al., 2016).

The word *Khalifah* or caliphate derives from the word *kh-l-f (khalafa),* meaning to replace, leave, deviate, and an heir to the role of humans to utilize, develop, invest and use the properties given by Allah to prosper human beings. Therefore, human conduct in regulating and prospering the earth must be fully subdued to the will of Allah SWT. Many have likened the concept of the caliphate as merely political and elite, so to say, and mostly linked to the establishment of Islamic state and imamate of the government (Bouzarinejad et al., 2017). However, the true meaning of *khalifah* encompasses the political aspects of Islam. It is more of a theological and moral foundation to lead the world. The world here should start from individuals and imply personal responsibility. Islam and Muslims believe that everyone is a leader, at least for themselves, their family, and their community, to achieve a more manageable world for the human being.

The nature of *insaniyyah* is the specialty that Allah has entrusted to humans to create the quality of human life from time to time. Every act or deed that leads to the form of humanizing and respecting human beings, then it is part of the guidance of the sharia. Yusuf and Bahari (2015) argue that humanism is inherent in Islam and, therefore, can be seen to create a better society and a more sustainable economic development. Islam urges collaboration and harmony between the parties involved in the economy (Zaman, 2009). Humanism in Islam is not limited to theories but practices as it acknowledges varied values between different people (Ahmadova, 2017).

The word *Itqān* literally means to do something perfectly with great care and diligence, as outlined in the Holy Qur'an. The equality principle in tourism is formed in tangible halal tourism, which prioritizes the values of brotherhood. Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said, "The parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever" ("Being merciful," n.d.; "The mutual mercy," n.d.). As Suryanto (2016) affirms, Islamic work ethic and audit is one way of increasing the level of professionalism amongst auditors and curing dysfunctional behavior in Islamic economics. Kamarudin and Kassim (2020) additionally signify those professional services like assurance, reliability, empathy, and responsiveness are central to getting customer satisfaction in Islamic teaching.

## Considerations on the Development of Halal Tourism Industry in Aceh

In the halal tourism industry development, several important points must be considered to build a tourism industry capable of reviving people's economy. Hospitality, halal food, infrastructure, amenity, human resources, and tourism events will be described in the following details.

### Hospitality.

Simply put, hospitality can be understood as all matters relating to all types of business forms related to the provision of accommodation, transportation, and lodging. According to Mills et al. (2008), hospitality is the overall comfort that a tourist gets while visiting the area. Therefore, it means that the hospitality industry provides a service facility for guests in the form of transportation, accommodation, lodging, various other service facilities.

### Halal Food.

The word "halal" means something that is permitted and is normally used for a legitimate understanding. The concept of halal in Islam has very unequivocal reasons, such as preserving the purity of faith, maintaining an Islamic mindset, safeguarding life, protecting assets and future generations, upholding self-respect and truthfulness. Furthermore, halal means all aspects of life, such as tolerable behavior, communication, clothing, and manner (Jaelani, 2017). Similarly, halal food has become a food and souvenir application platform (Sucipto et al., 2017). Therefore, halal food needs to receive more attention from Islamic tourism management to improve brand image and tourists' revisit intention. Research conducted by Wardi et al. (2021) in the context of the antecedents of halal restaurant brand image and its consequences on customer revisit intentions empirically at Rumah Makan Padang found that halal restaurant brand image has a significant positive effect on customer revisit intentions. Furthermore, the antecedents of halal restaurant brand image (i.e., service quality, health awareness, and religiosity) were also found to have a significant positive effect on halal restaurant brand image.

### Infrastructure.

The development of halal tourism will never be separated from the infrastructure facility, which is an important requirement to support the sustainability of tourism. Without adequate infrastructure support, it will not be easy to optimize tourist destinations' promotions. The visitors will certainly be more interested in coming if the provided infrastructure is complete and comfortable (Rani et al., 2017).

### Amenity.

Another important aspect of the halal tourism industry is the amenity. This aspect is related to the facilities that provide a comfortable atmosphere and related to satisfactory service. Presumably, this aspect is also related to the attractiveness of a tourist destination that must always receive the serious attention of the managers on an enduring basis. All good tourism objects will not have a meaningful value without being equipped with the required facilities and accompanied by excellent service. Of course, these facilities also need to analyze the spatial circumstances of the tourist destinations contextually and the overall needs of tourists (Naranpanawa et al., 2019) as not all amenities must be located in the main area of the destination.

### Human Resource.

In an organization, the most important thing to consider is human resources. They serve as the main supporters of achieving organizational goals. Human resources occupy strategic positions in an organization; therefore, human resources must be driven effectively and efficiently to achieve a high level of usability. Human resource management is a strategic series, processes, and activities designed to support the company's goals by integrating the needs of the company and its individuals (Madera et al., 2017).

### Tourism Events.

Creating a national and international scale tourism event related to halal tourism is a good marketing tool in the halal tourism world. Tourism events in the tourism industry can leverage tourist visits (Kelly & Fairley, 2018). It provides a special attraction for Muslim tourists in knowing tourist destinations. Through various events, it is expected that a sense of interest and mutual understanding will occur between tourists and the local community. Ways of implementation of Islamic values in tourism events include separation of places between men and women under sharia law, upholding local customs and culture by obtaining official approval from the government, local figures, and religious leaders, stopping all activities during praying times, and announcing to all visitors to join the prays (if they are Muslims), avoiding entertainment that is contrary to Islamic values.

## Halal Tourism Management Model in Aceh

It is imperative to encourage the role of the halal tourism industry for economic growth, proper and good governance so that the development of the halal tourism industry can run well and have a positive impact on the economy. This authority presence is also obligatory because developing halal tourism multi-stakeholder engagement requires certain strategies and proper planning. Abror et al. (2021) found that the dimension of religiosity has a significant moderating impact on the relationship between perceived value and trust of tourist visitors to West Sumatra Province. This study recommends that derivatives of religiosity can be implemented through halal standardization management in tourism services and products. The results of the SWOT mapping analysis carried out between the proposed expert components resulted in several policy strategies, as shown in Table 4:

Integrated tourism development can be comprehended with several principles. First is the participation of the local community. They will be very helpful by determining the vision of tourism, identifying available and enhanced resources, and developing goals and strategies for developing and managing tourist attractions. Second is the participation of tourism actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), volunteer groups, local government, tourism associations, and business associations. Third is the utilization of existing natural resources, which is to stimulate optimal

Table 4

*Halal tourism policy strategy based on SWOT analysis*

| **STRATEGY S-O** | **STRATEGY W-O** |
|---|---|
| 1. Strengthening local and national regulations<br>2. Integration of *maslahah* values<br>3. Center of education historical sites in Aceh<br>4. Build a brand image of halal tourism<br>5. Build halal ecotourism to accelerate local economic growth. | 1. Education and socialization<br>2. Preserve cultural values/local wisdom.<br>3. Access to facilities and infrastructure.<br>4. Assist business actors in the management of halal certification.<br>5. Build coordination between the government and tourism practitioners. |
| **STRATEGI S-T** | **STRATEGI W-T** |
| 1. Reinforce Islamic cultural values in society<br>2. Improving the quality of Islamic management and services<br>3. Improving halal tourism literacy for travel agencies and tour guides. | 1. Strengthen the role of ulema and community leaders.<br>2. Standardize the quality of facilities and infrastructure.<br>3. Involve community participation in promoting halal tourism. |

*Source:* Matrix SWOT analysis

economic development. Fourth, the support system is identified to be adjusted to the limits of local capacity and the environment.

As for the management of tourist destinations, three aspects must be considered: attraction, accessibility, facilities (amenities). In developing halal tourist destinations, developing Muslim-friendly tourism facilities and services is crucial for encouraging the creation of a halal tourism investment climate. Therefore, the facilities available at the destination objects must be durable and comfortable. Needs desired by tourists generally must also be made available like clean toilets, rest areas, parking lots, and other religious facilities. The mosque that was built should also meet the halal tourism standards. For example, it is clean, equipped with spacious parking areas, children's playgrounds. In special cases, if the mosque is a historical monument, there should be an information board that provides an impressive past account of the mosque to the visitors.

In organizing a tourism event, the role of the EO (Event Organizer) is very critical. An event organizer (EO) can be defined as an activity organizing service that aims to facilitate an activity or event, specifically for MICE activities (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions). Here, an EO (Event Organizer) needs to implement Islamic values in every event they organize. Moreover, the event can reflect on the integrated Islamic values in halal tourism destinations. Therefore, the management of halal tourism development and destinations is pursued by taking into account the following three aspects, that is to say: object development (tourism development), marketing development (tourism development), and industrial and institutional development.

First is the development of halal tourism objects. The basic reference in developing halal tourism is a belief held by the Muslims, which is interpreted as the value of Islamic law. Islamic Sharia regulates all daily activities of the believers, ranging from worship to the prohibition of unlawful food and drinks. Nonetheless, it must be understood that Islam is comprehensive and universal, which also has an attachment to *mu'amalah* (human relations) like business processes in the industry (El Garah et al., 2012). Thus, what makes consideration of tourism site development in halal tourism are the basic values of Muslims. Halal itself is a fundamental entity of halal tourism. Understanding the meaning of halal includes all facets of activities ranging from transportation facilities, promotions, hotels, food and beverages, facilities from tourism agencies, and the financial system itself.

Second is tourism marketing development. One of the challenges in developing halal tourism is related to marketing because marketing in halal tourism is not a stress-free issue. It is due to the difference between the demands of Muslim tourists and non-Muslim tourists. Non-Muslim tourists can decide not to travel to attractions without certain attributes. Consequently, one of the challenges of halal tourism is serving non-Muslim tourists and meeting their needs without violating the concept of halal tourism. For example, sharia hotels' may not be of interest to non-Muslim tourists; as a result, they quietly drop the sharia principles to attract more non-Muslim tourists. Therefore, it must be regulated and supervised. Thus, halal tourism can be a business opportunity to use creativity and flexibility to serve Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Satriana & Faridah, 2018).

Third are the tourism industry and institutional development. The development of a sustainable halal tourism industry will significantly contribute to the increased economic growth of all stakeholders involved. The development of tourist objects, marketing patterns, and halal tourism industry/institutions is an integrated unit to encourage one another and to have a multiplier effect. The multiplier effect in the tourism industry means that economically, there will be local entrepreneurs who profited from direct and indirect income or earning. Therefore, the local government's careful tourism plans and policymaking will be crucial to address the institutional development and develop a successful institutional roadmap of local economic development (Lourens, 2007).

The economic growth of the people from the halal tourism sector will be much stronger and more advanced when fully supported by the government and the banking sector to finance the construction of infrastructure, financial capabilities and develop reliable human resources in halal tourism. Potential optimization of sharia banking will support the development of halal tourism and vice versa. Well-integrated halal tourism will encourage the development and existence of sharia banking (Adyatma, 2013). Adyatma (2013) further argues that this means creating innovative products by providing special financing products for halal tourism industry players, organizing events to support halal tourism towards tourists' good experiences. A good experience for tourists, for example, is to have access to affordable sharia bank offices and ATM services. Therefore, it will encourage tourists and halal tourism industry players to use sharia bank services. In a similar tone, the Aceh Qanun, No. 11 of 2018 concerning Sharia Financial Institutions, encourages all financial institutions in the public and other financing services in private sectors to be operated based on sharia guidelines, including in the halal tourism industry.

## CONCLUSION

As stated in the introductory section, this present study was viewed to contribute to introducing a proposed model for halal tourism implementation in Aceh and supporting community economic growth. The model is still under exploration, and therefore more scrutiny on it is still required. However, it is expected that this study has provided more comprehensive insights at the conceptual stage on how halal tourism is envisaged to promote a more sustainable economic growth for the local community. It is intended to represent a small but meaningful step forward to help the government and the local community bridge the existing disparity.

From the academic and conceptual perspectives, this paper can help complement our standpoint that is likely to boost the economic growth of the local community in halal tourism that does not have to defy its basic principles of Islamic teaching. However, it is acknowledged that there is still a prevalent belief about how the local tourism model can benefit the local economy, which poses a serious challenge for halal tourism development policy amidst the changing politics and social demographic scenes.

Concerning Aceh as one of the provinces in Indonesia implementing tourism activities, Aceh has followed the guides provided by national laws as the main basis for developing tourism sector activities. In a similar vein, the Government of Aceh also issued government regulations, namely the Aceh *qanun* on tourism activities, adhering to the Islamic values and sharia implementation approved by the national government. The existence of both national and regional legal systems uniquely distinguished Aceh from other regions in Indonesia in tourism activities. Aceh, as a result, has a vast potential to develop a unique tourism model compared to the halal tourism concept applied in other contexts. The economy will grow if tourism actors and stakeholders support it. Either small, medium or large businesses within the scheme of halal tourism can actively contribute to and weigh out in the process. Furthermore, the economic growth of the people relying on the tourism sector will be stronger when the government and the banking sector fully supported the construction of infrastructure, providing capital and reliable human resources in halal tourism.

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| *USTP* | *– University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines* |
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| *UTHM* | *– Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia* |
| *UTM* | *– Universiti Teknologi Malaysia* |
| *UTSA* | *– The University of Texas at San Antonio* |
| *UUM* | *– Universiti Utara Malaysia* |
| *WIRAJAYA* | *– Wiraraja University* |
| *XMU* | *– Xiamen University Malaysia* |

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# Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities

*Our goal is to bring high-quality research to the widest possible audience*

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

(REGULAR ISSUE)

(Manuscript Preparation & Submission Guide)

*Revised: December 2020*

Please read the *Pertanika* guidelines and follow these instructions carefully. The Chief Executive Editor reserves the right to return manuscripts that are not prepared in accordance with these guidelines.

### MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION Manuscript Types

*Pertanika accepts submission of mainly 4 types of manuscripts*
- that have not been published elsewhere (including proceedings)
- that are not currently being submitted to other journals

#### 1. Regular article

Regular article is a full-length original empirical investigation, consisting of introduction, methods, results, and discussion. Original research work should present new and significant findings that contribute to the advancement of the research area. *Analysis and Discussion* must be supported with relevant references.

*Size:* Generally, each manuscript is **not to exceed 6000 words** (excluding the abstract, references, tables, and/or figures)**,** a maximum of **80 references**, and **an abstract of less than 250 words.**

#### 2. Review article

A review article reports a critical evaluation of materials about current research that has already been published by organising, integrating, and evaluating previously published materials. It summarises the status of knowledge and outlines future directions of research within the journal scope. A review article should aim to provide systemic overviews, evaluations, and interpretations of research in a given field. Re-analyses as meta-analysis and systemic reviews are encouraged.

*Size:* Generally, it is expected **not to exceed 6000 words** (excluding the abstract, references, tables, and/or figures), a maximum of **80 references,** and **an abstract of less than 250 words.**

#### 3. Short communications

Each article should be timely and brief. It is suitable for the publication of significant technical advances and maybe used to:

(a) reports new developments, significant advances and novel aspects of experimental and theoretical methods and techniques which are relevant for scientific investigations within the journal scope;
(b) reports/discuss on significant matters of policy and perspective related to the science of the journal, including 'personal' commentary;
(c) disseminates information and data on topical events of significant scientific and/or social interest within the scope of the journal.

*Size:* It is limited to **3000 words** and have a maximum of **3 figures and/or tables, from 8 to 20 references, and an abstract length not exceeding 100 words.** The information must be in short but complete form and it is not intended to publish preliminary results or to be a reduced version of a regular paper.

#### 4. Others

Brief reports, case studies, comments, concept papers, letters to the editor, and replies on previously published articles may be considered.

### Language Accuracy

*Pertanika* **emphasises** on the linguistic accuracy of every manuscript published. Articles can be written in **English** or **Bahasa Malaysia** and they must be competently written and presented in clear and concise grammatical English/ Bahasa Malaysia. Contributors are strongly advised to have the manuscript checked by a colleague with ample experience in writing English manuscripts or a competent English language editor. For articles in Bahasa Malaysia, **the title, abstract, and keywords should be written in both English and Bahasa Malaysia.**

Author(s) **may be required to provide a certificate** confirming that their manuscripts have been adequately edited. **All editing costs must be borne by the authors**.

Linguistically hopeless manuscripts will be rejected straightaway (e.g., when the language is so poor that one cannot be sure of what the authors are really trying to say). This process, taken by authors before submission, will greatly facilitate reviewing, and thus, publication.

## MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

The paper should be submitted in **one-column format** with 1.5 line spacing throughout. Authors are advised to use Times New Roman 12-point font and *MS Word* format.

### *1. Manuscript Structure*

The manuscripts, in general, should be organised in the following order:

**Page 1:** Running title

This page should **only** contain the running title of your paper. The running title is an abbreviated title used as the running head on every page of the manuscript. The running title **should not exceed 60 characters, counting letters and spaces.**

**Page 2:** Author(s) and Corresponding author's information

**General information:** This page should contain the **full title** of your paper **not exceeding 25 words**, with the name of all the authors, institutions and corresponding author's name, institution and full address (Street address, telephone number (including extension), handphone number, and e-mail address) for editorial correspondence. **The corresponding author must be clearly indicated with a superscripted asterisk symbol (*).**

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**Authors' addresses:** Multiple authors with different addresses must indicate their respective addresses separately by superscript numbers.

**Tables/figures list:** A **list** of the number of **black and white/colour figures and tables** should also be indicated on this page. See ***"5. Figures & Photographs"*** for details.

*Example (page 2):*

**The Mediating Role of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies in the Development of Social Behavior among Adolescents**

***Samsilah Roslan[1]*, Noorhayati Zakaria[2], Siaw Yan-Li[3] and Noorlila Ahmad[1]***

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noorlila_ahmad@yahoo.com (Noorlila Ahmad)
*Corresponding author

*List of Table/Figure: Table 1.*
*Figure 1.*

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This page should **repeat** the **full title** of your paper with only the ***Abstract***, usually in one paragraph and ***Keywords.***

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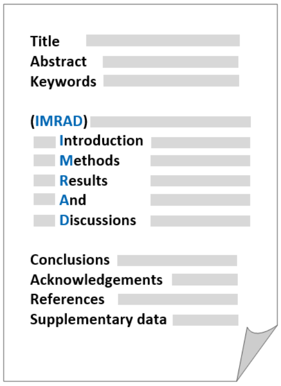
For articles in Bahasa Malaysia, **the title, abstract and keywords should be written in both English and Bahasa Malaysia.**

**Page 4:** Text

A regular paper should be prepared with the headings *Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussions, Conclusions, Acknowledgements, References,* and *Supplementary data* (if any) in this order. The literature review may be part of or separated from the *Introduction*.



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**Abstract**
**Keywords**

**(IMRAD)**
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**Methods**
**Results**
**And**
**Discussions**

**Conclusions**
**Acknowledgements**
**References**
**Supplementary data**

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Most scientific papers are prepared according to a format called IMRAD. The term represents the first letters of the words Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, And, Discussion. It indicates a pattern or format rather than a complete list of headings or components of research papers; the missing parts of a paper are: Title, Authors, Keywords, Abstract, Conclusions, and References. Additionally, some papers include Acknowledgments and Appendices.

The Introduction explains the scope and objective of the study in the light of current knowledge on the subject; the Materials and Methods describes how the study was conducted; the Results section reports what was found in the study; and the Discussion section explains meaning and significance of the results and provides suggestions for future directions of research. The manuscript must be prepared according to the Journal's instructions to authors.

### *2. Levels of Heading*

| Level of heading | Format |
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| 2nd | **Flush left, Bold, Capitalise each word** |
| 3rd | **Bold, Capitalise each word, ending with .** |
| 4th | ***Bold italic, Capitalise each word, ending with .*** |

### *3. Equations and Formulae*

These must be set up clearly and should be typed double-spaced. Numbers identifying equations should be in square brackets and placed on the right margin of the text.

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- All tables should be prepared in a form consistent with recent issues of *Pertanika* and should be numbered consecutively with Roman numerals (Table 1, Table 2).
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  *Reliability of subscales of the job satisfaction questionnaire*
- Explanatory material should be given in the table legends and footnotes.
- Each table should be prepared on a new page, embedded in the manuscript.
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***** Please submit all tables in Microsoft word format only, because tables submitted as image data cannot be edited for publication and are usually in low-resolution.***

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### *6. Acknowledgement*

Any individuals and entities who have contributed to the research should be acknowledged appropriately.

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References begin on their own page and are listed in alphabetical order by the first author's last name. Only references cited within the text should be included. All references should be in 12-point font and double-spaced. If a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) is listed on a print or electronic source, **it is required to include the DOI in the reference list.** Use Crossref to find a DOI using author and title information.

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|---|---|---|
| | **Insertion in text** | **In reference list** |
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|  | **Journals** |  |
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**Abbreviations**: Define alphabetically, other than abbreviations that can be used without definition. Words or phrases that are abbreviated in the *Introduction* and following text should be written out in full the first time that they appear in the text, with each abbreviated form in parenthesis. Include the common name or scientific name, or both, of animal and plant materials.

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*Review article*

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