

HUMAN BEHAVIOR, DEVELOPMENT and SOCIETY

Volume 22 No. 2, May – August 2021 | ISSN 2651-1762



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Human Behavior, Development and Society, Journal of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies,
Asia-Pacific International University
Online ISSN 2651-1762

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The journal has the following objectives:

- a). To stimulate the creation and synthesis of beneficial information, as well as its broad dissemination, especially in the varied fields of the humanities and social sciences,
- b). To foster a deeper understanding regarding the impact of business policies and practices on society, and
- c). To promote the adoption of best practices in communities through education, and to aid in the resolution of community issues for the betterment of society; this represents the development aspect referred to in its name.

Editorial Objectives

The editorial objectives are to advance knowledge through use of classical—or the creation of innovative—methods of investigation, and to foster the examination of cross-cultural issues to increase mutual understandings among diverse social groups. Encouraging cooperative studies and scholarly exchange across borders, as well as within Thailand, remains one of its aims. The application of theoretical considerations to the field, business, or community situations is also an outcome that is sought.

Journal Positioning

The journal is broadly based and has the potential to impact thinking and practices across a range of subject areas, dealing with substantive issues that arise in both developing and developed countries. It will likely appeal to readers with a broad appreciation of the social issues facing organizations, communities, and governments operating under varied challenges and constraints. Its contents are meant to appeal to both the academic community and practitioners in numerous areas of interest.

The positioning of the journal means that a variety of topics is covered in most issues. These, in turn, differ in their philosophical content, academic appeal, and practical implications.

Appropriate Content

The journal covers a broad spectrum of topics. These include, but are not limited to, anthropology, allied health focused on community issues and health education, education from the primary to the tertiary levels, literature, language use and acquisition, business, management, finance, geography, psychology, social sciences, philosophy, and theology. Review essays and seminar/forum papers are also accepted when appropriately focused. Well-executed studies that address interesting and significant topics in the areas mentioned above are particularly welcomed. All articles accepted should make significant contributions to understanding and add to the corpus of knowledge in their respective fields.

The following constitutes a partial list of topics that are considered potentially suitable for publication:

1. Applied linguistic or linguistic studies that examine issues related to communication, language pedagogy and use, as well as theories and meaning of language.
2. Religious or biblical studies that explore historical, philosophical, sociological, as well as hermeneutical issues.
3. Anthropological or ethnographic studies which seek to reflect cultural nuances of communities for a better understanding of the society.
4. Cultural/intercultural issues and diversity, including how tensions involving these parameters might be handled to achieve social justice and acceptance.
5. Review articles or studies in the fields of marketing, business, stock market trading, and auditing practices, and their significance to the business and broader community.
6. Organizational behavior, resilience, and the creation of a positive psychological work environment and job satisfaction.
7. Teaching strategies, interventions, assessment, and other issues to the betterment of society.
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10. Social trends in addictive behavior; how to address such issues creatively.
11. Impact of specific policies and interventions on health care, including how to promote positive health outcomes in communities.
12. Innovative and cost effective approaches to health care and education in poor, rural communities.

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Publishing Schedule

Human Behavior, Development and Society is published three times per year by Institute Press during the months of April, August and December.

All opinions, errors, omissions and such expressed in *Human Behavior, Development and Society* are the responsibility of the authors.

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Indexing

Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI)
 EBSCO Information Services

Current and Past Issues

Volume 22 No 2 August 2021
 Volume 22 No 1 April 2021
 Volume 21 No 4 December 2020
 Volume 21 No 3 September 2020
 Volume 21 No 2 June 2020
 Volume 21 No 1 March 2020
 Volume 20 No 4 December 2019
 Volume 20 No 3 September 2019
 Volume 20 No 2 June 2019
 Volume 20 No 1 March 2019
 Volume 19 December 2018 (*HBDS*)
 Volume 18 August 2018 (*Catalyst*)
 Volume 17 April 2018
 Volume 16 December 2017
 Volume 15 June 2017

Volume 14 December 2016
 Volume 13 June 2016
 Volume 12 December 2015
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 Volume 10 December 2014
 Volume 9 July 2014
 Volume 8 December 2013
 Volume 7 December 2012
 Volume 6 December 2011
 Volume 5 December 2010
 Volume 4 November 2009
 Volume 3 November 2008
 Volume 2 November 2007
 Volume 1 November 2006

From the Editor

Human Behavior, Development and Society (HBDS) is an international, open-access, interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal published three issues a year by Asia-Pacific International University (AIU). *HBDS* publishes findings and discussions regarding most aspects of human behavior, development, and society. The journal's scope is to advance knowledge through the use of classical methods of investigation and to foster the examination of cross-cultural issues that increase mutual understanding among diverse social groups within the international community, with a particular emphasis on Southeast Asia. All articles in the journal are indexed with the Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI) and the EBSCO database. The editorial team is committed to maintaining meticulous peer-review standards and the highest level of ethical integrity, ensuring consistency and scientific rigor in each research article.

This issue of HBDS contains 10 articles, nine of which were written by researchers external to the university, and one that was authored by AIU researchers. We are delighted to see reports and findings from various disciplines including finance, marketing, taxation, language education, psychology, and religion. Most articles in this issue reflect studies conducted in Asian contexts including Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand. We hope that this issue of HBDS will contribute to the development of society and serve as a source of information for various academic fields and research projects.

We would like to invite readers to publish your valuable papers with us. More information may be found on our website, <https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/hbds>. We would also appreciate comments or suggestions from you to help us improve the journal. Finally, we appreciate the hard work of authors, peer reviewers, editorial along with executive board members, and journal staff members who have contributed to make this achievement a reality.

Assistant Professor Dr. Damrong Sattayawaksakul, Editor
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Asia-Pacific International University

Maternity Leave Policy for Woman Workforces in Thailand's Formal Sector

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Date Received: 31 March 2021 Revised: 16 May 2021 Accepted: 21 May 2021

Abstract

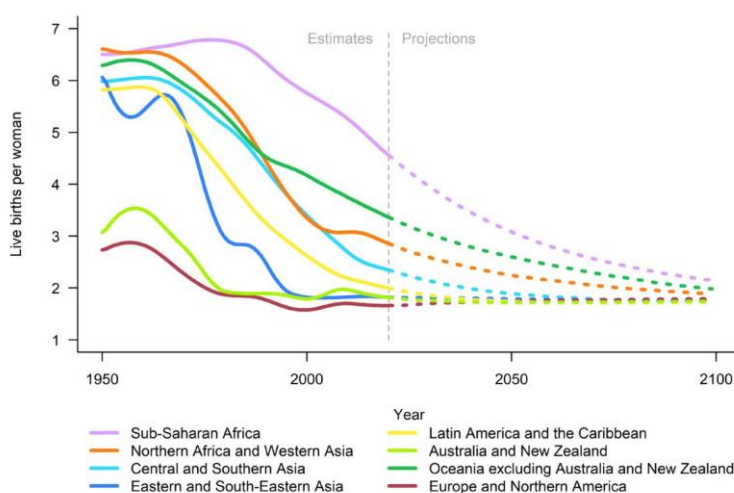
Thailand's total fertility rate has been below the replacement level since the 1990s. The Thai women's workforce, in the formal sectors, faces challenges finding a balance between employment and bearing children. Employers also tend to have unfavorable attitudes toward women who have children, because this affects them financially. The maternity leave policy remains ineffective, which results in the total fertility rate continuing to decline. Policymakers might consider also giving parental leave to the fathers of newborn babies. Maternity leave should be divided into three parts: pre-natal, maternity, and post-maternity leave, during which time women should still continue to be paid so that the expenses of rearing children can be offset. In addition, breastfeeding facilities should be introduced at workplaces to facilitate women's ability to rear their children at work. Finally, having children should not serve as an obstacle to women's career progression.

Keywords: *Fertility, formal female workforce, maternity leave policy*

Background, Global and Thai Fertility, and Thailand's Population Structure

The decline in total fertility has become a trend in many countries, except in southern Africa (United Nations, 2017). Total fertility rates in every region across the globe have experienced downward trends, which are projected to continue until the year 2100. There are no exceptions to such trends, even in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the total fertility rate has been the highest when compared with other regions. Even there, the total fertility rate fell from 6.3 births per woman in 1990 to 4.6 in 2019. Fertility on the global level decreased from 3.2 births per woman in 1990 to 2.5 in 2019. It must be noted that the replacement level is at 2.1 births per woman (United Nations, 2020). The total fertility trend in each region is illustrated in Figure 1.

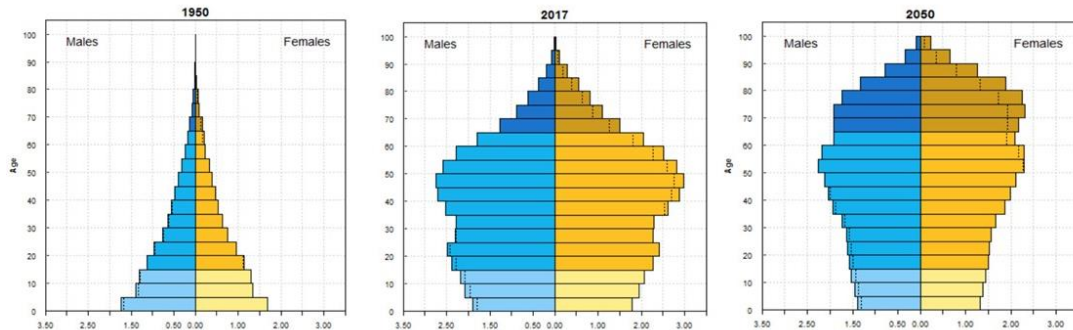
Figure 1 Total Fertility Rate by Region, Estimates, and Projections, 1950–2100 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020)



Thailand's total fertility declined dramatically from 6.1 children per woman in 1966 to 1.5 children per woman in 2017 (World Bank, 2018). The decline in total fertility is reflected in the country's population pyramid. The United Nations (2017) report on the past, the present, and the

nation's future population demographic pyramid is illustrated in Figure 2. According to this report, Thailand's demographic structure was in a pyramid shape in 1950, signifying a larger young population while the older population was contracted. It is suggested that the pyramid shape graph may have resulted from Thailand's high fertility rate, and also its high mortality rate during that period.

Figure 2 *Thailand's Population Structure, Past, Present, and Future (United Nations, 2017)*



Following the striking 1950 pyramid population structure, a much changed demographic population structure was observed in 2017. As can be seen from the latter data, Thailand's young population was reduced significantly compared to the 1950 pyramid. It can be noted that both the middle and old-age groups expanded. Eventually, the oldest population group started to shrink. This is in line with a constrictive demographic structure, which is a sign of a lower fertility rate. Finally, the United Nations forecast that Thailand's population would decrease and finally stabilize in 2050. This follows since the fertility rate has been continuously low.

According to demographic transition theory, economic development is reflected in declines in both fertility and mortality. In Thailand in the past, public health services were not good; thus, the death rate was high. With such a high death rate, people had to have more children to replace the members of the family who had died. However, presently public health services have improved all over the world. This has resulted in reduced death rates. With lower death rates, people no longer exhibited high levels of fertility, as the need to replace those who died had been reduced. Eventually, such trends would result in shrinkage of the population (Lundquist et al., 2015). Thailand's present demographic structure is in line with the demographic transition assumption. Moreover, it could be anticipated that the size of the labor force entering the Thai labor market would also decline. Stevenson (2012) studied the level of labor supply and tax revenue in the United States, and suggested that there is a relationship between the labor force level and the level of federal tax revenue. Hence, it is possible that labor force shrinkage will challenge Thailand's future tax revenue in the coming years.

The effects of demographic changes also lead to economic growth or decline. Wongboonsin et al. (2005) suggested that high fertility leads to the entry of a greater labor force into the labor market; thus, there are opportunities for economic growth. The effects of labor forces on the growth of Asian economies, including Thailand, has been confirmed by Kajimura's (2020) work. She adopted growth accounting to study the phenomenon. She considered labor input, capital stock, and human capital to verify the relationship between economic growth and labor force related factors. It was suggested that the level of the labor supply rate had a positive effect on economic growth in Thailand and other regions. Hence, it could be concluded that a decline in Thailand's fertility has led to a lower level of labor supply to the labor market, which eventually will affect the country's economic growth.

In this paper, possible causes and effects on the nation's low fertility will be reviewed, especially the factors influencing participation of the female workforce in the formal sector. Possible policy recommendations will be offered at the end of the paper.

Possible Causes of Low Fertility with a Focus on Working Parents

Urbanization

The childbearing rate in rural areas is much higher than that in urban areas. This is due to the differences in the working styles between those who reside in each respective area. More specifically, urbanites tend to spend more of their time at their workplaces and less time at home. Those who are in rural areas are also more likely to participate in the agricultural sector. Thus, parents hope that they will gain benefits from having more children to help them carry out their work (Soriano, 1991). To date, no official study with an explicit focus on Thailand has been conducted regarding this matter. However, Feng and Andrew (2008) revealed that in the People's Republic of China in the year 2000, life expectancy of their rural population was six years less than that of people in urban areas. This statistic was reflected in the fertility rate. Xiaodong (2019) reported a significant gap in the fertility rate between people in rural and urban areas. For instance, the average Chinese fertility rate was estimated at two children per woman, but in most urbanized Chinese cities, such as Shanghai, the fertility rate was 0.7 children per woman.

There is, however, a lowering of the fertility rate in rural areas (Sasiwonsaroj et al., 2020). A possible cause of this is the transformation of family arrangements. Urbanization has played an essential role in leading to different family arrangements beginning to appear. Many Thai families have changed from being extended families to nuclear families; this is because the younger generation tends to migrate from their hometowns to work in urban areas. As a result, the elderly population is abandoned, and the younger generation raises their families elsewhere, resulting in smaller family sizes (Shoichiro, 1997).

Having children consumes a great deal of parents' time in order to care for them. Receiving family members' support, such as parents and grandparents, would influence fertility intentions (Snopkowski & Sear, 2013). For example, Luo and Mao (2014) found that women expressed the opinion that they would have higher fertility intentions if more help was available to mothers to take care of their children.

Gender Roles in the Family

There is also an inverse relationship when it comes to the increase of individual participation in the labor market. More specifically, an increase in employment of married women has resulted in lower total fertility numbers compared with those applicable to wives who were not employed (Scanzoni, 1975; Soriano, 1991). Likewise, the latter tended to have more children than the former. Hakim (2003) categorized women into three groups: work-focused, home-focused, and combine-focused. She suggested that women who were work-focused—in other words, women who were in the workforce—tended to have lower fertility intentions than those who were home-focused or combine-focused. Besides Hakim (2003), McQuillan et al. (2015) also found that women employed in part-time jobs had lower fertility intentions. However, they did not find a relationship between women who were employed full-time and their fertility intentions. Eguchi et al. (2016) conducted a study in Japan. Their results revealed that the intentions for dual-earner couples to have additional children increased when the men were active in the labor market. However, no psychosocial factors were associated with women's intentions. A study in South Korea also affirmed that the gendered division of work influenced fertility intentions. Park and Cho (2011) revealed that women who were stay-at-home mothers had higher fertility intentions for a second child than women who had full-time employment.

Even though women's participation in labor markets is not a new phenomenon, there have been changes in the family institution. The trend has been away from male domination, with accompanying female subordination, to one featuring more female domination (Soriano, 1991). In the past, most women had less participation in the labor market because they were responsible for domestic work and taking care of their children (Scanzoni, 1975). The increase in the number of women participating in the labor market has shown a direct correlation with the decline in total fertility in many countries such as Canada, the United States of America, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and many more (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Soriano, 1991; Van Den & Maertens, 2015). This is because

women in the labor market are more likely to postpone motherhood than those who are not in the labor market (Davia & Legazpe, 2014). After a certain period, these women tend to feel that they are too old to have a child. Hence, they ultimately decide not to have offspring (Billingsley & Ferrarini, 2014; Fehr & Ujhelyiova, 2013). However, male labor force participation has had an opposite effect on fertility; that is, there would be a decline in fertility when male participation in the labor market was reduced (Raymo & Shibata, 2017).

When a couple is living together, they need to have an agreement on the division of labor at home. The division of labor in the family refers to the allocation of household chores between the husband and the wife, but this excludes paid work in companies where husband and wife are working formally. (Soriano, 1991). Like family support, the division of labor in the family is how family members share domestic tasks. Billingsley and Ferrarini (2014) also found that family support significantly affected fertility intentions across European countries. In addition to family members' support, the hours of shared housework between husband and wife played an essential role in the fertility decision. Thus, the decision to have a second child would be expected to increase according to the husband's shared housework and willingness to participate in childcare (Park et al., 2010).

Higher Education Attainment and the Delay in Childbearing

The educational level attained plays an important role when it comes to an individual's fertility intentions. In Thailand, Kaewbuadee and Pothisiri (2019) found that the woman's level of education had negative effects on the number of children born. Their finding is similar to the trends in most other countries. Those women who attained a higher level of education tended to be more modernized. In contrast, those who were unable to attain a high level of education tended to behave more traditionally. As a result, those women who attained a higher level of education were more likely to find it easier to access a fulfilling career path, which would result in higher economic benefits to society (Scanzoni, 1975; Soriano, 1991). Those holding higher educational level qualifications tend to have better incomes. Therefore, a population with a higher educational level might not have higher fertility intentions if they did not feel that having children was worthwhile. Evidence along these lines can be found in many European countries. Highly educated women are exposed to life-course paths that compete with childbearing, so they do not necessarily plan to have larger family sizes than less educated women (Hayford, 2009; Heiland et al., 2008; Mills et al., 2008). Some women in high-status occupations may intend to have fewer children from the beginning of their reproductive careers (Friedman et al., 1994), while others may decide later on to forgo having some of the children they had initially planned to have during their reproductive careers (Lacovou & Tavares, 2011). Additionally, better-educated women are more likely to postpone the idea of having children than less educated women (Heaton et al., 1999; Schoen et al., 1999). Consequently, they are more likely to have fewer children than they had initially intended.

In summary, the new Thai generation's living arrangement has shifted from the extended family to the nuclear family. The new generation is pursuing their careers mainly in urban areas. Thus, they migrate to the cities and have smaller families—the higher education attainments among women allows them to pursue higher career development aspirations. Women's participation in the labor market is not a new norm. The proportion of women who are working full-time keeps increasing over time. Gendered division of labor becomes an issue when two people are living together as a couple. A wife is less likely to plan for a high number of pregnancies if her husband does not have a role in the housework, for raising a newborn baby consumes much time. The grandparents would have a role in supporting the new generation to take care of their children if they lived in an extended family arrangement. Unfortunately, this is not the case since living arrangements have changed. Hence, Thailand's total fertility rate keeps declining to below the replacement level.

Women Labor Force Characteristics

During the first decade of the 21st century, the percentage of Thai women's participation in the labor market was steady. According to the International Labour Organization (2013), 60% to 62% of

Thai women participated in Thailand's labor market. At the same time, Thai men's labor market participation was 20% higher on average. The trend of women's labor force participation in the formal sector compared to the informal sector has been changing slightly every year. For example, the data from Quarter 1 of the 2006 Thai labor force survey revealed that the ratio of women participating in the formal sector compared to the informal sector was 51:49 (National Statistical Office, 2006). The data from Quarter 1 of 2010 showed a ratio of 49:51 (National Statistical Office, 2010). Finally, Quarter 4 of the 2020 reported a ratio of 51:49 when comparing women's labor force participating in the formal sector compared to the informal sector (National Statistical Office, 2020). Moreover, the overall working trend in Thailand's labor market has been moving away from the informal sector and toward the formal sector. In reflection of this trend, Buddhari and Rugpenthum (2019) revealed that the proportion of the labor force who do not insure themselves under the Social Security scheme fell from 78% in 2002 to 69% in 2018.

Regarding the women labor force's educational attainments, their educational level has improved dramatically compared to the past. A comparison of women's labor force education attainment between 2006 and 2020 showed that the percentage of women labor force who had completed secondary school increased from 48.6% to 53.4%, while those who completed high school increased from 57.5% to 75.5% (National Statistical Office, 2006, 2020). Lastly, around 70% of the female labor force in the labor market is married (Digital Government Development Agency, 2017).

Maternity Leave Policy

Legislated Maternity/Parental Leave and Benefits

Maternity leave is a leave of absence given to pregnant mothers who will give birth, while parental leave is a leave of absence given to the father of a child. The Labor Protection Act. B.E. 2541 (1998), Chapter 3, Section 41 (Royal Thai Government Gazette, 1998) indicated that only female employees would be able to take maternity leave for a period not exceeding 90 days. However, this kind of leave did not apply to men who were fathers of newborn babies. In addition to leave time, the Labor Protection Act. B.E. 2541 (1998), Chapter 5, Section 59 (Royal Thai Government Gazette, 1998) states that "the mother is entitled to receive her full salary during her maternity leave for a period not exceeding forty-five days." In other words, all employees who are mothers of newborns are entitled to receive their maternity leave with pay for forty-five days, and an additional forty-five days without pay.

Parental leave is when the father of a child who will be born is given leave of absence. Parental leave is applicable to government officers only. Moreover, those government officers who are the fathers of a child are eligible to apply for leave for a period not exceeding fifteen consecutive days. This parental leave entitlement is stated in the Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Government Officer Leave B.E. 2555 (2012), Chapter 3, Section 20. As a precaution, the person in authority may request evidence to approve such leave (Royal Thai Government Gazette, 2013).

According to Pattarakijkusol and NaRanong (2020), the current policies on maternity leave and parental leave are not very effective. The leave would not augment the desire to have additional babies unless it is adjusted. In addition to maternity leave, post-maternity leave is also vital to creating fertility intentions, since mothers need to take care of their newborn babies. As previously mentioned, employers do not have a favorable attitude toward women's pregnancies since they raise the cost of employment. However, there are some efforts to provide childcare facilities within workplaces to maintain mothers' labor market participation. This has not been widely implemented across the nation. Although there is empirical evidence that making it easier for working mothers to raise their children in the workplace does not weaken their work performance, there are still issues in facilitating child rearing by working women in Thailand's workplaces (Yimyam et al., 2012).

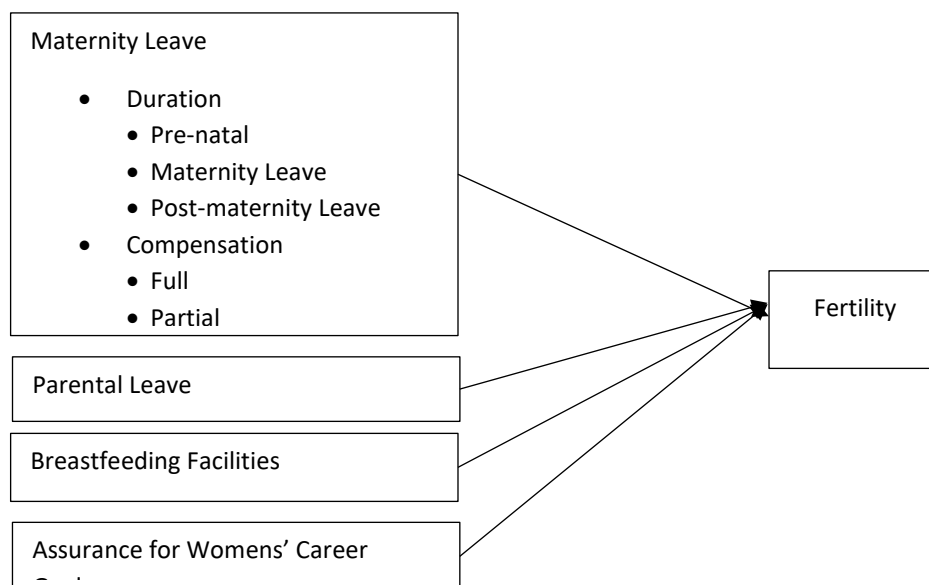
There are trade-offs in providing maternity leave to the female labor force. Maternity leave is good for the economy. There is empirical evidence in Europe that maternity leave can function to keep women in the labor market, resulting in a lower unemployment rate (Ruhm, 1998). On the contrary, there are some extra costs incurred when female employees take maternity leave, such as hiring new

temporary staff during the leave, and salary costs paid to the women during their leave. As a result, employers tend to have unfavorable attitudes toward female employees (Akhtar & Khan, 2020)

Not all females in the labor market benefit from maternity leave, but only the female labor force in the formal sector enjoy such benefits. A consequence of any extension of maternity leave length is that it improves women's fertility intentions. For example, a study in Switzerland revealed the positive impact of extending maternity leave length on fertility planning (Barbos & Milovanska-Farrington, 2019). In Australia, the number of planned children increased by 16% when an 18-week paid maternity leave policy was announced (Bassford & Fisher, 2020).

In Thailand, where the total fertility rate has continue to decrease annually, the maternity leave policy has not changed for decades. Figure 3 gives the framework for maternity leave, which relates to the female workforce in the formal sector. Improvements in the factors involved may ensure the fertility level among women workforces in the formal sector does not fall far behind the replacement level.

Figure 3 *Framework for Maternity Leave Relates and Womens' Workforces in the Formal Sector*



Maternity Leave and Compensation

At the present moment, the length of maternity leave is only 90 days. During this period, women will only be paid for a period of 45 days. This is an economic constraint that impacts womens' decisions to have children, making these decisions more difficult. Apart from the issue of paid salary during a woman's maternity leave, pre-natal and post-maternity leave periods are also important factors in helping them to decide to have children. Women who are about to give birth may have to visit their doctors once a week or once every two weeks. Frequent leave may impact their career path and progression. Without pre-natal leave, it makes it more difficult for them to obtain permission to leave. There are some problems with post-maternity leave, which is leave that would occur after maternity leave (90 days). If the mother does not live in an extended family who can help her care for the child, there would be additional childcare expenses. In addition, during the first year of the child's life, there are numerous vaccines that the child has to receive at a hospital or clinic on a monthly basis. As a result, the mother will have to obtain leave from her work. Hence, if the mother has no access to such leaves, this may impact her finances as well as her future career path. Hence, the factors involving the duration of leave impact women's fertility intentions.

Parental Leave (Applicable to Males)

Urbanization results in changes in living arrangements. More of the younger generation move to live in the cities. Apart from the fact that the form of families has changed from extended to nuclear,

there is less family support in terms of grandparents helping to rear newborns. Given the fact that there is no parental leave at the current moment (with the exception of 15 days for civil servants), this may lead to lower fertility intentions among women. Hence, the introduction of parental leave would mean that women would receive help in rearing the newborn child. This in turn would lead to higher fertility rates.

Breastfeeding Facilities

Even though studies have shown that rearing children at the workplace may not impact a woman's work performance, companies still do not tend to support the creation of breastfeeding facilities at work. There are various reasons for this. Companies may not be aware of the need or importance of such facilities. However, breastfeeding facilities may help reduce women's economic constraints, which are an important factor in women's fertility intentions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Thailand's total fertility rate is far behind the replacement level. This means that there is an expectation of shrinkage of the labor force in the labor market. It is possible that this decline in the labor force could lead to low or negative economic growth in the future, which would create issues with government revenues.

According to literature worldwide, fertility decline among working parents is influenced by various factors. Urbanization seems to be the starting point. Urbanization forces the younger generation to move to the city for work. As a result, the extended family arrangement is giving way to the nuclear family. This means that grandparents' support when the mother is giving birth is no longer readily available. The norm of a male dominator and female subordinate is also a factor in determining fertility rates, as husbands do not feel that they have to do any housework. The pressures of both a full-time job and housework impact the wife's fertility decision. The opportunities to access higher education among Thai women allow them to aim for a more fulfilling life, and this results in delays to becoming pregnant. In some cases, women remain single by choice because they feel that they do not need to be dependent on males.

The Thai maternity leave policy does not satisfy mothers because the length of the leave time is too short for a nuclear family that is comprised of only a husband and a wife. Additional impediments are that pre-natal leave to visit the doctor may not be easy to obtain, maternity leave with full pay is for a limited period, and the childcare service costs are high. Thus, younger couples choose to reduce their family size or postpone pregnancies. After giving birth, breastfeeding facilities may not be available at the work site, which is an important factor in women's fertility intentions.

Today, women have greater access to education. Thus, they have opportunities to think about their career goals. Better entitlements need to be given in regards to women's pre-natal leave, maternity leave, and post-maternity leave in order to allow these aspirations to be met. This is an important factor that policymakers need to address. Women need access to such leave to ensure that there are minimal negative impacts on their career paths or on their future in the company.

The government should reconsider maternity leave and parental leave policies if they wish to encourage the younger generation to increase their fertility. Parental leave should be granted to fathers to support mothers in taking care of newborn babies. Maternity leave policies—for pre-natal, maternity, and post-maternity leaves, along with compensation rates—should be adjusted. The attitudes of the employers toward mothers should be improved. Breastfeeding facilities should be built in the workplace, and having babies should not prevent women from attaining their career goals.

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Oral Communication Apprehension in Oral Presentation among Polytechnic Students

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Date Received: 1 February 2021 Revised: 12 May 2021 Accepted: 24 May 2021

Abstract

In the present study, factors were investigated that caused oral communication apprehension among polytechnic students when performing oral presentations. The specific objectives of the study were: (a) to compare the communication apprehension level associated with five factors and (b) to find out if there were relationships among the five factors, namely, personality traits, preparation level, audience factor, language proficiency, and confidence level. For this descriptive study, communication apprehension data was obtained from 373 students in a polytechnic college using a 23-item Likert-scale questionnaire. The results showed that the audience factor caused the greatest oral communication apprehension, as respondents reported being affected by negative expressions seen on the audience members' faces. The factors causing a moderate level of oral presentation apprehension were preparation, language ability, personality traits, and confidence. The findings suggest communication apprehension related to oral presentation can be reduced by giving skills to presenters in objectively analyzing the audience's reactions, practicing rehearsals, and using audience engagement strategies.

Keywords: *Oral communication, apprehension, polytechnic students, English subjects*

Introduction

Oral presentation is a common assessment tool at all levels of education in Malaysia, where students give oral presentations, sometimes with visual aids. Through oral presentations, students get to practise their speaking skills and develop confidence to speak to an audience. Students' communication competence is demonstrated by their ability to provide a particular audience, such as their industry and faculty supervisors, with a compelling oral presentation that prompts a response, understanding, appreciation, or critical inquiry (Yusoff, 2010). Good oral presentation skills are important to succeed in job interviews and to make convincing reports and arguments in meetings. In colleges and universities, good oral presentation skills are important to score in assessments and to exchange information with peers and instructors.

Students may face some challenges when giving oral presentations, such as the inability to articulate their thoughts, which may lead to mumbling (Soomro et al., 2019). Moreover, students might have a meek disposition and feel awkward in front of an audience (Raja, 2017). They may avoid their instructor's eyes, and forget what they want to say (Al-Nouh et al., 2015). A hesitant delivery and lack of eye contact results in a poor presentation performance and, if evaluated as a coursework assessment, may result in unsatisfactory grades. Besides public speaking, students might also feel uncomfortable in group discussions, meetings, as well as other interpersonal conversations (Bastida & Yapo, 2019). McCroskey (1977, pp. 78–79) described this situation as oral communication apprehension, which is defined as the "the predisposition to avoid communication, if possible. Communication apprehension is an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."

Studies in various settings have indicated that students often experience oral communication apprehension, particularly under assessment conditions (e.g., Kakepoto et al., 2012). McCroskey's (1984) early study in Japan indicated that three-fourths of the students were classified as having high levels of communication apprehension in both Japanese and English. In the United Kingdom, students

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were more nervous in oral assessments than in paper-based assessments (Huxham et al., 2012; Simper, 2010). In Mexico, students with poor English language ability reported having higher levels of anxiety (Pappamihel, 2002). In Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language in schools, Mustapha et al. (2010) found that a majority of university students experienced moderate to high levels of communication apprehension. In order for instructors to know how to help their students cope with communication apprehension, it is necessary to identify factors for greater apprehension. Furthermore, to help students develop fluency in a foreign language, it is necessary to understand potential reasons why students do not talk to reduce anxiety associated with speaking the foreign language (Lucas, 1984).

Researchers have identified some factors that cause communication apprehension. Kho and Leong (2015) found that the main cause of oral presentation difficulties, for polytechnic students in Sarawak, Malaysia, was lack of practice. In instructional settings, students have inadequate opportunities for oral practice and this makes it difficult for students to improve their oral communication skills (Soomro et al., 2019). Those who practice well before presenting in public are much more likely to be positive and give successful presentations (Raja, 2017).

In the present study, we investigated factors that caused oral communication apprehension among polytechnic students when performing oral presentations in English.

Literature Review

In the present study, the focus was on oral presentation, which is considered public speaking. Oral presentation has been reported to be challenging by various authors (Soomro et al., 2019; Kakepoto, 2012). In Malaysia, Mustapha et al. (2010) found that Malaysian students preferred group discussions as they were less apprehension-provoking than engaging in dialogues and speeches. These findings point to the need to further examine factors causing communication apprehension during oral presentations. An established framework used for studying communication apprehension is McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) instrument. The PRCA-24 framework is composed of 24 statements that measures overall apprehension as well as apprehension in four specific communication contexts: interpersonal or dyadic, small group, meeting or large group, and public speaking.

McCroskey (1982) did not attribute communication apprehension to either trait or the situation (also referred to as state). It can be inferred that McCroskey (1982) did not subscribe to the notion that certain personality types were prone towards communication apprehension, as is evident in some of his later research on this subject. For example, Razawi et al. (2019) suggested five factors affected communication apprehension, one of them involved personality traits. The other four factors investigated in Razawi et al.'s (2019) study on oral presentation involved language ability, confidence, preparation level, and audience. Pitt et al. (2000) also were of the opinion that some people were more orally apprehensive than others. McCroskey's (1982) construct of communication apprehension was oriented towards comparing the apprehension levels associated with the four communication contexts, but, of late, researchers seemed to be more interested in factors that can predict communication apprehension levels.

Research data have shown that communication apprehension is caused by situation and trait factors, and the findings suggest the audience factor and shyness are the more discernible influences. In Pakistan, Soomro et al. (2019) showed that stress and nervousness affected 71% of engineering students' oral presentation performance, followed by lack of motivation (63%), while other factors affected only about half of the undergraduates (poor oral communication skills, fear and anxiety, shyness, and low self-confidence). Shyness can be considered a trait factor (see Cheek & Briggs, 1990). Shy people tend to have negative views of self and sometimes feel that interlocutors, particularly in unknown social settings, would make a negative evaluation of them (Marinho et al., 2020). In Mustapha et al.'s (2010) study, conducted in Malaysia on final year Bachelor of Business and Marketing students, it was found that students felt more apprehensive when engaging with unfamiliar groups of students. Almost half of the students (45%) reported a high level of communication

apprehension, while 26% and 29% reported average and low levels, respectively. A communication context with new acquaintances is more apprehension-provoking than an audience composed of familiar people. In fact, Razawi et al.'s (2019) study of diploma and degree students enrolled in English courses in a Malaysian university showed that the audience was the most apprehension-provoking factor, and they were particularly frightened by the audience reactions. Interestingly, over 60% of the students in Razawi et al.'s (2019) study reported having personality traits inclined towards low self-esteem and low self-confidence. They reported feeling worried during an oral presentation even though they had made adequate preparation. Their apprehension was exacerbated by the presence of a large audience, and the thought of their peers and lecturers laughing at their low English proficiency. Based on these results, there seemed to be an interaction involving trait and situational sources in communication apprehension.

In addition to the audience factor, researchers have also identified the lack of language ability as a factor that causes communication apprehension in oral presentations. Hashim and Isa (2012) reported that when their students spoke English, most of them were worried about how individuals around them could track their knowledge and output of English in evaluative situations. If students with poor English proficiency are asked to speak English in front of their peers, they may begin to feel self-aware and their confidence level consequently drops (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). Chuang (2010, as cited in Al-Nouh et al., 2015) mentioned that, despite being well-prepared, some students still felt anxious as they thought that their peers spoke English better than they did, and they were afraid that their lecturers would pay attention to their English mistakes. In another study in Johor, Malaysia, Rafik-Galea and Mohd Zain (2006) found that a majority of the Bachelor in Business Administration students were afraid of using English due to lack of proficiency in the language and they had high levels of communication apprehension when using the language to communicate. Abdul Rahman and Ahmad Mahir (2008) found that inability to pronounce English words correctly and personality traits were the major causes of communication apprehension. Inability to pronounce English words comes under the language ability factor in McCroskey's (1977) measure of oral communication apprehension. Razawi et al. (2019) used the term "language ability" and Kho (2014) used the term "linguistic factors" to refer to problems with fluency and pronunciation when speaking (see also Wilang & Singhasiri, 2017; Wilang & Vo, 2018).

Methodology of the Study

The descriptive study on communication apprehension involved 373 Diploma students in a polytechnic. These students enrolled in a 14-week semester long English subjects (Communicative English 2 and Communicative English 3), in which one of the coursework assessments was an oral presentation. The course presenters assessed speaking, grammar, writing, and reading skills, with speaking contributing to 35% of the total grade.

Table 1 shows students' background information. The students had poor English language proficiency, evident from their band scores in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) 2020 results (Joseph, 2021). A majority of the students (59%) were in MUET band 3, meaning that they were social users of English. They demonstrated fairly appropriate use of language in social contexts but they may make grammatical errors. A total of 30% were in MUET band 2, described as limited users of English with a limited command of English and showing a lack of accuracy, expressiveness, fluency, and appropriateness in use. None of the students were academic users of English, as there were none in MUET bands 5 and 6.

In the present study, the questionnaire on communication apprehension in oral presentations contained 23 items. The questionnaire items can be seen in Tables 3–7 in the Results section. The term "communication apprehension" was not used in the questionnaire because it is a technical word that students might not understand. Instead, simple words such as "nervous," "worried," and "anxious" were used in the items. A five-point Likert was used for the items (1, *strongly agree*; 2, *agree*; 3, *undecided*; 4, *disagree*; 5, *strongly disagree*). Another section of the questionnaire elicited background

information. The questionnaire returned high internal consistency, shown by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89.

Table 1 *Background Information on the Participants (N = 373)*

Independent Variables		No.	%
Gender	Male	210	56.3
	Female	163	43.7
Semester	Semester 1	6	1.6
	Semester 2	16	4.3
	Semester 3	272	72.9
	Semester 4	57	15.3
	Semester 5	16	4.3
	Semester 6	6	1.6
Department	Mechanical Engineering	107	28.7
	Civil Engineering	103	27.6
	Electrical Engineering	101	27.1
	Commerce	37	9.9
	Petrochemical Engineering	23	6.2
	IT & Communication	2	0.5
MUET	Band 6	0	0
	Band 5	0	0
	Band 4	18	7
	Band 3	153	59
	Band 2	77	30
	Band 1	3	1

The questionnaire was adapted from McCroskey (1982), Razawi et al. (2019), and Soomro et al. (2019). Nine items were adapted from McCroskey's (1982) communication apprehension framework (PRCA-24) and focused on oral presentations. Fourteen items were taken from Razawi et al.'s (2019) study that had another four items that were similar to PRCA-24 items. Following Razawi et al.'s (2019) investigation, the factors causing oral presentation apprehension were categorized into personality traits, self-confidence, preparation, language ability and the audience factor. We used the term "audience factor" to cover two aspects examined by Razawi et al. (2019), which were audience interest and audience reaction.

The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the June 2020 session at the polytechnic, after the students had completed their oral presentation assessments. For the data analysis, the means and standard deviations were calculated. As a five-point Likert scale was used, the mean scores were divided into thirds. Mean scores between 1 and 2.33 were categorized as low communication apprehension, and the mean scores for moderate and high communication apprehension levels were 2.34–3.66 and 3.67–5.00, respectively.

Results and Discussion

In this section the results are presented on the five factors influencing communication apprehension. Table 2 shows that the top factor causing communication apprehension when making oral presentations was audience interest ($M = 3.75$). The students' communication apprehension level for the other four factors was moderate, as indicated by mean scores between 2.34 and 3.66. Among these four factors, lack of preparation brought about more communication apprehension than the other three factors (language ability, personality traits, and confidence).

Table 2 Mean Scores for Factors Causing Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations (*N* = 373)

No.	Factors	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	Audience Factor	3.75	0.73
2.	Preparation	3.65	0.67
3.	Language Ability	3.44	0.66
4.	Personality Traits	3.22	0.54
5.	Confidence	3.08	0.72

The results given in Table 3 showed that, in oral presentations, the audience factor potentially caused communication apprehension. The mean score for the first three items was between 3.67 and 5, categorized as high levels in this study. The students felt nervous making oral presentations in the presence of a large unfamiliar audience ($M = 3.86$). Their nervousness increased with the size of the audience ($M = 3.84$). The fear of audience reactions also affected oral presentation performance. Audience reactions such as low interest in the presentation topic, lack of attention, and unresponsiveness might make them lose confidence and adversely affect their performance. Additionally, students were worried that the audience might laugh at them when they spoke English ($M = 3.54$), but the level of apprehension was moderate (between 2.34 and 3.66). Their English proficiency was sufficient for them to communicate in social situations and, to some extent, in academic contexts. However, the standard deviation for this item was higher than the other audience factor items showing variability among the students. Those with a better command of English might not feel as much communication apprehension as others with poorer proficiency. These results showed that the audience factor played an important role in determining the communication apprehension felt by the polytechnic students in oral presentation situations. Their communication apprehension was compounded by the fact that their lecturers were in the audience who were evaluating them and deciding their coursework marks. Their lecturers might not laugh at them but might display facial expressions that indicated that they said something incorrectly.

Table 3 Mean Scores on How Audience Factors Affected Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations (*N* = 373)

No.	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	I feel nervous when I make oral presentations to people I do not know.	3.86	0.90
2.	I feel nervous when many people are watching me when I am making an oral presentation.	3.84	0.93
3.	The audience's reactions affect my performance in the oral presentation.	3.76	0.84
4.	I worry that the audience will laugh at me when I speak English.	3.54	1.02
Average		3.75	0.73

Data in Table 4 indicated that lack of preparation was a factor that caused communication apprehension in oral presentations as shown by mean scores of above 3.67 for two out of five items. The polytechnic students reported that when they started their oral presentations, they got so nervous that they forgot what they wanted to say ($M = 3.85$). They also felt worried even if they had prepared well beforehand. Good preparation for an oral presentation includes preparing the PowerPoint slides ahead of time, revising the content until they express the intended meanings, and rehearsing for the presentation until smoothness in delivery is achieved. However, students may not make an elaborate preparation for their oral presentations, leading to high communication apprehension. During their presentation, they also found it difficult to organise their ideas logically ($M = 3.62$). It could be assumed that if students were well-prepared and had rehearsed beforehand, they would be able to organize their ideas. However, their communication apprehension can affect them to such an extent that, despite their preparation, they find themselves still disorganized. Our experience of teaching polytechnic and university students showed that students might consider the preparation of slides, the addition of graphics in the slides, and making notes counted as good

preparation. Few students rehearse and time themselves to ensure a smooth delivery, which could alleviate their communication apprehension when making oral presentations. This is evident from their responses to the question on whether they needed to read from their notes or slides during oral presentations (Item 4, $M = 3.57$). The item focused on the student's behaviour of reading from notes or slides during oral presentations. This contrasted with item 5 that was a precautionary behaviour to steady the nerves. Bringing notes with them made presenters feel confident in case they forgot ($M = 3.40$). The mean scores obtained showed that more students read from their notes or slides, but fewer needed notes if they were well-prepared.

Table 4 Mean Scores on How Preparation Affected Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations ($N = 373$)

No.	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	When I start my oral presentation, I get so nervous that I forget things I wanted to say.	3.85	0.88
2.	I feel worried even if I have prepared well beforehand.	3.78	0.83
3.	I find it difficult to organize my ideas logically during an oral presentation.	3.62	1.00
4.	I need to read from my notes or the slides during oral presentations.	3.57	0.83
5.	I bring notes with me during my oral presentation even if I am well prepared.	3.40	0.98
Average		3.65	0.67

Preparing oral presentations in English caused a moderate level of communication apprehension to the polytechnic students (mean scores of 2.34–3.66) and this was partly due to their low English proficiency. Data in Table 5 indicated that a majority of students agreed that they were worried when presenting due to their low English speaking ability ($M = 3.64$). The specific aspect of their English proficiency that was the most worrying to them was their word choice ($M = 3.54$). This was followed by grammar, fluency, and pronunciation (both with $M = 3.48$). In their view, grammatical competence was a problem. In addition, the polytechnic students also did not have many opportunities to speak English in their daily life and develop fluency in communicating in English. This was because their lectures were mostly in Malay and it was also the medium of instruction in school. Moreover, outside of the lecture context, they tended to communicate in Sarawakian Malay or their mother tongue. The mean scores of the other two items were closer to the mid-point of three, indicating that these issues were not particularly anxiety-causing, that is, thinking in their mother tongue and translating to English ($M = 3.37$), or memorising the script of the oral presentation without trying to understand it ($M = 3.13$).

Table 5 Mean Scores on How English Language Ability Affected Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations ($N = 373$)

No.	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	I am worried because of my low English speaking ability.	3.64	0.98
2.	I find it hard to find a suitable word to express my meaning when I am making an oral presentation.	3.54	0.87
3.	I care about my grammar more than fluency in the oral presentation.	3.48	0.90
4.	I have a problem with oral fluency and pronunciation during the oral presentation.	3.48	0.82
5.	During an oral presentation, I think in my mother tongue or Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) then translate it into English.	3.37	0.93
6.	I prefer to memorize the script of the speech/oral presentation rather than understand it.	3.13	0.98
Average		3.44	0.66

The items in Table 6 would have been categorized as personality traits by Razawi et al. (2019), but contains mostly items that directly focused on feelings associated with making oral presentations (Items 2–6). Item 1 is an indirect focus on students' preference for individual or group work, which is linked to their personality. Generally, most of the students preferred to do their oral presentation in

pairs or groups ($M = 3.83$). Based on the first researcher's observation of his students' conduct during an oral presentation, the students were able to share the burden and assist each other when presenting in pairs or groups. For example, when the students could not convey their ideas well, the group members could come to their assistance. While a large proportion of students reported feeling very anxious before an oral presentation, many others felt comfortable doing oral presentations ($M = 3.18$). The difference in the level of oral presentation anxiety could be attributed to their personality trait as in whether they were comfortable speaking in public and this may be linked to their introvert-extrovert personality. Next, the students reported feeling marginally embarrassed when making oral presentations in English ($M = 3.15$). While the students did not feel relaxed about presenting in English, they also did not dislike doing so. The students seemed to have accepted the fact that they had to make oral presentations in English for assessment purposes and doing so in groups alleviated their anxiety.

Table 6 Mean Scores on How Personality Traits Affected Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations ($N = 373$)

No.	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	I prefer to do an oral presentation in pairs or groups.	3.83	0.96
2.	I feel very anxious before an oral presentation.	3.55	0.88
3.	I am comfortable doing oral presentations.*	3.18*	0.76
4.	I feel embarrassed when I do an oral presentation in English.	3.15	0.97
5.	I feel relaxed when I do an oral presentation in English.*	2.89*	0.79
6.	I dislike doing oral presentations.	2.84	0.83
Average		3.22*	0.5

Note: *The scores for these two items were reversed for the calculation of the mean score (average) because, in this study, the higher scores indicate higher levels of communication apprehension on the five-point Likert scale of 1 to 5.

Finally, it was clear from the results shown in Table 7 that self-confidence did not have much influence on their communication apprehension when making oral presentations, compared to the other four factors. The mean scores for the avoidance of questions during presentation due to low self-confidence were close to the mid-point of three ($M = 3.10$). Similarly, the students marginally disagreed that they found oral presentations easy because of their confidence.

Table 7 Mean Scores on How Confidence Affected Communication Apprehension When Making Oral Presentations ($N = 373$)

No.	Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	I avoid answering questions during my presentation due to my low self-confidence.	3.10	0.95
2.	I find an oral presentation easy because I have confidence.	2.95	0.80
Average		3.08	0.72

This study led to the identification of the audience factor as the greatest contributor to a high level of communication apprehension. Interestingly, the audience factor was more apprehension-provoking than lack of preparation. Taking the items in the high apprehension mean score range, the factors that created the most apprehension were an unfamiliar audience, a large audience, and negative audience reactions. Students might also feel afraid of making mistakes during the presentation and of getting negative comments from their lecturers (Prastiwi, 2012). Fear of the audience is not surprising because Soomro et al. (2019) also found that students in their study were shy and hesitated to communicate their opinions during oral presentations due to unfamiliarity with the audience. Shy people seem to be more fearful of a negative evaluation by the audience (Marinho et al., 2020). The polytechnic students also seemed to be very affected by audience reactions, and read boredom and other negative evaluations into the non-verbal expressions and actions of their audience. It can be conjectured that having an affirmative audience who smiled and nodded at them

during their oral presentation would lower their apprehension level. Essentially, if the audience is unresponsive, the speaker would view them as saying, "You may be talking but I'm not listening to you," which can cause both stress and anxiety (Bassett et al., 1973, as cited in MacIntyre et al., 1997). Therefore, when it comes to assigning oral presentation tasks to students, lecturers should bear in mind that making students do "speaking-for-the-sake-of-speaking" exercises or performance-style presentations can generate little audience interest because they are often performed simply to gain public speaking experience (MacIntyre et al., 1997). Some ways that instructors can help their students is through audience analysis, and teaching their students to attract the audience's interest, and engage with their audience throughout the presentation.

Based on the study on polytechnic students, a significant factor causing communication apprehension during oral presentation was preparation. This is an area that instructors can work on, unlike the audience factor, which is beyond the control of the students. Students can be taught techniques to make good preparations for oral presentations and also be reminded to conduct repeated rehearsals to familiarise themselves with the presentation content. A study by Chou (2011) found that group presentations can help students develop effective communication techniques to improve their ability to communicate with audiences and to enable them not just to memorise vast pieces of text. Practice in oral presentations can minimise glossophobia, the fear of public speaking. A person with glossophobia is unable to control their nerves and, often to the point of a nervous breakdown, has an extremely strong fear of public speaking (Barnard, 2017). Kurniawan (2016) recommended that during preparation, the students could practice speaking in front of the mirror. This strategy also helps to reduce students' nervousness while doing the presentation. Tanveer (2007) stated that restricted exposure to the target language and lack of opportunities in certain settings to practice speaking inhibit students' communicative ability to develop fully.

Conclusions

The study on factors that cause communication apprehension among students, when performing oral presentations, showed that the top two factors causing high apprehension to students were the audience factor and preparation. In comparison, language ability, personality traits, and confidence caused a moderate level of communication apprehension. Apprehension may negatively affect language learning (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991; Phillips, 1992). The findings are useful to language educators, curriculum designers, and policy makers because they identify areas of communication apprehension for educators to work on in courses and to give training to assist students in overcoming their fear of speaking in a second or foreign language. The findings suggest that a practical way for instructors to reduce their students' communication apprehension when making oral presentations is to teach them about audience awareness. By doing that, the students may be able to tailor their oral presentations to their audience, and react accordingly to the audience situation, so that they will be attracted to listen to the presentations. This includes interacting actively with the audience to control the audience mood. In addition, the importance of rehearsals must be impressed upon students who should take the initiative to improve their verbal communication skills. A limitation of this study was that the findings were based on students' self-reports, and may not be reflective of the actual apprehension levels experienced during oral presentations. Future research should investigate communication apprehension using observational techniques of audience factors and confidence levels while employing direct measures of the students' preparatory work for oral presentations. In addition, since the audience factor is the greatest barrier to confidence in oral presentations, intervention studies involving training of students to lessen communication apprehension due to the audience factor should be conducted to understand and alleviate student's communication apprehension.

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The Influence of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty Outcomes: A Case of Convenience Stores in Myanmar

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Date Received: 3 October 2020 Revised: 8 December 2020 Accepted: 28 December 2020

Abstract

In this study conducted in Shan State, Myanmar, the impact of service qualities on convenience store customer loyalty was explored, along with the impact of customer loyalty on outcomes through the mediators of perceived value, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The study focused on five service quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Five customer loyalty outcomes were also included: identification, exclusive consideration, advocacy, strength of preference, and share of wallet. The mediators considered were perceived value, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The data were collected via a survey questionnaire from customers ($N = 446$) of D-Mart convenience stores. Structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis were used for analyzing the data. It was found that the tangibility and responsiveness dimensions of service quality positively influenced perceived value, and customer loyalty positively influenced the five dimensions of customer loyalty outcomes. The findings could contribute to service loyalty outcomes. Moreover, the findings could be applied to the development of service quality strategies to induce customers to remain with a convenience store chain.

Keyword: *Service quality, perceived value, customer loyalty, outcomes*

Introduction

In Myanmar, there are few high income earners. Low and middle income earners do not have extra money to make purchases. They usually make purchases near their homes after being paid. Most customers depend on retail stores in the market place. In these, payment is by cash, in contrast to a credit system operating in wholesale markets. The low and middle income earners do not buy on credit, and indeed, the retailers refuse to operate on such a basis. The advantage is that the stores get their money instantly, gaining a profit of around 10% for each product. In wholesale markets, by contrast, money is not gained instantly and the profit margin is lower.

In Myanmar, the retail industry is well developed in urban areas such as Yangon and Mandalay. There are lots of shopping malls, supermarkets, and convenience stores in the downtown areas. Well-known supermarkets such as Capital, Citymart, and Ocean are present in big cities beside Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw. There are over 30,000 retail stores in Myanmar according to the Myanmar Retailer Association (Phyu, 2018).

According to the Myanmar Times (Mullines & Win, 2014), there are also homegrown convenience stores such as ABC (founded 2006), City Express (founded 2011), and Grab & Go (founded 2012). They have the greatest representation in Yangon. Most convenience stores are planning to expand in well-known cities such as Nay Pyi Taw (third largest city) and Mandalay (second largest). Other convenience stores such as One Stop, Sunny, and Grab Mart are already in the market place. Meanwhile, there is also rapid expansion of local convenience stores. So many local owners of convenience stores need to improve service quality, such as providing up-to-date equipment, supporting excellent promotions, and training the employees to serve customers. Foreign investors also are poised to invest in Myanmar's domestic market when legal restrictions are removed.

There are 14 states and 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar. Most ethnic groups (around 100) live in Shan State, which is very high compared to other states. Shan State is divided into three parts: Eastern, Northern, and Southern. Eastern Shan State is near Thailand, Northern Shan State is near China, and Southern Shan State is near the principal cities of Nay Pyi Daw and Mandalay. The main products of Southern Shan State involve growing raw vegetables such as ginger, garlic, lettuce, cabbage, potatoes,

and tomatoes. Most of the growers are low income people. They rely on retail stores for daily purchases. Southern Shan State also has the popular tourist resorts of Kalaw and Pindaya (two of the study sites selected). Foreign visitors make purchases at retail stores there, as do local holidaying people. However, according to the Myanmar Retailers Association (Phyu, 2018), convenience stores are most numerous in Taunggyi City in Southern Shan State.

Aung Pann (the third study site) is an agricultural trading town close to Kalaw; its existence is critical for supplying Yangon's daily needs (~ 590 km distance). A D-Mart was opened in 2000 as the first convenience store in Aung Pann. It offered foodstuffs only. The owner visited Thailand in 2009 and observed the 7-Eleven convenience stores there. This inspired him to open a store that offered not only foodstuffs, but also consumer products. Five branches now operate in Aung Pann, Kalaw, and Pindaya. These stores were selected for detailed study among all the convenience stores available.

This study has special relevance for retail companies planning to open or operate convenience stores. It is to their advantage to know the attitudes and opinions of respondents, thus enabling them to fulfil the needs of local people, and to create more job opportunities for them. A principal aim of this study was to know how to attract new customers to recently opened convenience stores. Through this research, we planned to examine customer engagement based on their satisfaction and repurchase intentions. This knowledge will be valuable to enable new customers to be attracted, and for store chains to maintain customer loyalty amidst increasing competition. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating the influence of customer loyalty on customer loyalty outcomes among retail convenience stores in Shan State, Myanmar.

The questions that were addressed in this research are as follows:

1. How do tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy affect perceived value?
2. How does perceived value affect customer satisfaction?
3. How does customer satisfaction affect customer loyalty?
4. How does customer loyalty affect customer loyalty outcomes?

Literature Review

Specifically, the aims of the present study were to examine the factors influencing customer service quality, perceived value, and customer satisfaction in selected Myanmar convenience stores. Moreover, a focus of the study was to investigate the factors most influential in establishing customer loyalty in the Myanmar retail industry.

Service Quality Theory and Perceived Value

When customers consider the quality of service, they perceive that it is of high value if the service exceeds the costs that they imagine have been incurred to obtain it. There is some empirical evidence that service quality is positively related to perceived value (Brady & Robertson, 1999; Teas & Agarwal, 2000). Keng et al. (2007) indicated that perceived value reveals a general consumer appreciation of a service provider's business provisions following the display of competence and upon giving dependable service. Models of service quality and perceived value are intended to describe the influence of service quality on perceived value. Customer willingness to purchase is influenced by functional service quality perceptions, but also technical service quality perceptions, which have relevance to product quality perceptions. Service quality also shows consumers' willingness to buy from specific service providers where the value exceeds the benefits gained and sacrifices undertaken by purchasers. The model of service quality (SERVQUAL) developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) contains elements of assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles, which represents the direct influence of technical service quality and functional service quality on consumers and on their value perceptions, regardless of products' quality and price perceptions. Thus, the dimensions describing service quality become the index for defining customer values. The value of perceptions is directly influenced by the service quality in the customer satisfaction index. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- H_1 : Tangibility of service quality has a positive influence on perceived value.
 H_2 : Reliability of service quality has a positive influence on perceived value.
 H_3 : Responsiveness of service quality has a positive influence on perceived value.
 H_4 : Assurance of service quality has a positive influence on perceived value.
 H_5 : Empathy of service quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction

Perceived value is a determinant of customer satisfaction. It represents a fundamental tool to facilitate reaching the goals of the business. The greater a customer's perception that the quality of a service exceeds the costs of offering the service, the higher their perceptions of the value of the service. Many papers confirmed the idea that perceived value shows a significant and strong relationship with customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to customer loyalty (Patterson & Spreng, 1997). For example in the sports industry, a direct and positive relationship has been found between perceived value and satisfaction of customers (Murray & Howat, 2002). Firms can either enhance perceived benefits or reduce perceived costs in order to improve perceived value by customers. According to Oliver (1992), satisfaction has a direct influence on perceived value and value-based satisfaction. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

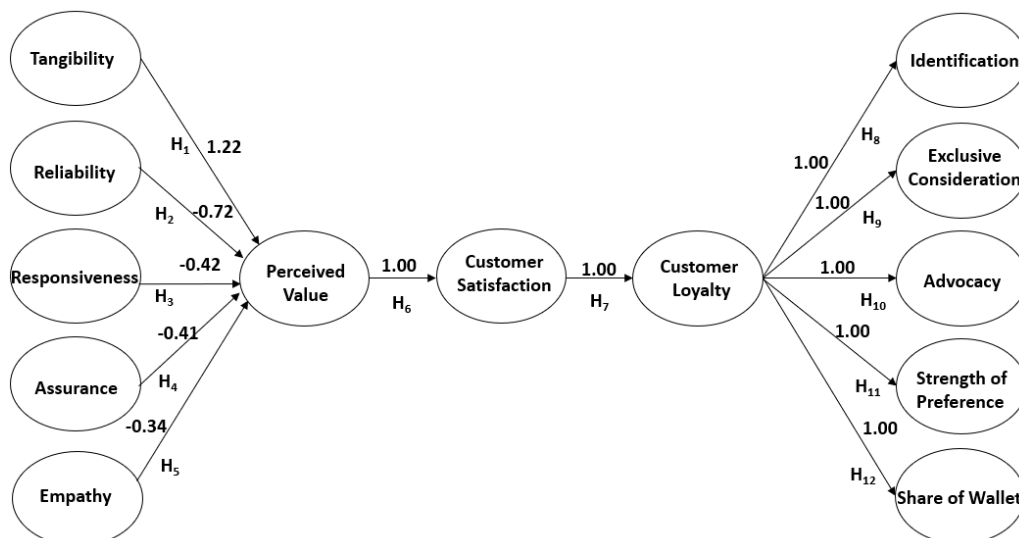
- H_6 : There is a direct positive relationship between perceived value and customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

According to Pont and McQuiken (2005), customer satisfaction can be assumed to be a crucial indicator of customer loyalty. These researchers also investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty intentions in retirees and university students in the banking industry. There was no significant difference in the satisfaction levels of either group. Nonetheless, it was found that satisfaction has a significant impact on three behavioral intentions dimensions, which are loyalty, willingness to pay more, and external response. This suggests that management should launch service policies intended to secure improvements in customer satisfaction. Yu et al. (2006) explored the relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty to enable support service providers to improve their quality. According to their results, there was a significant relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. In addition, overall customer satisfaction has a significant relationship with customer loyalty. Hence, in this study it has been proposed that:

- H_7 : Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Note. Adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1988), Rai (2013), and Fournier (1998).

Customer Loyalty and Loyalty Outcomes

Various researchers have defined the outcomes of customer loyalty differently. Three types of loyalty are recognized, i.e., behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive. This means that there are different outcomes in regards to customer loyalty. Widely operationalized outcomes are identification, exclusive consideration, advocacy, strength of preference, and share of wallet. In this study, each of these loyalty outcomes was regarded as a dependent variable to test whether it was influenced positively by customer loyalty or not. The group of hypotheses adopted follows:

H_8 : Customer loyalty has a positive influence on identification.

H_9 : Customer loyalty has a positive influence on exclusive consideration.

H_{10} : Customer loyalty has a positive influence on advocacy.

H_{11} : Customer loyalty has a positive influence on the strength of preference.

H_{12} : Customer loyalty has a positive influence on share of wallet.

Table 1 *Theoretical Framework*

Variable	Definitions	Operational Definitions
Tangibility	Physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel (Parasuraman et al., 1988)	Physical facilities, equipment, appearance of the employees of convenience stores
Reliability	Ability to perform a promised service dependably and accurately (Parasuraman et al., 1988)	The convenience store's ability to perform a promised service dependably and accurately
Satisfaction	The summary psychological state resulting when an emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience (Oliver, 1992)	Psychological state of convenience stores' service consumers resulting from strong expectations of better shopping services as enhanced by prior experiences of acceptable shopping services received
Perceived Value	A customer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given	A customer's overall assessment of service by convenience store based on perception of what is received and what is given
Customer Loyalty	Customer loyalty is defined as a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service in the future despite the fact that situational influences and marketing efforts have the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1992)	Customers' commitment to re-buy a preferred product or service in the future from the convenience store
Identification	Relationship building between customer and service provider produces a sense of ownership over the service, with customers referring to "my accountant," "my hairdresser," or "my mechanic" (Gabbott & Hogg, 1994; Bhattacharya et al., 1995)	The sense of ownership over the service of the convenience store that customers received
Exclusive Consideration	Extent to which the consumer considers the service provider as their only choice when purchasing this type of service (Dwyer, 1987; Jones & Taylor, 2007)	Extent to which the customer purchases consistently from a convenience store as their only choice for purchasing desired products
Advocacy	Consumer's willingness to recommend a service provider to other consumers (Dick & Basu, 1994)	Customers' willingness to recommend the convenience store to other customers

Strength of Preference	Strength of preference is defined as an affectively generated evaluation of service (Mitra & Lynch, 1995)	Customers have a strong preference for the convenience store in comparison to others, and it is not easy for competitors to draw them away
Share of Wallet	Share of wallet is defined as a customer's desire to make all of their purchases in a category from the same service provider (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999)	Customer's relative desire to make all of their purchases from same convenience store

Methodology

The target group for this study were customers in Kalaw, Aung Pann and Pindaya (18–60 age bracket). These three towns are in Southern Shan State. They were selected because most of the D-Mart convenience store customers are from these areas, and more branches are being planned in these areas. The pilot study was conducted by using 30 randomly selected samples to test the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. Then, the main data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire survey from 496 customers who were purchasing at D-Mart convenience stores in Kalaw, Aung Pann, and Pindaya (Figure 2). The questionnaires were given to and answered by the respondents when they came to the stores. The duration of the survey was about two months (April–May 2020). A total of 446 questionnaires were usable for data analysis after screening out incomplete returns.

In this study, 47 items were modified from those used by previous researchers to measure 13 variables. Twenty-two items measured six service qualities (Parasuraman et al., 1988), three items considered perceived value (Cronin et al., 2000), three items indicated customer satisfaction (Cronin et al., 2000), three items measured customer loyalty (Orel, 2014), and 16 items measured customer loyalty outcomes (Bourdeau, 2005). The survey questionnaire was scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Three main steps were involved in data analysis. First, Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the reliability of scale items used to measure all variables. The output for all variables was between a minimum (–.780) and a maximum (.80). Second, the discriminant validity of the questionnaire was measured by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Finally, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) research techniques were used to check the proposed conceptual model.

Figure 2 Locations of the Towns of Kalaw, Aung Pann and Pindaya, Shan State, Myanmar



Results

Table 2 shows the demographic information obtained in this study.

Table 2 *Characteristics of Respondents*

Item	Percent	Item	Percent
Gender		Monthly Income (MMK)	18.3
Female	68.0	Under 150,000	31.5
Male	32.0	300,001–450,000	14.5
Age (years)		450,001–600,000	11.4
18–20	23.0	Above 600,000	24.2
21–30	59.7	Visit Frequency	
31–40	11.4	Daily	7.8
41–50	2.5	2–3 times weekly	41.2
> 50	3.4	Once a week	33.3
Education		Once a month	17.7
High school	10.5	Time Spent	
Undergraduate	24.4	< 30 minutes	85.9
Postgraduate	55.3	30–60 minutes	12.1
Masters or above	7.4	>60 minutes	2.0
Other	2.5	Amount Spent (MMK)	
Job		< 50,000	86.1
Student	30.4	50,000–100,000	12.3
Government employee	4.0	> 100,000	1.6
Private staff	30.9		
Own business	29.1		
Dependent	5.6		

After modifying the model according to the modification index of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), 47 scale items were used to measure 13 variables (22 items for six service quality, three items for perceived value, three items for customer satisfaction, three items for customer loyalty, and 16 items for customer loyalty outcomes). The results of CFA are described in Table 3.

Table 3 *Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Items	Degrees of Freedom	CMIN/ df	p-values	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	NFI	RMR
CFA Model for Service Quality	86	2.251	.000	.95	.93	.98	.05	.96	.02
CFA Model for Mediators	21	2.324	.000	.98	.96	.99	.05	.98	.01
CFA Model for Customer Loyalty Outcomes	60	2.258	.000	.96	.93	.99	.05	.98	.01

Note. GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; NFI = Normal Fit Index; RMR = Root Mean Square Residual

As shown in Table 3, there was an acceptable fit of the model with the key criteria studied. The ratio results produced by the model returned values lower than the 3.0 threshold, p -value = .000, GFI

> .95, AGFI > .90, NFI > .94, RMR = .18, and RMSEA = .36. The data indicated that all of the CFA indexes reached levels that indicated goodness of fit of the model.

In the SEM analysis (Table 4), most of the fit indices reached the required levels. The values of AGFI and GFI fit with the requirements confirmed by Baumgartner & Homburg (1996), while the values obtained for RMSEA and RMR were at passable levels (threshold values) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 4 Overall Model Fit

Model Fit	Acceptable Level	SEM Model
GFI	> .80	.88
AGFI	< .80	.85
RMSEA	< .08	.06
RMR	Smaller, the better	.02
CFI	> .90	.94

Most of the hypotheses specified in the model were supported (Table 5). Hypotheses relating to the service quality construct dealing with tangibility and reliability (H_1 , H_2) were accepted. Hypotheses H_3 , H_4 , and H_5 were not significant. However, perceived value influenced customer satisfaction positively ($p < .000$). Moreover, customer satisfaction was linked to customer loyalty (H_7). All the remaining hypotheses, from customer loyalty to customer loyalty outcomes, were significant ($p < .000$). Therefore, all of these hypotheses (H_8 , H_9 , H_{10} , H_{11} , and H_{12}) were accepted.

Table 5 Summary of Testing Results

	Hypothesis Path	Beta	CR	Sig.(P)	Evidence
H_1	Tangibility > Perceived Value	1.22	4.213	.000***	Supported
H_2	Reliability > Perceived Value	-0.72	-3.129	.002**	Supported
H_3	Responsiveness > Perceived Value	-0.42	0.912	.362	Unsupported
H_4	Assurance > Perceived Value	-0.41	-1.221	.222	Unsupported
H_5	Empathy > Perceived Value	-0.34	1.142	.253	Unsupported
H_6	Perceived Value > Customer Satisfaction	1.00	17.179	.000***	Supported
H_7	Customer Satisfaction > Customer Loyalty	1.00	17.034	.000***	Supported
H_8	Customer Loyalty > Identification	1.00	16.703	.000***	Supported
H_9	Customer Loyalty > Exclusive Consideration	1.00	17.271	.000***	Supported
H_{10}	Customer Loyalty > Advocacy	1.00	17.630	.000***	Supported
H_{11}	Customer Loyalty > Strength of Preference	1.00	18.036	.000***	Supported
H_{12}	Customer Loyalty > Share of Wallet	1.00	16.761	.000***	Supported

Note. Cut off t -value is 1.96; * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The influence of the tangibility and reliability dimensions of service quality on perceived value were significant. The perceived value of service enterprises differs according to the product being marketed. In the retail industry, a number of studies have shown that services that provide scope for self-gratification and social interaction, that are utilitarian and convenient, that give transactional value, and are efficient in providing service excellence in an aesthetically pleasing environment add to perceived value (Reimer & Kuehn, 2005; El-Adly, 2019).

Based on the results, H_3 , H_4 , and H_5 were not significant. Such negative results for the value of responsiveness, assurance, and empathy cannot be taken to cover all situations. Responsiveness may be significant in some retail environments (Siu & Cheung, 2001). In our study, the customers in these unsupported areas thought that employees were not responsive to the questions or actions of the customers. They did not convey assurance and empathy enabling them to serve the

customers according to their needs and wants. In the research areas surveyed (Kalaw, Aun Pann, Pindaya), firms did not wish to invest in training of employees, as they left after receiving training and moved to urban areas. This explains why the three dimensions of service quality—responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—did not have a positive influence on perceived value. Firms need to study what kind of support they can offer to their employees, such as negotiating their salaries and offering incentives. In this way, they could maintain good relationships with their employees, which also would have more direct effects on customer relationships.

The hypothesis that perceived value positively influences customer satisfaction was supported ($p < .000$). This result also corresponded with the data found by Hapsari et al. (2015) involving 5-star airline passengers at two Indonesian airports. Moreover, customer satisfaction was linked to customer loyalty (H_7). This is in line with the work of Howat and Assaker (2013), who pointed out that the higher the level of customer satisfaction, the higher the level of customer loyalty. Hence, customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty. All the hypotheses H_8 , H_9 , H_{10} , H_{11} , and H_{12} were accepted. This means that customer loyalty had positive influences on identification, exclusive consideration, advocacy, strength of preference, and on share of wallet. These results were aligned with the findings of Dick and Basu (1994) and Jones and Taylor (2007).

According to the results, firms can improve service quality by providing up-to-date equipment, giving quick responses to customer difficulties, and offering individualized care and attention to their customers. All of these activities can improve customer perceived value, which can develop higher customer satisfaction. Higher satisfaction leads to a high investment of customer loyalty in the firm. Improvement in customer loyalty leads to positive customer loyalty outcomes such as feelings of ownership over the store, considering the store as their only choice to purchase a certain type of service, willingness to recommend the store to other customers, having a strong preference for the store in comparison to others, and a willingness to make all of their purchases for certain types of services at the store.

Implications

This study provides beneficial observations for business organizations in retail marketplaces. First, the function of service quality seems to be the most important factor influencing customer loyalty in convenience stores. Looking at the individual indicators of service quality dimensions, it follows that stores should invest in offering attractive service with an acceptable level of quality, and that this level should be maintained over time. Firms can improve by providing up-to-date equipment, providing quick responses to resolve difficulties when they arise, and offering care and individualized attention to its customers. All of these activities can improve customer perceived value, which can develop high customer satisfaction. Higher satisfaction leads to development of customer loyalty to the firm. Improvement in customer loyalty leads to positive customer loyalty outcomes, such as feelings of ownership over the store, considering the store as their only choice to purchase a certain type of service, willingness to recommend the store to other customers, having a strong preference for the store in comparison to others, and willingness to make all of their purchases for certain types of products or services with the store.

Conclusions

This study examined the impact of five customer loyalty outcomes through the mediators of customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and perceived value on five dimensions of service quality to understand the behavior of convenience store customers in Shan State, Myanmar (Kalaw, Aung Pann, and Pindaya). All factors examined, except responsiveness, assurance and empathy, had significant impacts on customer loyalty outcomes for customers purchasing in D-Mart convenience stores. The study data indicated that the greater the level of customer satisfaction, the more likely they are to be loyal to the firm. In today's world of intense competition, satisfying customers may not be sufficient. Management should not just focus on improving customer satisfaction, but also consider improving customer perceptions of overall service quality and increasing consumers' perceived value. Therefore, service providers have to develop both service quality and perceived value continuously.

Limitations of the Study

In future research, the scope of the study might be enlarged to include different service business industries in different geographical regions. In addition, as for theoretical limitations, future research should extend the predictors of customer loyalty by reviewing other studies. In testing service quality, the five variables suggested by SERVQUAL were used. In future studies, the variables included might be extended to encompass different aspects of service quality. Moreover, future studies might also consider the demographic characteristics of respondents. Equal representation from different educational levels may be possible in order to make more realistic generalizations. In addition, future studies should also include a fair mix of occupational and income factors in order to generalize to a broader range of customers served by an industry.

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Antecedents and Outcomes Associated with Employees' Psychological Ownership of Convenience Stores in Bangkok

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Date Received: 5 April 2021 Revised: 10 June 2021 Accepted: 14 June 2021

Abstract

Employees' psychological ownership has been proposed as a key characteristic that motivates them to make a strong commitment to their organizations. However, research on the antecedents and outcomes of employees' psychological ownership in the convenience store sector is a topic that has been under-explored. Thus, the primary objective of this research was to investigate the effects of psychological ownership on the organizational commitment and organizational identification of employees who work at convenience stores located in Bangkok. Moreover, the influence of supervisor support and organizational trust was assessed on employees' psychological ownership. Survey data were collected randomly from 347 employees who worked at convenience stores located in seven districts in Bangkok. Partial least square structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. The results obtained offered significant support for the proposition that psychological ownership exerts positive effects on employees' organizational commitment and identification. Moreover, the analysis showed that supervisor support and organizational trust affected employees' psychological ownership positively and significantly.

Keywords: *Employee commitment, human resource management, psychological ownership*

Introduction

Convenience stores, which constitute a small retail sector, are widespread in Bangkok and urban regions. They have demonstrated the highest growth rate among all types of current trade outlets and gained an exceptional market share from traditional retailers. According to data from Krungsri Research (2019), there are 15,694 convenience stores nationwide in Thailand, an increase from 14,552 in 2017, or 7.8% year on year. Although convenience stores are growing and expanding, they face problems with employee retention and turnover. Voluntary turnover has an adverse effect on employees' attitudes, company growth, productivity, and organizational revenue (Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). According to evidence from previous research (Berisha & Lajçi, 2020; Ikatrinasaria et al., 2018), retail is one of the industries with the highest turnover rates. Thus, it is important to examine the factors that lead employees who work in this business sector to feel involved with their jobs.

Research in organizational behavior has shown that one important characteristic of employees that can motivate them to make a strong commitment to their organizations is psychological ownership (PO) (Dawkins et al., 2017). Generally, PO is employees' feeling that a certain object, place, or idea belongs to them (Pierce & Furo, 1990). In the work context, when employees feel that their organization belongs to them, it motivates them to contribute to the organization tremendously (O'Driscoll et al., 2006). Given the significance of PO as a factor that could enhance employees' contributions, the aim of this research was to examine whether it could also be beneficial for employees who work at convenience stores.

Although the topic of PO has been investigated widely in various research contexts, especially among full-time employees (Fan et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017), a limited number of studies have been conducted on its benefits among employees in the convenience store business context, who are primarily part-time employees. In particular, whether PO is actually relevant to part-time employees constitutes a knowledge research gap that requires support from empirical evidence. Although many employers may have some doubt about part-time employees' commitment, evidence from previous research has shown that part-time employees tended to show high levels of work commitment when they received favorable treatment from their supervisors and organizations (Johanson & Cho, 2009;

Lee & Johnson, 1991). For example, Lee and Johnson's (1991) study showed that part-time workers' degree of organizational commitment did not differ from that of permanent full-time workers. The evidence from Johanson and Cho's (2009) study in the service sector showed that part-time employees even tended to demonstrate a higher level of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior than did full-time employees. Particularly in the retail business, Ikatrinasaria et al. (2018) showed that favorable work conditions could promote employee commitment. Thus, it can be postulated that part-time employees may develop a sense of attachment and show high commitment to their organizations if they have a positive attitude toward their supervisors and organizations.

The objectives of this research were as follows. First, the aim of the study was to examine whether convenience store employees' psychological ownership affected their organizational commitment and organizational identification. Moreover, an attempt was made to investigate certain antecedent factors that may promote employees' psychological ownership. The antecedents investigated included supervisor support and organizational trust. The findings were expected to provide important implications for businesses in the convenience store sector to help them motivate their workforces more effectively, which is a key ingredient in their business success.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership is defined as "... the psychologically experienced phenomenon [during] which an employee develops possessive feelings for the target" (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004, p. 439). According to Brown et al. (2014, p. 319), "The core of psychological ownership is the feeling of possessiveness and being psychologically tied to an object, as those objects become part of the extended self." The concept of PO has received considerable attention from scholars and has been applied in various business sectors, such as manufacturing and service (Dawkins et al., 2017), and the positive outcomes derived from employees' PO has been explored widely in previous research (Dawkins et al., 2017; Fan et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017). For example, Fan et al. (2019) found that PO promoted job satisfaction among workers in spa businesses. Lu et al. (2017) found that the PO of employees in automobile manufacturing companies reduced their turnover intentions. Hameed et al. (2019) demonstrated that the PO of employees in multinational corporations encouraged knowledge sharing in their organizations. In the context of the retail industry, Potdar et al. (2018) found that employees' PO helped stores reduce shoplifting. Potdar et al.'s (2021) study also supported the proposition that PO encouraged guardianship behavior on the part of frontline service employees in supermarkets.

The Effect of PO on Organizational Commitment and Organizational Identification

In this research, the author proposed that the PO of employees who worked in franchise stores would motivate them to develop organizational commitment to, and organizational identification with, their workplaces. First, organizational commitment is defined as "... the individuals' psychological attachment to an organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 492). Moreover, Meyer and Allen (1991) defined organizational commitment as an attitude in which employees want to stay in their organizations. In particular, employees who develop a sense of ownership of their workplaces are willing to commit strongly to work for them because they do not consider themselves employees who simply work day-after-day for a paycheck (Tiamboonprasert & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Rather, they act as if the company is their valuable belonging and, thus, they cannot work for it passively (Fan et al., 2019). When employees believe they have some ownership in their organizations, they are willing to devote themselves to secure and maximize their benefits (Dawkins et al., 2017). This role of PO in organizational commitment is consistent with agency theory, which posits that "Agents who own shares will automatically alter their behavior and seek to maximize the value of their ownership stake" (Sieger et al., 2013, p. 365). Given all this support from the literature, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relation between convenience store employees' PO and their organizational commitment.

Second, organizational identification is defined as "... a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's success and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). When employees develop PO toward their organizations, they are very likely to identify strongly with their workplace. Specifically, the sense of belonging that employees develop will make them consider themselves a part of their organization; thus, they will care more about others' perception of its image (Charoensukmongkol, 2017). Consistent with agency theory, employees' feeling that they own a stake in a company will make them feel that each of its successes or failures reflects their personal performance as well. This effect of PO on organizational identification has also been found in previous research. Given these supporting arguments, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relation between convenience store employees' PO and organizational identification.

Effect of Supervisor Support and Organizational Trust on PO

In this section, the author proposed two key factors that may predict employees' PO: supervisor support and organizational trust. First, supervisor support reflects employees' "... general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contribution and care about their well-being" (Eisenberger et al., 2002, p. 565). Generally, supervisors tend to be persons who have a strong influence on employees because they are in the position to decide the allocation of rewards or punishments that employees will receive (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020). This supervisory role is particularly strong in high power distance cultures, such as Thailand, where subordinates willingly accept their superiors' authority (Guang & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Studies have found that having a supportive supervisor can increase job satisfaction and lead to various positive work outcomes (Casper et al., 2011; Charoensukmongkol, 2021; Willemse et al., 2012).

In this research it was proposed that the level of support that franchise employees received from their supervisors could affect the level of PO that they developed for their organizations. Theoretically social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which is based on the law of reciprocity, can explain supervisor support effects on employee PO. According to Blau (1964, pp. 91–92), social exchange theory is concerned largely with "... the voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others." DeConinck (2010) also argued that "Social exchanges differ from economic exchanges in that social exchanges involve high levels of trust and obligation and go beyond the employment contract." Based upon the law of reciprocity, when their supervisors treat employees well, they are more likely to realize how important business performance is to them and thus, they are willing to help their supervisors take good care of their businesses as a way to reciprocate (Vaitoonkiat & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). This positive attitude will persuade them to regard the company as their own, and thereby leads them to be devoted strongly to their organization. Research has shown that supervisors tend to have strong influences on employees' attitudes and behaviors related to PO. For example, Sollitto et al. (2014) showed that part-time workers who received favorable treatment from their supervisors tended to develop attachment to their organizations. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relation between supervisor support and convenience store employees' PO.

Second, in this research it was proposed that organizational trust promotes employees' PO. Organizational trust is defined as "... employees' collective perception regarding the trustworthiness of their organization" (Li et al., 2012, p. 372). Trust is considered a key ingredient that enhances the quality of the relationship between parties. It is also regarded as one of the key components in the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Trust is not established easily; it tends to take a considerable

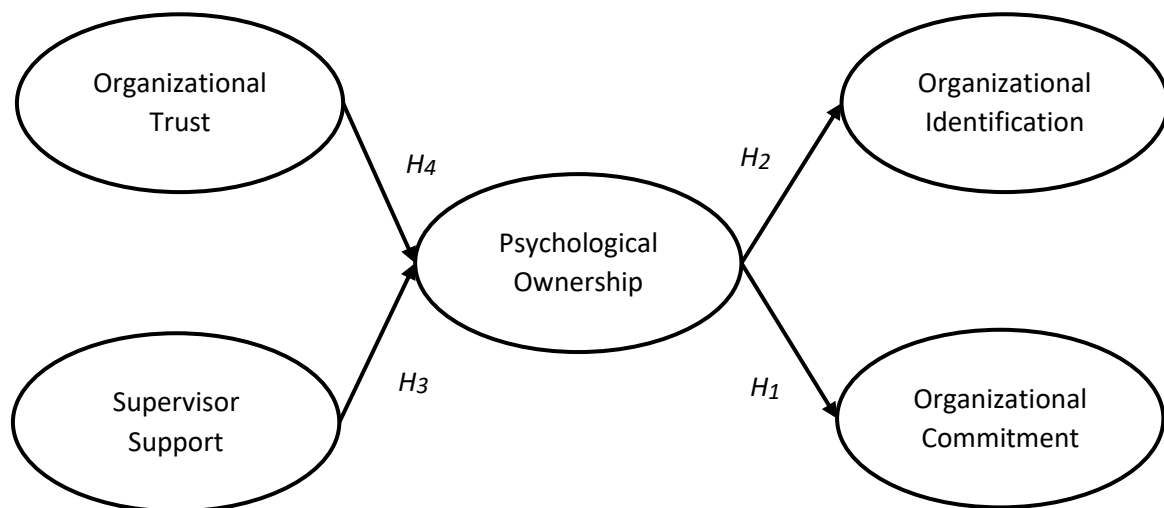
amount of time and effort to develop (Ratasuk & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). However, when trust is established, it can yield significant benefits to the trusting parties with respect to caring and cooperative behavior (Seriwatana & Charoensukmongkol, 2020).

Given important roles attributed to trust, the author proposed that the level of organizational trust that franchise employees perceived was a key factor which motivated them to develop PO of their workplaces. When employees perceive that their organization can be trusted, they are assured that it will demonstrate goodwill and protect their best interests. This attitude will cause them to reciprocate by demonstrating a sense of membership in the organization (Koirala & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). In previous research, the role that organizational trust plays in PO has been documented. For example, O'Driscoll et al. (2006) found that a less structured work environment, characterized by high autonomy and personal control, was a factor that led to PO. However, this environment cannot develop without trust between the organization and employees. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relation between organizational trust and convenience store employees' PO.

The conceptual model used in this research is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Conceptual Model*



Methods

Samples and Data Collection

The data were collected from employees who worked in chain convenience stores located in seven districts in Bangkok. The cluster sampling method was used to select the samples. First, the seven districts were chosen randomly; then, stores located within these seven districts were visited randomly to collect the data. The store managers were approached directly in person during off-peak times and asked for permission to allow their staff to participate in the survey. After receiving permission, the questionnaires were then distributed to the staff to complete. A total of 135 stores gave permission to collect data, and a total of 347 surveys was distributed. However, 47 staff refused to participate in the study (response rate = 86.5%).

Measurement

Psychological ownership was measured using the scale Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) developed, which consisted of seven items. Organizational commitment was measured using the scale Mowday et al. (1979) developed, which was composed of six items. Organizational identification was measured using the scale Mael and Ashforth (1992) developed, which consisted of six items. Supervisor support was measured using the scale Eisenberger et al. (1986) developed, which consists of four items.

Organizational trust was measured using four items from the Organizational Trust Inventory scale of Nyhan and Marlowe (1997). All of the items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The final form adopted for the questionnaire is shown in the Appendix.

Control Variables

Four factors that could affect PO, organizational commitment, and organizational identification were included in the analysis as control variables: namely, age, gender, job position, and job tenure. Gender was coded as a dummy variable (male = 1; female = 0). Age was coded as a continuous variable. Job position was coded as a dummy variable (supervisor = 1; non-supervisor = 0). Job tenure was measured in months.

Estimating Technique

In this study, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data. The method is considered a component-based SEM technique that allows multiple equations to be assessed simultaneously; further, it also allows variables to be measured as reflective or formative latent variables (Chin, 1998). This method can be used to analyze data even when they are not distributed normally (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982). Moreover, PLS regression analysis does not require a larger sample size for analysis compared to other SEM techniques (Chin & Newsted, 1999). In this research WarpPLS v. 7.0 was used to analyze the data.

Results

Measurement Model

Before analyzing the data, it was important to check the reliability and validity of the factors that were used as reflective latent variables—PO, supervisor support, organizational trust, organizational commitment, and organizational identification. First, the author evaluated the latent variables for convergent validity using factor loadings. Hair et al. (2009) indicated that factor loadings for constructs must be higher than .50 to have good convergent validity. Some items did not meet the minimum requirement, including two items of supervisor support, one of organizational commitment, and one of PO. Therefore, these items were removed from the analysis, after which the results showed that the remaining items had factor loadings higher than .50. Secondly, the author tested the discriminant validity of constructs using the average variance extracted (AVE). The results indicated that the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than other correlations involving that construct, which suggested that the level of discriminant validity was satisfactory (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of the AVEs and bivariate correlations among all variables in the model are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Bivariate Correlations and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted*

Variable	PO	SUP	TRS	COM	IDF	AGE	POS	TEN	GEN
PO	(.76)	.46**	.46**	.48**	.50**	.23**	.19**	.16**	-.02
SUP		(.87)	.69**	.47**	.40**	.09	.09	.10	-.07
TRS			(.83)	.44**	.39**	.10	.02	.04	-.04
COM				(.75)	.68**	.14*	.12*	.10	.01
IDF					(.79)	.09	.12*	.09	.01
AGE						(1)	.43**	.53**	-.08
POS							(1)	.42**	-.16**
TEN								(1)	-.04
GEN									(1)

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; the square root of AVE is shown in parentheses. Abbreviations: PO = psychological ownership, SUP = supervisor support, TRS = organizational trust, COM = organizational commitment, IDF = organizational identification, AGE = age, POS = job position, TEN = job tenure, GEN = gender.

Third, the reliability of the constructs was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient and composite reliability. Table 2 shows that all Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability were over .70, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended.

Finally, the author checked for multicollinearity among the indicators using full variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. The analysis showed that all full VIFs ranged from 1.04 to 2.12, which were lower than 3.30, according to the specifications of Petter et al. (2007). These results indicated that there were no serious multicollinearity issues with the data.

Survey Population Characteristics

The respondents' mean age was 24.65 years ($SD = 5.51$), and 86 were males (29%), while 214 were females (71%). The respondents' mean job tenure was 3.24 months ($SD = 2.75$). A total of 47 held a supervisory position (16%), while 253 were line employees (84%).

Structural Model

The results of the analysis are given in Figure 2. The estimation of the standardized beta coefficients and p -values were performed with the bootstrapping resampling method that used 100 subsamples, as recommended by Efron et al. (2004). The model fit indices of the PLS-SEM analysis was accomplished using Kock's (2019) recommendations. The results were as follows, with the significance level obtained shown: average path coefficient (APC = .124; $p < .001$), average R^2 (ARS = .257; $p < .001$), average full collinearity (AFVIF = 1.713), Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) = .453, Sympton's paradox ratio (SPR = .813), R^2 contribution ratio (RSCR = .993), and statistical suppression ratio (SSR = 813). All the results proved to be satisfactory.

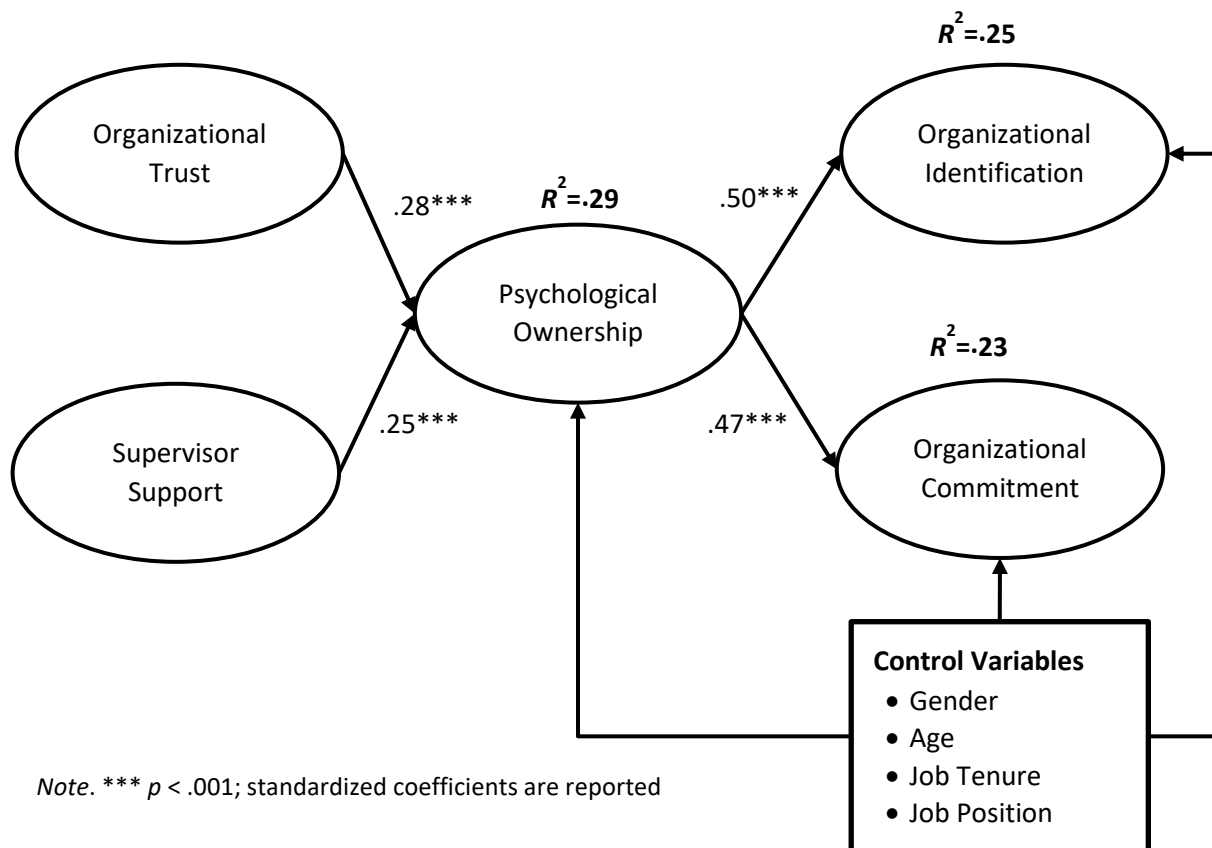
Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and Composite Reliability Coefficient

Variable	Psychological Ownership	Supervisor Support	Organizational Trust	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Identification
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	.85	.83	.84	.74	.88
Composite Reliability Coefficient	.89	.90	.90	.84	.91

In Hypothesis 1 it was proposed that a positive relation existed between employees' PO and organizational commitment. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .47$; $p < .001$), which meant that the results supported the hypothesis. In Hypothesis 2 it was proposed that a positive relationship existed between employees' PO and organizational identification. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .50$; $p < .001$), which indicated the hypothesis was supported. In Hypothesis 3 it was proposed that there was a positive relation between supervisor support and employees' PO. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .25$; $p < .001$), a finding that supported the hypothesis. In Hypothesis 4 it was proposed that a positive relation existed between organizational trust and employees' PO. The analysis showed that the relation was positive and significant ($\beta = .28$; $p < .001$). This finding supported the hypothesis.

The analysis also showed that only a few control variables were statistically significant. In particular, employees' PO was associated positively and significantly with age ($\beta = .13$; $p < .01$) and job position ($\beta = .106$; $p < .01$). However, the other control variables were not associated significantly with employees' PO.

Figure 2 Results from Hypotheses Testing



Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of the Findings

The objective of this research was to examine the antecedents and results related to convenience stores employees' PO. First, the outcomes indicated that the relationships between employees' PO and the organizational commitment and organizational identification variables were positive and significant. This suggests that convenience stores employees who developed PO tended to demonstrate higher levels of organizational commitment and identification. These findings are consistent with the results of earlier studies which showed the positive outcomes derived from employee PO in other occupational contexts (Fan et al., 2019; Hameed et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2017). The findings are also consistent with previous studies that supported the benefits of employees' PO in retail businesses (Potdar et al., 2018, 2021). Theoretically, the results of the outcomes of employee PO are consistent with predictions arising from agency theory, which explains why employees, who develop a sense of belonging to their workplaces, make a commitment to, and identify with, their organizations (Sieger et al., 2013). For the antecedent variables of employees' PO (organizational trust and supervisor support), the results illustrated that the relation between these two variables and PO were also positive and significant. This indicates that convenience store employees who developed trusting relationships with their organizations and received good support from their supervisors were more likely to demonstrate PO. From the theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with the predictions coming from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which explains that employees whose organizations and supervisors treat them well are willing to respond in kind with favorable behaviors toward their work and organizations. The results are also consistent with the studies of Sollitto et al. (2014) and Johanson and Cho's (2009), which showed that part-time workers developed a sense of attachment and commitment to their organizations when they received favorable treatment from their supervisors and organizations.

Research Contribution

Overall, the results of this study extended prior PO research that did not identify the antecedents and outcomes associated with PO clearly in the context of convenience store employees. First, it was clarified that PO can be a beneficial factor in that it encourages part-time employees in this business sector to develop positive attitudes toward their work and organizations. This aspect of the results broadens our knowledge about the applicability of PO in the context of part-time employees, which had not previously received sufficient support in the literature. In particular, in this study it was shown that part-time employees also benefit from PO, as do full-time employees in large corporations. Secondly, this research contributes to the body of knowledge by revealing particular work-related factors that could lead convenience store employees to develop PO. In particular, the results indicated that supervisor support and trust in the organization were key antecedents of PO. This increases our understanding of why some employees in this business sector are more likely to demonstrate PO than are others. Although some employers may think that part-time employees have little motivation to develop a sense of belonging and commitment toward their organizations, our research findings indicated that a positive attitude toward their supervisor and organization could encourage them to demonstrate these positive behaviors.

Practical Contributions

Given that the results obtained supported the benefits of PO in employees' work attitudes, developing their PO is recommended as a practice that needs to be implemented to motivate employees to make a stronger commitment to their organization. Given that supervisor support and organizational trust were key factors that enhanced PO, the management practice of promoting employees' PO may need to focus on policies that encourage supervisors to care for their employees well and motivate them to develop trust in the organization. First, the management may need to create a supportive work environment that promotes building relationships between supervisors and their employees. The favorable treatment that employees receive from their supervisor may encourage them to reciprocate by developing PO of the organization. Moreover, to promote the quality of trust in the organization that contributes to employees' PO, the management needs to treat employees with care and respect. They also need to show integrity and be honest with them. These practices could make employees feel that their employers value them, and thereby encourage them to place trust in the organization (Mayer et al., 1995). When employees feel that their supervisor and organization are considerate and attentive to their values and wellbeing, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging to the organization, which is conducive to the development of PO.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the data were obtained from a small sample of convenience store employees in the Bangkok area. This small sample could limit the degree to which the results can be generalized to the entire population. Future research is required to expand the sample size and scope of the data collected to increase the ability to generalize the results. Second, the use of self-reported measures for data collection may include some subjective bias on the respondents' part. Third, certain other confounding variables may have affected PO in addition to those that were used in this research. Hence, future research may need to incorporate other unexplored variables that could potentially influence PO in order to gain a better understanding of the way employees develop it.

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Appendix: Scales

Psychological Ownership (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- This is my organization.
- I sense that this organization is our company.
- I feel a very high degree of personal ownership for this organization.
- I sense that this is my company.
- This is our company.
- Most of the people that work for this organization feel as though they own the company.
- It is hard for me to think about this organization as mine. (reversed)

Organizational Trust (1: *very low* – 5: *very high*)

- My level of confident that this organization will treat me fairly.
- The level of trust between supervisors and workers in this organization is.....
- The level of trust among the people I work with on a regular basis is.....
- The degree to which we can depend on each other in this organization is.....

Supervisor Support (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- My work supervisor really cares about my wellbeing.
- My supervisor cares about my opinions.
- My supervisor shows very little concern for me.
- My supervisor strongly considers my goals and value.

Organizational Commitment (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organization succeed.
- I feel very little loyalty to this organization (reverse coded).
- I would take almost any job to keep working for this organization.
- I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.
- I am proud to be working for this organization.
- I would turn down another job for more pay in order to stay with this organization.

Organizational Identification (1: *strongly disagree* – 5: *strongly agree*)

- When someone criticizes the company I work for, it feels like a personal insult.
- I am very interested in what others think about the company I work for.
- When I talk about the company I work for, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.
- This company's successes are my successes.
- When someone praises the company I work for, it feels like a personal compliment.
- If a story in the media criticized the company I work for, I would feel embarrassed.

The Apostle Paul on Homosexuality: A Critical Analysis

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Date Received: 28 April 2021 Revised: 2 June 2021 Accepted: 5 June 2021

Abstract

In recent times, more homosexual people are becoming open with their sexuality. Given this observation, this study aims to investigate the connection between the Christian Bible and homosexuality within the Christian faith. Using critical analysis, this study analyzed the historical background of chosen Bible texts through the exegetical method. The immediate context of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans in A.D. 57 regarding homosexuality was examined and compared with the situation in today's world. For instance, Paul's upbringing could have impacted his writing and thoughts on homosexuality, as some parts of his letter were quoted or paraphrased from contemporary philosophers of his time. Moreover, the social sexual construction in Tarsus, the city where Paul was raised, had a strong masculinity affinity linked with power and domination, which may have had an influence on this letter to his audience. The findings of this study attempt to address certain questions pertaining to the handling of issues between homosexual people and the church, which includes considerations for the church to prepare itself to respond biblically to homosexual members.

Keywords: *Homosexuality, Apostle Paul, LGBT, same-sex attraction*

Introduction

With over 2.18 billion Christians of all ages around the world, Christianity represents nearly a third of the estimated 2020 global population of 7.8 billion (Current World Population, 2020). Consequently, there have been discussions within communities of faith about coexisting with homosexual people. Just as heterosexual Christians are human, same-sex attracted Christians are similarly human in that they can have faith in Jesus Christ, and have emotional and social experiences and challenges that other Christians go through. Nonetheless, homosexuality within the church remains controversial because of the focus on its potential negative impacts, often overshadowing any positive opportunities. This is evidenced by Trammell (2015), who found that homosexuality remains viewed and discussed as a spiritual problem by religious media for over ten years. Many churches are also not welcoming towards members who are homosexuals, citing religious and cultural differences (e.g., Masson & Nkosi, 2017). Nonetheless, to completely marginalize homosexual people may be rash. Hence, this paper invites members of the community of faith, including pastors, elders, church members, and same-sex attracted Christians, to critically evaluate the core value of churches and understand the reasons for their existence. To achieve this, the paper identifies conducts a biblical exegesis of Romans 1:26-27, which is a biblical passage that is related to homosexuality.

Literature Review

Around the world, there are members of religious communities who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual identities (LGBTQ+) (e.g., in South Africa, Masson & Nkosi, 2017; in Australia, Subhi & Geelan, 2012; in Singapore, Tay, Hoon, & Huy, 2018). Nevertheless, only a fraction of them discuss their sexuality with other church members (Clapp, 2006). Having to repress their sexuality has been found to be a factor that leads to mental illness (Subhi & Geelan, 2012), with non-heterosexuals, especially younger people, being more likely to consider suicide (Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015; Plöderl et al., 2013; Remafedi, 1999). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual identities are at greater risk of depression and substance abuse; nearly one-third (29%) of LGBTQ+ youth had attempted suicide at least once in the prior year, compared with 6% of heterosexual youth (Lyons et al., 2019).

As a result, studies have been conducted to examine and discuss conflicts stemming from homosexuality and the Christian community, with suggestions to address problems of philosophy, theology, and ethics (Nkosi & Masson, 2017). These studies are crucial, as a primary cause of conflict related to homosexual issues in the religious world are interpretations of sacred texts by different religious sects. It can be said that Christians and Muslims, the two main religions which comprise almost half the world's population (Diamant, 2021), usually have a negative view regarding homosexuality (Roggemans et al., 2015). This may have led to inequalities of social ethics and human rights. In Christianity, the problem of homosexuality initially arose from misuse of the writings of the Apostle Paul. Religious leaders may have taken the topic of homosexuality out of its original context (Mohler, 2004). This may have resulted in a divide between fundamentalist Christians and homosexual Christians. Until today, theological debates are still being reported (Prentiss, 2010; Lee & Yi, 2020).

The church has been misunderstood and blamed for the social stigma and suicidal cases among LGBTQ+ members. Some Christian communities may have been guilty of playing God and having a "pharisaical attitude"; the Free Dictionary defines this as "practicing or advocating strict observance of external forms and ceremonies of religion or conduct without regard to the spirit; self-righteous; judgemental". This type of attitude may be traced to the writings of the Apostle Paul, who is one of the most quoted authors with regards to homosexuality in the Christian community. Thus, using the writings of the Apostle Paul, this paper provides an exegetical examination to help provide a space for spiritual discourse regarding homosexual people and Christian faith communities. Specifically, this paper seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How can the Apostle Paul's statements on homosexuality be understood in their context? (Romans 1:26–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, and 1 Timothy 1:9–10.)
2. How can we find a theological balance that will lead to social harmony in this matter?

By addressing these questions, this paper hopes to meet the following research objectives

1. To be able to comprehend Paul's letters in their original context.
2. To help readers understand the mind of the Apostle Paul on the matter of homosexuality.
3. To provide pastoral care guidelines for the issue of homosexuality in the Christian community.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted using biblical exegesis as the method of analysis. This is a tool to provide explanation or critical interpretation of a biblical text. The practice of exegesis is widely employed for addressing theological controversies. The suitability of this method is because of its comprehensiveness and holistic approach, seen through excavation of the following areas (Hays, 2007).

- 1 – General Context
- 2 – Literary Context
- 3 – Lexical-grammatical Context
- 4 – Cultural Context
- 5 – Biblical Context
- 6 – Theological Context

Exegesis of Romans 1:26-27 Regarding Homosexuality

Below is an application of exegetical steps applied in Romans 1:26-27. This procedure helps excavate the intention and meaning of Apostle Paul's words. Through the exegetical approach, a theological balance can be achieved.

The Apostle Paul's Background

Let us first consider the Apostle Paul's background. Before he became a well-known Apostle, he was known as Saul of Tarsus. As a child, he grew up in a Roman province and was a dedicated Jew who inherited Roman citizenship. According to Mark (2019),

Paul was directed to study in Jerusalem and became a prominent member of the Jewish community there (Acts 22:3). When the disciples of Jesus Christ began sharing their new faith, Saul was among their persecutors until he experienced a vision on his way to Damascus in which Jesus spoke to him and he was struck blind (Acts 9:3-9). After recovering his sight with the help of Christians, he became the great evangelist, traveling the Roman roads of Syria-Cilicia Phoenice to spread the new faith.

Tarsus served as an important commercial port in the province of Cilicia, and was famous for its culture of Greek philosophy, literature, and wealth. There were also schools that could rival those found in Athens and Alexandria (Conybeare & Howson, 1976). Paul seemed to be proud of his birthplace, because as he was being arrested, he had said to the Tribune, *"I am a Jew and a citizen of the well-known city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39)."* The mention of his birthplace may be linked with the city's status as being free, which was accorded by Roman Emperor Augustus for the city's contributions during Rome's civil wars. With the status of being free, cities like Tarsus were given autonomy in terms of instituting their own laws and practicing their own customs. These cities were also free from the heavy presence of Roman guards (Bible Study, n.d.).

Alongside his birthplace, Paul's childhood background and experience impacted his personality, his life, and later his letters to different early churches. For example, Paul's list of vices recorded in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 9, and 1 Timothy are found to be somewhat similar to the popular moral teachings of the Stoics in his day. Dodd (1952) suggested that the vice lists of Paul may have been used in catechetical instruction from a very early period. According to Springett (1990), Christian thought found precedent for ethical lists in Hellenistic Jewish literature. In such literature, vice lists were abundant—for instance, in the writings of Philo. He gave an excellent example of a vice list found in Wisdom 14.25,26: *"Blood and murder, theft and fraud, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, troubling of good, thankfulness for benefits, defilement of souls, confusion of sex, disorder in marriage, adultery, and wantonness."*

Theologians like Abbott (2010) and Hall (2018) suggested that the vices listed in Paul's writings were an echo of Paul's childhood nurturing. They show how Paul uses the words and ideas of a well-known Greek philosopher in his time to help his readers understand more about the gospel he was preaching. However, this is not to suggest that Paul was not inspired by the Holy Spirit, as he wrote his letters to encourage different churches in faith. Throughout the Bible, God uses what is happening in those particular contexts and times to help people understand Him better. According to Judge (1972), though Paul's teachings had much in common with contemporary philosophical thought, they cannot be identified with any philosophical system. Paul rather made use of the popular ethical instruction of the day, not a system of ethics as such, but as a way in which a loose body of general principles for life develops among thoughtful people in a community.

With that said, Paul grew up in a very influential community, which would later have a huge impact on his life. Yet as a committed Jew, what might have influenced Paul most would have been the Torah and Hebrew Scriptures. His spiritual commitment and obligation to his religion could be major factors that impacted his life and his writings. This theme will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

Exploring Bible Texts on Homosexuality

There are four passages in the New Testament that deal with homosexuality. Three from the works of the Apostle Paul, penned by his assistants like Tertius, and one from Jude, the brother of James, referring to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. The following are other Bible verses that refer to homosexuality: Genesis 19:4-5, Judges 19:22, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Ezekiel 16:48-50, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-11, and Jude 1:7.

Brief Historical Context

The book of Romans was written around A.D. 57. This book was authored by the Apostle Paul with the help of a scribe named Tertius. At the time it was written, Paul was on his third missionary journey, and his work in the eastern Mediterranean had almost come to an end. Paul was now ready to return

to Jerusalem with a gift of financial resources from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia to assist the poor believers in Jerusalem (Romans 16:25-26). The place where Paul wrote the book of Romans is either Corinth or Cenchrea, which are less than 10 kilometers apart.

Literary Context

Paul's original audience was the church in Rome whose members were predominantly Gentile Christians (Romans 1:7). Jews were the minority in this community of faith. Paul expressed a strong desire to visit the Roman church (Romans 1:8-16). For many years, he had longed to be there with these believers, but he was obligated to deliver monetary gifts to the poorer members in Jerusalem. Hence, instead of going to Rome, he prepared the Christians thereby sending his letter ahead through a woman named Phoebe before his visit. As was the custom of that time, according to Todstad (2018), the person who carried the letter was the one who would read it out loud.

One could imagine that sister Phoebe carried Paul's letter from one house to the next in Rome. It could have been that some members might have wanted to reread the letter, and so they began to copy and circulate it. Theologically speaking, the letter to the Romans was a systematic theological introduction to his hoped-for future personal ministry. Since Paul was not acquainted directly with the believers in Rome, he says little about their problems (Barker, 1995) when compared to the Corinthians, with whom he was better acquainted because he had spent at least 1.5 years at Corinth. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentioned the problems of specific individuals, but such was not the case with his letter to the Christians in Rome.

Even though Paul had not been acquainted with the believers in Rome, he did mention some of the universal problems that believers faced throughout the Greek world. Greek civilization had a big impact on the world, and the Romans had inherited much of their culture and lifestyle from the Greeks. One social norm that had been passed down to Roman society was homosexuality (Levin-Richardson, 2019). This may be one of the distinct problem areas where the Christians in Rome were being challenged. Sexuality has always been an area where God's people struggle and are challenged throughout history. Several incidents in the Old Testament and in the Torah remind us that God's people were frequently tempted to worship the gods and goddesses of the Canaanites. This was very tempting, because part of the requirement of Canaanite worship was to have sexual intercourse with a priest or goddess. Those acts of worship were an abomination to the God of Israel. However, a careful exegesis of Romans chapters 1 and 2 reveals that the situation in the book of Romans was different from the case of the Israelites in the Old Testament. More details will be presented later, in the "Literary Structure" section of this paper.

Genre

One of the most important aspects of the interpretation of Scripture is genre. Exegesis requires that one can differentiate between various kinds of writings. As Schreiner (2018, p. 44) stated, "If we misunderstand the genre of a text, the rest of our analysis will be askew." In this case, the question to ask is whether the book of Romans is a letter or an epistle? The Gospels, Letters, and the Apocalypse are written in different literary genres and serve different purposes. The question to ask is, why did Paul write the Romans a letter rather than a Gospel? Many scholars agree that Paul wrote Romans as a letter, but there is no real consensus as to what kind of letter it is.

There is a difference between an epistle and a letter. An epistle is usually understood to be for everyone or a large group of audience. On the other hand, a letter is usually meant for an individual or a small group of individuals. This is what the immediate readers of the Church of Rome had to decide, as do readers today. Historical records that in AD. 49, Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome, and as a result of this exodus, there were also almost no Christians left in Rome. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, this was because the Jews were always fighting about 'Christos' – a reference to the ongoing conflict between Jewish Christians (such as Aquila and Priscilla) and traditional Orthodox Jews. This is one piece of evidence that Paul's message to the Romans was more of a letter than an epistle.

The letter of Romans was written in AD. 57. Claudius died in AD. 54, three years before the letter was written. After Claudius died, the brutal Nero succeeded him on the throne. Nero harbored a strong dislike of Christians. These historical facts help us see that there may not have been many Christians left in Rome, except for those who were caught by the Romans soldiers from different regions for entertainment in the Coliseum. Paul must have had this information in mind when he wrote this letter to the few people in Rome. During this time of trauma and persecution, there was no time for Paul to waste on the smaller issue of homosexuality. But instead, he wanted to encourage those few people in Rome who were being persecuted for Jesus Christ. That is why later in his letter, in Romans Chapter 8, Paul reassured the Christians in Rome that nothing could separate them from the love of God, even their sins, because Jesus has covered all for them.

Major Theme

The major theme helps readers to focus on the central issues in the letter without losing track when bombarded with details along the way. Paul's primary theme in Romans is the basic gospel, God's plan of salvation and righteousness for all humankind, Jew and Gentile alike. Readers may be lost and overwhelmed with information, but the major theme serves as the North Star that guides them home.

Literary Structure

The literal structure provides an overview of the biblical writer's thought flow. To understand the matter of homosexuality in the letter to the Romans, it is necessary to gain ability to see the whole thought flow of the entire letter. This helps to determine what is important and what is not so important to the author, and what are the main messages he wants to convey. To make a balanced judgment on the matter of homosexuality, it is suggested that prior prejudices be set aside first. In this case, the conclusion that Apostle Paul condemns every kind of homosexuality is not necessarily viable simply because homosexuality is mentioned in Romans Chapter 1. Instead, it is necessary to see the whole trend of his thought and theology, as the literary structure helps to highlight the big picture and the whole frame of thought in the mind of the Apostle Paul. With regards to the details surrounding Romans 1:26-27 where homosexuality is mentioned, a mini literal structure of Romans 1:18-3:20 has been prepared and constructed to provide a bird's eye overview of the structure of the text.

The Universality of Human Sinfulness

- A. God's Wrath against the Gentiles (1:18-32)
 - 1. Their rejection of God's revelation of himself 1:18-20
 - 2. Divine retribution for deliberate sin (1:21-31)
 - 3. Conclusion: they both sin and approved of a sinner (1:32)
- B. God's Wrath against the Jews (2:1-3:8)
 - 1. The truth of God's judgment on the Jews (2:1-16)
 - 2. The Jewish failure to keep the law (2:17-29)
 - 3. God's faithfulness and Israel's failure (3:1-8)
- C. The Sinfulness of All Humanity (3:9-20)
 - 1. The universal nature of sin (3:9)
 - 2. The extent of human depravity: total (3:10-18)
 - 3. The universality of sin (3:19-20)

This structure underscores a clearer understanding of the mind of the Apostle Paul. He is trying to point out that every single human is a sinner, and all deserve the wrath of God. Singling out one particular sin in this section of the letter is not the author's intention. By doing so, one is committing the sin of deviating from the actual biblical message.

A Closer Look

Towards the end of Romans Chapter 1, Paul is condemning the Gentiles for their sin of dishonoring God. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21, NIV). Paul's premise is that every human knows that there is a Creator God (Romans 1:19-24). Paul goes into detail about the sins they committed in verses 25-32.

Paul tried to point out that even people who do not know God may learn about Him by observing nature around them. Intuitively they know that there is a divine being. They have made all kinds of gods from wood, rock, and stone into different animal shapes and worship them. They intentionally worshiped created beings like animals and nature instead of the Creator. That is why Paul mentions that they have exchanged the truth for lies. So God gave them up to do shameful things.

Despite this, the Gentiles claimed to be wise, and we can see why. The Greeks developed a great concentration of philosophical and medical "wisdom," but their lifestyle and culture was incredibly depraved. Worldly wisdom is not the same as divine truth, so amid all their knowledge they "became fools." Their pretension to worldly wisdom proved itself to be foolishness, because they worshipped, first, themselves, and second, false gods (Osborne, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, according to Osborne (2017), in his literal context, Paul is talking about a group of non-Christian Gentiles—specifically, the Greeks who lived in Rome. Paul might refer to the different sects of philosophers like the Epicureans and Stoics as well, according to the evidence of a previous conversation with them in Acts Chapter 17. However, the main purpose of pointing this out is to systematically reveal that nobody has an excuse for or can escape from sin. Not even the non-Christian Gentiles, who claimed that they did not know God. After pointing this out, Apostle Paul analytically shifted his focus back to the believers, Christians. The literal structure shows us that Paul is building a theology that points to soteriology in Jesus Christ. In Chapter 2, Paul makes it even worse for the Christian believers. The believers in this context were quite certain that they were good people, and righteous enough to judge the sinful Gentiles who had committed shameful acts. These believers had developed a spirit of hypocrisy like that of the Pharisees. Paul turned to this group of believers and said,

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse!
When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. (Romans 2:1 NLT)

What "same things" did they do? Did they do exactly what the non-Christian Gentiles did in Chapter 1? Paul gives us a hint in verse 5 that they are stubborn, and by refusing to turn from sin, they are storing up terrible punishment for themselves. This is to point out that Christian Gentile believers are no different from non-believers. Likewise, they all committed sin; it might just be sin in a different form.

And lastly, in this structure, Paul directs his attention to the Jews who claimed to have a special relationship with God and know what is right. These people were not just normal Jewish citizens, but leaders and teachers of the law. They were convinced that they were guides for the blind and lights for people who were lost in darkness. These people claimed that they could instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God (Romans 2:19-20 NLT). But Paul pointed out that they were not living what they taught and preached. These leaders taught against idolatry, yet they were using items stolen from pagan temples (Romans 2:22). They knew every bit of the law, yet failed to uphold and keep it. So Paul in Romans 2:25 said to these people that they were no better off than the uncircumcised Gentiles. They may have appeared to be holy and righteous, but their hearts were not right with God.

For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people. (Romans 2:28-29 NLT)

Macro Literary Structure

The macrostructure of Romans 1:18-3:20 supplies context to the statement in Romans 1:26-27 regarding homosexuality, and can be summed up as shown below.

Romans 1:18-24 Paul points out the problem of the sins of the “Gentiles” (non-Christians).

Romans 1:25-31 Paul elaborates the sins of the Gentiles (homosexuality is one of those)

Romans 1:32 Paul emphasizes the consequence of sin (death)

Romans 2:1-4 Paul points out the problem of the sins of the “Gentile Christians” (Church members).

Romans 2:1-3 Paul highlights the sin of being judgmental

Romans 2:5 Paul discusses the sin of being stubborn and refusing to turn from the wrong (Ego)

Romans 2:16 Paul emphasizes the consequence of sin (God’s judgment)

Romans 2:17-24 Paul points out the problem of the sins of the “Jews” (Religious Leaders)

Romans 2:17-20 Paul describes how they perceived themselves to be teachers of the law. (Ego)

Romans 2:21-25 Paul shows how they fail to live what they teach/preach.

Romans 2:24 Paul emphasizes the consequence of sin (the Gentiles blaspheme the name of God)

The Gentiles (non-believers), the believers (Christians), and the Jews (Religious leaders) represent the universality of humanity. Paul simply points out that “everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard” Romans 3:23. The purpose of the law is to keep people from having an excuse and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. The law simply shows us how sinful we are (Romans 3:19-20). The macrostructure above enables readers to see that Paul’s intention is not to single out one particular sin, or a particular group of people. Homosexuality is neither the main focus nor the main theme. It is not an appropriate text to single out and use against homosexual people. To apply Romans Chapters 1-3 in context, Scripture should be handled fairly, used against all human brokenness, and allowed to point broken persons to the greatest Healer, Jesus Christ. However, since this study is dealing with Apostle Paul’s thoughts on homosexuality, therefore, we need to explore Romans 1:26-27 and examine it in depth.

Grammatical Study

Before getting into the specific word study, it is important to make one general observation. It is important to note that language usage by the writer helps to unveil hidden details; it provides an understanding of the immediate context.

In Chapter 1:1-17, Paul uses the grammatical 2nd person “you” to address the audience. In grammar, a person is used to show the relationship between the speaker and the audience, or the writer and the reader. Grammar can also reveal possessive relationships. In this case, Paul is using 2nd person to address the audience who are believers. It shows their intimacy as brothers and sisters in Christ, even though they had never met. It is an agreement that they are of the same mind and the same faith, a mutual understanding of the same ethical code.

In Romans 1:18-32 the use of grammatical person shifts to the 3rd person, and the tone has also changed. (In reading scripture, it should be kept in mind that originally there were no chapters or verses. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses came later in A.D. 1551 by Robertus Stephanus). The shifting of grammatical person and change in tone suggests that Paul intended to make a distinct separation between believers and non-believers. In this context, he uses the 3rd person to point to another group of people who do not belong to the immediate audience. The Greek and Roman homosexuals belong to this 3rd person group which Paul addresses. This means some moral standards and worldviews may be different from place to place, religion to religion, culture to culture, and people to people.

However, right after Romans Chapter 1 in Chapter 2, Paul shifts the grammatical person back to the 2nd person, and continues to address his main audience. This continues to the end of Chapter 16. When listing the sins of unbelievers, including homosexual sin in Chapter 1, he uses the 3rd person to

point to the Gentiles. Afterwards, Paul only uses the 1st and 2nd persons like brother and sister, us, we, I, and you throughout the remainder of his letter. Moreover, in Chapter 16, Paul even addresses some believers in Rome by name: for instance, Priscilla and Aquila. "This couple is mentioned in Acts 18:2, 18:18 a, and 18:26 as associates of Paul and helpers to Apollos. Apparently, they were now back in the city of Rome" (Guzik, 2018). This shows the intimacy between Paul and some members of his original audience, which is in contrast to the group of people whom he mentioned and condemned in Chapter 1. This provides some clues and hints that will be elaborated further in the next section.

Sexuality in Rome during the Time of Paul

Sexuality in Rome during the time of Paul was greatly influenced by Greek civilization. However, when compared to the modern Internet era, many views and practices related to sexuality have evolved. People have had different expectations and appreciation for sex according to the emergence of different social structures over time.

Normally the basic thought about sex in the mind of the Roman citizen was "active dominant masculine" vs. "passive submissive feminine" (Williams, 2010). In this kind of culture, men were the dominant authorities. They held social privilege, ethical power, political seat, and all legal papers. Freeborn males were the ones who ruled the house. Since the Romans were always in military campaigns, the conquest mentality, therefore, had a great influence when it came to ruling the household. To use an exact description, masculine pride drove society and sexual relations.

Roman men were free to enjoy sex with other males without a perceived loss of masculinity or social status, as long as they took the dominant or penetrative role. Acceptable male partners were slaves and former slaves, prostitutes, and entertainers, whose lifestyle placed them in the nebulous social realm of *infamy*, excluded from the normal protections accorded a citizen even if they were technically free. Although Roman men, in general, seem to have preferred youths between the ages of 12 and 20 as sexual partners, freeborn male minors were off-limits at certain periods in Rome, though professional prostitutes and entertainers might remain sexually available well into adulthood (Williams, 2010, p. 118).

It was expected and socially acceptable for a freeborn Roman man to want sex with both female and male partners, as long as he took the penetrative role (Richlin, 1992). It was immoral to have sex with another freeborn man's wife, his marriageable daughter, his underage son, or with the man himself, while sexual use of another man's slave was subject to the owner's permission. Lack of self-control, including in managing one's sex life, indicated that a man was incapable of governing others. Too much indulgence in "low sensual pleasure" threatened to erode the elite male's identity as a cultured person (Hallett, 1998, pp. 67-68).

However, there is something worth noticing on the woman's side. According to Minor (2014), same-sex activity between a woman and other women was quite rare (p. 212). It was uncommon in Roman society, which differed from that of the Greeks, where it was so uncommon that an ancient poet in the time of Augustine said that sexual activity between women was "unheard-of" (Skinner, 2014, p. 69). This is a reminder of what the Apostle Paul penned in Romans 1:26 "This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual intercourse for what is unnatural." Paul was writing this letter to warn the Christians in Rome, and he mentioned that females had exchanged natural sexual intercourse for what was unnatural, which seems to contradict contemporary findings. One said sexual activity between women and women was rare, while another stated that it was not uncommon. Perhaps it might have been a linguistic or biblical figurative language problem, or it could be that some women were engaging in (unnatural) masturbation activity, instead of having normal sex with their husbands. According to Genesis 38, there was a man named Onan who did not follow God's command to have natural sex with his sister-in-law whose husband had passed away. Instead, Onan masturbated and ejaculated outside the body of the woman, resulting in God punishing him with death. Romans 1:26 and Genesis 38 may seem to be in a different context and time, but they are worth noting.

Sometimes it is difficult to define the word common or uncommon. In the world we live in, sex between men and men or women and women seems to be much more open than in ancient Rome. But when the majority of the earth's population are straight, it could be said that it is relatively uncommon. The same goes with ancient Rome; something that is allowable does not mean that it is commonly done as the norm.

Another piece of evidence that provides insights into the sexual culture of the Roman world is the excavation of Pompeii. The Pompeian culture was infused with sexuality, which manifested itself in all aspects of everyday life. For one thing, the Romans' sexual practices were quite open; they did not require a sense of privacy. In the modern world, we think of privacy as the most important thing about sexual activity; hence, sexual activities would be hidden away from public spaces. However, this was not the case in Pompeii. Sexual activity could happen anywhere between the dining table and the bedroom, and guests were meant to see it and see their host as a man of taste and refinement. Furthermore, sexual imagery could be seen everywhere. Not only was it found in fine art or inside the house, but it was also found throughout the streets of Pompeii. To the people in Pompeii, this imagery represented good luck and fortune (Levin-Richardson, 2019).

Another occurrence that was distasteful to the God of the Jews and Christians was ancient shrine worship (Deuteronomy 23:17-18). This was a religious practice that had been around for thousands of years where worshipers would get themselves drunk with wine and have sexual intercourse with the temple priest. This included male-to-male sexual intercourse. In addition, travelers who came to the temple of Aphrodite would say the goddess's name before having intercourse with her temple maids. Having sex with strangers was not only possible but obligatory (Marcovich, 1996). According to the Greek historian Herodotus, writing about the city of Cyprus in the 5th Century BC, "The foulest Babylonian custom is that which compels every woman of the land to sit in the temple of Aphrodite and have intercourse with some stranger at least once in her life" (Anagnostou-Laoutides & Charles, 2018). This applied to all women, high and low, he says, though rich ladies often drove to the temple in covered carriages. This kind of culture and civilization affords a clearer view of why the Apostle Paul seems to be against all kinds of sexual immorality. That was because it was happening everywhere in Rome and contradicted his religious beliefs and background. As an ex-Pharisee and a leading Christian figure, Paul taught a different moral standard than the Romans. Herodotus added, "A woman could not refuse payment. Once a stranger had made his choice and cast money into her lap, she would be forced to have intercourse outside the temple" (BBC, 2016).

With such information, it is hardly surprising that Paul uses such strong words against the people who participated in such practices. This goes hand in hand with how the Old Testament condemned male cult prostitutes or male shrine prostitutes in Deuteronomy 23:17, 1 Kings 14:24, 1 Kings 15:12. This leads to the question, "were there any genuine Christians in Rome who participated in the shrine worship?" The answer is most likely, No. This means homosexual activity that happened in the shrine worship was something different than what same-sex attracted Christians experience today. To compare and use the analogy of homosexual activity in the temple of Aphrodite is baseless. What happened in the temple of Aphrodite involved people who had no relationship with Jesus, and was very different from the experience of same-sex attracted Christians.

Same-Sex Marriage in Ancient Rome

When same-sex marriage in ancient Rome was discussed, the usual connotation was male-to-male marriage. There are very few records of same-sex marriage in ancient Rome, and it usually involved a small informal wedding. The legal system of ancient Rome did not recognize same-sex marriage. One of the reasons was so that children from heterosexual marriages could continue the family name and father's legacy. Same-sex marriage was considered something bizarre. The couple could be mocked for having a same-sex marriage (Hersch, 2010). Later, when the emperor Constantine became a Christian, homosexuality declined and same-sex marriage in the Roman empire was prohibited. However, during the time of the Apostle Paul, Emperor Nero had two public wedding ceremonies with men. The first one was with a wine steward, a man named Pythagoras who used to be a slave, during

which Nero took the role of the bride even though this was against traditional beliefs and social norms. The other wedding was with a young man named Sporus; here the Emperor took the role of the groom. The Emperor later ordered him to be castrated in an attempt to keep his youthful appearance. The wedding included customary aspects like an endowment and the wearing of the Roman bridal veil (Williams, 2010). This is another important piece of evidence about the situation in Rome that could have shaped the context and message in Romans Chapter 1.

Political Situation Relates to the Book of Romans

The letter of Romans was written around AD 57. The letter's purpose was to encourage the local Christians and establish a theological foundation for church members in Rome. Christians were a minority in the city of Rome. There were no rules or laws that protected Christians' rights during this period.

Since its beginning, the Roman Empire was a committed religious culture. Religion and politics usually went hand in hand. Emperor Julius Caesar was the highest priest in the temple of Jupiter (Pontifex Maximus) before he was elected as Consul, the highest Republican political role (Ricketts, 2020). The Romans worshipped a large constellation of deities, some of whom were passed down from the Ancient Greeks, and the city was filled with shrines and temples. People at every level sought to participate in paying homage to these gods. Thailand is a good example of a modern society that—like the Romans—still exhibits a deep connection between people, business, and politics. Most of the houses and businesses, big and small, usually have a local shrine display in front, for people to pay homage to that which is sacred, while asking for protection, success, and luck. The Roman emperor became a god to many Romans, an idea Christians were to later find highly offensive.

On the other side, theological clashes and debates between the Jews, Christians, and Romans created a lot of tension, which gave rise to several protests and violence. This led the central government to take a negative view of the Jews and the Christians. Claudius Caesar was the emperor in AD 49 at the time of a famine that prompted Saul and Barnabas to take a gift from the church in Antioch to the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). Claudius later expelled all the Jews from Rome. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, this was because the Jews were always fighting about 'Christos'—a reference to the ongoing conflict between Jewish Christians (such as Aquila and Priscilla) and traditional Orthodox Jews (Campbell, n.d.). This historical evidence indicates that numerous Christians must have been living in Rome at that time to cause an uproar between the Christian and the Jews. The names of people listed in Romans 16 supports the idea that there were a large number of Christians and churches in the city before the expulsion decree.

After the murder of Claudius by his fellow Senate members, the throne passed to his teenage stepson, Nero. At the age of 17, Nero inherited the throne and became the emperor of the Roman empire. He was a violent psychopathic ruler. His taste for sexuality was considered extreme and different from that of other rulers before him. One of Nero's political initiatives was to set his city on fire in AD. 64. He deflected blame on the Christians in order to justify rebuilding a new city with a golden palace and bronze statues of himself, hoping to gain more popularity. But things did not go as he wished; he started to lose popularity and favor from the people. Nero started to send Christians and slaves to their deaths in the amphitheater as entertainment for Roman citizens. This was also a factor leading to the Roman-Jewish war in AD 66 (The Infographics Show, 2019). Biblical history in Acts 25:11 reveals that the Apostle Paul used his Roman citizenship right to appeal to Emperor Nero in AD 57. This was probably the same year in which he authored the book of Romans while in Corinth.

The Critical Question

The historical information above raises certain critical questions. How many Christians or Christian Jews were left in Rome? With all the hardship and persecution that was happening, was there still time to focus on these Christian gay or homosexual topics and theological debate? It could have been that in a critical time of continued crisis such as this, most likely the Christians in Rome were focusing on how to physically and spiritually survive each day in times of heavy persecution. The condemnation

of unnatural sex in Romans 1:26-27 is not pointing to Christians, but rather to the norms of Roman society. The text is not even a warning to Christians in Rome; it simply refers to the behavior of those who were not Christian. And by “behavior”, it means sexuality in Rome during the early 1st century, in the context of a society that tied its existence to a hyper-masculine culture with all its gods and shrines. As discussed in the literary section above, Paul tried to warn the Christians in Rome not to live sinful lives which contradicted the gospel of Jesus Christ as did the pagans. However, Paul was positioning his message to build his grand theology (all are sinners and in need of a Savior). In the second and third chapters of Romans, Paul points out that even the Jews and Christians are sinners too, no matter how good they think they are.

Summary

1. In such a crisis there was no time to worry about a theology of homosexuality and Christianity in this historical context. There might not even be enough Christians left in Rome after the Jews and Christians were expelled and Nero’s subsequent reign.
2. The condemnation of unnatural sex is targeting a hyper-masculine Roman society, not the homosexual Christians of today. Today, believers face many more complications as they live in different contexts with different challenges, face different issues in distinct societies, and have diverse understandings and outlooks towards life.

Conclusion

With the specific homosexual issues during Paul’s time, there is no question or ambiguity as to why he seemed to take a negative view of homosexuality. Every homosexual story recorded in the Old Testament involved violation and caused the loss of someone’s life. It always had to do with excessive lust and sinful passion, which caused the degrading of a human being.

On the other hand, homosexual issues in Paul’s time were centered around knowledge and power, as Foucault noted regarding the role of sex in Greek and Roman antiquity (Foucault, 1978). The element of true love according to the creation account had been done away. There are 7 words for love in Greek, but homosexual activity during Paul’s time seemed to involve only the lower forms of love such as eros, ludus, philautia, or at most philia, but it leaves out the higher types like storge, pragma, and agápe. It is the higher level of love that God demands from his children. It could be argued that when Paul mentioned homosexuality in the vice list of Romans 1, his deeper intention was to target any person who practiced lower kinds of love. Because that was the specific trend of homosexuality during Paul’s time.

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The Mediating Role of Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction on the Relationship between Service Convenience and Loyalty: A Case Study of Private Bank in Myanmar

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Date Received: 20 March 2021 Revised: 30 June 2021 Accepted: 5 July 2021

Abstract

The aims of this study were to investigate the impact of service convenience dimensions on loyalty, and the sequential mediating effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationships between service convenience dimensions and loyalty. In this study, emphasis was placed on the dimensions of service convenience, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. A quantitative research approach was used to investigate valid responses ($N = 442$) collected via a questionnaire survey from the users of a private bank in Myanmar. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the data. Decision convenience and post-benefit convenience had a significant positive impact on loyalty, and perceived value and customer satisfaction sequentially mediated the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty. Dimensions of service convenience were the drivers of loyalty and had direct or indirect influences through perceived value and customer loyalty. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the service loyalty context in respect to service convenience dimensions, perceived value, and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Service convenience, perceived value, customer satisfaction, loyalty*

Introduction

There has been a rapid shift in the way businesses offer their products and services to the market in order to cope with the ever-increasing competition that they face (Bhat et al., 2018). Even in previously production-oriented firms, the focus has been shifted towards the customers (Hsu, 2018). This change occurs in all sorts of organizations, including service enterprises, that seek to establish a good relationship with customers (Markovic et al., 2018). Competition in the financial industry is intense, and banks are also attempting to improve service by cooperating with their customers so as to gain a competitive edge in the financial market (Bhat et al., 2018; Leninkumar, 2017).

Internet availability has had an enormous influence on customers' expectations (Berry, 2016). Offering service convenience, hence minimizing consumers' perception of time and effort to obtain a service, has become crucial in today's competitive arena (Benoit et al., 2017). In addition, changes in the sociocultural and sociodemographic characteristics of consumers also has encouraged the demand for service convenience (Benoit et al., 2016). Service convenience is applicable to service providers, as it can influence consumers' decisions to repurchase, their perceptions of the service experience, and their demands for greater convenience (Benoit, et al., 2017). Researchers have found that service convenience has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and perceived value, and has a direct or indirect impact on loyalty (Khan & Khan, 2018; de Matos & Krielow, 2019). However, most of them treated service convenience as a unidimensional variable, although it was introduced theoretically as a multidimensional construct (Seiders et al., 2000) that included decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience (Berry et al., 2002). These dimensions of service convenience have been found to produce outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chang et al., 2010). The present study focused on the Myanmar banking sector and sought to explain the impact of service convenience on outcomes such as perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

The relationship view of marketing has had a huge impact on service businesses. Firms that focus on customer profitability believe that effective management of satisfied and loyal customers can improve a company's economic and competitive situation (Hong et al., 2019). Therefore, providing customer value and satisfying customers are vital tasks that enable a firm to maintain long-term relationships with its customers (Ivanauskiene et al., 2012). In addition, the concept of customer

satisfaction and perceived value are the determinants of loyalty intention, as well as the outcome of service convenience (Khan & Khan, 2018; Aye & Soe, 2020). In this regard, this study also treated customer satisfaction and perceived value as the outcomes of service convenience and determinants of loyalty in the Myanmar banking context. The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To examine the impacts of service convenience dimensions on loyalty.
2. To test the mediating effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationships between service convenience dimensions and loyalty.

Literature Review

Service Convenience

Service convenience is consumers' perception of the time and effort related to buying or using a service (Berry et al., 2002). When acquiring or consuming a service, consumers have to invest their time and effort; as a result, service convenience has been thought of as a way to add value to consumers by reducing the time and effort that consumers have to expend in order to obtain a service (Colwell et al., 2008). Previous studies have treated service convenience as a multidimensional construct (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007; Colwell et al., 2008; Benoit, et al., 2017). In this study, five dimensions of service convenience were considered: decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience (Berry et al., 2002). Their impact on other constructs in the model was investigated. The definitions of these dimensions and the operational definitions adopted from the corresponding literature are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Definitions of Service Convenience Dimensions*

Dimensions	Definitions	Operational Definitions (for the Study)
Decision Convenience	Consumers' perception of time and effort to make a decision on purchases or use of a service provider (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007).	Private bank users' perception of time and effort to make a decision to use the bank.
Access Convenience	Consumers' perception of time and effort to initiate a service delivery or to reach a service provider (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007).	Private bank users' perception of time and effort to use the bank's service.
Transaction Convenience	Consumers' perception of time and effort to complete a transaction with a service provider (Dabholkar, 1996).	Private bank users' perception of time and effort to complete the transaction with the bank.
Benefit Convenience	Consumers' perception of time and effort to experience the core benefits of a service (Berry et al., 2002).	Private bank users' perception of time and effort to experience the benefit provided by the bank.
Post-benefit Convenience	Consumers' perception of time and effort to retain contact with a service provider after a service's benefit stage (Berry et al., 2002).	Private bank users' perception of time and effort to retain contact with the bank.

Perceived Value

Previous researchers have defined perceived values from different perspectives: money, quality, benefit, and social psychology. According to the monetary perspective of perceived value, customers' value is generated when less money is paid for a product or service (Bishop, 1984). In the quality perspective, value is the difference between the money that customers paid for a product or service and the perceived quality of that product or service by the customer (Bishop, 1984). According to this perspective, a customer's perceived value estimate is positive when less money is paid for a higher quality product. Zeithaml (1988) argued that customers' perceived value is the overall evaluation of the utility of perceived benefits against perceived sacrifices. This view of perceived value, from the

perspective of benefit, is the customers' perceptions of what they get and what they have to give up in order to obtain a particular product or service. From the benefit perspective of perceived value, what the customers give up for a product or service is more than money and includes all its costs, both monetary and nonmonetary. From the perspective of social psychology, the generation of value is based on the meaning of purchasing a product or service to the buyer's community (Sheth et al., 1991). In this study, the benefit perspective of perceived value was applied and defined as the difference between customers' perception of the bank's service and the costs of getting the service.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a familiar topic in business literature. There is no standard definition of customer satisfaction. Basically, it is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance with their expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Previous authors have specified two types of customer satisfaction, transaction-specific and cumulative (Jones & Suh, 2000; Kaura et al., 2015). *Transaction-specific satisfaction* is the evaluation of service encounters, and *cumulative* or overall satisfaction is related to an overall evaluation of the service provider (Kaura, et al., 2015). For transaction-specific satisfaction, consumers judge based on a particular event of a service transaction and, on the other hand, for overall satisfaction, consumers judge their general experience with the firm (Jones & Suh, 2000). Since all previous experiences with the service provider are included in overall satisfaction, it can be viewed as a function of all previous transaction-specific satisfaction evaluations (Parasuraman et al., 1994). Overall satisfaction is a combination of all previous transaction-specific judgments, and is updated after each specific transaction (Jones & Suh, 2000).

Harris and Goode (2004) argued that satisfaction in loyalty is conceptualized as overall satisfaction rather than a transaction-specific satisfaction. In addition, Parasuraman and colleagues (1994) also pointed out that overall satisfaction is more stable than transaction-specific satisfaction. On this basis, overall satisfaction was used in this study instead of transaction-specific satisfaction, and it defines customer's satisfaction as judgment of their general experiences with the bank.

Loyalty

Loyalty is the stated chance of participating in a certain behavior (Oliver, 1997). It is often considered to include a willingness to recommend, revisit, and provide positive word-of-mouth intentions. Zeithaml and colleagues (1996) grouped the intention to recommend, revisit, and give positive word-of-mouth into loyalty. Previous studies have classified loyalty as attitudinal and behavioral (East et al., 2005; Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007; Carpenter, 2008). *Attitudinal loyalty* describes a consumer's identification with a particular service provider and preference of a product or service over alternatives (Jones & Taylor, 2007). *Behavioral loyalty* is the customer's intention to repurchase the same brand and maintain a relationship with a service provider (Jones & Taylor, 2007). Behavioral loyalty can generate actual purchases, while attitudinal loyalty will not ensure a customer's actual purchase. However, attitudinal loyalty ensures the customer, through word-of-mouth, helps to create a positive image of a firm with others. When studying the antecedents of loyalty, researchers often combine these dimensions into one variable comprising the intention to repurchase, recommend, and pay higher prices (Cheng, 2011). In this study, loyalty was treated as a unidimensional variable and defined as the private bank customers' identification with the bank to use the service and maintain a relationship with the bank.

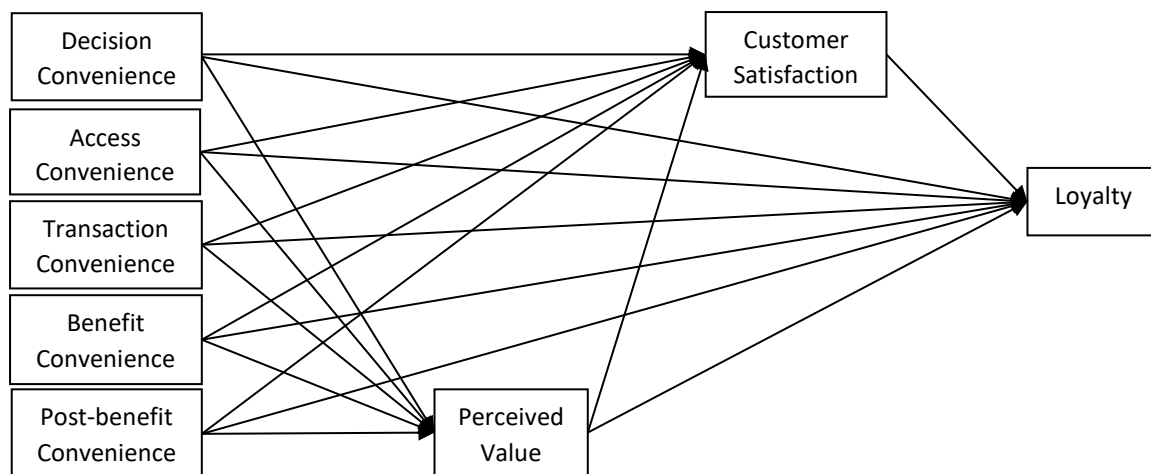
Relationships among Research Variables

Previous studies have emphasized the impact of service convenience on customer satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty (Khan & Khan, 2018; Pham et al., 2018; Kaura et al., 2015). Khan and Khan (2018) studied the impact of service convenience on customer satisfaction, value, and loyalty of online buyers in India; they found that service convenience had a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction, value, and loyalty. In addition, Pham et al. (2018) studied the relationships among service

convenience, perceived value, and loyalty, and found that perceived value had a mediating impact on the relationship between service convenience and loyalty. Kaura and colleagues (2015) also studied the relationships among service convenience, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Customer satisfaction was considered as a mediating variable on the relationship between service convenience and loyalty. Regarding the relationship between perceived value and customer satisfaction as the determining factors of loyalty, customer satisfaction was treated as the outcome of perceived value (Khan & Khan, 2018; Zhang & Wang, 2020). Based on the above discussion and research objectives, the following hypotheses were generated and a conceptual framework was devised as illustrated in Figure 1.

- H_{1a} : Decision convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.
- H_{1b} : Access convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.
- H_{1c} : Transaction convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.
- H_{1d} : Benefit convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.
- H_{1e} : Post-benefit convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.
- H_{2a} : The relationship between decision convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.
- H_{2b} : The relationship between access convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.
- H_{2c} : The relationship between transaction convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.
- H_{2d} : The relationship between benefit convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.
- H_{2e} : The relationship between post benefit convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

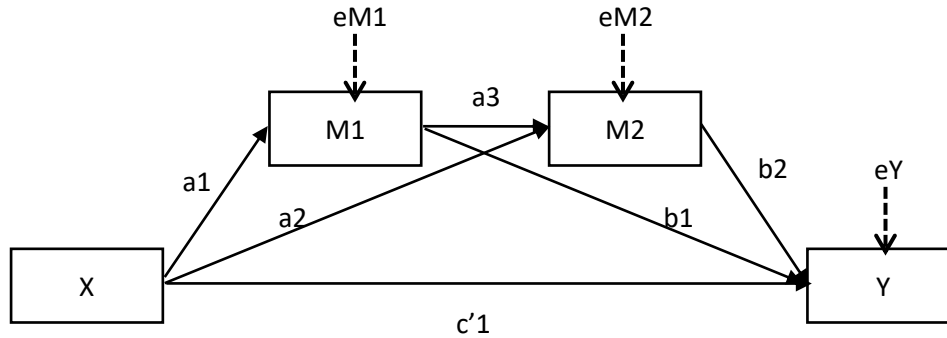


Research Methodology

This study was mainly exploratory in nature. After reviewing the previous studies, a questionnaire was developed and translated into Burmese using the back-translation method. The questionnaire was distributed to a pilot group of 41 respondents to test its reliability. The questionnaire was refined, and the adjusted instrument was distributed to 650 users of a private bank in Myanmar. For the main study, the response rate was 84.2%, and after removing incomplete responses and responses with outliers, 442 qualified responses were used for the study. In the main study, after analyzing scale reliability with Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis were used to assess the scale validity and the hypotheses specified in the model.

In order to test the sequential mediation effect of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty, a serial multiple mediator model was developed. If independent variables (i.e., service convenience dimensions) are assumed as X, the dependent variable (i.e., loyalty) is assumed as Y, and mediators, perceived value, and customer satisfaction, are assumed as M1 and M2, respectively; a sample multiple mediator model can be devised as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 *Serial Multiple Mediator Model*



From this model, one direct and three indirect paths were generated. This study denotes the direct effect of X on Y as $c'1$. There are three indirect paths of X on Y and are denoted as (1) $a1b1$ ($X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow Y$), (2) $a2b2$ ($X \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$), and (3) $a1a3b2$ ($X \rightarrow M1 \rightarrow M2 \rightarrow Y$), which contributed to the total indirect effects of X on Y ($a1b1 + a2b2 + a1a3b2$). Thus, the combination of direct effect ($c'1$) and total indirect effects ($a1b1 + a2b2 + a1a3b2$) represents the total effects of X on Y. Accordingly, the following three regression equations can be used to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of X on Y (Hayes, 2018).

$$\text{Equation 1: } M1 = iM1 + a1X + eM1$$

$$\text{Equation 2: } M2 = iM2 + a2X + a3M1 + eM2$$

$$\text{Equation 3: } Y = iY + c'1X + b1M1 + b2M2 + eY$$

Where $iM1$, $iM2$, and iY represent the Intercepts; $eM1$, $eM2$, and eY represent Errors in estimation, and $a1$, $a2$, $a3$, $b1$, $b2$, and $c'1$ represent Regression coefficients.

Taylor and colleagues (2008) found that bootstrap methods were the best among different categories of methods for testing mediation. In the bootstrap confidence interval method, an effect is said to be significant if its lower and upper limit confidence interval does not contain zero. Otherwise, this effect is not statistically significant (Hayes, 2018). In this study, the bootstrap method also was used to test the serial mediating effect.

Research Measurement

The influences of service convenience on customer satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty were also investigated. Scale items for testing service convenience dimensions were adapted from the work of Berry et al. (2002) and Colwell et al. (2008). In this study, for the dependent constructs, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and loyalty were treated as unidimensional variables and were adapted from the works of Cronin et al. (2000), Voss et al. (1998), Levesque and McDougall (1996), and Zeithaml et al. (1996). The scale items for all the constructs were measured by using a seven-point Likert scale.

Reliability Analysis

In the main study, Cronbach's Alpha analysis and exploratory factor analysis were initially used to assess the internal consistency of the scales adopted in the model. Cronbach's Alpha values of at least .70 are considered to represent sufficient internal consistency of scales (Zikmund et al., 2010). As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's Alpha values for all the variables ranged from .79 to .96, and these results show that all the variables for the study were valid in terms of internal consistency.

Table 2 *Reliability Analysis for the Research Variables*

Research Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Decision Convenience		.90
The information I receive from the bank makes it easy for me to choose what to buy.	0.80	
Making up my mind about what service I want to buy is easy.	0.79	
The information that I receive from the bank is clear and easy to understand.	0.85	
The bank let me know the exact interest rate or service charges or special offer.	0.77	
Access Convenience		.79
The bank is available when I need to talk to them.	0.75	
The bank is accessible through various ways (online, telephone, in person, ATM).	0.38	
The hours of operation of the bank are convenient.	0.67	
Locations of this bank branches are easy to access.	0.59	
Transaction Convenience		.89
I find it easy to complete my service purchase with the bank.	0.83	
I am able to complete the purchase of my service quickly with the bank.	0.85	
It takes little effort to deal with the bank during purchase.	0.86	
Benefit Convenience		.88
I am able to get the benefits of bank's service with little effort.	0.83	
The time required to receive the benefits of bank's service is reasonable.	0.78	
Products of the bank are easy to use.	0.86	
Post-benefit Convenience		.89
The bank quickly resolves problem/s I have with the service.	0.84	
It is easy for me to obtain follow up service from the bank after my purchase.	0.82	
When I have questions about my service, my bank is able to resolve my problem.	0.75	
Perceived Value		.92
Compared to alternative banks, the bank offers attractive product/service costs.	0.86	
Compared to alternative banks, the bank charges me fairly for similar products/ services.	0.84	
Compared to alternative banks, the bank provides more free services.	0.87	
Comparing what I pay to what I might get from other competitive banks, I think the bank provided me with good value.	0.91	
Comparing what I pay to what I might get from other competitive banks, I think the bank provides me with good value.	0.91	
Customer Satisfaction		.96
My choice to avail the bank service is a wise one.	0.92	
I did the right thing when I chose the bank for its services.	0.92	
Services of the bank are exactly same what I need.	0.92	
Overall, I am very satisfied with the bank.	0.93	
The bank always fulfills my expectations.	0.86	
My experiences with the bank are very positive.	0.88	

Table 2 *Reliability Analysis for the Research Variables (Continued)*

Research Variables	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Loyalty		.95
I say positive things about the bank to other people.	0.83	
I recommend the bank to someone who seeks my advice.	0.95	
I encourage friends and relatives to do business with the bank.	0.94	
I consider the bank my first choice to buy services.	0.91	
I will do more business with the bank in the next few years.	0.92	

Analysis Results

Testing the Relationship between Service Convenience Dimensions and Loyalty

In order to assess the first group of hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was done, and the results are shown in Table 3. The findings show that two out of five dimensions of service convenience, decision convenience, and post-benefit convenience had a significant positive influence on loyalty. Hence, hypotheses H_{1a} and H_{1e} were accepted. However, three dimensions of service convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, and benefit convenience did not relate to loyalty significantly. Thus, H_{1b} , H_{1c} , and H_{1d} were rejected. In addition, 66% ($R^2 = .66$) of variation in loyalty can be explained by service convenience dimensions (Table 3).

Table 3 *Multiple Regression Analysis: Service Convenience Dimensions and Loyalty*

Research Variables	Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>	<i>F-sig</i>
Decision Convenience	.23***	4.342	.000	.66	166.516	.000
Access Convenience	.07	1.345	.179			
Transaction Convenience	.13	1.898	.058			
Benefit Convenience	.07	1.189	.235			
Post-benefit Convenience	.39***	7.815	.000			

*** $p = .001$

Serial Mediation Analysis

According to Demming and colleagues (2017), the indirect effect that passes through both mediators is the foundation of a serial mediation model. If this effect is statistically significant, serial mediation can be claimed. For a better understanding of the model, the shorter indirect effects, which pass through only one mediator, were also investigated. The results of this analysis are illustrated in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, all the indirect effects of the service convenience dimensions on loyalty were significant. On the other hand, four dimensions of service convenience—except benefit convenience—had significant direct effects on loyalty. However, benefit convenience was not found to have a significant direct effect on loyalty. Therefore, perceived value and customer satisfaction were partially mediating the relationship between four dimensions of service convenience—decision convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, and post-benefit convenience—and loyalty, supporting H_{2a} , H_{2b} , H_{2c} , and H_{2e} . According to these findings, perceived value and customer satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between benefit convenience and loyalty, leading to acceptance of hypothesis H_{2d} . A summary of the hypotheses and corresponding decisions are presented in Table 5.

Table 4 Path Analysis Results

Paths	Estimate	Bootstrapping 95% CI		SE	Significant or Insignificant
		Lower Limit CI	Upper Limit CI		
Indirect effect of DC on Loy					
DC->PV->Loy (a1b1)	.06*	0.005	0.115	0.028	Significant
DC->CS->Loy (a2b2)	.21*	0.143	0.285	0.036	Significant
DC->PV->CS->Loy (a1a3b2)	.24*	0.183	0.305	0.032	Significant
Direct effect DC->Loy (c'1)	.13*	0.075	0.182	0.027	Significant
Indirect effect of AC on Loy					
AC->PV->Loy (a1b1)	.07*	0.022	0.137	0.029	Significant
AC->CS->Loy (a2b2)	.24*	0.165	0.308	0.037	Significant
AC->PV->CS->Loy (a1a3b2)	.26*	0.192	0.320	0.033	Significant
Direct effect AC->Loy (c'1)	.11*	0.053	0.167	0.029	Significant
Indirect effect of TC on Loy					
TC->PV->Loy (a1b1)	.07*	0.020	0.128	0.028	Significant
TC->CS->Loy (a2b2)	.27*	0.195	0.346	0.039	Significant
TC->PV->CS->Loy (a1a3b2)	.22*	0.162	0.269	0.027	Significant
Direct effect TC->Loy (c'1)	.08*	0.021	0.135	0.029	Significant
Indirect effect of BC on Loy					
BC->PV->Loy (a1b1)	.07*	0.023	0.132	0.028	Significant
BC->CS->Loy (a2b2)	.27*	0.192	0.352	0.041	Significant
BC->PV->CS->Loy (a1a3b2)	.24*	0.187	0.297	0.029	Significant
Direct effect BC->Loy (c'1)	.04	-0.021	0.094	0.029	Insignificant
Indirect effect of PBC on Loy					
PBC->PV->Loy (a1b1)	.07*	0.012	0.127	0.029	Significant
PBC->CS->Loy (a2b2)	.27*	0.196	0.336	0.035	Significant
PBC->PV->CS->Loy (a1a3b2)	.22*	0.161	0.277	0.030	Significant
Direct effect PBC->Loy (c'1)	.13*	0.072	0.192	0.031	Significant

Note: DC = Decision Convenience, AC = Access Convenience, TC = Transaction Convenience, BC = Benefit Convenience, PBC = Post-benefit Convenience, PV = Perceived Value, CS = Customer Satisfaction, Loy = Loyalty, * $p < .05$

Table 5 Summary of the Hypothesis Testing Results

	Hypotheses	Accept/Reject
H_{1a}	Decision convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.	Accepted
H_{1b}	Access convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.	Rejected
H_{1c}	Transaction convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.	Rejected
H_{1d}	Benefit convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.	Rejected
H_{1e}	Post-benefit convenience has a significant positive influence on loyalty.	Accepted
H_{2a}	The relationship between decision convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.	Accepted
H_{2b}	The relationship between access convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.	Accepted
H_{2c}	The relationship between transaction convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.	Accepted
H_{2d}	The relationship between benefit convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.	Accepted
H_{2e}	The relationship between post benefit convenience and loyalty is sequentially mediated by perceived value and customer satisfaction.	Accepted

Discussion

The influence of service convenience on loyalty and the sequential mediation effect of perceived value and customer satisfaction were investigated in regards to the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty. According to the findings, decision convenience and post-benefit convenience have significant positive effects on loyalty. Banking consumers' perception of time and effort in making a decision and maintain contact with the bank are the drivers of their loyalty towards the bank. These findings are aligned with those of Rahman and Khan (2014). However, the findings showed that access convenience, transaction convenience, and benefit convenience did not have a significant impact on loyalty. Customers' perception of time and effort to reach the bank, to do financial transactions with the bank, and to experience the core benefits of the service provided by the bank did not have a significant relationship on their loyalty toward the bank. These findings are aligned with those of Kumar et al. (2020).

The second part of the study objectives and hypotheses was to test the sequential mediation effect of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty. The perceived value and customer satisfaction sequentially and partially mediated the relationship between four dimensions of service convenience—decision convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, and post-benefit convenience—and loyalty. In addition, according to the findings, perceived value and customer satisfaction had a full sequential mediating effect on the relationship between benefit convenience and loyalty. Although benefit convenience did not have a significant direct impact on loyalty, customers' perception of decision convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, benefit convenience, and post-benefit convenience impacted perceived value, which in turn increased their satisfaction, which ultimately affected loyalty towards the bank. These findings displayed similarities to those of Kaura and colleagues (2015), Khan and Khan (2018), and Zhang and Wang (2020).

Conclusions

Theoretical Contribution

The most significant contribution of this research study is the development of a theoretical model or framework that extends previous theories and satisfies all conditions on account of the level of fit to the data. In addition, the framework, which is a combination of service convenience, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, helps to explain the Myanmar banking context.

Fundamentally, this study contributes to the service loyalty literature emphasizing relationships among service convenience, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. The findings of the study indicated that service convenience dimensions are, in some ways, the drivers of bank customers' loyalty. The roles of perceived value and customer satisfaction on relationships between service convenience dimensions and loyalty represents another contribution to current understandings. Perceived value and customer satisfaction are sequentially mediating the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty.

Managerial Implications

The results showed that decision convenience positively and significantly impacted loyalty. This means that when customers have a positive perception regarding the usefulness of the time and effort expended to make decisions about the use of a firm's service, their loyalty toward it can also be increased. In order to gain the loyalty of customers, firms can make it easier for customers to decide to purchase from them. Especially for banks, this should provide potential customers with a clear message about what services they are providing. The results also showed that post-benefit convenience has a positive significant impact on loyalty, meaning that when customers hold a positive perception about retaining contact with the service provider, their loyalty can also be increased.

In addition to the direct impact of service convenience dimensions on loyalty, the sequential mediating effect of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty were also studied. The results indicated that, when perceived

value and customer satisfaction are sequentially mediated, all dimensions of service conveniences have a significant positive impact on loyalty. This implies that customers' perception of decision convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, benefit convenience, and post-benefit convenience have a significant impact on their perceived value, which in turn increases their satisfaction, and ultimately affects loyalty. For a bank, when the effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction are considered, customers' perception of the time and effort required to make a decision, use services, carry out transactions, experience benefits, and keep contact with the bank have a significant impact on their loyalty intention. Therefore, banks can increase loyalty by increasing customers' perceptions of convenience, value, and satisfaction with the bank's service.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

In this study, the impact of service convenience dimensions and the mediating effect of perceived value and customer satisfaction were investigated to explore the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty. However, potential limitations may still exist. First, the sample used to test the model was collected from the users of a major bank in Myanmar. From the perspective of theoretical limitations, service convenience is not the only driver of loyalty. In addition, perceived value and customer satisfaction may not be the only constructs affecting the relationship between service convenience and loyalty.

Based on the limitations of this research, there are several improvements that could be considered in future studies. The scope of investigation might be expanded to include different service business industries from different geographical regions. The predictors of loyalty might also be extended after reviewing additional studies.

Conclusions

In this study, the aim was to investigate the impact of service convenience on loyalty. It also explored the sequential mediating effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction on the relationship between service convenience dimensions and loyalty of private banking customers in Myanmar. In order to fulfil the objectives of the research, 10 hypotheses were tested using regression analysis, and seven were accepted. According to the results, decision convenience and post-benefit convenience were found to have a significant positive impact on loyalty, and perceived value and customer satisfaction exerted a sequentially mediating effect on the relationship between each dimension of service convenience and loyalty.

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Filipino College Students' Perspectives on the Challenges, Coping Strategies, and Benefits of Self-Directed Language Learning in the New Normal

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Date Received: 20 April 2021 Revised: 23 June 2021 Accepted: 19 July 2021

Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic posed different challenges among teachers and learners worldwide. To add to literature regarding teachers' and learners' responses towards the pandemic, this study sought to determine the challenges and coping strategies of self-directed language learners. Anchored in the Zone of Proximal Development Theory, utilizing a case study design, eight randomly sampled college self-directed language learners from three purposively and conveniently sampled higher educational institutions in the Philippines were interviewed. Three teachers and two parents were also interviewed for triangulation. Emerging themes revealed that the self-directed language learners have *difficulty consulting with teachers, logistical issues and poor Internet connections, and family commitment and distractions*. To cope with these challenges, they *developed time management and self-discipline, cultivated self-reliance, and prepared contingency plans*. Moreover, they gained *self-motivation and academic independence* while employing self-directed language learning in the new normal. This implies a positive adaptation to a new normal way of studying.

Keywords: *Self-directed language learning, new normal, overlapping roles*

Introduction

The global spread of COVID-19 has resulted in a paradigm shift in educational systems. Learners are obligated to study on their own with little assistance from their teachers; hence, self-directed learning (SDL). In basic education, *i.e.*, pre-school, elementary, and high school, learners gain self-regulated learning where they learn to study at their own pace following the guidelines set by their teachers. On the other hand, college learners gain SDL as they study at their pace, follow their guidelines, and experience less guidance from teachers as long as they achieve the required tasks assigned to them. Sometimes they even go beyond what is required of them at school. Although SDL was introduced many years ago, it is deemed to have the utmost importance for college students in the new normal where they learn on their own, with minimal or no face-to-face learning. Filipino nationals, who are also English as a Second Language (ESL) college learners in the Philippines, are not spared from this new normal; hence, this study was conducted. Because of the pandemic, language teachers and ESL learners need some adjustments to adapt to the new normal setting in education. Galang (2020) pointed out that language learning is still essential in the new normal despite the limitations faced by both teachers and learners. Because most of the instruction happens online, the use of new media has become a primary necessity. In the case of the Philippines, self-directed learning through online means may be achieved by encouraging a student-centered learning environment, such as that exemplified by Alga (2016), Deita and Posecion (2019), as well as Garcia et al. (2020).

Review of Literature

Self-Directed Language Learning (SDLL)

SDLL empowers second language learners so that outcomes are attainable by teachers and students inside and outside of the usual instructional context (Benson & Voller, 2014). Curry et al. (2017) argued that students who control their language learning through SDL are more likely to succeed. Nonetheless, control over learning still requires support in terms of resources, strategies,

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and evaluation of learning outcomes. This implies that although SDLL is done by students, teachers still play a big role. In the pandemic, the teachers' may be playing a more important social role, such as that seen in SDLL conducted in relation to technology (Lai et al., 2017; Sert & Boynuegri, 2017). Additionally, Haidari et al. (2019) found that technology is a significant predictor of SDLL. However, this result contradicted the findings of Sert and Boynuegri's (2017) study, which revealed that the skills of both students and teachers in the use of technology are not correlated to students' SDLL. Hence, the teachers' capacity to support students' language learning with the use of technology is vital in the *new normal* setting, where students barely see their teachers and classes are mostly taught online. A student-centered approach also goes with language learning for ESL students to gain SDL skills. When ESL students become active in their language learning, they tend to discover learning strategies that fit them. In an experimental study done by Dimaculangan and Dimaculangan (2018) between two adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in the Philippines, it was mentioned that language learning strategies are a variable in language acquisition which lead students to more self-directed learning. Furthermore, new learning is easier for EFL learners to transfer to different situations (see also Dagway-James & Bulusan, 2020).

Phases of Self-Directed Language Learning

In a literature review done by Marquez-Leccio (2016), it was revealed that students who are skilled in SDL show maturity and responsible learning. Moreover, they aspire for autonomy and show more initiative to study. To attain this specifically in language learning, students must undergo the phases of SDLL. The following phases of SDLL are derived from the SDL phases of Winne and Hadwin, as cited in Saks and Leijen (2014) and Knowles (1975).

Defining Language Learning Tasks

Learning tasks are a vital part of an instructional setting. According to Richter (2012), learning tasks are the interface between learners and the information they are learning; they activate and control the learning process to ensure that successful learning takes place. Moreover, learning tasks prompt students to actively engage in their learning. Identifying learning tasks is arguably the most difficult part of learning. Learning tasks differ in purpose, setting, subject matter, scope, form, and complexity; hence, learning tasks can be accomplished both in and outside of the classroom (Niv, 2019). Furthermore, learning tasks allow sumptuous time for students to work on their own or with a group (Anderson & Pesikan, 2016).

Setting Language Learning Goals

Setting goals helps students to self-direct their learning. This was shown by an integrative review by Traga (2020), where it was noted that teachers were helpful agents in students' goal setting, which can lead to learning independence. Since rapid change in educational systems is inevitable and technology is a primary factor, Hematian et al. (2017) argued that an urgent need exists for self-directed and self-motivated students. In an experimental study among 40 grade eight students in Iran, it was found that teachers must show students how to set goals to develop independent learning.

Furthermore, goal setting is associated with students' individual behaviors. The students set their own goals and motivated themselves to meet them, which can result in the achievement of the set goals (Huei-Ju, 2018). Moreover, Beckers et al. (2016) emphasized that SDL is a learning process which involves goal-directed and self-controlled learning behavior, while Schweder (2019) reiterated that students' loss of learning motivation can be related to not knowing how to set and/or achieve their goals. It can be inferred that for students to learn how to set goals, teachers or more knowledgeable adults should help them.

Employing Language Learning Strategies

Learning strategies, according to Shi (2017), "are steps taken by learners to enhance their learning" (p. 24). All learning processes require a strategy to achieve the learning goals (Hardan, 2013);

therefore, employing learning strategies is imperative in SDL and SDLL. Language learning strategies, just like goal setting, can be taught to students (Saleh, 2018). Rigeny (1978) and Oxford et al. (1989), as cited in Hardan (2013), defined language learning strategies as the “behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information” (p. 1715).

Evaluating Language Learning Outcomes

To evaluate ESL students' learning outcomes, they must monitor their own performance in class and be taught strategies that help them improve their language learning. In an online manner of learning in the new normal, regular monitoring of academic performance is important to improve the status of low-performing students and maintain the status of high-performing students. However, when Hromalik and Koszalka (2018) analyzed the reflective journals of community college students, they discovered that only high-performing students regularly monitor their academic progress.

Psychological Challenges of Studying in the New Normal

Among the challenges posed by the new normal in education is students' battle with anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues. In a web-based cross-sectional survey among 476 university students in Bangladesh, it was discovered that students had heightened depression during the new normal. Among the respondents, 15% had moderately severe depression, while 18.1% had severe anxiety. Some reasons behind these psychological issues were academic and professional uncertainty and financial insecurity (Islam et al., 2020). This implies that besides academic struggles, ESL learners may also suffer from mental health problems. In the Philippines, a study among 191 randomly sampled teacher education students in a state university affirmed the results of Islam et al.'s (2020) study. Buenvenida et al. (2021) found out that more than 20 % of the teacher education students perceived studying in the new normal as very stressful. The results also revealed that a positive and significant relationship between respondents' motivation and their stress level. This means that the stresses and anxieties they experienced during the pandemic motivated them to study harder.

International and national studies on SDL evince that it has had a positive effect on remote learning. However, although many studies on SDL have been conducted globally concerning language learning, such work is scarce at the national level especially among ESL students during the new normal who were future English language teachers. Hence, this study aimed to serve as a springboard for future research on the same topic in the Philippine higher education context.

Study Objectives

This study specifically aimed to:

1. Determine the challenges encountered by college self-directed language learners in the new normal.
2. Identify the coping strategies that were used to address those challenges.
3. Find out the benefits they gained from employing SDLL in the new normal.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory. ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). It refers to the gap between what the students are capable to do on their own, and what they can do with the help of someone more capable (McLeod, 2019) until they reach autonomy in their learning. Pathan et al. (2018) explained that among many others, ZPD is one of the theories commonly connected with second language learning. Moreover, the theory emphasizes that there is a difference in the language development of a student who is assisted by a more knowledgeable adult that may result in positive SDL outcomes.

ZPD, among other socio-cultural theories, affects the cognitive development of students in language learning.

ZPD was deemed fit for this study because it starts with what ESL learners can do for their own language learning without the aid of other people. The next level is when more complex concepts about language learning are introduced to them, which needs the assistance of a more knowledgeable peer, adult, or teacher. The product of what they can do alone and with the help of others is the last level of language learning, where ESL students are expected to use the learned language concept across disciplines, in communication, and in learning autonomy, which is also the goal of SDL.

Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative study employed a case study design. The challenges, coping strategies, and benefits gained by ESL students from selected public and private Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines were explored. Although responses were subjective based on their perceptions, feelings, and experiences, the themes were identified objectively. Also, the process of their language learning in the new normal was explored; therefore, a case study method was utilized. Merriam (1998) stated that “qualitative case studies are prevalent throughout the field of education” (p. 26), and also pointed out that a case study is distinguished in the boundedness of the case being investigated, and how finite was the data collection. In the present study, the case was bounded among 3rd and 4th year Filipino Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) English students whose first language was not English. Moreover, data collection was limited to the challenges, coping strategies, and benefits that the participants experienced and/or gained from employing SDLL.

Participants of the Study

The population of the study was the third- and fourth-year ESL students from selected public and private HEIs in the Philippines. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used in the selection of the public and private HEIs from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. For the purposive sampling, the inclusion criteria were: (a) state universities and private sectarian universities and colleges; (b) with Bachelor of Secondary Education English programs; (c) with third- or fourth-year BSE majors in English that employ SDLL who were willing to participate in the study; (d) whose BSE English learners were willing to have a one-on-one video-recorded interview. Convenience sampling was also used because after setting the criteria, the researchers referred to the list of HEIs from an official government website. HEIs with available emails on their official websites and those recommended by the researchers’ friends and colleagues were given letters of intent. Among the 12 HEIs, three approved of the data gathering: 1 each from Luzon (ABC College-private), Visayas (DEF University-public), and Mindanao (GHI College-public).

Upon approval from the HEIs, the researchers got a list of learners from the HEIs’ College of Education or Registrar. To eliminate bias, the researchers employed a simple random sampling technique in choosing actual participants from the list through drawing lots. Two language learners were from ABC College in Luzon (Learners 1 and 5), three were from DEF University in the Visayas (Learners 2, 3, and 4), and three were from GHI College in Mindanao (Learners 6, 7, and 8). All were in their third year as BSE English learners except for Learners 7 and 8, who were in their fourth year. For triangulation, two parents and three language teachers of the participants who voluntarily participated were also interviewed. Learners 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 were female, while Learners 2, 3, and 6 were male. Teachers 1 and 3 were female while Teacher 2 was male. The father of Learner 1 and the mother of Learner 4 were the parents who were included.

Learner 1 had a family problem which she kept confidential, Learner 2 was living with his extended family, Learner 3 worked part-time to sustain his personal needs, Learner 4 was not living with her parents because of their jobs, Learner 5 was living with her mother and stepfather, Learner 6 worked as a mechanic to support himself and his siblings, Learner 7 was a single mother who took care of her 2-year-old daughter, and Learner 8 lived in an area with an extreme Internet problem.

Data Gathering Tools

A self-constructed, semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data. The interview guide was validated by four English language experts, three research experts, and one English major learner to guarantee appropriateness and validity. The first part was highly structured in which the responses were short and accurate to get the participants' demographic profiles. Questions included the year level, type of institution (public or private), number of years of exposure to the English language, and estimated GPA. The second part was a semi-structured interview guide anchored in the study's objectives. It included probing questions that required participants to narrate stories instead of short answers. For the parents and teachers, two sets of self-constructed, semi-structured interview guides were formulated. The instruments were validated by the adviser and one panel member. Both interview guides consisted of five probing questions. Follow-up questions were done during the actual interviews. Three interviews (2 learners and 1 parent) were conducted via Zoom, and 9 other interviews (6 learners, 1 parent, 2 teachers) were done via Google Meet. One teacher was not able to be interviewed due to a hectic schedule at school, but provided written answers to the research questions. All interviews were one-on-one video recorded lasting from 39 minutes to 1 hour and 17 minutes. All the student and teacher participants were requested to respond in English as much as possible, while the parents were encouraged to speak in Tagalog.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed individually since the interviews were one-on-one. All Tagalog and Visayan terms were translated into English. The primary participants (ESL students) were the first to be interviewed. After transcribing these interviews, guide questions for triangulation were formulated, which were validated by the researcher's adviser and one panel member. After transcribing all the interviews, initial codes were developed which were narrowed down to the final themes. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, or coding the data to form themes, is a systematic process that—according to Creswell (2007)—ensures that the themes formed represent the case that is being discussed in a study. This means that the coding should be done thoroughly. In the present study, themes were checked by the researcher's adviser and methodologist, member-checked by the participants (8 learners and 3 teachers), and were modified considering their comments. These steps were done to ascertain the reliability and relevance of the themes in this case.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers secured clearance from their Institutional Review Board and were given the study protocol code 2021-ERB-AUP-008. Consent forms were also procured from the participants, and the signed forms were retrieved before the conduct of the interviews.

Results

The results revealed that the college self-directed language learners have *difficulty consulting with teachers, logistical issues and poor Internet connections, and family commitments and distractions*. To cope with these challenges, they *developed time management and self-discipline, cultivated self-reliance, and prepared contingency plans*. Moreover, they perceived that studying in the new normal helped them to gain *self-motivation and academic independence*. Since the genders of the primary and secondary participants were disclosed, gender-appropriate pronouns were used in this part.

Challenges Encountered by College Self-Directed Language Learners in the New Normal

According to the participants, *difficulty consulting with teachers, logistical issues and poor Internet connections, and family commitments and distractions* were the three most apparent challenges they were experiencing in the new normal.

Difficulty Consulting with Teachers

Teachers are an essential part of students' self-direction. In the phase where learning becomes difficult for learners and they think they cannot do it on their own, the guidance of the teacher is needed as implied in the ZPD theory (Vygotsky, 1978). However, because there was no face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners, teachers' involvement in learning became limited. In the new normal, the participants mentioned that they usually communicated with their teachers through their chat groups on Messenger and via emails (Learners 1, 5, 6, 7, & 8). For Learners 2, 3, and 4, the communication went to a middleman who was the student representative of their section. The concerns of the students were communicated with the student representative, and the student representative was the one who relayed it to their professors. According to Teacher 2, this was to ensure that email addresses or chat groups were not "bombarded" with concerns from different students, especially if many of them had the same concerns.

Consultation has been a challenge for the participants during the pandemic because they were accustomed to just visiting their teachers during consultation hours or approaching them right after class. However, the new normal created a distance between learners and teachers. Learners 3 and 6 mentioned that the language teachers were not online all the time, so it was a challenge when they had urgent concerns that only their language teachers could address. On the other hand, Learners 1 and 7 stated that because of the difficulty of consulting with their language teachers, they opted not to ask too many questions and tried to understand things on their own.

According to Learner 6:

"Sometimes, hindi kasi namin macontact yung instructors namin kasi busy sila. Sometimes po, Ma'am, kasi hindi ko talaga maintindihan yung lesson, so self-directed language learning...sometimes it's hard because hindi lahat ng nasearch mo is magbibigay sayo ng knowledge kaya kelangan mo talaga ng assistance ng teacher mo. Pero kung wala talaga, Ma'am, kelangan mo syang matutunan ng ikaw lang talaga" [we cannot contact our instructors because they are busy. Sometimes, Ma'am, because I really cannot understand the lesson, so self-directed language learning...sometimes it's hard because not everything that you search can give you knowledge, so you really need the guidance of your teacher. But if there is really none, Ma'am, you really need to learn that on your own].

Teacher 3 proved that this was one challenge encountered by language learners during the new normal. She tried to orient learners to convey their concerns in their chat group on Messenger because other learners may have had similar questions, so there could be just one explanation for everyone. It was also possible that other learners could answer classmates' questions, and so they could exchange ideas through the chat group. However, Teacher 3 admitted that asking questions or conveying concerns through chat groups barely happened. The possible reason that she could think of was "because they are anxious that they will be labeled as slow learners if they clarify about the concepts."

Despite this challenge, the students found that difficulty in consulting with their teachers somewhat helped them to be more self-reliant and independent in their language learning. All the participants realized that in the new normal, they were on their own in terms of their language learning. They needed to understand the lessons by themselves (Students 1 and 7) or look for online sources when they encountered confusing topics (Students 3, 4, and 6).

Logistical Issues and Poor Internet Connections

Another apparent challenge for college self-directed language learners was logistical issues and poor Internet connections. Because the new normal demands digitalization, a stable Internet connection, steady electrical power, and good weather condition were necessities. Apparently, the proximity of the learners' homes was a possible reason for problems on the Internet. Only 2 among the 8 participants were living in cities. The others were in suburbs, and some were in remote areas where a little rain affected electricity and the Internet signal.

Learner 5 rescheduled her interview for this study twice because of a poor Internet connection, while Learner 8 rescheduled hers three times. Learner 8 explained that her greatest challenge in the

new normal is “the slow Internet connection”, especially since she was doing her practice teaching. It was difficult when she was disconnected during a scheduled class with her students. Learners 1 and 5 also mentioned that there were instances when they were having synchronous classes that they were suddenly disconnected because of a poor Internet connection. Learner 2 complained, “the Internet connection I have now is not totally stable, like it will be gone, totally, like for hours...and when Internet is gone, I don’t have any means on how to attend classes” [sic].

Teachers 1, 2, and 3 were in consensus that the setback of the new normal in the educational system in the Philippines is regarding the Internet connection. Teacher 3 confirmed that specifically in her area in Mindanao, brownout happened at least once a week. If there was no electricity, there was also no WiFi connection. Also, a little change in the weather caused intermittent signals. This was a challenge for their learners as well as for the teachers during the new normal. This reduced the need to use the Internet. Affirmingly, the mother of Student 4 asserted that her daughter sometimes needed to go to the seaside to look for a more stable Internet signal especially during synchronous classes in the new normal. In her statement, the mother of Student 4 shared, “*Kahit gabi nandun sya sa tabing dagat makakuha lang ng signal kasi ayaw nyang mahuli sya*” [Even if it’s evening, she goes to the beach looking for an Internet signal because she doesn’t want to be left behind].

Family Commitments and Distractions

Besides the consultation issues, logistical issues and Internet problems, another theme that emerged was language learners’ family commitments and distractions at home. Because they were staying at home, they disclosed that it was difficult to set boundaries in their roles as children, siblings, friends, and learners.

Learner 3, who lived with an extended family (immediate family and cousins), cited that he sometimes had to do his required work in between house chores like cooking, doing the laundry, teaching the younger cousins with their modules, and others. Learner 6, on the other hand, prepared for class or did asynchronous activities during his breaks at work as a mechanic. Learner 6 is a breadwinner with three other siblings. To help the family with the expenses at home and with his schooling, he works as a mechanic while studying. Meanwhile, Learner 7 revealed that being a single mother, she has to sacrifice her early mornings to prepare for her teaching as a practice teacher or do other schoolwork because during the wee hours, her daughter is still asleep, and she will not be disturbed. She stated, “*Minsan gumigising po ako ng alas-tres ng umaga, alas-kwatro...ganyan, para gawin yung mga dapat sagutan para wala pong istorbo kasi tulog pa po yung baby ko* [Sometimes I wake up at around 3 or 4 am to do what I need to answer so that there will be no distraction since my baby is still asleep]. Learner 4, whose parents live on another island to work, serves as her 8-year-old brother’s sister, mother, and father. She does all the house chores and assists her brother and another cousin with their modules.

In the triangulation, Teacher 2 pointed out that the language learners in the new normal were experiencing different distractions at home so they could not focus on their school requirements. Distractions not only included the presence of entertainment such as television or Netflix, but distractions could also be the different roles that language learners were playing at home. They sometimes must take care of their younger siblings (Learners 1, 3, and 4), take care of the house when their parents are working (Learners 2, 5, 7, and 8), or work for their own needs (Learner 6).

Coping Strategies of College Self-Directed Language Learners

The participants, however, emphasized that the aforementioned challenges can be addressed. They *developed time management and self-discipline, cultivated self-reliance, and prepared contingency plans* to cope with their challenges in the new normal.

Developed Time Management and Self-discipline

Among all the skills developed during the new normal, time-management and self-discipline were the most repeated. All the 8 ESL college students thought that time management and self-discipline

were the top coping strategies that they developed during the new normal. It was a challenge for them to juggle different schoolwork and activities while at home, which in some ways was not conducive for learning (Learner 2) because when they were at home, they sometimes tended to delay what needed to be done for their studies. All the participants exclaimed that they were better at managing their time during the new normal. “Just now, I became more responsible in my learning abilities and tasks as a student and I also became more disciplined in time management” [sic], explained Learner 7, who found time to accomplish her school requirements, teach for her practice teaching, do household chores, and take care of her two-year-old daughter. Meanwhile, Learner 6 managed his time by organizing what needed to be done and not wasting his time. When he had no work at the mechanic shop, he did his school work. Learner 4, without her parents at home for 2 years now, made sure that she managed her school needs, choir practice, and the responsibility of being the elder sister to her younger brother who was also studying as an elementary student. According to Learner 3, there were a lot of distractions at home, i.e., household chores, high-volume television, noisy neighborhood, naughty siblings, crowded house, etc. Despite the challenges they encountered with studying at home, they were sure to meet their goals, do their tasks, and submit their output on or before time.

Additionally, Learners 2 and 3 mentioned that ESL learners like themselves played different roles at home and should be responsible to play those roles without compromising their studies. As for Learner 1, knowing that there was no teacher to supervise her, if she was not disciplined in managing her time, she would always delay her work. Consequently, Learner 8 reminded the ESL college learners that they “need to have time management in every module so that we [they] can submit the final output ahead of time.” Teachers 1, 2, and 3 generally agreed that the college self-directed language learners developed time management during the new normal. Moreover, Teacher 2 stressed that teachers should teach students “to be disciplined with their time and to really assess themselves what best works to them as a student”, while giving them the freedom to work on their own.

The mother of Learner 4 stated that being far from Learner 4 for two years now affected the studies of the latter in terms of managing her time. She mentioned:

Noon senior high sya, lahat ng mga personal na gamit nya, yung isusuot nya, ako ang naggagawa nun. Talagang pag-aaral lang ang sa kanya. Ngayon nahihirapan sya gawa ng wala ako. Kaya sinasabi nya, “Ma, iba talaga pag nandyan ka kasi...” Kumbaga focus sya lahat. Ngayon hindi eh. Syempre iisipin pa nya yung isusuot nya eh lalo kasama sya sa chorale. Yung time nya nauubos. [Before in senior high, all her personal things, what she'll wear, I do that for her. She really has to focus on her studies only. Now she's having a hard time because I am not there, she has to think of what to wear, especially that she is part of the chorale. She has no time anymore].

Cultivated Self-Reliance

To address the difficulty in consulting with teachers, the college self-directed language learners cultivated self-reliance. They learned to solve most of their concerns on their own. For all the participants, SDLL in the new normal meant total self-reliance when it comes to their language learning. The language learning of the ESL college students in the new normal revealed no face-to-face interaction with and less involvement of teachers and classmates. Hence, they perceived SDLL as taking the initiative to learn with or without help from others (Learner 8) where learning happens on their own (Learners 2, 4, and 6).

Learner 1 emphasized that during the new normal, she rarely asked her teacher about the lessons; instead, she tried to look for answers on her own, relying on her own abilities. Learner 7 did the same because she was “shy to ask” questions. Learner 3, on the other hand, thought that it was not good to always ask his teachers because they were also busy preparing for other classes and upgrading to earn their master's or doctor's degree. These concerns of the students pushed them to rely on themselves and look for other means to understand their lessons better; hence, they also learned how to optimize the use of the Internet through research. The participants' self-reliance also heightened during the new normal because “*napakaliit lang ng interaction ng teacher* [there is very little interaction with the teacher] so you are...asked or maybe forced to learn by yourself” (Learner 3). Therefore, the ESL college students found ways to “tailor their study on their own needs” (Learner 5)

so they can “gradually manage their learning; adopt it to the individual skills like studying the lessons on their own and comprehending the lesson on their own” [sic] (Learner7).

The father of Learner 1 admitted that he was unable to supervise his daughter's studies because of his work; however, he was confident that Learner 1 was very diligent with her studies and strove hard to be successful. Learner 1 lives on her own with her younger brother in the Visayas while both her parents are working in Luzon. Her mother mentioned that Learner 1 became more responsible to take care of herself, her brother, and their studies. Teachers 2 and 3 reiterated that ESL college students who employed SDLL did not need frequent monitoring from their teachers because they developed self-reliance. “Since self-directed language learning *lang sya, hindi masyadong needed and presence ng teacher* [since it is only self-directed language learning, the presence of the teacher is not much needed]” stated Teacher 2.

Teacher 1 also reiterated that the role of language teachers was to give “proper guidance and reminders” to keep the students on the right track as they “seek new strategies that will suit their learning needs as they employ SDLL especially in the new normal”. This was because their teachers or classmates were not available to help them at all times, and in the long run, this will benefit the students in their lifelong learning.

Prepared Contingency Plans

Due to logistical issues and poor Internet connections, the participants learned to think of contingency plans. The 8 participants agreed that one contingency plan was to have extra load for mobile data. Another way was to find a spot with a more stable Internet connection (Learners 4, 6, and 7). For others, they would go to a friend's or a relative's house where the Internet connection was better (Learners 1 and 5). During the interview, Learner 8 stressed that in her area, a little rain would completely disrupt the Internet connection, which led to her absence from her teaching practice. She had to “apologize to my students” almost every day because of this problem. As was affirmed by the mother of Learner 4, her daughter sometimes needed to go to the beach to look for a more stable Internet signal, especially if there was a synchronous class. On the other hand, what the language teachers usually did was to provide materials that the ESL college students could download and peruse even if they were offline (Teachers 1, 2, and 3). Learner 2 also stressed that he had language teachers who recorded their lectures and allowed the students to download them for later without worrying about having an intermittent Internet connection.

Benefits Gained by the Participants About Language Learning in the New Normal

All learners, including language learners, were caught by surprise to face the new normal. However, because self-directed language learners found ways to adapt to changes, challenges were managed with different proactive strategies. When asked about their perspective on language learning in the new normal, the participants argued that they gained (a) *self-motivation* and (b) *academic independence* in the new normal educational setting.

Self-Motivation

COVID-19 was a challenge for ESL college learners. Learner 3 divulged that because of the pandemic, his mental health suffered while adjusting to it. At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, he felt fear and anxiety. He feared for his family's health and felt anxious about what a student's life would be like during the new normal. However, he mentioned that he was doing better now. Apparently, this also happened to Learner 1 who gained confidence in her language learning through writing. Although she did not suffer depression, studying in the new normal was tedious for her and tested her mental toughness. During the new normal, she was encouraged to create a Facebook page where she could post encouraging thoughts. This activity benefited her as an ESL student while she also encouraged others to be more resilient and positive amidst the pandemic. “Just in these pandemic times ma’am because *di ba* there are some victims of depression...in that page, ma’am, I want everybody who will be reading my thoughts, ma’am, they will get some motivation or inspiration”

[sic], Learner 1 expounded. Additionally, Learner 7 valued the importance of overcoming the new normal challenges for her daughter. She mentioned that she wants to give her daughter a better life, and being a single mother doubled the hardship, but she still endeavored to finish what she started. She was about to graduate in June 2021. Learner 4 kept on reminding herself that “*wala akong ibang aasahan kundi sarili*” [I have nobody else to ask help from but myself]. She also mentioned that thinking about the hardships of her parents, who chose to be separated from their children to provide for their needs, made her realize that she has no right to be neglectful of her studies. Hence, the participants thought of different motivational factors that would keep them going and brave the challenges of the new normal.

Employing SDLL in their learning not only benefited the learners; it also benefited the parents and the teachers. When asked if they ever encountered school-related problems with Learners 1 and 4, the father of Learner 1 and the mother of Learner 4 objected that they had never experienced being summoned by the school head or any teachers for any concern regarding their children’s studies. The mother of Learner 1 mentioned that they [she and husband] were proud of Learner 4. All their sacrifices being far from their two children were compensated with their children’s hard work at school during the pandemic even where they could not supervise them. The father of Learner 1, on the other hand, explained that family problems which occurred during the new normal did not hinder his daughter or cause her to neglect her duties as a student. Teachers 2 and 3 emphasized that despite the many challenges of adapting to changes in the new normal, ESL college learners still strove to finish their programs regardless of whether they were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

Teacher 1 stated that the new normal has taught many of her language learners to be resilient, flexible, optimistic, and resourceful. They found ways to deal with the difficulties they were experiencing, making the situation bearable. Also, the father of Learner 1 stated that he noticed his daughter’s *kasigasigan* (diligence) in her studies in the new normal.

Academic Independence

Besides self-motivation, the participants gained academic independence. Because there was very minimal involvement from their teachers and less collaboration with their peers, the ESL college students gained independence implicitly. Learner 4 argued that because in the new normal there was no teacher to “tell you everything that you have to do, you rely solely to yourself”, which Learners 3 and 8 also affirmed. Student 6 lengthily explained, “I learn to develop myself so I learn to understand with my own...I learn to work on my own not just like before in face-to-face, sometimes you work together with your classmates. So now, I have to...solely just myself...so work hard properly the things to do the lesson” [sic].

The participants highlighted that they did their requirements on their own (Learners 2 & 4), rarely asked help from their teachers (Learners 3, 6, 7, & 8), and explored the Internet to look for ideas and search for answers to their concerns (Learners 1, 4, & 5). They also learned how to self-evaluate to see if their learning was improving despite the challenge that their teachers could not accommodate them all the time. “I do online quizzes, on grammar to check my progress in grammar and then...that is actually the determiner of where I am at or on the technical sides of that language [sic]” (Learner 4). Learners 2 and 3, on the other hand, admitted that they went back to the criteria or rubrics. “I immediately go back to the criteria...back and forth to what I have wrote...and to see other works, Ma’am so that I can compare which part of our paper is different, Ma’am [sic]” (Learner 2). These strategies helped them in their independent learning. The grades that they got from performance of each task served as their affirmation that what they did was correct.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings revealed that in the new normal, the ESL college students were obliged to rely solely on themselves. Although teachers and classmates were willing to help, the situation made it difficult to get assistance from them. The difficulty in consulting with teachers, logistical issues and poor Internet connections, and family commitments and distractions were the most apparent challenges

that the college self-directed language learners experienced in the new normal. Because of these challenges, they cultivated self-reliance, prepared contingency plans, and developed time management to ensure that their language learning was not jeopardized. Besides the academic aspect, as well as the results, the demographic profiles, showed that each participant was in a unique situation which could also be a factor in their challenges adjusting to the new normal. However, all of them still gained self-motivation and academic independence in the new normal despite their situations. The results illustrated ZPD, wherein language learners try to do things on their own until they need help from a more knowledgeable adult, and in the new normal, online sources and materials, to aid their learning. In the end, their goal was to be independent learners who were resilient in facing challenges that different educational settings may pose.

Based on these results, ESL college learners are encouraged to develop SDLL and be more technologically adept so they can brave challenges brought about by the pandemic. It is suggested that language teachers provide succinct material, instruction or guidelines, and immediate feedback to help language learners in their SDLL. Moreover, parents and family members are encouraged to provide space and time at home to support ESL college learners' synchronous and asynchronous classes. Although needing to be done urgently, the curriculum developers must be quick-witted in creating a language learning curriculum that is holistic, learner-centered, and new-normal ready. This will help the curriculum implementers (teachers) and curriculum beneficiaries (students) to maximize their language teaching and learning. Lastly, because this study is qualitative, it cannot be generalized; hence, it is suggested that future researchers address this through a quantitative study using the emerging themes as variables. Factors such as teacher-provided learning materials and the mental toughness of the respondents may also be considered.

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The Effect of Good Corporate Governance, Size of Firm, and Leverage on Financial Performance of Listed Property and Real Estate Companies in Indonesia

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Date Received: 12 June 2021 Revised: 28 July 2021 Accepted: 9 August 2021

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the determinants of financial performance of Indonesian property and real estate companies listed on the country's Stock Exchange. The effects of good corporate governance, firm size, and leverage were examined (135 observations) during the period from 2015 to 2019. The research method used included a causal quantitative approach and multiple linear regression analysis. The results showed that the size of the audit committee had a significant negative effect on the company's financial performance; no other factor investigated exerted significant effects. Indonesian companies might consider minimizing the number of audit committee members in order to realize higher profits.

Keywords: *Corporate governance, firm size, leverage, financial performance*

Introduction

Indonesia recognizes the need for advanced corporate governance, as it ranked 17th out of 25 markets according to a 2014 KPMG-ACCA study. Hence, Indonesia's financial services authority (OJK) released a roadmap outlining ways to obtain better corporate governance. But at the same time, businesses need to focus on their performance (OJK, 2014). Financial performance is an important part of achieving company goals and is one of the most important things that potential investors pay attention to when making stock investment decisions. According to Friedman (1970), managers have an obligation to always act in the shareholders' long-term-interests. However, agency relationship problems (agency conflicts) exist, where the owner (principal) and manager (agent) have different interests. This is particularly true when the manager as an agent does not fully represent the best interests of the principal. It is essential to align their interests (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

According to Benhart and Rosestein (1998), one way to reduce agency problems is to adopt good corporate governance. This includes establishing a relationship between company management, the board of commissioners, shareholders, and stakeholders. The main foci are the need for shareholders to obtain correct and timely information, and for the company to disclose information in a timely, transparent, and accurate manner about all matters relating to company performance, ownership, and stakeholders (Yunizar & Rahardjo, 2014).

According to Aprianingsih (2016), the board of commissioners and independent commissioners oversee the running of a company so that it follows the principles of good corporate governance. Then the audit committee will oversee internal supervision of the financial reporting process so as to minimize fraud in financial reports. Moreover, Rifai (2009) argued that the board of directors is also fully responsible for achieving the goals and objectives of the company.

Company size has a significant effect on capital structure, and can be expected to lead to good financial performance (Soewignyo, 2009). The larger the size of the company, the more information about it is usually available to investors (Gusliana & Fadlan, 2017). Company size has a positive and significant effect on financial performance as proxied by return on assets (ROA) (Luckieta et al., 2021). These authors showed that increases in total assets were indicative that a company was also getting bigger. The more the total assets, the greater was the capital invested and the cash flow, which can improve financial performance.

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Tapping into funding sources is required to achieve goals. Assets and fixed cost funding can be used to increase the profit potential of shareholders. Companies can choose the source of funding in the form of debt (Atmaja et al. 2015). According to Brigham and Houston (2001), the use of debt in investment is expected to increase company profits. In addition, higher leverage allows for better creditor monitoring. According to Detthamrong et al. (2017), leverage can help alleviate investment concerns such as investing in value-destroying projects, resulting in enhanced firm performance.

This study was conducted in the property, real estate, and building construction sectors listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) from 2015–2019, in contrast to previous studies (Nurchahya et al., 2014; Tertius & Christiawan, 2015). Currently in Indonesia, the emphasis is on development of vital infrastructure, which in turn may provide support to the nation's economic development. One sector that will benefit from the quality of infrastructure is property and real estate; good infrastructure will stimulate investors to invest in this field (Gitusudarno & Basri, 2008).

In this study, the aim was to investigate the effects of size of a number of features, namely, the board of commissioners and independent commissioners, the board of directors, the audit committee, firm size, and leverage on company's financial performance. In contrast to studies (e.g., Ararat et al., 2017; Asimakopoulous et al., 2009; Detthamrong et al., 2017) that have focused on countries which adopted a one-tier board system, this study focused on the two-tier board system used in Indonesia.

Literature Review

Agency Theory

According to Jensen and Meckling (1976), an agency relationship is a relationship based on a binding contract, where the principal entrusts another person or agent to carry out several responsibilities in decision-making. Because many decisions that financially affect the principal are made by the agent, differences in interests and priorities can arise.

Good Corporate Governance

In good corporate governance, the aim is to create added value for all interested parties (Arifin, 2005). In addition, corporate governance is meant to improve the company's financial performance by supervising or monitoring the performance of management that will guarantee accountability to stakeholders based on the regulatory framework (Farinda et al., 2010).

To ensure the implementation of good corporate governance, it is necessary for a company to disclose timely, transparent, and accurate information on all matters relating to the company's performance, ownership, and stakeholders (Yunizar & Rahardjo, 2014). In this structure, an independent commissioner acts as a mediator in disputes between internal managers, oversees management policies, and provides advice to management. Fama and Jensen (1983) suggested that the greater the proportion of independent commissioners, the more effective was their role in carrying out the supervisory function and protecting all company stakeholders. According to Nugroho and Raharjo (2014), the board of directors has the right to represent the company internally and externally. Therefore, more directors with clear responsibilities will have a positive impact on stakeholders. With the audit committee, a larger size leads to better reporting quality and a higher level of monitoring, leading to optimization of the company's profitability (Sarafina & Saifi, 2017).

Board members are appointed to assist and support the company through their ability to maintain commitments and support from key external stakeholders; keep communication channels open between the firm and external organizations; gain access to resources, particularly information and advice; as well as establish legitimacy (Hillman et al., 2000; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

Company Size

The assets owned by a company represent the rights and obligations, as well as its capital. Large companies, according to Batubara et al. (2017), will get more attention from the public and have a wider circle of stakeholders. The bigger the company's size, the greater the capital investment, which means greater opportunities and the possibility of higher performance.

Leverage

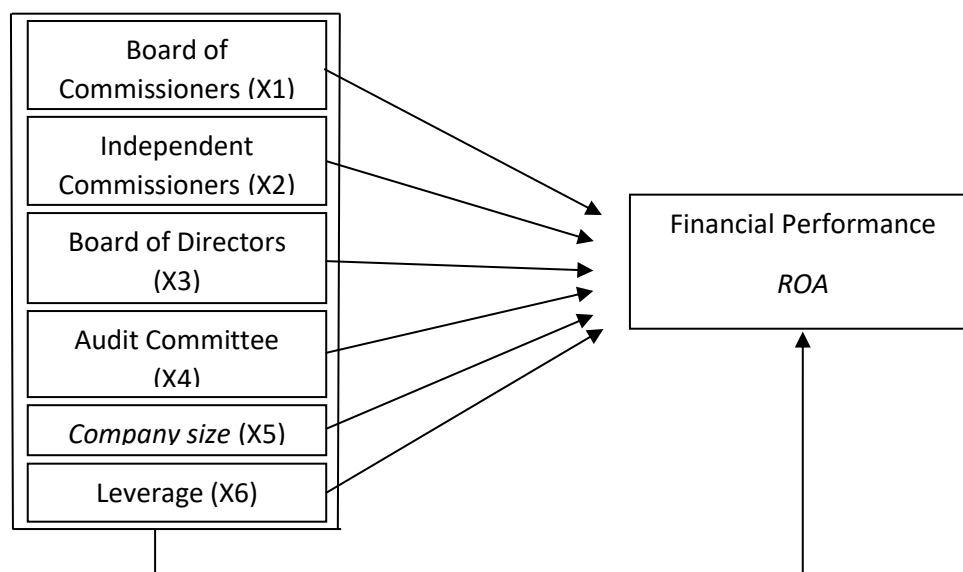
Leverage is the use of assets and sources of funds from companies with fixed costs to increase the profits to shareholders (Sartono, 1997). Fixed costs are not affected unless the company carries out changes in business activities. Leverage clarifies the importance of debt financing by showing the presentation of a company's assets that are supported by the use of debt (Darsono & Azhari, 2005).

Financial Performance

Financial performance is the most crucial obligation of a business entity (Friedman, 1970). Firms must measure their performance to ensure that they are running efficiently and effectively and reaching their objectives. A company's strategy from a long-term financial perspective will affect shareholder value (Nuswandari, 2009). Companies that implement good corporate governance will maintain company growth by working effectively and efficiently, which in turn will reduce the cost of capital, reduce risk, and increase investors and creditors confidence. This will receive a positive response from investors.

In this study, profitability ratio was employed to measure company's performance. A company's success within a certain period reflects the level of management effectiveness in carrying out the firm's operations. Profitability was calculated using return on assets (ROA), following prior studies (Asimakopoulos et al., 2009; Detthamrong et al., 2017). It represents a ratio used to measure a company's ability to generate net income based on certain asset levels.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Used



Hypothesis Development

The Effect of the Board of Commissioners on Financial Performance

The board of commissioners is responsible for overseeing management policies. The greater the number of board of commissioner members, the more effectively a company can be monitored and fraud minimized, hence potentially increasing profitability (Rahmawati et al., 2017).

H₁: The size of the Board of Commissioners affects a company's financial performance.

The Influence of Independent Commissioners on Financial Performance

Independent commissioners are perceived an effective monitoring tool for management behavior (Rosenstein & Wyatt, 1990). The greater the proportion of independent commissioners on the board of commissioners, the more effective is their role in implementing the supervisory function of management's opportunistic behavior (Fama & Jensen, 1983). Independent commissioners positively affect company profitability (Widyati, 2013). Increasing the number of independent commissioners can encourage commissioners to be objective in taking action and can protect all company

stakeholders.

H₂: The number of Independent Commissioner affects a company's financial performance.

The Effect of the Board of Directors on Financial Performance

The board of directors has the right to represent the company internally and externally (Nugroho & Raharjo, 2014). According to resource dependency theory, the members of the board are appointed to provide aid and support to the company (Hillman et al., 2000; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Hence, a larger board can provide better stakeholder representation, competence, and experience. Therefore it is posited that the board of director's size has a positive effect on the company's financial performance.

H₃: The size of the Board of Directors affects a company's financial performance.

The Effect of the Audit Committee on Financial Performance

The audit committee has a significant effect on company profitability (Sarafina & Saifi, 2017; Rahmawati et al., 2017). The bigger the audit committee, the better the reporting quality, and the higher the monitoring of management. In turn, the more effective the audit committee's supervision, the greater the company's profitability. Consequently, it can minimize management efforts in dealing with data problems related to finance and accounting procedures and functions to increase company profitability.

H₄: The size of the Audit Committee affects a company's financial performance.

The Effect of Company Size on Financial Performance

The size of the company is one of the criteria for consideration by investors. Size may or may not affect profitability (Dewayanto, 2010; Rahardja, 2014). The failure to realize increased profitability with size may be on account of increased agency problems being experienced in a larger company.

H₅: Company size affects a company's financial performance.

The Effect of Leverage on Financial Performance

If a company's debt increases, its leverage increases, but its potential profit may also increase (Higgins, 2004). However, leverage affects the company's financial performance because the higher the leverage ratio, the higher the risk of inability to pay its obligations. Thus, leverage has a significant effect on company profitability (Wahyuningtyas, 2014). Companies that get funding from debt can determine the impact of corporate loans on company performance. However, the higher the leverage value in the ratio of financial statements, the greater the risk to creditors (Ramdhonah et al., 2019).

H₆: The degree of leverage affects a company's financial performance.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative and causal methods were used. Trend analysis was utilized together with multiple linear analysis to measure the effect of the independent variables on company profitability.

Table 1 *Operational Definition of Variables*

Variable	Definition	Measurement
Y	Return on Assets (ROA)	$\frac{\text{Net Income}}{\text{Average Total Assets}}$
X ₁	Board of Commissioners	\sum board of commissioners
X ₂	Independent Commissioner	\sum independent commissioners
X ₃	Board of Directors	\sum board of directors
X ₄	Audit Committee	\sum audit committee
X ₅	Company Size	LnTA (Natural Logarithm of Total Assets)
X ₆	Leverage	DFL (Degree of Financial Leverage)
		$\frac{\% \text{ Changes in EPS}}{\% \text{ Changes in EBIT}}$

Table 1 shows the measurements used in this study. Secondary data were used, namely the financial statement data of property and real estate companies that have been audited from 2015–2019 from the official website of the Indonesia Stock Exchange. The basic guidelines for testing the hypothesis were as follows: if the probability value is $\leq .05$, the researcher accepted H_a and H_0 was rejected. However, if the probability value was $> .05$, the opposite conclusion was reached.

The equation used in this study was as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{BOC} + \beta_2 \text{IC} + \beta_3 \text{BOD} + \beta_4 \text{AC} + \beta_5 \text{Size} + \beta_6 \text{Lev} + \varepsilon_i$$

Population and Research Sample

The population was property, real estate, and building construction companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange from 2015 to 2019. Purposive sampling was used; namely, selection was according to the criteria adopted for the study (Dolores & Tongco, 2007). The sample selection criteria were as follows:

1. Property and real estate sub-sector companies listed on the IDX for the 2015–2019 period.
2. Property and real estate companies that continued to issue financial reports (audited) during 2015–2019.
3. Property and real estate companies that published financial statements in Indonesian Rupiah.
4. Property and real estate company that had complete data on good corporate governance measurement, company size, and leverage.

Using these criteria, 27 companies were selected for a total of 135 firm-year observations.

Result and Analysis

Trend Analysis

The trends observed in commissioners, board members, and auditors over the period 2015–2019 are shown in Table 2. A rise was noted in the number of Board of Commissioner members until 2017, after which the number declined. A decrease may occur due to death, fulfilment of the term of office, termination of office based on the decision of the General Meeting of Shareholders, or no longer fulfilling the requirements to be a member of the Board of Commissioners based on the Company Law Article 1 No 2. By contrast, the number of Independent Commissioners and Board of Director members remained relatively stable. The number of directors can change according to the company's needs or by the decision of the General Meeting of Shareholders, but this was apparently not a frequent action. The number of audit committee members fluctuated but tended to increase. An increase in the number of audit committee members reflected company needs and a decision to assist the Board of Commissioners in supervising company activities more effectively (Sari, 2019).

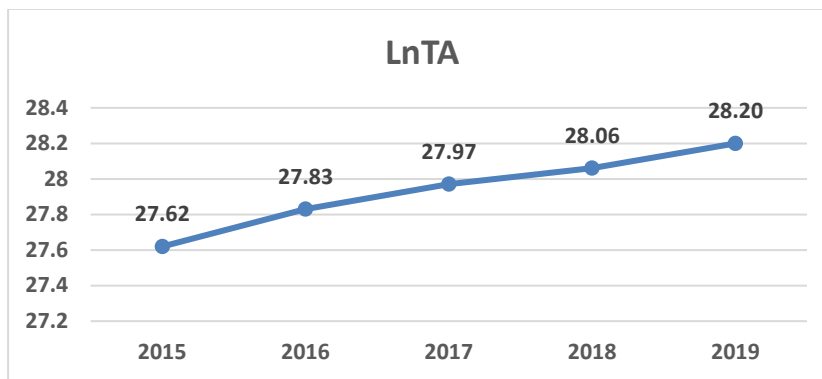
Table 2 Average Number of Members on Real Estate Company Oversight Committees: 2015 to 2019

Membership Trends (Average Number of Members)	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Board of Commissioners	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.2
Independent Commissioners	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8
Board of Directors	4.5	4.4	5.2	4.6	4.5
Audit Committee	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.9	3.0

Source: IDX website

Figure 2 shows that each year, the size of the company, as measured by LnTA, tended to increase due to the addition of assets such as land, factories, and investments, and an increase in new product inventories. Another factor that can affect the growth of total assets is financing (Chandra, 2014). Financing is an activity to support planned investments.

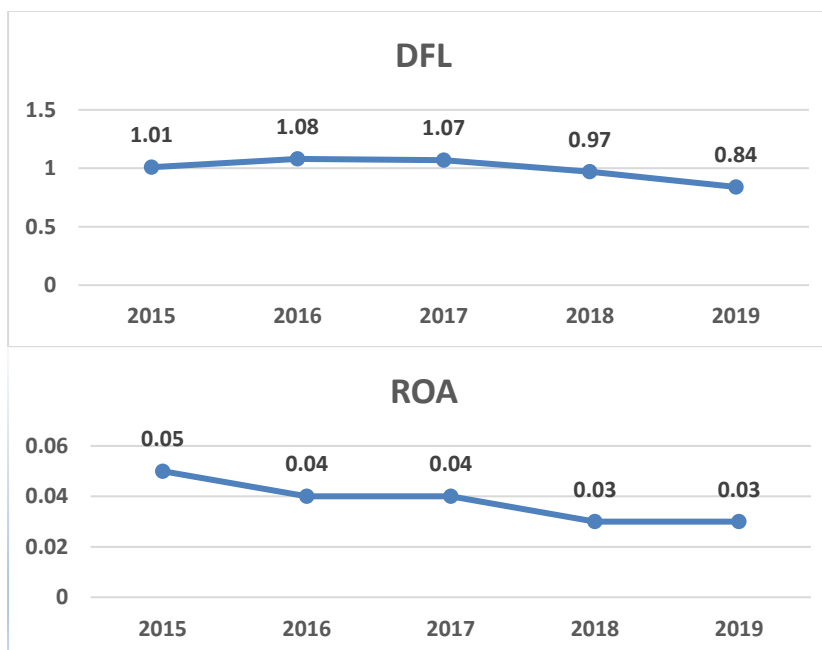
Figure 2 Average Natural Logarithm of Total Assets (LnTA)



Source: IDX website

The trend analysis in Figure 3 shows that each year the Degree of Financial Leverage (DFL) tended to decline even though there was a slight increase in 2016. A low use of debt in a company depended on the condition of the company. If it was producing high profits, there may have been a significant source of internal funds. Conversely, the high use of debt in a company can be caused by generation of low profits, so the company chooses to increase the level of debt (Myers, 1984). Also in Figure 3, the ROA tended to decline. A decrease in ROA could be caused by the fact that the company is increasingly ineffective in managing assets to generate profits (Munawir, 2007).

Figure 3 Average Degree of Financial Leverage (DFL) and Average Return On Assets (ROA)



Source: IDX website

Hypothesis Testing

The test results conducted on the various hypotheses are shown in Table 3 on the following page.

The Effect of the Board of Commissioners on Company Financial Performance

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that the size of the board of commissioners did not have a significant effect on company profitability, meaning that H_1 was rejected. In this study, the number of company commissioners ranged from three to four people and female commissioners accounted for only 19% of the total number.

The results agreed with other research findings (Sukandar & Rahardja, 2014; Pratiwi, 2018), where it was found that the board of commissioners had no significant effect on company profitability. This may imply that the more the number of commissioners, the lower the profitability. Excess numbers may cause the Board to be ineffective in carrying out its duties, as coordinating among members could hinder the supervisory process.

Table 3 *Partial Test Results (T-Test)*

Variable	Hypothesis	Coefficient	Sig.	Explanation:
BOC	H_1	.000	.921	Rejected
IC	H_2	.006	.320	Rejected
BOD	H_3	.001	.581	Rejected
AC	H_4	-.027	.001	Accepted
DFL	H_5	.005	.366	Rejected
LnTA	H_6	.001	.701	Rejected
Constant		.079	.120	
N		135		
F-stat/LR χ^2		2,186		
Prob > F		.046		
Adj. R^2		.051		

The Effect of Independent Commissioners on Company Financial Performance

From Table 3, it can be concluded that the number of independent commissioners did not have a significant influence on profitability, so H_2 was rejected. The results of this hypothesis test are in line with the research of Fadillah (2017) and Octosiva et al. (2018).

No positive influence on company profitability was found for corporate governance mechanisms related to the number of independent commissioners. According to research conducted by Nurcahya et al. (2014) and Saifi (2019), the larger the size of the independent board of commissioners, the lower the company's profitability. This could be because the supervision by the commissioners in the company are not completely independent. Independent commissioners should not be a company's former directors or commissioners previous periods, as stipulated in Article 25 Paragraph (1) of the Financial Services Authority Regulation Number 33 / POJK.04 / 2014, as this can affect their ability to act independently.

The Influence of the Board of Directors on Company Financial Performance

The number of directors had no significant influence on financial performance (Table 3), so H_3 was rejected. The work of Gill and Obradovich (2012) and Widyati (2013) showed that having more directors can lead to a decline in company finances. The large amount of money spent on the board of directors can cause company finances to decline. In the data analyzed for this study, more directors in property and real estate companies did not significantly improve their performance (Table 3), so H_3 was rejected. The results are in line with the research of Gill and Obradovich (2012) and Widyati (2013), who showed that adding more directors leads to a decline in company finances.

The Effect of the Audit Committee on Company Financial Performance

Data shown in Table 3 indicated that the size of the audit committee had a significant influence on financial performance. The agrees with Irma's (2019) research, which indicated that audit committee size had a negative relationship on company profitability. This is possibly because the greater the number of auditors, the more control and supervision will be carried out, and the higher the cost. With a smaller number of audit committee members, the ROA value increases. This means that efforts must be made by the company to reduce the number of auditors, and maximize their functions and duties so that supervision and consideration of company policies is not unduly strict.

Property and real estate companies listed on the IDX had women auditors, but their representation was limited to 26%. This may impact a company's progress, for Abbott and Presley (2012) contended that the presence of one or more women on an audit committee was very influential. Women tend to be independent, flexible, broad-minded, and cooperative in groups. Likewise, recent research has indicated that the presence of women on audit committees had a significant positive effect on profitability (Hartono et al., 2019)

The Influence of Company Size on Company Financial Performance

The data in Table 3 indicated that that large companies did not always perform better than smaller companies. No significant effects were seen, hence H_5 was rejected. The results are consistent with research conducted by Sukandar and Rahardja (2014) and Irma (2019), where company size, as measured by total assets, was not a benchmark that could be used to measure ROA. Many factors must be considered in assessing the size of a company, one of which is how a company can manage its assets efficiently and effectively to obtain maximum profitability (Azis & Hartono, 2017).

The Effect of Leverage on Company Financial Performance

Data in Table 3 showed that leverage had no significant effect, thus H_6 was rejected. This indicates that additional debt will not always have a positive impact on profitability. The results agree with research conducted by Azis & Hartono (2017) and Nasib and Azzahra (2019), who indicated that leverage can have a negative influence on profitability because it involves long-term products. These products have the potential to increase bank debt. Therefore, companies in the property and real estate sector must avoid incurring additional debt.

Conclusions

The conclusions reached are as follows.

1. The Board of Commissioners has an insignificant influence on ROA. The greater the number of commissioners, the lower the profitability. Work undertaken with too many commissioners can be ineffective because of coordination difficulties among board members that hinder the supervisory process.
2. The number of independent commissioners had an insignificant effect on ROA. This may be due to the fact that some commissioners were not fully independent, meaning that the supervision offered by them to the company is not entirely sound. Lack of independence could be the cause of decline in company performance. Independent commissioners should not be former directors or commissioners of a company from previous periods, as this can affect their ability to act independently.
3. The number of directors had an insignificant influence on ROA. This may be due to the relatively large amount of money spent on them that may cause company finances to decline.
4. The size of the Audit Committee had a significant negative effect on company profitability. The larger the number of audit committee members, the more control and supervision will be carried out. More audit committee members will incur extra costs. Thus, a smaller number of members will increase ROA value. Companies need to reduce the number of audit committee members and maximize their functions and duties, so that supervision and consideration of company policies is not so strict that financial performance becomes very difficult to improve.
5. Firm size had no significant effect on ROA. Large companies did not always perform better than smaller companies. After all firm size, as measured by total assets, is not a benchmark that can be used to measure a company's ROA.
6. Leverage had an insignificant effect on ROA. This was because property and real estate sector companies deal with long-term products. Long-term production has the potential to increase bank debt; therefore, companies in the property and real estate sector must avoid additional debt.

Recommendations and Limitations

To improve company financial performance, property and real estate companies might consider reducing the number of audit committee members. The implementation of corporate governance must be improved, carried out, and kept under serious supervision.

In further research studies, it would be advantageous to expand the scope to test the success of good corporate governance by expanding the population and research sample, such as using a sample of companies operating in different industries. In addition, other variables could be investigated such as managerial and institutional ownership and board diversity (e.g., education, experience, age, gender). This could provide a more accurate explanation of the factors that affect a company's financial performance. Lastly, future researchers might look at trends over a greater time span to increase the relevance of research results and strengthen the conclusions.

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Personal Income Tax Knowledge of Expatriates in Thailand

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Date Received: 11 March 2021 Revised: 20 May 2021 Accepted: 24 May 2021

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the level of knowledge about personal income tax and to investigate the factors that influenced respondents' knowledge of personal income taxes. The sample group consisted of expatriates currently working in Thailand. A questionnaire was used for data collection from 130 respondents. The statistics used in data analysis were descriptive statistics, *t*-test, and the one-way ANOVA test. The research findings indicated that expatriates had a medium level of knowledge of personal income tax payments. It was also found that gender, age, average monthly income, and education level influenced the knowledge held by expatriates concerning personal income taxes. The research findings and recommendations made will be useful to relevant agencies, such as the Revenue Department, employing organizations, and educational establishments. These agencies could use this information as a guide in providing additional knowledge about issues where understanding is minimal. This will help taxpayers to prepare their returns accurately, and will strengthen the tax-liability awareness of all people living in Thailand.

Keywords: *Personal income tax, expatriate tax knowledge*

Introduction

Under tax laws, it is mandatory for the public to pay taxes to the government in order to support the operations of the country. Tax revenue plays an important role in the process of generating income and conducting different state activities. It promotes economic development, social welfare and improvement of the quality of life, efficient resource allocation, transportation, and other major projects (Amin et al., 2018). Thus, the collection of taxes from the public is an important revenue-raising device that helps in the administration of the country. There are several types of taxes levied by the government based on different tax schedules. These includes personal income tax that is levied on the income base, expenditure tax that is levied on the consumption base, and property taxes that are levied on the wealth or property base (Poungsangasuk et al., 2018). According to the Revenue Code, personal income tax is a type of tax collected from the general public on earnings or income that is required by law (Boonkuson et al., 2020).

For those who are liable to pay personal income tax in Thailand, the law sets a specific tax measure. Regardless of race or nationality, if income is generated in Thailand, it is subject to Thai income tax. Personal income tax information is important and beneficial to the government, since it reflects household income in terms of the salary base and deposit base that is generated each year. It also reflects the knowledge and understanding of personal income tax provisions (Teeratansirikool & Phutharat, 2016). If the taxpayers are aware of the correct tax payment, have a good knowledge of the taxation system, and pay taxes voluntarily, then they are regarded as good citizens of the country. The country, in turn, will enjoy full revenue collection from taxes (Nakeepate & Buasri, 2020). Therefore, having a knowledge of personal income taxes is essential so that taxpayers will have a better understanding of tax law and the tax compliance process. Additionally, this helps in planning tax payments and protecting individual interests, which includes tax deductions, accurate and complete calculation of taxable income according to the Government Revenue Code, and realistic estimates of tax returns. It is important to file tax returns within a specified period of time, because insufficient knowledge of the tax system may result in loss of personal benefits, risk non-compliance penalties, or lead to the eventual collection of back taxes (Bornman & Wassermann, 2020).

The present researchers were interested in studying the tax knowledge of expatriates in Thailand, specifically in relation to personal income tax. The objective was to provide guidelines for expatriates who come to work in Thailand so they have adequate knowledge about personal income tax. This will

function to strengthen their awareness of their civic rights regarding personal income tax and will be useful in effective tax planning.

Research Objectives

1. To study the level of knowledge about personal income tax among expatriates working in Thailand.
2. To compare the level of knowledge about personal income tax among expatriates working in Thailand as influenced by personal factors.

Literature Review

Personal Income Tax

Personal income tax is a tax levied on an individual's income during the previous year. This tax applies to individuals liable to pay personal income tax or to an individual who is in a general partnership, and even applies to individuals deceased during the tax year involving an undivided estate (Revenue Department, 2020). Principles are followed in the collection of taxes on all types of income. This includes any income that is tax exempt; such exemptions must be specified by law. To those who are liable to pay income tax in Thailand, the law provides tax measures based on the income source and their residence as stated in the Civil Code. It is understood that regardless of race or nationality, if the income arises from any income source in Thailand, it is subject to Thai tax. Moreover, any individual who resides in Thailand for 180 days is responsible to pay income tax from the source of income in that tax year. In addition, if income is earned from a source outside Thailand and the funds are brought into Thailand, then that income is subject to Thailand's income tax in the tax year (Rojanavanich et al., 2018).

The personal income tax rate is either a progressive tax or based on a ladder-like tax system where the higher the income, the higher the tax rate applied (the highest current personal income tax rate is 35%). The Revenue Department is the agency responsible for collecting income tax. Income earners have to report their income starting from January to March of the following year. In special cases, the law allows taxpayers to submit their personal income tax for the actual income earned in the first half of the year in order to alleviate the tax burden that must be paid at the end of the year. In some other cases, the law requires the employer to withhold tax on part of their income so that there is a gradual tax payment while the income is earned (Revenue Department, 2020).

Personal Income Tax Knowledge

Knowledge relates to the systematic perception of various subjects, the ability to compile or distinguish issues in detail and clearly prioritize them in an orderly way, making a logical comparison of various matters and applying this knowledge in real situations depending on individual experiences (Pati, 2017; Putsom, 2019). Tax knowledge, in this context, is the ability of taxpayers to understand various tax laws and regulations, and it is something that they need to understand and practice in order to preserve their personal benefits. It involves knowledge about the content of personal income tax, the method of tax calculation, expense deduction entitlements, and tax report filing that leads to better tax compliance levels (Susyanti & Askandar, 2019).

Because filing personal income tax paperwork is mandatory and there are penalties for tax avoidance and late filing, people naturally try to understand requirements in order to be able to file tax returns accurately and on time (Nakepate & Buasri, 2020). According to past studies, most Thai people have a medium level of knowledge and understanding about personal income tax. However, the most common problems among Thais is regarding personal income exemptions, expense deductions, withholding tax deductions, personal income tax rates, and filing tax returns. Another problem is the lack of training about taxation (Damrongchai & Purisan, 2018; Yosrikhun, 2018; Yensap, 2017). In the study of Salam et al. (2018), it was found that Ilorin University staff had relatively low knowledge of personal income tax matters, and one of the main problems was the lack of updates in regards to changing tax criteria (Nakepate & Buasri, 2020). Not understanding tax laws is an obstacle

for calculating taxes and annual personal income tax payments, and it is a drawback for filing taxes properly (Damajanti & Karim, 2017). One additional reason for non-compliance is that taxpayers perceive the tax system as complex. Tax knowledge is a factor that affects the behavior of taxpayers. The reality is that most taxpayers rely on the accounting department or tax experts to submit their tax returns due to lack of knowledge and understanding about taxes (Saad, 2014).

From the literature review, it is evident that Thai groups frequently showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of personal income tax. Expatriates were included in this study in order to provide a clearer picture about their level of knowledge and understanding of personal income tax in Thailand.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of expatriates who were authorized to work in Thailand, especially those 111,540 expatriates working under Section 59 of the Royal Decree Concerning the Management of Employment of Foreign Workers (Foreign Workers Administration Office, 2020). The sample size of 400 was determined using Yamane's schedule (Sincharu, 2017, p. 47). Those sampled included individuals in the teaching profession, various department managers, managing directors, senior management, and others. Because the sample group contained people with high education and salary bases, it was assumed that they had to pay personal income tax. Sampling was done using a convenience sampling method and involved a total of 130 respondents working at 5 organizations. This accounted for 32.5% of the ideal sample size but was sufficient for data analysis (Aaker et al., 2001). The period of data collection was between December 2020 and January 2021.

Research Instrument

A self-constructed questionnaire was verified for content accuracy by three experts. The instrument was revised according to the Index of Item Objective Congruence to verify the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the research items, taking into account the opinions of the experts. The questionnaire had a consistency index of .90 between the questions and the overall objectives. Baotham (2015) suggested that a consistency index .50 or higher is an acceptable value. This meant that the research questionnaire was appropriate for the designated purpose. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: (a) general information about expatriates working in Thailand, which included gender, age, average monthly income, and education level; and (b) opinions regarding knowledge about personal income tax payments of expatriates working in Thailand. This latter section consisted of eight questions that dealt with issues commonly encountered concerning personal income taxes. The questionnaire was constructed from personal knowledge and from reading, training, and information gleaned from others.

Measurement

The statistics used for data analysis were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, and Scheffe's method of comparison.

The scoring criteria (rating scale) used the same average for all ranges (Srisa-ard, 2011) as follows:

A mean value of 4.51–5.00	=	a <i>maximum level</i> of knowledge;
A mean value of 3.51–4.50	=	a <i>high level</i> of knowledge;
A mean value of 2.51–3.50	=	a <i>medium level</i> of knowledge;
A mean value of 1.51–2.50	=	a <i>low level</i> of knowledge;
A mean value of 1.00–1.50	=	a <i>minimum level</i> of knowledge.

Research Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic data gathered are shown in Table 1. The majority represented in the sample group were males, nearly half were more than 40 years old, a majority earned 25,001–45,000 Baht per month, and most held a Master degree or above.

Table 1 *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 130)*

General Information	N	%
1. Gender		
Male	71	54.60
Female	59	45.40
Total	130	100
2. Age		
≤ 20 years old	0	0.00
21–30 years old	23	17.70
31–40 years old	43	33.10
> 40 years old	64	49.20
Total	130	100
3. Average Monthly Income		
≤ 25,000 Baht	21	16.20
25,001–45,000 Baht	86	66.20
45,001–65,000 Baht	20	15.40
> 65,000 Baht	3	2.30
Total	130	100
4. Education		
Bachelor degree or lower	56	43.00
Master degree or higher	74	57.00
Total	130	100

Table 2 shows that most expatriates working in Thailand had a medium level of knowledge of personal income tax. The statement "Payment of tax is a civic duty" had the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 4.47$), while "My employer explained to me about the Thai personal income tax system" had the lowest mean score.

Table 2 *Mean and Standard Deviation of Personal Income Tax Knowledge of Expatriates in Thailand*

Tax Knowledge	\bar{X}	SD	Level
1. I know that I must pay Thai personal income taxes.	4.35	0.85	High
2. Payment of tax is a civic duty.	4.47	0.76	High
3. I know how personal income tax is calculated.	3.13	1.18	Medium
4. I know about personal income tax deductions (spouse, donations, etc.).	3.28	1.13	Medium
5. I understand the personal income tax system in Thailand.	2.83	0.99	Medium
6. I know the surcharge penalty for not paying personal income tax on time.	2.79	1.04	Medium
7. My employer explained to me about the Thai personal income tax system	2.49	0.96	Low
8. My employing organization cares for, or handles my payment of personal income tax in Thailand.	4.15	0.97	High
Average	3.44	0.98	Medium

Comparisons of Differences in Personal Income Tax Knowledge in Regards to Gender, Age, Education Level, and Income Type

From Table 3, it was evident there were gender differences in knowledge levels among expatriates. Male respondents had a higher level of personal income tax knowledge than female respondents, and the difference was significant ($p < .05$).

Table 3 *Comparison of Personal Income Tax Knowledge by Gender*

	Male (n = 71)		Female (n = 59)		t	p-value
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
Overall Tax Knowledge	3.65	0.68	3.37	0.67	2.319	.022*

* $p \leq 0.05$

Table 4 data indicated that tax knowledge among expatriates working in Thailand differed according to age ($p < .01$). Based on Scheffe's method of comparison (Table 5), it was evident that the respondents in the age group of 21-30 years had less knowledge about personal income tax than those in the age groups of 31-40 years, and those more than 40 years old.

Table 4 Comparison of Personal Income Tax Knowledge by Age

Tax Knowledge	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	5.553	2	2.777	6.426	.002**
Within Groups	54.877	127	0.432		
Total	60.431	129			

** $p \leq .01$

Table 5 Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis

Age (years old)	\bar{X}	21-30 (n = 23)	31-40 (n = 43)	≥ 40 (n = 64)
21-30	3.09	-	.003**	.011*
31-40	3.67	-	-	.759
≥ 40	3.58	-	-	-

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Knowledge about Thai income tax also differed significantly among expatriates with different average monthly income levels ($p < .01$; Table 6). Scheffe's method of comparison indicated that respondents with incomes less than 25,000 Baht had less knowledge about taxation from those who earned between 25,001-45,000 Baht and those who earned between 45,000-65,000 Baht (Table 7).

Table 6 Comparison of Personal Income Tax Knowledge by Income

Tax Knowledge	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	12.534	3	4.178	10.990	.000**
Within Group	47.897	126	0.380		
Total	60.431	129			

** $p \leq .01$

Table 7 Scheffe's Post Hoc Analysis

Income (Baht)	\bar{X}	$\leq 25,000$ (n = 21)	25,001 – 45,000 (n = 86)	45,001 – 65,000 (n = 20)	$> 65,000$ (n = 3)
$\leq 25,000$	2.90	-	.000**	.001**	0.942
25,001-45,000	3.66	-	-	.996	.061
45,001-65,000	3.70	-	-	-	.067
$> 65,000$	2.67	-	-	-	-

** $p \leq .01$

Respondents with different educational levels, perhaps not surprisingly, also had significantly different levels of knowledge about personal income tax ($p < .01$). Respondents with a Master's degree or above had a higher level of knowledge than respondents with a Bachelor's degree or lower.

Table 8 Comparison of Personal Income Tax Knowledge by Education Level

	Bachelor or Below (n = 56)		Master or Above (n = 74)		t	p-value
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
Overall Tax Knowledge	3.30	0.69	3.69	0.64	-3.301	.001**

** $p \leq .01$

Discussion

The data collected in this study showed that the majority of respondents had a medium level knowledge of personal income tax. Even though most respondents realized their civic duty to pay personal income tax, many did not understand how to calculate personal income tax or the various deductions allowed by the law, which could result in the loss of personal tax benefits. Many expatriates did not know about the penalties levied when a tax return was not filed or if the personal income tax payment was not paid within the specified period. This is because employer organizations usually calculate tax payments for their employees. Prior to expatriate employees leaving employment, it is expected that employer organizations will provide comprehensive information about the calculation of their income tax. They should support their employees with new knowledge about Thai personal income tax by providing various tax-related information in English, because most documents and information is written in Thai. This would furnish employees with knowledge about filing personal income tax when they leave an organization, and consequently protect their personal benefits.

In addition, the results of the study showed that different gender group had different levels of knowledge about personal income tax. An explanation could be that in most families, males are the head and have a primary duty to manage family finances (Onputtha et al., 2018). However, according to statistics in Thailand, the number of single mothers is increasing. This may be on account of divorce, unplanned pregnancy, or the other party showing a lack of responsibility or being unready for change. Hence, many single mothers have to bear the burden of managing their own finances. As a result; women have begun to play a greater role in family financial management (Panmueng, 2017). This finding is consistent with the research of Pounsangsuk et al. (2018) and Yosrikhun (2018), who found that there were gender differences in knowledge about personal income tax. They also found that individuals within the age of 21-30 had less knowledge of personal income tax than those in the age group between 31-40, and also those above 40 years old. When people get older, they become more concerned with their health and stability, and consider making investments in property. Therefore, it is important to find out what type of life insurance, assets, or investments will provide tax deductions in order to properly plan tax payments and help alleviate the annual tax burden (Kadchaikarn, 2019). This finding is consistent with the research of Damrongchai and Purisan (2018), who also found that different age groups had different levels of knowledge and understanding regarding personal income tax matters.

Our study also found that individuals who attained different educational levels had different levels of knowledge about personal income tax. This finding is consistent with the research of Salam et al. (2018), Pounsangsuk et al. (2018), Yosrikhun (2018), and Yensap (2017). In addition, Nakeepate and Buasri (2020) also found that individuals with a higher level of education may have a better chance to study or research about income tax, which would contribute to having a higher level of tax knowledge. Our study also found that individuals with average monthly income of less than 25,000 Baht had a lower level of knowledge of personal income tax compared to those with an average monthly income of 25,001–45,000 Baht and 45,001–65,000 Baht. People with higher incomes classically pay higher taxes than those with lower incomes, according to progressive tax rates. On account of this, it is advantageous for them to study the tax system and its provisions to help with tax planning, and so pay less tax. In order to relieve the burden for taxpayers, stipulated deductions are permitted allowing personal income tax to be reduced (Kadchaikarn, 2019). Our finding is in accordance with the research of Nakeepate and Buasri (2020) & Yensap (2017), who stated that individuals with different net incomes per year had different levels of knowledge and understanding about personal income tax.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study showed that expatriates working in Thailand have only a medium level of knowledge about the personal income tax system. The level of knowledge about personal income tax differed significantly with gender, age, education level, and average monthly income. Therefore, it is highly recommended that relevant agencies, employers, or departments should provide adequate personal

income tax training for expatriates in Thailand. In addition, support might be provided concerning the correct tax practices through consistent and continuous clarifications and training, especially in regard to the method used to calculate tax, the allowable expense deductions, and penalties for non-compliance.

In future studies, an in-depth interview approach would be useful in order to broaden the approach adopted in developing and promoting tax knowledge. This would make the research outcomes more comprehensive and valuable.

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Analysis of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Group Cohesion in a Filipino Emergency Response Team

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Date Received: 11 June 2021 Revised: 26 July 2021 Accepted: 5 August 2021

Abstract

The objective of this study was to ascertain the relationship between emotional intelligence and group cohesion among emergency response team members. The hypothesis was that emotional intelligence improves teamwork by increasing the team's cohesiveness. The research methodology used in this study was quantitative (descriptive, correlational, and comparative). A psychometric instrument was used as a survey tool to elicit information about the research participants' characteristics and perceptions. The data were analyzed with Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and group cohesion. The findings indicated that emergency response teams exhibit emotionally intelligent behaviors at work, except for intuition, emotion, and motivation. On the other hand, it was discovered that their level of group cohesion is relatively high. The group demonstrated collective pride, task commitment, and interpersonal attraction. The analysis revealed that emotional intelligence and group cohesion had a moderately significant relationship with emotion being a strongly correlated component of emotional intelligence. Thus, the claim that emotional intelligence promotes group cohesion was supported.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, group cohesion, emergency response team*

Introduction

Numerous organizations are encouraging a more collaborative approach to work. The group approach has evolved into one of the most effective methods for sharing ideas and achieving more productive and dependable outcomes. According to Gratton and Erikson (2007), organizations can utilize more innovative arrangements and thus increase profitability by utilizing the intensity of a few people rather than relying on one individual.

According to reviews by Cross and Travaglione (2003) and Gantt and Agazarian (2004), one such concept that could significantly improve collaboration effectiveness is emotional intelligence (EI), as research has demonstrated that a high level of group EI results in desirable outcomes and makes the group productive and beneficial. According to Druskat and Wolff (2001), EI is more of a foundation upon which to build a team than the sole factor determining whether a team is effective. Prati et al. (2003) discovered that EI is a positive predictor of attachment formation. According to them, "the degree of group cohesion depends on team members' emotional intelligence." Along these lines, individuals who are genuinely interested create strong bonds and an emotionally supportive network.

Emotional intelligence can aid in the development of stronger work relationships. Psychologists have discovered that individuals with a high level of EI are more constructive, approachable, and amicable in a group setting. They are more adaptable to changing circumstances and pressure. They are also motivated and passionate about their work, which leads to superior performance and results and inspires other group members. These individuals are more capable of managing their responsibilities in the face of difficult work activities. They are capable of resolving and minimizing conflicts to foster synergy when completing group tasks (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

According to researchers, reviews focusing on the role of emotions in groups would aid in understanding why some groups effectively function while others fail (Wolff et al., 2006). However until recently, emotions were studied minimally because intellect has been historically regarded as superior (Salovey et al., 2000). Numerous researchers have examined the relationship between EI and group cohesion, but with limitations and gaps. Contextually, psychological research on this genre in the Philippines has also been sparse. Hence, this study fills a gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between EI and group cohesion.

Objective

To determine the relationship between EI and group cohesion of emergency response team members.

Research Questions

1. What is the EI profile of emergency response team members in terms of innovation, self-awareness, intuition, emotions, motivation, empathy, and social skills?
2. As assessed by the respondents, what is their level of group cohesion?
3. Is there a relationship between EI and the level of group cohesion?
4. Are there differences in the respondents' EI and group cohesion if grouped according to age, gender, marital status, and the number of months/years in the emergency response team?

Research Hypotheses

H_1 : Emotional Intelligence is significantly related to the level of group cohesion.

H_2 : Emotional Intelligence is significantly different from group cohesion when grouped according to age, gender, marital status, and the number of months/years in the emergency response team.

Literature Review

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence

This study is grounded on the theory of Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and science author who conducted studies for the New York Times; his work was built upon by Salovey and Mayer in the 1990s. In 1998, Goleman's first model of EI identified five domains or measurements, comprising twenty-five skills. Three measurements—self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation—portrayed individual abilities identified with knowing and overseeing feelings in a person's self. The remaining two measurements—empathy and social skills—portrayed social capabilities identified with knowing and overseeing feelings in others. As Goleman refined his model, the *self versus others* refinement would remain an essential measurement of his EI typology. According to Goleman (1998), EI is defined as “the capacity for recognizing our feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (p. 5).”

Goleman (1998) stated that the self-awareness domain enables individuals to recognize their feelings and thoughts, along with their personal strengths and weaknesses. He argued that this is critical to understanding others and exhibiting empathy. Goleman (2002) proposed that emotional self-management refers to regulating distressing effects like anxiety and anger; inhibiting emotional impulsivity is the second domain. Competencies in this domain are emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement orientation/motivation, optimism, and initiative. Goleman (1998) stated that social awareness competencies determine how we handle relationships. He further claimed that the social awareness domain includes three competencies: empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. Goleman (1998) explained that the relationship management domain contains competencies that directly affect interactions with other people. In a fundamental sense, according to him, “the effectiveness of one's relationship skills hinges on one's ability to attune to or influence the emotions of another person.”

Group Cohesion

Carron et al. (1985) define cohesion as “a dynamic process reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of instrumental objectives and/or the satisfaction of member affective needs” (p. 124). Carron (1980) additionally saw cohesion as containing relational working relationships, achievements accomplished by the group, and individual component powers that draw in individuals to the group. Carron et al. (1985) viewed the major variance in team cohesion as shaped by four dimensions: first is the individual attraction to group-task (ATG-T); second is individual attraction to group-social (ATG-S); third is group integration-task (GI-T); and the last is group integration-social (GI-S). Attraction to group task (ATG-T) is the individual colleague's sentiments about their association with the gathering's undertaking, profitability, objectives, and targets. Then

again, attraction to group-social (ATG-S) is an individual colleague's emotions about acknowledgment of social communications with the gathering. Group integration-task (GI-T) is an individual colleague's inclinations about the similitude, closeness, and all around holding inside the group, and about the gathering's assignment. Also, group integration-social (GI-S) is an individual colleague's emotions about the comparability, closeness, and holding inside the group in general, and around the gathering as a social unit.

This view depends on the accompanying key presumptions: (1) Cohesion, as a group property, can be evaluated through the impression of individual colleagues [fitting with Lewin's (1935) early idea of a union]. It depends on five accompanying suggestions, which are: a group has recognizable properties, such as an authoritative structure, along with job and status connections. Furthermore, individuals from the group experience social circumstances and form convictions about them accordingly. Thirdly, these convictions are shaped by other colleagues, thus resulting in social insights that affect group preparations and the coordination or view of group-related experiences. Fourthly, colleagues' views of the group, in general, give a sensible gauge of elements that nurture solidarity. And last, social insights can be estimated internally, instead of through the estimation of external entities, for example, supervisors (Chiocchio & Essiembre 2009); (2) Team individuals create a view of the level of solidarity to manage and regulate insider group members in general processes, and how the group fulfills their needs and goals; and (3) Team individual's impression of union within the group and of the group will be accorded with group errands (i.e., undertaking attachment), and the social connections inside the group, (i.e., social union).

Conceptual Framework

The researchers aimed to study the dynamics between EI and group cohesion of the emergency response team members through theories of EI (mixed-model) and the conceptual model of group cohesion. Figure 1 (please see on following page) shows the schematic diagram of variables being examined in the study.

This framework illustrates the relationship between EI and the emergency response team's group cohesion. These variables were based on the mixed-model theory of EI and the conceptual model of group cohesion. The study determined the correlation between EI and the level of group cohesion of the emergency response team (H_1). Also, it looked into significant differences when grouped according to age, gender, marital status, and the number of years in the emergency response team (H_2).

Research Methodology

This section discusses the study's methods, the study context, the research participants, the instrumentation, the procedures, and the statistical tools used to make sense of the data gathered.

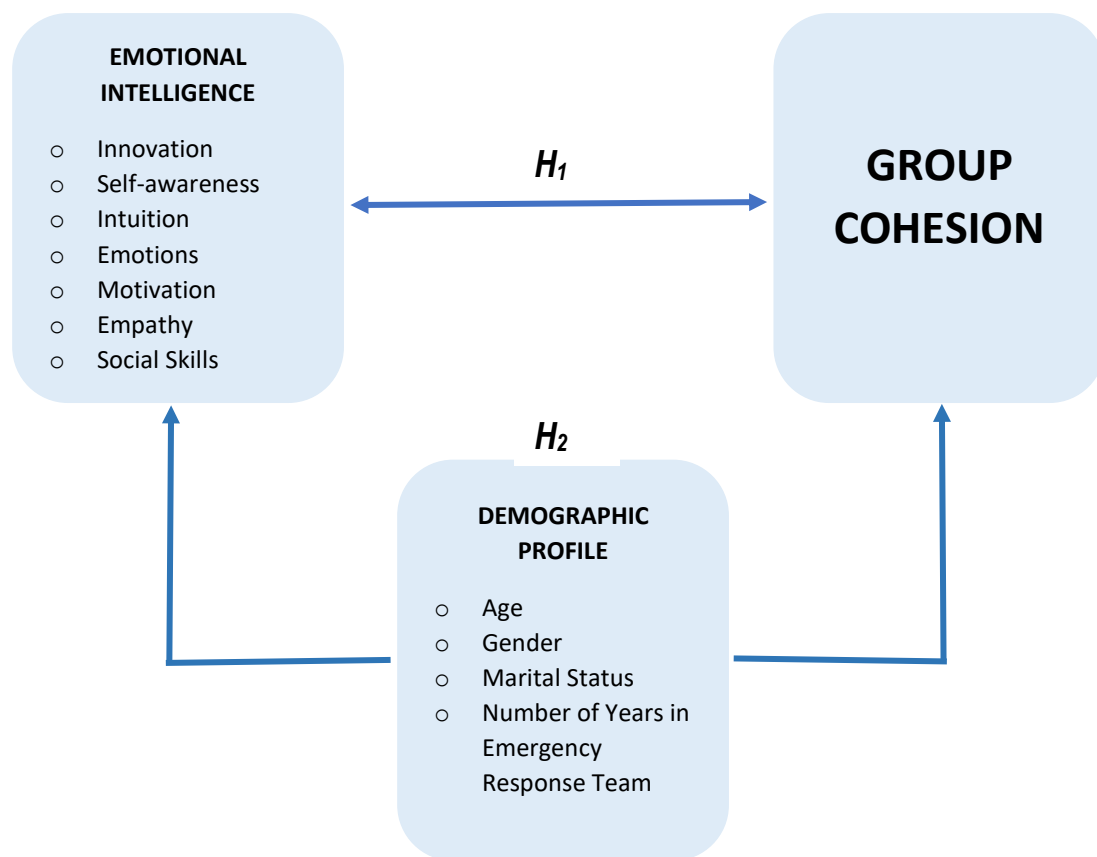
Research Design

The data collection methods used in this study were quantitative. A quantitative research design was employed in which differences in behavior were quantified using descriptive, comparative, and correlational methods. The descriptive method was used to elicit information about the characteristics and perceptions of the research participants via a survey. To establish a relationship between respondents' EI and group cohesion, the correlational method was used. The comparative method was used to ascertain the significance of two variables when demographic variables were grouped.

Research Participants

The study participants were 28 municipal-based members of an Emergency Response Team (ERT). The municipal ERT was organized to address the needs of the locality for rescue operations during fire hazards and emergencies. The organization has a formal organizational structure and functions—the members are rescuers and volunteers are composed of municipal and school-based teams.

Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework*



The main function of the ERT includes the following:

- (1) The ERT initiates rescue and evacuation operations of lives and property in affected areas; it responds to all forms of emergencies and calamities in the municipality;
- (2) members also make recommendations on how to prevent disasters, if possible, and/or suggest precautionary measures to minimize the effects of disaster;
- (3) they submit reports and recommendations for allocation of needed resources; and
- (4) they attend/conduct training regarding disaster risk management as advised by the Local Chief Executive.

Recruitment and screening for membership in the ERT is open to all municipality constituents regardless of gender, marital status, occupation, or educational attainment; however, applicants must be of legal age or at least 18 years old at the time of application, and no older than 60 years old. The recruitment process includes pre-entry training, which applicants must complete to qualify as a member. The duration of this training is typically six days with 24 hours of training per day, as some simulated activities are conducted at any time of day or night. Little or no warning is given to participants because the sequence of events in any disaster is unpredictable. The following topics are covered through simulated activities: first aid and basic life support, mass casualty incidents, water search and rescue (high-angle rescue), teamwork, and self-discipline. To qualify as a member, one must complete the training.

Research Instrument

The study instrument used measured Emotional Intelligence using the Work Profile Questionnaire–EI version (WPQei), and group cohesion using the Group Cohesion Scale-Revised (GCS-R). The Work Profile Questionnaire EI version is an 84-item questionnaire designed to quantify the individual

characteristics and skills representatives must develop to manage emotions at work effectively. These are recognized by researchers such as Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (2001).

The WPQei instrument was based on Goleman's conceptual model of EI. It consisted of seven components: innovation, self-awareness, intuition, emotions, motivation, empathy, and social skills, all of which were evaluated on a five-point scale as follows: 1) always or almost always; 2) very often; 3) fairly often; 4) from time to time; and 5) never or almost never. Each component was on a bi-polar scale, with one end of the scale representing a low score, and the other representing a high score.

The scoring and interpretation were based on the 2004 edition of the WPQei User's Guide. Raw scores were obtained and converted to Sten scores using the WPQei scoring software to determine each participant's WPQei profile. The results were summarized on a ten-point scale that compared responses to a representative sample of individuals representing various occupations. A higher than average score indicated a significant number of the personal characteristics necessary for viability. A normal score indicated a portion of the personal characteristics necessary for success. A lower than average score indicated that it may be difficult to perform successfully in specific work areas.

Cameron (2004) discovered that WPQei scales are within the 0.60 to 0.80 range for psychometric scales, with middle-scale reliability of 0.78. The instrument's overall reliability appears to be 0.95. Additionally, the correlations between WPQei scales and marker factors range between 0.60 and 0.80, with a median correlation of 0.73, indicating that the WPQei scales accurately assess individual and emotional skills as defined by Goleman. The instrument demonstrates a high degree of face and content validity. Confirmatory Factor Analysis results from an investigation led by Apaydin and Anafarta (2012) confirmed that correlated first-arrangement seven-factor shows were the best fit for the data. The scale's alpha coefficient was determined to be between 0.65-0.78. The construct reliability value and fluctuation removed from the scale were determined to be sufficient. The seven-factor model constructed from the 84 items and the WPQei was reliable and valid in a Turkish instructional setting.

The second instrument was the Group Cohesion Scale-Revised (GCS-R) developed by Treadwell et al. (2001). The GCS-R is a 25-item questionnaire that assesses group cohesion in interaction and communication among group members (including domination and subordination), member retention, decision-making, vulnerability among group members, and consistency. Each item is rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from (strongly disagree) to (strongly agree).

This scale contains reversed scores, which were in items 5, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24, and 25 (Adams, 2010). Internal consistency (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) ranged between 0.48 and 0.89 on pre-test appraisal, and 0.77–0.90 on post-test evaluation in a validation study (Treadwell et al., 2001). This self-report questionnaire has been demonstrated to be both reliable and significant in identifying changes in team cohesiveness during the group development process (Treadwell et al., 2001).

In this study, internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.71 to 0.77 with an average of 0.746, which was therefore reliable. In Cronbach's alpha internal consistency scale, $0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ is interpreted as an acceptable level of internal consistency in social science research.

Research Procedures

Dr. Thomas Treadwell granted permission via email to use the Group Cohesion Scale-Revised. Similarly, permission to use the WPQei instrument for research purposes was sought and granted by the Palompon Institute of Technology administration via the Guidance Center. To conduct the study, ethical approval was obtained, and the Local Chief Executive granted authorization with the assistance of the local disaster risk management office where the study was conducted.

Data Analysis

This study employs descriptive measures to describe the respondents' profiles, i.e., age, gender, marital status, and number of months/years in ERT. Descriptive measures also describe the weighted mean response on respondents' EI and group cohesion. Furthermore, the variation of responses was measured by the standard deviation. The relationship between EI and group cohesion was calculated

using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Also, a paired sample t-test was calculated to determine significant differences between respondents' EI and group cohesion when grouped according to age, gender, marital status, occupation, and the number of months/years as an ERT member.

Findings

Among the 28 participants in this study, there were 27 males and one female. Twenty-four, or 86% were married, and four (14%) were single. Among the participants, 17 (61%) were young adults aged 21-40, and 11 (39%) were middle-aged adults aged 40-60. In terms of the number of years as a member of the emergency response team, 12 (43%) had been ERT members for over six years, 10 (36%) had been ERT members for 3 years or less, and the remaining six (21%) had been ERT members for between three to six years.

Emotional Intelligence Profile of the Respondents

The overall EI mean score profile of emergency response team members was about 4, which may be described as average. An average assessment of the respondents' EI would imply that respondents can utilize their sentiments and feelings to get the best out of themselves and for other people.

Table 1 *Emotional Intelligence Profile of the Emergency Response Team*

Components	Mean (10-point Scale)	SD	Interpretation
Innovation	5.29	1.74	Average
Self-Awareness	4.86	2.38	Average
Intuition	3.14	1.67	Low
Emotion	2.43	1.00	Low
Motivation	3.18	1.96	Low
Empathy	3.93	1.74	Average
Social Skills	3.68	1.42	Average
Over-all Emotional Intelligence	3.79		Average

The respondents had a mean score for innovation of 5 (SD=1.74), which was considered average. This result implies that the respondents were genuinely imaginative and entirely open to change. This result was reflected in Goleman's (1995) conceptual model of EI in the self-management domain, as respondents exhibited their initiative in problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Likewise, the self-awareness component had a mean score of 5 (SD=2.38), which was also considered average. This implied that respondents were able to reasonably identify their emotions, and the impact on their performance. Respondents exhibited fairness in the self-awareness component; this typical behavior verified Goleman's conceptual model of EI. Moreover, as indicated in Table 1, when it came to instinct, hunches, and feelings along with facts and information to guide decisions, participants got a mean score of 3 (SD=1.67), which is considered low. Having a lower than normal score on the intuition component of EI implied that respondents thought it was hard at present to utilize their sentiments and feelings to control their work. As indicated by Cameron (2004), low scorers in intuition depend more on actualities and examination when making decisions. They frequently miss what is circumventing them. Results in Table 1 also revealed that the emotions component of EI had a mean score of 2 (SD=0.997), which was considered low. The result inferred that respondents had some control of their sentiments, yet they could likewise feel overwhelmed by their feelings and powerless. Their states of mind and feelings tended to influence their conduct. This specific outcome was seen in the hypothesis of Guthrie and Azores, when they attested that Filipinos have passionate control (as referred to in Church, 1986). For them, Filipinos demonstrated a resilient state of mind when controlling feelings amid negative encounters.

Table 1 also shows that for the motivation component of EI, respondents had a mean score of 3 (SD=1.964). The low assessment in this component implied that respondents had very few of the

characteristics and capabilities of driven individuals, yet getting on at work was not their primary need in everyday life.

The respondents were also found to possess an average level of empathy, with a mean score of 4 (SD=1.741). This meant that respondents could reasonably take care of emotional signals and decently tune in, modestly demonstrating affectability and comprehending other individuals' viewpoints and understand other individuals' needs and sentiments.

Level of Group Cohesion of the Respondents

Table 2 shows the level of group cohesion of the ERT. Mean scores showed that respondents' perception of problem-solving as a group, (3.4), respect for confidentiality (3.4), feelings of unity and togetherness (3.3), and contribution to group decision-making (3.3) were very high. On the other hand, negatively stated behavioral statements which were reverse scored as low revealed the perception that problem-solving processes were not disrupted if two members or less were absent (2.0), attempts to include quieter members were not minimal (2.1), members preferred not to transfer to other groups with the same goals (2.3), and group members' vulnerability in the group was low (2.4).

Table 2 *Level of Group Cohesion of the Emergency Response Team Group Cohesion Statements*

Indicators	Mean (4-pt Scale)	Interpretation
1. Group members are accepting of variations in each other's culture, customs, habits, and traditions.	3.1	High
2. There are positive relationships among the group members.	3.2	High
3. There is a feeling of unity and togetherness among group members.	3.3	Very High
4. Group members usually feel free to share information.	3.2	High
5. Problem-solving processes would be disrupted if one or two members are absent.	2.0	Low
6. The group members feel comfortable in expressing disagreements in the group.	2.6	High
7. Problem-solving in this group is truly a group effort.	3.4	Very High
8. Group members influence one another.	3.1	High
9. I dislike going this group's meetings.	3.0	High
10. The group members seem to be aware of the group's unspoken rules.	2.9	High
11. Discussions appear to be unrelated to the concerns of the group members.	2.8	High
12. Most group members contribute to decision making in this group.	3.3	Very High
13. Group members are receptive to feedback and criticism.	3.0	High
14. Despite group tensions, members tend to stick together.	3.0	High
15. It appears that the individual and group goals are inconsistent.	2.6	High
16. An unhealthy competitive attitude appears to be present among group members.	2.7	High
17. Group members usually feel free to share their opinions.	3.2	High
18. Minimal attempts are made to include quieter members of this group.	2.1	Low
19. Group members respect the agreement of confidentiality.	3.4	Very High
20. People would be concerned when a group member is absent from the group.	2.9	High
21. Group members would not like to postpone group meetings.	2.8	High
22. Many members engage in "back-stabbing" in this group.	2.9	High
23. Group members usually feel free to share their feelings.	3.2	High
24. If a group with the same goals is formed, I would prefer to shift to that group.	2.3	Low
25. I feel vulnerable in this group.	2.4	Low
Overall Mean	2.91	High

However, the results also showed that negatively stated behavioral statements, which are reversely scored, presented high perception results of respondents. These were respondents' dislike for going to group meetings (3.0), inconsistent individual and group goals (2.6), the presence of unhealthy competitive attitudes among group members (2.7), and members of the group engaged in "back-stabbing" (2.9). Though slightly elevated as high in the scale, these behavioral statements reflected respondents' perceptions of group cohesion. On a positive note, this implied that groupthink was not present in the group despite the members' perceptions of invulnerability.

The overall group cohesion mean score was 2.91, which means that the emergency response team had a high level of group cohesion. Another important factor that seemed to influence cohesion was the entry difficulty or initiation into the group. As in the case of the ERT pre-entry training of the group, the difficult entry criteria or procedures tended to exhibit the group in a more elite light. The more tip-top the group is seen to be, the more esteemed it is to be a part of the group, and therefore, the more motivated individuals are to have a place and remain in it (Beal et al., 2003).

Relationship between EI Components and Group Cohesion of ERT Participants

Table 3 presents the relationship of the components of EI and group cohesion of the respondents. Results revealed strong positive correlations between emotions and social skill components. A computed r of 0.631 (0.000) was obtained between their emotional components and group cohesion, which implied that as the emotional component scores increased, the degree of group cohesion was also higher. A computed r of 0.611 (0.001) was observed for the relationship between the social skill components and the level of group cohesion, which implied that EI social skills and group cohesion tended to move in tandem. For instance, if a person had high social skills component of EI, he was likely to also have a high degree of cohesion with the group. Thus, as respondents recognized and understood their feelings and emotions and managed them well, they had a strong and significant impact on the group; building relationships with the group and communicating effectively with them fostered cohesion.

Table 3 *Relationship between EI Components and Group Cohesion of ERT Participants*

Components	r	p-value	Interpretation
Innovation	0.171	0.383	Very weak relationship
Self-Awareness	0.449	0.017*	Moderate relationship
Intuition	0.343	0.074	Very weak relationship
Emotion	0.631	0.000**	Strong relationship
Motivation	0.449	0.007**	Moderate relationship
Empathy	0.469	0.012*	Moderate relationship
Social Skills	0.611	0.001**	Strong relationship

Note: * Significant at the 0.05 level ** Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 shows moderately positive correlations between EI components and group cohesion. The computed r of 0.449 was obtained for both self-awareness and motivation (0.017 & 0.007, respectively). Meanwhile, empathy and group cohesion had a computed r of 0.469 (0.012), also indicating a moderate relationship between the two areas. It was found that there was a moderate relationship between respondents' self-awareness, motivation, and empathy components and group cohesion. The results indicated the need to improve or enhance these components to foster higher levels of group cohesion.

Next, the Innovation and Intuition components of EI and group cohesion of respondents showed weak relationships; however, their association was not significant, as indicated in Table 3. This means that the respondents' level of EI for the Innovation and Intuition components were not significantly associated with the respondents' degree of agreement for group cohesion. Although the correlation value was defined as very weak, this coefficient value was not statistically significant, implying that the very weak association was negligible.

ERT Participant Differences between EI and Group Cohesion when Grouped by Demographic Profile

This section shows the significant differences in respondents' EI and group cohesion when grouped according to age, gender, civil status, and their number of years in the ERT.

The age group classification utilized was based on the Human Development concept by Elizabeth Hurlock. Only two groups were identified: the 21 to 40 years old (Young Adults), and 41 to 60 years (Middle-aged Adults). Table 4 shows that EI and group cohesion were different at a 1% significance level for young adults. This implied that young adults perceived EI as distinct from their group's

cohesion. The responses of young adults in the ERT varied in regards to the degree of group cohesion, since there were significant differences between them. In comparison, the responses of middle-aged adults showed that their views of EI and group cohesion were not significantly different. In terms of gender, there was insufficient data as there was only one female respondent. Next, in terms of marital status, single ERT members noticed no significant differences between EI and group cohesion. However, married ERT members perceived group cohesion as significantly different from EI.

Table 4 *Participant Differences between EI and Group Cohesion Grouped by Demographic Profile*

Profile	Category	t	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Young Adult	3.739	0.002	Significant at 0.01
	Middle Adult	-1.413	0.188	Not Significant
Gender	Male	-3.488	0.002	Significant at 0.01
	Female	Insufficient data		
Marital Status	Single	-2.799	0.069	Not Significant
	Married	-3.006	0.006	Significant at 0.01
No. of Years in ERT	0 Months – 3 Years	-2.004	0.071	Not Significant
	3.01 – 6 Years	-6.567	0.001	Significant at 0.01
	6 Years and Above	-1.222	0.250	Not Significant

For the next variable, number of years in service, respondents were divided into three (3) groups: the first group consisted of respondents with 0 month to 3 years in ERT, followed by respondents with 3.01 to 6 years in ERT, and respondents with 6 years or more in ERT. Results showed that ERT members who stayed on the team for less than three years perceived group cohesion as similar to EI. Similar results were found for respondents who were members of ERT six years or more. Those who had been members for three to six years, however, perceived group cohesion differently from EI.

Discussion

The results indicated average scores for the EI components including innovation, self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, while they were low for intuition, emotion, and motivation. The innovation component had the highest mean score (5), while the emotion component has the lowest mean score (2). The overall EI profile of the ERT showed that most of the lines were between the 4-5 STEN score, which inferred that in spite of disparities in the individual results with respect to the seven components, they may be considered as being on the average level. This also indicated that their EI may also change. If change is focused on being positive, respondents will likely have the capacity to watch and control their feelings, and also those of others, in order to guarantee more effective results as they confront their responsibilities in the ERT.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that respondents had average levels of EI. They acted candidly astute in some circumstances, yet not in others, as shown in their responses towards innovation. Respondents' self-awareness was fair, but there is still room to build individual capabilities, such as becoming more self-aware. Furthermore, respondents' reasonable imagination and critical thinking style suited their workplaces, circumstances, and group positions. They were also genuinely mindful of their qualities and shortcomings. Furthermore, they were genuinely open to sincere input, new points of view, persistent learning, and self-development. It could be demonstrated that respondents were both inclined toward a judicious and logical way to deal with basic leadership, or were still expected to learn and adapt, and did not feel that they could depend on their sentiments and feelings. Further, having lower than average results in intuition, motivation and emotion suggested that it may be harder to perform successfully in specific areas of work—that is, some tasks that are impacted by their identity/ EI do not fall into place easily for them. Results also implied that in the components of intuition, innovation, and emotion, there was a need for improvement in order to navigate the complexities of emotional demands, disregarding the respondents' context.

On the other hand, the results on the level of group cohesion incorporated both task- and social-oriented aspects within the group, and discernments are identified with the level of solidarity the group has and the way in which individual goals are met by being involved as a group (Carron et al., 2002). Thus in summary, EI and group cohesion were significantly related to self-awareness, emotion, motivation, and empathy. This implied that when responses to emotions and social skills components of EI appeared high, group cohesion also tended to be perceived higher, such as was seen in the studies of Moore and Mamiseishvili (2012), and Arfara and Samanta (2016). Thus, there was a significant relationship between emotional and social components of EI and group cohesion. On the other hand, both the Innovation and Intuition components of EI had no significant relationship to group cohesion. This may have been due to not valuing these two EI capabilities in a group setting.

Implications and Recommendations

The study's findings indicated that the ERT exhibited typical emotionally intelligent behaviors at work, except for intuition, emotion, and motivation, which may be addressed by the respondents. On the other hand, it was discovered that respondents had a high level of group cohesion. The group demonstrated collective pride, task commitment, and interpersonal attraction. Additionally, the study concluded that EI and group cohesion had a moderately significant relationship. As a result, EI facilitated group cohesion. Additionally, significant differences in EI and group cohesion were observed when respondents were classified according to their age (young adults category), marital status (married category), and years in ERT (3.01 to 6 years category). For further research, the study should be replicated with ERTs in other municipalities. Two to three years after measuring a group's perception of EI, a follow-up study of EI and group cohesion could follow. Furthermore, correlation between ERT's EI and their adversity quotients could be studied, along with additional qualitative research on their group development.

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3. Submissions Procedure

- 3.1. Manuscripts submitted to *HBDS* must not have been previously published elsewhere or under review for publication in other journals.
- 3.2. Manuscripts must adhere to the journal guidelines; failure to comply with these may result in the rejection of a submission.
- 3.3. Manuscripts must be submitted through the ThaiJo online submission system at <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/hbds>; look for the *HBDS* web page.
- 3.4. Manuscripts should be submitted by no later than December 31 for the April issue, April 30 for the August issue, and August 31 for the December issue. Nonetheless, even if a submission is received before the stated dates, and is accepted, the journal's Administrative Board reserves the right to decide on the publication date.

4. Review Process

- 4.1. Manuscripts will be checked for originality and prescreened by the editorial staff to see if their structure, content, and formatting complies with journal standards.
- 4.2. Manuscripts will undergo a double-blind review process conducted by at least 2 qualified independent peer reviewers who are external to authors' institutions, and knowledgeable in a relevant academic field. This process typically takes from 4–6 weeks, depending on peer reviewer response times.
- 4.3. Authors will be informed of reviewers' comments as soon as they are available.
- 4.4. Authors will be given up to 1 month to revise their papers (should that be necessary) and should return the revised version by the 1st of February/June/October (or earlier).

5. Numbers in APA Style

- 5.1 In general, round decimals to two places with the exception of *p*-values (three decimal places is the limit— $p < .01$ or $.001$). Percentages are expressed as whole numbers or to one decimal place.
- 5.2 Rounding rules: If the final number is 5 or more, add one to the last decimal place to be kept (1.565 becomes 1.57). If the number is less than 5, write the number with the required decimal places (2.344 becomes 2.34).
- 5.3 When a statistical expression cannot exceed the value of 1, then the number reported is NOT preceded by a zero (e.g., with *p*-values— $p < .01$, also applies to correlations, Cronbach's alpha).
- 5.4 Large numbers—use commas between groups of three digits in most figures of 1,000 or more.

5.5 Further information can be gained by consulting. James Cook University, Singapore. (n.d). Numbers in APA. See https://www.jcu.edu.sg/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/680085/Numbers-in-APA.pdf; Guadagno, R. (2010). Writing up your results – Guidelines based on APA style. Retrieved from https://ich.vscht.cz/~svozil/lectures/vscht/2015_2016/sad/APA_style2.pdf

6. Recommended Verb Tenses for APA Style Articles (p. 118)

Paper Section	Recommended Tense	Example
Literature review (or whenever discussing other researchers' work)	Past Present perfect	Quinn (2020) presented Since then, many investigators have used
Method	Past	Participants completed a survey
Description of procedure	Present perfect	Others have used similar methods
Reporting results	Past	Results were nonsignificant Scores increased Hypotheses were supported
Discuss implications of results	Present	The results indicate
Presentation of conclusions, limitations, future directions, etc.	Present	We conclude Limitations of the study are

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