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Editorial Statement

Human Behavior, Development and Society is a refereed multidisciplinary journal that explores a wide range of scholarly topics, especially in fields relating to the humanities and social sciences. It is published online three times a year and is available free of charge through the ThaiJo and Asia-Pacific International University (AIU) websites, with a limited number of hard copies available. The journal, originally entitled *Catalyst*, has been published since 2006 by Asia-Pacific International University, Muak Lek, Thailand, through its publishing arm *Institute Press*.

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 is a key aim, especially when these may have practical applications within the Southeast Asian region. The application of theoretical considerations to organizations, fields, and communities 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:

Applied linguistic or linguistic studies that examine issues related to communication, language pedagogy and use, as well as theories and meaning of language.
Religious or biblical studies that explore historical, philosophical, sociological, as well as hermeneutical issues.
Anthropological or ethnographic studies which seek to reflect cultural nuances of communities for a better understanding of the society.
Cultural/intercultural issues and diversity, including how tensions involving these parameters might be handled to achieve social justice and acceptance.
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.
Organizational behavior, resilience, and the creation of a positive psychological work environment and job satisfaction.
Teaching strategies, interventions, assessment, and other issues to the betterment of society.
Policies and political movements, and their impact on educational development.
Violence, discrimination, and marginalization: how these issues are viewed in contemporary society, and the factors contributing to their emergence.
Social trends in addictive behavior; how to address such issues creatively.
Impact of specific policies and interventions on health care, including how to promote positive health outcomes in communities.
Innovative and cost-effective approaches to health care and education in poor, rural communities.

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From the Editor

This is the first issue of *Human Behavior, Development and Society (HBDS)* for 2024. The journal is an international, open-access, and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal published three issues a year by Asia-Pacific International University (AIU). *HBDS* publishes academic research articles in the fields of business administration, development, education, health, the humanities, public administration, religion, tourism, and other social sciences that contribute to development of concepts, theories, and new knowledge for developing communities and societies. 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 international communities, with a particular emphasis on Southeast Asia. All articles in the journal are indexed by the Thai-Journal Citation Index Centre (TCI), ASEAN Citation Index (ACI), and the EBSCO database, and starting with this issue, digital object identifiers (DOI) are used to provide each article with a permanent web address.

This issue contains 12 articles, ten of which were written by researchers external to the university, and two of which were authored by an AIU researcher. We are delighted to see reports and findings from various disciplines including business, education, health, psychology, and religion. Most articles in this issue reflect studies conducted in ASEAN contexts including Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as articles from Australia and the United Arab Emirates. 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, reviewers, editorial board members, executive board members, and journal staff members who have contributed to making this achievement a reality.

Assistant Professor Dr. Damrong Satayavaksakoon, Editor

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Australian Teachers' Voices on Religiosity, Spirituality, and Their Link to Job Satisfaction: Qualitative Data – Part Two[1]

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Abstract

This paper is the second of a two-part report on a mixed methods study that examined the job satisfaction of teachers who worked in faith-based schools. In part one (Vodéll, 2023), 11 independent variables were identified through quantitative data analysis that impacted the dependent variable of overall job satisfaction (OJS). This led to the development of a model illustrating the factors influencing OJS. In part two, the teachers' voices are recorded from an unframed perspective. Qualitative data were collected from a sample that consisted of nine faith-based schools in Australia. A thematic analytical approach was applied to the qualitative data (N = 94), and it was found that three major themes emerged as having a major impact on OJS: People, Processes, and Purpose for Teaching. The data from both sources was then triangulated to integrate the findings using a convergent design process. It was found that religiosity impacted OJS directly and indirectly via the mediating element of spirituality. Also, spirituality itself indirectly influenced OJS via the purpose-for-teaching element. Finally, the data indicated that OJS increased when there were positive relationships (students and colleagues) and perceived organisational efficiency within the workplace.

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, religiosity, spirituality, faith-based school*

Introduction

In addition to striving to achieve organisational objectives, employees in the 21st century appear to be increasingly looking for a purpose and fulfilment in the workplace. As a result, when analysing the contributors to job satisfaction, the focus has been expanded by some to include more factors. These factors have included the transcendent domain, and the importance of studying religiosity and spirituality in the workplace also has been emphasized. One research group has suggested "that work organizations are our most significant community, replacing institutions such as the church" (Bell & Taylor, 2001, p. 2).

From an educational administrator's perspective, particularly those in faith-based institutions, the issues of religiosity and spirituality in the workplace have become of interest. Also some researchers have identified links between organisational performance and its association with health, happiness, and satisfaction of the individual employee (Sander, 2017; Sholihin et al., 2022). However, past investigations have also revealed mixed results (Hackney & Sanders, 2003). Consequently, there is a need to further understand the impact of spirituality and religiosity on job satisfaction in the educational context, because while there is considerable research in many other workplaces, there is limited research of a comparative nature in this domain.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research was to both identify and analyse the factors that influence overall job satisfaction (OJS) for those teachers who operate in faith-based environments. A specific focus was to explore whether there were any relationships among the variables of religiosity and spirituality (transcendent factors), as well as five aspects of teaching (colleagues, working conditions, responsibility, work itself, and recognition) and the dependent variable of OJS.

[1] This article is based on a thesis that was previously posted on a university website for a limited audience.
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Furthermore, recognising that the numbers from a survey can provide significant insights and yet, because of limits to the depth of understanding that this data can provide, it was considered important to collect unframed data to get to the deeper "why" questions. To find the things that really mattered to this group of teachers, it was deemed necessary to hear their voices.

Problem and Hypothesis

The under-studied nature of this area is demonstrated by the lack of any comparative studies between Australian schools that are secular and those that are faith-based. Furthermore, within the faith-based sector there have been a very limited number of multi-faith studies. This research represents a small step in seeking to remedy that situation.

The research was guided by two questions:

1. What is the nature of teachers' perceptions of religiosity and spirituality when allowing for the respondents to formulate their own framework in which to describe these constructs?
2. What do teachers perceive impacts on satisfaction with their jobs, when allowing for the respondents to formulate their own framework in which to describe these constructs?

Methodology

This section presents a rationale and description of the research methodology used. A mixed methods approach was adopted. This can be defined as a method whereby the investigator combines both quantitative and qualitative data in such a way that analysis and explanations from both data sets help to recognise and resolve research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The research approach chosen was considered appropriate in that both components were involved in accessing different information. A specified framework was used to explore the impact of the teachers' worldview (religiosity and spirituality) on their job satisfaction. An exploration of teacher perceptions of job satisfaction and worldview (religiosity and spirituality) required different types of data. For the first component, data were collected using a quantitative approach that enabled the generation of profiles, and the opportunity to discover relationships using path analysis within the accepted frameworks. For the second component (which this paper covers), qualitative data were collected enabling the respondents to generate their own frameworks to present their perceptions. The subsequent triangulation that was utilised enabled both validation and expansion of the conclusions obtained by the respective methodologies. This study was carried out using a one-phase design, where the two types of data were collected in the same time frame. This was achieved by the construction of a single questionnaire consisting of questions using a six-point Likert scale, and obtaining open-ended written responses to further questions.

The Sample

To obtain qualitative data from teachers working within faith-based schools, an approach was made to the administration of five Lutheran and four Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools in Victoria, Australia. Following agreement, a total of 221 usable questionnaires were received from the nine schools providing quantitative data. From this, a total of 94 respondents chose to provide qualitative data by giving answers to the open-ended questions, and this gave an adequate return rate of 42.5%. This follows the tendency of qualitative research to garner significantly "rich" material that is collected from a fewer number of respondents. However, there were still sufficient respondents to be able to achieve both descriptive redundancy (Glaser, 2007) and theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Qualitative Data Collection Instrument–Format and Analysis

The qualitative instrument consisted of two open-ended questions. One question related to general comments the respondent could make about their job satisfaction, and the other provided an opportunity for respondents to comment on their own religiosity and/or spirituality. The individual open-ended responses were transcribed, and this data was collated to highlight the range of understandings that were expressed by the respondents, and to explore the links between these understandings. The data was then further analysed manually using inductive thematic analysis, (Braun, 2021), which followed a six-stage iterative process. This involved (a) data familiarisation, (b) code generation, (c) theme development, (d) reviewing, (e) naming, and (f) exemplar selection. The relationships among the themes and the dependent variable were then expressed via a model (Figure 2) that illustrated the phenomena.

Results

The Factors That Impact OJS: Teachers' Perspectives

When the teachers were given the opportunity to outline their own frameworks for factors that influenced their OJS, three major themes began to emerge from the data, namely, People (others and the individual), Processes (the job itself), and the Purpose for Teaching. (The lack of any significant mention of advancement, pay, or security as a satisfaction element is noteworthy.)

People. Within this theme, four sub-sets were identified: Administration, Colleagues, Students, and Myself. The teachers indicated that job satisfaction came when the administration was supportive of the staff, made them feel that things were organised, and they were included in the operation of the school. Further, their OJS was enhanced if the teachers perceived that the administration was seeking God's leading in running the institution. Communication, or the lack of it, also appeared to be an important factor in influencing job satisfaction. The considerable influence of the administration subset within "People" and their impact upon OJS was evident from the following two quotes: "In comparison to my past experiences, I love it here at [school name]. I feel safe with the prayerful decisions made by our leadership staff" (Respondent 12) and "[It is the] Best school I have taught at. Great colleagues, great students, supportive parents and fantastic principal" (Resp. 75).

The teacher's evaluation of the influence of the administration was also reinforced by the following three negative comments: "Job satisfaction is reduced by unorganised daily activities from administration, lack of support, workload" (Resp. 14); "My satisfaction is linked to the effectiveness of admin. to do their job well. e.g., Communicate, lead, hold students accountable for behaviour," (Resp. 64) and "Everything is OK most of the time. Job satisfaction decreases during disagreement in decision making with Admin. When I feel that I am treated no better than a student" (Resp. 11).

Second, colleagues have a very important part to play in OJS. Teachers stated that when their colleagues were helpful and assisted each other, their levels of OJS increased. Teachers also perceived that things worked better when they were able to call on and give their expertise to others. This is illustrated by comments from a number of respondents: "My job satisfaction is due in a large part to the people I work with," (Resp. 26) and "It really helps to get along with the people in your department = a better team" (Resp. 10).

Third, the students were also deemed to be an important factor in determining OJS. Teachers gained satisfaction from seeing students' progress and develop in both the academic and spiritual/ social domains of their lives. This was demonstrated by three respondents' comments. "I love it when students tell me about what they have learned." (Resp. 8); "I love the job of teaching. I believe that we can make something wonderful out of every human being. The combination of religion and teaching is powerful. The value-added component is often the difference in religious schools," (Resp. 87); and "What keeps me highly motivated and focused is engaging with students, banter, camaraderie" (Resp. 52).

The fourth and final subset within the People theme was "Myself." The information gathered clearly indicated that individual teachers were significant controllers of their own job satisfaction. Some maintained that satisfaction was an intrinsic/internal thing that was not so dependent on external factors. Others stated that if they had organised themselves and prepared ahead of time, then job satisfaction was greater. The following quotes from various respondents support these concepts: "Basically, teachers' problems are self-imposed. This means that the level of satisfaction obtained from teaching requires temperance in judgment." (Resp. 4); "Like life, job satisfaction is what I make of it. I have the greatest input into whether it is 'grand' or ordinary." (Resp. 13); "Job satisfaction is probably more dependent on my frame of mind and attitude." (Resp. 60); "It is possible for me to remain satisfied with my job regardless of extrinsic factors." (Resp. 21) and "Satisfaction tends to be internally driven rather than externally driven" (Resp. 46).

Processes. The second theme identified was Processes, or the job itself. It was also evident that it impacted OJS. Here the teachers outlined that while they may enjoy teaching, there are systems, processes, or protocols that reduce their level of OJS. Some teachers found that job descriptions and guidance, together with the need to be efficient, were all important in the process of teaching in order to have job satisfaction. These thoughts are outlined in quotes from various respondents: "I do enjoy it [teaching] but some things need to be changed in the school and its systems." (Resp. 38); "It would give more clarification if I were to have a job description to compare it to." (Resp. 19); "I get frustrated at inefficiencies within the school;" (Resp. 45); and "Apart from lack of initial guidance, job description, etc. my school is a pleasant, cooperative environment in which to work." (Resp. 24).

Also, within the Processes theme there were numerous references to time or, more specifically, the lack of time associated with the job itself. In a similar manner to the need to be efficient, the need to get the job done within a reasonable amount of time was considered essential. The lack of time to complete various jobs significantly reduces a teacher's job satisfaction. This is shown in the following comments by six respondents. "The first couple of years aren't that much fun because you are too busy. I think it's getting better though;" (Resp. 35); "Only frustration is limited time to achieve so much;" (Resp. 15); "Not enough time to spend with students and planning good classes. This decreases satisfaction;" (Resp. 61); "Job satisfaction varies based upon stress levels and 'busyness' of the year;" (Resp. 51); "Would be more satisfied if sufficient time was given to complete responsibilities adequately;" (Resp. 48); and "Job satisfaction is good, but it consumes almost all of my life and time– not a good balance to pursue other interests." (Resp. 71).

Purpose of Teaching. The third theme to emerge from the data was identified as the Purpose for Teaching. It has been referred to as a "calling." Teachers remarked that many believe that they are doing God's will in performing the role of a teacher. This in turn gives them a sense of peace and satisfaction. This is somewhat akin to how clergy have traditionally perceived their role in society. It appears that many teachers see their purpose in the classroom as being a sort of divine mission. The following comments illustrate these sentiments. "My job satisfaction is based on intrinsic values cultivated by my Christian philosophy and influenced by my Christian teachers." (Resp. 21); "When students are happy to come into my classroom; enjoy learning and see Jesus through me then my job is satisfying." (Resp. 29); "I enjoy it even though it wears me out. I would move away from teaching if God called me elsewhere, otherwise I know God uses me here." (Resp. 54); "I believe I am doing the work God has for me right now." (Resp. 62); and "So good to have a job that fulfils my personal beliefs and calling to ministry." (Resp. 15).

Even when teachers did not feel satisfied about their jobs, there were those who recognised that the job of teaching could be considered a calling, and the following respondent clearly did not feel called. "I am not sure that I wish to remain in teaching in the long term. I do not feel 'called' to be a teacher; it is simply a job." (Resp. 44).

The Nature of Spirituality and Religiosity: Teachers' Perspectives

The teachers perceived that there was a difference between spirituality and religiosity, and even though they could not always clearly articulate this difference, they thought that this difference was extremely important. This is illustrated by two responses: "There is a difference between spirituality and religion. I note myself as a spiritual rather than a religious person" (Resp. 14), and "I am glad the distinction was made between religious vs spiritual." (Resp. 24).

A number of the respondents perceived that spirituality was more important in their lives than religiosity. Two respondents' comments follow: "I believe in a relationship with God [spirituality] more than 'religion' [religiosity]," (Resp. 48), and "I consider my personal spirituality more important than church affiliation." (Resp. 21). For these teachers, spirituality was first defined as a private relationship or something that dealt with their own faith. The emphasis was on the moral and ethical aspects of the individual's worldview, and this was seen as somewhat independent of religious affiliation. One respondent stated: "I believe one's spiritual realm ought to be a private affirmation of one's faith and not necessarily a public affirmation. One's actions ought to be taken to an ethical and moral maxim in spite of one's religious affiliation." (Resp. 4).

Second, spirituality was seen to be something that added security to one's life and included prayer that is personal in nature; this reinforced the relational aspect of this construct. One respondent stated these ideas as follows: "My faith gives me an anchor point. A point of reference from which to view all the complexities of life." (Resp. 6).

Finally, the teachers acknowledged that there is a difference between spirituality and religiosity, but some felt that spirituality was a personal relationship, and as such, it may be difficult to measure. For these teachers, religiosity was firstly defined as the public relationship or something that dealt with one's community. Some respondents appeared to focus on the things that an individual does—reading books, watching DVDs, public prayer, rules, doing or not doing things. Two responses illustrated this thought. "[I am] Always interested in reading spiritual books and listening to … talks on CDs," (Resp. 35), and "I seem to be more liberal in my application of the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of my religion." (Resp. 12).

Some respondents also appeared to lament the busyness of their lives, which prevented them from accomplishing or doing more in this area of religious expression. This is illustrated by the following respondents' comments: "I could be more involved if work wasn't so busy." (Resp. 28); "My work … has limited my ability to volunteer due to time demands," (Resp. 16); and "I have a strong faith but find that being a busy mum limits these types of activities" (Resp. 49).

In addition to this, a considerable number of respondents indicated that a relationship with God seemed to connect both spirituality and religiosity, with some emphasising that it covered both constructs while others suggested that it moved beyond these constructs. Comments from respondents included: "Every day is an experience with God and I know and am convinced that God guides me [in] everything that I do," (Resp. 11); and "I believe that a relationship with God is what counts." (Resp. 7).

Predictors of Overall Job Satisfaction

Quantitative Data: Model for Predictors of Overall Job Satisfaction

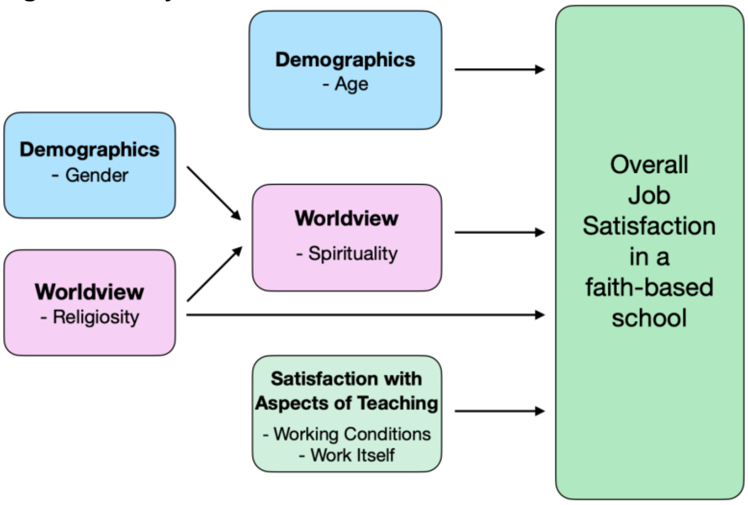
When examining the predictors for OJS, the initial analysis looked at 18 inputs from three discrete areas: Demographics, Aspects of Teaching factors, and Worldview factors. Using regression analysis, the number of potential predictor variables was reduced to 11 and an initial model for the predictors of OJS was constructed. This model was presented in Part One (Vodéll, 2023), which involved three groups of predictors: Demographics (Age, Gender, Highest Qualification, Teacher Religious Affiliation); Aspects of Teaching factors (Colleagues, Working Conditions, Responsibility, Work Itself, Recognition); and Worldview factors (Spirituality, Religiosity).

To determine the relative influence of each of these 11 factors, backward regression analysis was carried out, and four independent variables were shown to be the strongest predictors of OJS—the dependent variable. These were in order of strongest impact: Working Conditions, Work Itself, Spirituality, and the Age of the Respondent.

Because of the previously noted strong correlation between Spirituality and some other factors, it was decided to model Spirituality as a dependent variable to ascertain its predictors. The first step in this process delivered a model where Religiosity and Demographics, 45.2% and 10.1% respectively, accounted for the variance in Spirituality. This high level of interaction between Spirituality and Religiosity is in line with previous research that has been conducted on these two phenomena (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Hudson, 2007; King & Crowther, 2004; Koenig, 2007; Neff, 2006; Piedmont et al., 2009; Slater et al., 2001; Zullig et al., 2006). When the analysis was completed, backward regression was performed to identify the predictors of Spirituality. Both Religiosity and Gender were significant predictors at the 5% level. This work then resulted in the development of a modified model (Figure 1) for the predictors of OJS.

This model indicated that influences on OJS can be best described by a combination of direct and indirect relationships. The demographic variable—age, and the job satisfaction elements—Working Conditions and Work Itself, impacted OJS directly. In contrast to this, the demographic variable—Gender, and the Worldview factor—Religiosity, both influenced OJS indirectly through their influence on Spirituality. In addition to this Religiosity also had a direct influence upon OJS (Figure 1).

Figure 1 *Modified Quantitative Model*



This means that in this study, teachers indicated that working conditions which involved a pleasant physical environment and where the administration communicated its policies well, and where the work enabled one to be creative, using a variety of skills and providing opportunities to make one's own decisions, had a major positive impact on OJS. The data indicated that as age increased, OJS increased, and also that females demonstrated a higher level of OJS than males. For the teachers, the greater their perceived connectedness to the Divine, and the greater their involvement with their religious community and its rituals, then the greater their OJS. This impact was relatively minor compared to the Aspects of Work factors.

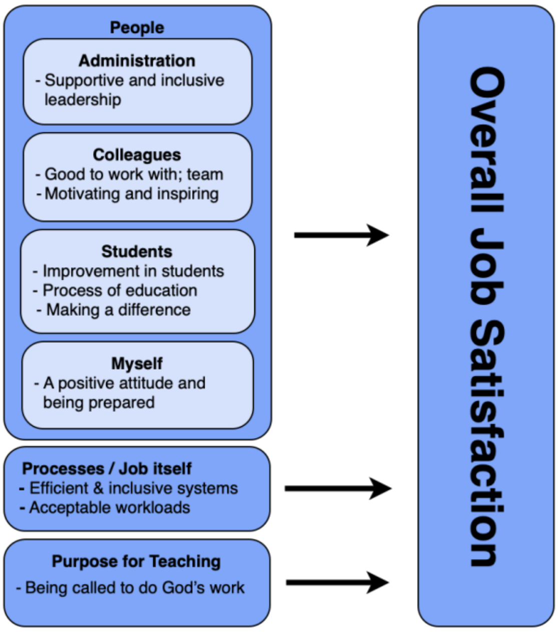
Qualitative Data: Model for Predictors of OJS

When given the opportunity to present their perspectives on factors that influence OJS without the constraints of a survey framework, the teachers in this study included elements found from the survey analysis, but also presented additional factors. From the analysis of the qualitative data, three major themes emerged as having a major impact on OJS: People, Processes, and Purpose for Teaching (Figure 2).

Within the People theme, the first sub-set was Administration. Where administration was perceived to be supportive and inclusive, this feature contributed to the teachers' OJS. This component was similar to the Working Conditions identified from the quantitative data analyses. The second sub-set was Colleagues. If these individuals were seen to be inspiring and motivating and acted with a team spirit, then this contributed positively to the teachers' OJS. This component was not identified from the quantitative data analysis. The third sub-set, which also was not identified from the regression analysis, was Students. The OJS increased where teachers were able to see improvements within the academic and social domains in their students. The fourth sub-set, which similarly was not identified from the quantitative data, was labelled as Myself. Those teachers, who maintained a positive attitude to their work and were consistent in their planning so as to remain organised, recorded greater OJS.

Within the second theme of Processes, it was those teachers who perceived the workplace to have efficient and inclusive systems in place, and scheduled acceptable workloads, that recorded higher OJS ratings. This theme had some level of similarity to the Working Conditions component from the quantitative analysis.

Figure 2 *Factors That Impact Overall Job Satisfaction—The Teachers' Perspective*



The final theme was Purpose for Teaching. This theme was unique to the qualitative data, and was perceived to be a very important factor in influencing OJS. Where teachers saw their role as having a higher purpose and some connection with the divine, then higher levels of OJS were evident in the data.

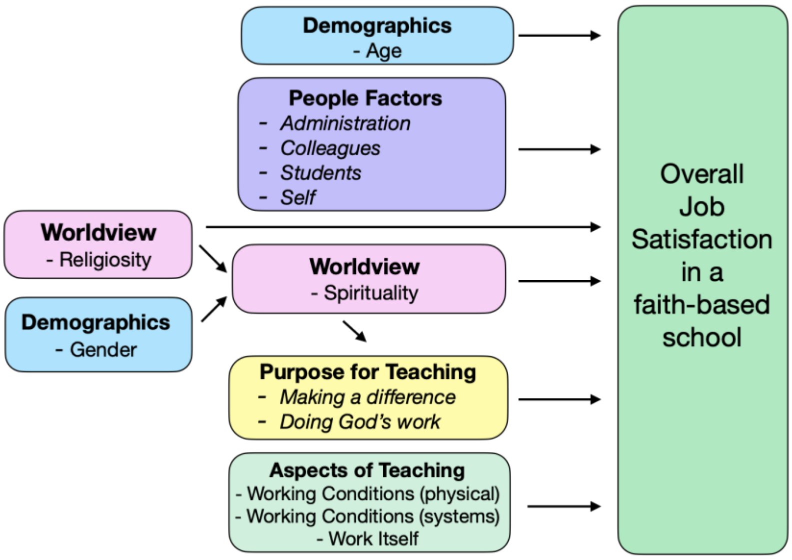
Final Model for Predictors of OJS

A more complete model may be generated by using the information that was obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. This model includes components that were unique to each of the respective analyses, as well as those components that were similar in nature (Figure 3).

The Working Conditions component identified from the quantitative analysis covered both the leadership and the system aspects of the school operations. In this final model, the Administration component was placed in the People factor under the sub-set Administration, while the Working Conditions element within the Process theme was restricted to the system aspect of processes.

The nature of the Purpose for Teaching theme would suggest that it is in some way derived from a person's worldview. For this reason, it seemed appropriate that the Religiosity and Spirituality factors should influence teachers' understanding of their purpose. Hence, pathways can be seen linking Religiosity, Spirituality, Purpose for Teaching, and OJS within the final model. This sequencing is supported by the work of Downey (2006), whose results indicated that vocation has an impact on personal sanctification and apostolic mission. Although Downey's work, located within a context of Catholic spirituality, did not focus on job satisfaction, there are some parallels that exist in that the teachers' unframed responses obtained in the present study. These pointed to the "purpose of teaching" as being a significant factor influencing the dependent variable of OJS in a faith-based school.

Figure 3 *Factors Influencing Overall Job Satisfaction for Teachers in Faith-Based Schools*



When the combined model based on both the quantitative and qualitative data is inspected, it is observed that there are some factors that have a primary or direct influence on OJS, and there are others whose influence is secondary or indirect. Finally, those factors influencing the OJS that come from the qualitative data alone are presented in italics in the final model.

Conclusions

In this research, the constructs of Religiosity and Spirituality were investigated from the perspective of teachers who worked in faith-based schools. Further, the relationship between Religiosity, Spirituality, Aspects of Teaching, and OJS were explored. The constructs of Religiosity and Spirituality in this study were determined to be distinct, yet there is an overlapping of these concepts partly brought about by both having a connectedness with the divine. For the teachers involved in the survey, spirituality was focused around the intrapersonal, while religiosity was focused around the interpersonal.

The teachers from both the Lutheran and SDA education systems, when considered as a single unit, rated themselves more spiritual (M = 5.127) than religious (M = 4.256). That is, the teachers rated themselves higher in terms of their personal connectedness with a power or source in the universe that is greater than oneself (spirituality), than their institutional, doctrinal public faith as celebrated with others (religiosity).

In this study, a positive and direct relationship was identified between some Demographics factors (age); People factors (Administration, Colleagues, Students, Myself); Working Conditions (physical and systems); Work Itself (system aspects); Religiosity and Spirituality; and OJS. In addition, the data indicated that Religiosity and Spirituality also had a positive impact on OJS indirectly, via a mediating variable—Purpose for Teaching, where teachers saw their role as having a higher purpose and some connection with the divine. It is interesting to note that Roundy (2009, p. 1) found there to be "a positive relationship between religious callings and job satisfaction." In some sense, Purpose for Teaching could be seen to be a parallel concept to religious calling, and in this manner the present research aligns with the findings of Roundy.

The quantitative data indicated that, for both religiosity and spiritualty, the teachers from the SDA school system rated these constructs slightly higher than those in the Lutheran Education System. However, the teachers from the Lutheran system were significantly more satisfied with the five aspects of their job: Colleagues, Working Conditions, Responsibility, Work Itself, and Recognition.

As previously stated, a number of possible explanations exist. First, it could be that teachers in the respective systems have different understandings of the terms Religiosity and Spirituality, and hence the different outcomes. Second, it could be that the teachers in the respective systems have the same understandings of the terms and yet their worldviews are influenced by different sets of factors. Here one could speculate on what these factors are; however, this is an area where further research is recommended.

Of the aspects of one's job that were considered to influence OJS by Lester (1987), for the group of teachers considered in the present study, only Working Conditions and Work Itself contributed significantly to OJS. In this case, Working Conditions consisted of two components. First, there were the physical surroundings, consisting of buildings, facilities, landscaping, etc., and second, the systems, policies, and protocols as communicated by the administration. Work itself was also deemed a significant influence. This involved the variety of skills employed, whether or not one had the freedom to make personal decisions, and the extent to which routine tasks were employed—essentially a focus on the art and science of teaching. Sufficient time to be able to do this was also a major factor in the opinion of the teachers.

The present study also indicated that one of the more important influences on OJS were the People factors at one's workplace. When the Administration is able to give clear directions, Colleagues are helpful and share their expertise, and a team spirit exists, this has a positive impact on the OJS. Similarly, when the students are developing/progressing and a difference is being made in their lives, together with the teachers themselves having a positive attitude, then all of these factors work together to increase their OJS.

Finally, although some components may have a somewhat greater influence than others, this was not fully explored in this study, yet it can be clearly seen from the final model (Figure 3) that the influences of Spirituality, Religiosity, and Aspects of Teaching on OJS include both direct and indirect linkages.

As stated in the introduction, when examined within a management framework, researchers have not extensively studied teachers and the impact that religiosity and spirituality have on their job, and the satisfaction gained from this endeavour. Yet, if producing satisfied teachers is seen to be a need, then surely the academic study of religiosity and spirituality must form a part of an overall matrix of influences. It would appear for both the Lutheran and SDA schools that, where there is a concurrence between the school's ethos and the individual teacher's purpose for teaching, staff with higher levels of OJS will be seen. One would suspect that this may result in lower levels of staff turnover and a resultant positive impact on students and their educational outcomes.

In summary, even though teachers within the SDA and Lutheran school systems saw Religiosity and Spirituality as distinct constructs, they perceived that there was a connectedness in that both represent linkages to one's relationship with the transcendent. Second, while the intrapersonal worldview (Spirituality) of teachers in the SDA system was a significant contributor to their OJS, by contrast for the teachers within the Lutheran system, it was their interpersonal worldview (Religiosity) that contributed more significantly to their OJS. This outcome was not expected and needs further exploration. Finally, the most important factors in determining OJS were the Working Conditions, Work Itself, and the People Factors (Colleagues, Students, Self). In terms of Working Conditions, when there was perceived to be a pleasant physical environment and an organised systems environment, the teachers' OJS was increased. When work itself provided opportunities for creativity, use of skills, and the freedom to make decisions within their own classrooms, OJS was increased. OJS was increased when teachers perceived there was a collaborative ethos amongst staff, that their students were progressing within the academic, social and spiritual domains, and when their own attitude to teaching was positive.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations stem from this study. First, as recommended by others, there is a need for further study in this area because of the far-reaching impact this area has on people's lives. Irrespective of the conceptualisations utilised for religiosity and spirituality and how they may be related, they are frequently absent in organisational research despite their substantial influence.

Considered by some to be the "father of psychology," William James claimed a complete understanding of the individual is not possible without considering the impact of the transcendent (James, 1958). Furthermore, when religiosity and spirituality are put into the context of an examination of aspects of workplace diversity, one can clearly see the limited amount of research that has been completed in this area.

Second, it is well documented that to achieve a significant level of teacher job satisfaction in faith-based education, systems need to be in place to ensure that the physical working conditions are pleasant for the teachers, that the administrative systems are well communicated, that the administration engender a collaborative approach to decision making, and that there are opportunities provided for teachers to express their religiosity and spirituality.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, self-reported data can be seen as a limitation. Yet, the very nature of this research, which focused on an area of significant personal value, suggests that this method is an extremely effective way to collect the data. Both job satisfaction and the factors of spirituality and religiosity are intensely personal, and one could argue that gaining the information from any other source or method would be fraught with difficulties of access and of questionable accuracy.

While there was a relative degree of diversity of race (almost 15% overseas born), this sample lacked any significant degree of diversity for religion. Just over 83% of respondents came from either an SDA or Lutheran background, and the remaining respondents came from mainly a mixture of other Christian denominations. It would be expected that future research is needed to explore variance across religions or possibly even within specified denominations. Therefore, these findings should be used with care before generalising to other religious faiths or other contexts.

While these results generate interpretations based on the population of teachers from a number of schools, there was a range of school sizes within this sample, and such interpretations may not accurately represent the situation for schools of different sizes. It is important to note that the stressors in small schools are significantly different from those in larger schools. Furthermore, there was a self-imposed geographic limitation that restricted respondents to the state of Victoria.

Although areas for further research have been identified in the discussion of the results gained from the study of faith-based schools, to gain a greater understanding of the impact of religiosity and spirituality on teachers' job satisfaction, studies ideally need to be carried out in multiple faith-based and perhaps even incorporate some non-faith-based schools.

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Navigating the Academic Maze: An Auto-ethnographic Reflection on Advising in Thai Higher Education

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Abstract

Academic advising is an integral component of higher education that impacts student achievement, university retention, and graduation rates. Given the current competitive arena in Thai higher education, advising plays an increasingly critical role in students' and universities' success. However, advising is a complex process, and what actually occurs, with whom, when, and where is complicated. Furthermore, little is known of the current state of advising in Thai higher education as in the extant literature there are as yet no articles in English on the subject. The present article presents an auto-ethnographic reflection of the author's lived experience in conducting advising at a university in Thailand between 2020 and 2022. The purposes of this article were to shed light on the current state of advising in Thai higher education by sharing the author's lived experience, and to connect this experience to broader issues in advising at Thai universities. Suggestions are given to further the professionalization and quality of advising in Thai higher education, including a call for a paradigmatic shift from a traditional, prescriptive approach to a developmental, holistic one. Given the lack of English literature on advising in Thailand, this paper provides needed insights into the subject.

Keywords: *Academic advising, faculty advising, higher education, Thailand*

Introduction

A substantial body of empirical research indicates that academic advising supports positive outcomes for students as well as universities (Springer & Tyran, 2022). For students, advising has been linked with increased self-efficacy, improved decision making, and greater satisfaction with their university experience (Hart-Baldridge, 2020; Holland et al., 2020), while for universities advising supports student retention and graduation rates (Asavisanu & Mhunpiew, 2014; McGill, 2021). Academic advising has therefore come to be acknowledged as a function instrumental to both students' and universities' success (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2021; Complete College America, 2013). These benefits likely arise from the nature of the academic advising relationship, which inherently entails a longer-term relationship with a caring university member in a structured setting outside of the classroom. The development of a sustained, trusting relationship over time between a concerned university figure and a student fosters a greater sense of connection for students with their university, helping them feel that the university cares about them. In fact, advising is perhaps the only structured campus activity that facilitates having a personal, ongoing, one-to-one interaction with a caring university member. Indeed, as they navigate the growing complexity of higher education, today's students demand high quality advising to assist them in their educational planning and academic decision making. Around the world, the importance of high quality advising in contemporary higher education is being recognized, with more international academic advising conferences taking place, the establishment of international academic advising networks, and growing international research on the subject (White & Steele, 2016).

In Thai higher education, universities are confronting several pressures. Driven by the country's declining birth rate and ongoing economic stagnation, total higher education enrolment has consistently fallen over the last decade. In the 2020 academic year, approximately 100,000 openings were left unfulfilled (Joungtrakul, 2019; Quigley & Svare, 2021). Thai universities are experiencing serious financial stress, and many are implementing measures such as slashing budgets, paring staff and faculty, and cutting programs (Dumrongkiat, 2017, 2018). These issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, graduation and retention rates are a major concern. Data indicate that the national college completion rate hovers around 33%, meaning that only one in three students actually graduates within six years (World Bank, 2009). In the contemporary landscape of a highly competitive, financially stressed higher education market and a low retention rate, academic advising has become even more vital to helping Thai college students stay in school. It is even more crucial to ensure that enrolled students stay on course and graduate. Yet despite its importance, a lack of clarity still surrounds the complex process of academic advising (McGill, 2021).

What actually occurs in an advising session, with whom, where, when, and how can be difficult to determine. The answers to those questions may appear simple; advisors help students plan their courses according to the prescribed curriculum and meet with them on a regular basis in their offices throughout the student's time at university. However, a number of factors contribute to make advising a complex function. These factors include the organizational structure of advising; who delivers advising; the advisor's theoretical approach, assumptions, and attitudes towards advising; the type and quality of training provided to advisors; whether advising is proactively valued by the Institute of Higher Education's (IHE) leadership; the IHE's mission and campus culture; the funding and resources allocated for advising; and the characteristics of the student populace (Robbins, 2012). Due to such factors, advising takes a different shape at each university in accordance with its unique identity and circumstances.

The discipline of academic advising is nascent in Thai higher education, a factor contributing to the current dearth of knowledge on the subject. Academic advising is a component in the national higher education framework for the accreditation of universities, and all IHE are required to have an academic advising function (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2014). It is important to note, however, that a formalized, national set of standards for academic advising programs has not yet been devised. Thus, while Thai universities are technically required to provide academic advising services, there are no key performance indicators nor quality assurance measures for advising programs. Without standards or program oversight, it is probable that the types and quality of academic advising programs vary dramatically among Thai IHE.

The nation's top universities, such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Mahidol, tend to have more developed academic advising programs, while outside of these top tier institutes, there is a high level of variability. Further clouding our understanding of the situation in Thai higher education is the lack of a national association of academic advising. Lacking such an association, national empirical surveys have not been conducted, and fundamental knowledge of the profession does not yet exist. Key missing information includes staffing numbers, fiscal budgets, ratios of advisors to advisees, employment requirements for professional academic advisors, predominant models of advising, predominant theories of advising, types of advising services provided, and more common issues. Moreover, there is no journal dedicated to advising, and little research has been conducted in English on academic advising in the Thai higher education system. Thus, while each university must provide some form of advising, dramatic differences exist among the systems, delivery, and quality of advising across Thai IHE.

The present academic article seeks to address the murkiness of the current state of advising in Thai higher education. In the following passages, the researcher uses an auto-ethnographic approach to describe his lived experience in conducting academic advising at a Thai university. Auto-ethnography is a type of academic writing that is autobiographical, and analyzes and interprets the lived experiences of the researcher, connecting emerging insights to larger socio-cultural issues and trends (Poulos, 2021). Along this line, another purpose of this article was to connect the author's experience to broader concerns regarding advising in Thai higher education. Questions guiding the investigation on the experiences described included the following:

What was the organizational model of advising at their university? What were Thai students' perceptions of advising? What training was given? What was the administrative system of advising? What were salient issues around advising? How did the author's personal experience connect to broader issues in the field of academic advising in Thai higher education?

What is Academic Advising, Exactly?

To answer this question, it is important to understand that advising and counselling are not synonymous. Advising helps students to achieve their educational and career goals, as well as personal goals, while counselling specifically supports students to overcome personal problems that interfere with their academic achievements (Kuhn et al., 2021). While advisors may help students with personal goals, they are not trained to treat mental health issues and are not allowed to do so; in such instances, advisors must refer the student to a school counsellor. Academic advising has been defined as a series of intentional interactions grounded in the teaching and learning mission of the IHE that aim to synthesize students' educational experiences within the contexts of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond classroom and campus boundaries (NACADA, 2006). This modern definition of advising represents a holistic approach, in which academic advisors support student learning and success beyond the classroom, collaborating with them to achieve their personal goals and aspirations, and maximize their abilities.

While academic advising in American higher education dates to the founding of Harvard University in the early 17th century, advising as a professional field is only slightly over forty years old, having as its origin the founding of The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and The Global Community for Academic Advising in 1979 (Cook, 2009). The Association (NACADA), an international organization of professional advisors, counsellors, faculty, administrators, and students, endeavours to enhance students' educational development through the provision of quality academic advising (NACADA, 2023). Following the establishment of NACADA, early key events in the progress of advising toward professionalization involved using the term "academic advising" as a descriptor in the Educational Research Information Centre database and the publication of the first issue of the NACADA journal. Both of these developments occurred in 1981. Since then, graduate and postgraduate degree programs, scholarships, and research grants in advising have been established. Official national standards for advising programs have been promulgated, including standards on advising's mission, organization, administration, funding, facilities, campus and community relations; program evaluation has also been implemented. In addition, an extensive body of manuals, monographs, empirical research, and research meta-analyses has emerged (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2021; Young & Zeng, 2021). Thus, advising has become a distinct, formalized, professional field that is an area of specialization and expertise unto itself.

Three components are universal to advising: namely, curriculum or what advising deals with, pedagogy or how advising does what it does, and learning outcomes or the results of advising (NACADA, 2006). Curriculum encompasses advising theory, attributes of the IHE (e.g., vision and mission, campus culture, etc.), and the practicalities of enrolment, such as the organizational structure and administrative system of advising, informational resources, policies, and procedures. Advising pedagogy represents the preparation, facilitation, documentation, and assessment of advising interactions, as well as the relationships and interpersonal interactions involved. The advisor-student relationship is at the heart of this endeavor and is characterized by the development of a lasting relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and ethical behavior. Central to every interaction is the student's best interests. Development of such a trusting relationship demands that advisors have a conscious personal philosophy and approach to advising, that they have empathy and emotional intelligence, and that they demonstrate interpersonal and communicational skills in order to generate rapport and promote meaningful interactions (NACADA, 2006). Finally, learning outcomes are intertwined with the IHE's unique mission, goals, and curriculum, which direct what students will be expected to know, value, and do after participating in advising. To be effective, student outcomes must take into account student demographics. In American higher education, learning outcomes are affected by the student populace, which has grown increasingly diverse, with older people, single mothers, military veterans, international students, non-binary and LGBTQ+ people, and diverse ethnicities now constituting a significant portion (Hinton et al., 2014; Hodges, 2017).

A diversity of organizational structures of advising exist. A common structure adopted is the supplemental model, which is a shared structure whereby faculty instructors deliver advising in addition to professional advisors in an independent advising center (Pardee, 2004). Regarding training, often training of half a day to one full day once per semester is allotted (Robbins, 2012). Researchers have identified three aspects of effective advisor training: the informational component, which focuses on administrative-curriculum details and policies; the conceptual component, which covers theories and philosophies related to student learning and life-span development; and the relational component, which covers the interpersonal skills used in the one-to-one interaction (NACADA, 2006). Since each student is unique and student behavior is complex, a single advising theory does not circumscribe advising, which draws on an array of psychosocial and educational theories in such areas as student development, learning, decision-making, retention, personality, life span development, and moral development theories (Williams, 2007). Prescriptive advising and developmental advising are two notable approaches. *Prescriptive Advising* represents the traditional approach, and is based on the hierarchical relationship between the academic advisor and the student, in which the student asks questions and the advisor answers directly, often telling the advisee what to do. In contrast, *Developmental or Holistic Advising* focuses on the whole student, and promotes a relationship where the advisor is interested in such things as the student's decision making, relationships, attitudes, and problem solving skills. With this approach, the advisor encourages students to take responsibility for their own development and progress.

The evolution of advising, from being primarily information sharing to being more developmental and holistic (incorporating student learning beyond the classroom, developing students' strengths and autonomy, collaborating on personal goals, etc.), has meant that the humanistic aspect of the advisor-student interaction has garnered much attention (McGill, 2021). Extensive research has highlighted that a critical component of effective advising is the establishment of a relationship based on trust (Holland et al., 2020; NACADA, 2017). To develop a trusting relationship, researchers have found that the key qualities of effective advisors are empathy and warmth (Springer & Tyran, 2022).

Finally, although faculty-delivered advising is common, a number of issues have been identified in the literature. These include an inequitable workload for instructors; non-existent or poor assessment systems of advising; the absence of recognition and rewards systems; a lack of clarity on management's expectations of advising; inadequate training, especially a lack of coverage of relationship and interpersonal skills; and (low) instructor motivation (Hart-Baldridge, 2020; Hutson, 2013; Robbins, 2012; Troxel et al., 2021; White & Steele, 2014).

Academic Advising at a Private Thai University

From 2020 to 2022 I conducted academic advising within the undergraduate School of Arts at a private international university in metropolitan Bangkok with an approximate enrolment of 8,000 students. In the following passages, I delineate such matters as the model of advising, training, advising policies, administrative system, student perceptions of advising, and other advising concerns.

Model Administration of Advising

The target university utilized the supplemental model of advising. This meant that departmental faculty-delivered advising occurred in addition to the provision of professional advisors in a stand-alone advising center located in the academic affairs department. This advising center primarily served incoming students and sophomores through welcoming events, group orientations, and individual interviews. As well as these services, the advising center also provided one-to-one psychological counselling, free of cost for all students, and career guidance. The department head and an assistant were responsible for advising matters within a faculty. Leadership appeared supportive of advising, as evidenced by their communicating to faculty the importance and value of advising, stating that given the current competitive economics in higher education, advising had become a truly important mechanism to create strong engagement and rapport with students, and that advisors should make every effort to provide effective advising (Personal Communication, 1 June 2020).

Policy dictated that students attend one advising session per semester; students failing to do so were barred from registration for the upcoming semester. Instructors were typically assigned twelve advisees. As with all programs at the university under investigation, an app-based system was used for advising. This app allowed instructors to schedule sessions, review students' academic transcripts on both a quarterly and a cumulative basis, confirm students' participation in advising, and record session notes. Advising sessions normally occurred on campus at the office of the reporting investigator. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from 2020 to 2022, they took place online. A minimum session time of fifteen minutes was mandatory. In practice I allotted thirty minutes per session because less than that did not feel adequate to provide quality service. Advising policy suggested that the best time to schedule sessions was after the midterm exam period. Considering the scheduling of advising sessions, students were encouraged to schedule a session about a month prior to the final exam period. This gave students more time to determine whether they would need to retake a class, which would affect their course planning. By then students were also beginning to think ahead to the next semester, yet there was ample time remaining for advising to happen without interfering with students' final exam preparations. The author received one training session of three hours duration at the beginning of the semester which was provided by Academic Affairs department professionals. This training focused on the informational component, explaining how to use the app, curriculum requirements, and policies and procedures. The focus on administration to the neglect of relational components (i.e., interpersonal skills, soft-skills), while disappointing, was common as advisors of necessity must possess a comprehensive understanding of credits, course sequences, and requirements.

Student Characteristics, and Perceptions of Advising

Typically, I was assigned twelve students per semester for advising (thus a total of 48 students were advised between 2020 and 2022). These advisees were not the investigator's students, which provided the advisees with an opportunity to connect with a caring university member outside of their classroom. These students were from within the same program (Business English), reflecting the author expertise. In my case, the advisees primarily consisted of fourth year students nearing degree completion and graduation. Although the American university student demographic profile has diversified drastically, as previously noted, Thai higher education is still strongly characterized by a traditional student profile (Thai students are about 18–24 years of age, entering university from high school). This was the case at the target IHE, a private international university with relatively high tuition fees, where students were often of a higher socioeconomic status. As most of the advisees interviewed were within two semesters of graduation, they did not need much assistance in course planning. By this point, they had repeatedly been through the process of course planning and registration and were aware of the last remaining requirements they needed to fulfil in order to graduate. If advice was provided during the second semester of the academic calendar, there were usually a few advisees who were planning to enrol in summer school, with questions regarding whether the classes they needed would be offered and the maximum number of credits allowed.

Over time, I observed certain concerns prevalent among advisees. One concern was that they had not given sufficient thought to post-college plans and felt worried and anxious about upcoming, impending major life decisions regarding their careers, independence, and adulthood. Through discussion with them, it was found that most, if not all, had never been specifically asked by an instructor or an advisor in the academic affairs center as to their post-graduation plans. Other notable student concerns included trouble with time management (a frequent cause of poor management was spending excessive time playing online games, and not scheduling regular study time), sleep issues (usually staying up too late, and then feeling drowsy and unable to concentrate during class), relationship issues with friends or romantic partners, and academically related stress and anxiety. These student concerns mainly represented well-being and life issues that were different from the advising traditionally undertaken in academic planning. In my experience these issues were not difficult to detect. In a warm, friendly atmosphere where genuine care is shown, Thai students often wanted to share and get help with their personal concerns.

What Actually Happened in an Advising Session?

In my capacity as an advisor, I had two critical responsibilities. One was to check the student's academic performance by scanning their transcript to identify academic concerns (or to give praise for good achievement). The second was to examine their study plan for the upcoming semester to evaluate whether they had chosen the correct courses in the right sequence, completed the prerequisites for their chosen classes, and taken an appropriate course load. The gist of an advising session thus centered on ensuring that advisees were prepared for registration and provided with information and resources as needed.

Prior to the session the advisee was contacted via a message from the author that was composed in a way that would be friendly to students, in which I provided a brief self-introduction, notified the student that advising session dates had been scheduled and that they could select the time most suitable for them, asked them to complete and return their pre-registration course planner at least one day prior to their advising session, and expressed excitement to meet them. The introductory messages were written with the intent of addressing the advisees as valued people. Most students appreciated this message and replied in turn. After this, I reviewed the student's transcript, checking for outlying occurrences such as a course(s) being repeated multiple times or low grades in a specific course or semester, as well as for indicators of excellence.

A session was opened by giving a short self-introduction so that the student could get to know the advisor personally. Then I asked the student to share something of their own background, especially their hobbies, which was intended to be a pleasant ice-breaker. These introductions were not required, but were crucial in developing a warm, personal relationship. Only after this was a transition made to discuss the student's academic performance. However, rather than immediately focusing on any specific academic concerns, an indirect path was used by inquiring as to how the current semester had been going for them so far. Taking this indirect approach helped put students at ease, rather than making them feel defensive. Then any relevant academic matters were raised or performance praised. Finally, their pre-registration planner was reviewed. Once the core academically related tasks had been completed, I talked with them in what was intended to be a warm manner to explore if they had any further concerns or questions. At this juncture, students would often share their personal concerns. Then the advising session went beyond its academic focus to life issues and well-being concerns. Finally, sessions were concluded by clearly informing the student that if they had any questions or needed assistance in the future, their advisor was happy to help.

Pertinent Issues

Regarding workload, assuming a normal load of twelve students and, in my case, an average session time of thirty minutes, advising accounted for about an additional six hours of work per semester. This calculation was not inclusive of preparation and follow-up documentation. An additional six hours was manageable, but not insignificant. It demanded careful planning to schedule sessions to fit into the author's busy work schedule and yet also be convenient for students. At times it was difficult to find a mutually suitable appointment date, and advising sessions could end up falling on a packed day of classes, creating work overload and stress. To prevent such occurrences, it was sometimes necessary to schedule advising sessions on a Sunday, with the student's agreement.

The advising assessment system was another concern. My experience verified that a lack of clarity on management's expectations regarding advising was an important issue. Students were required to complete an evaluation form following their session. However, the content of the evaluation form (its items and rubric) was not explained to faculty. Thus, faculty advisors were unable to know the specific criteria being used in evaluation, which created confusion. Furthermore, the results of these evaluations were not communicated to the faculty. Without receiving the assessment results, the evaluation felt meaningless, and I wondered what purpose it actually served. Certainly, it was not a metric in considerations of faculty compensation. This experience highlighted the findings noted earlier by other investigators (Robbins, 2012; Troxel et al., 2021). Even if an IHE has an evaluation system, it is rare that it truly incorporates, evaluates, and weighs advising as a formal component in decisions of promotions, salary raises, merit, and tenure.

Another issue was that the training provided was only one three hour session, which was insufficient. The training did not provide guidelines on best practices in advising, an explanation of management's expectations, nor did it include explanations of humanistic and student development theories. Many instructors may be unfamiliar with the advising strategies available to promote student success; hence, such training is vital. Furthermore, the interpersonal-relational component of advising is central to the endeavor, but approaches to generating and developing a long-term relationship based on trust, empathy, and caring were not covered in the training received.

A low commitment to advising was perceived among most fellow advisors/instructors. Advising was felt by many instructors to be a burden, which is a common concern. While this was unfortunate, it was a probable outcome considering the issues noted above: the poor advising assessment system, lack of recognition and monetary incentives (or other rewards), inadequate training, and management's unclear expectations. In addition, a few instructors viewed advising as a form of coddling students, whom they felt were of a mature enough age to do their own academic planning, and hence should be expected to do so.

Table 1 below presents several themes arising from this discussion, and offers a glimpse of the current state of advising at the selected private Thai university based on the author's lived experience.

Table 1 *Themes Emerging From the Author's Experience in Conducting Academic Advising*

Organizational Model	Administration	Policies	Training
The supplemental model; a shared structure whereby advising duties are shared between faculty and a central, standalone unit	Department head and their assistants in charge of advising Sessions scheduled after midterm exams An app used to schedule sessions and record session notes	Students required to attend one advising session per semester, if not, barred from registering for upcoming semester Minimum required session time: 15 minutes	One training of three hours Training dedicated to information on program credits, courses, requirements, and administration and policies
Student Characteristics	**Student Perceptions**	**Prevalent Student Issues**	**Prevalent Advisor Issues**
Few non-traditional path students (almost exclusively traditional students; about 18–25 years of age, entering college from high school)	Students apathetic to advising, participated because it was a pre-registration requirement Many advisees were stressed over their future and had not done enough planning for post-college life Common concerns: Time management, poor sleep, anxiety/worry, stress, and relationship issues	Student apathy Students lack awareness of the benefits to them of receiving advise	Instructor workload Instructor motivation Inadequate training Poor assessment system Lack of recognition or reward system

Another concern that I observed was a prevailing apathy among students toward advising. Students felt advising to be an obligation and participated only because it was a pre-registration requirement. One reason for this indifference was that they seemed not to fully understand the benefits to them of advising beyond course planning. Also, their past advising sessions had almost exclusively been focused on the informational component, to the diminishment of the relational aspect. Thus students (as well as most faculty) viewed advising as merely a routine, obligatory task.

Discussion

Although the present investigator was genuinely committed to delivering high quality academic advising, it was challenging at times to do so. It is true that a busy work schedule, exacerbated by a lack of recognition and credit for advising, were demotivating factors. There were occasions when the importance of advising was subsumed under the routine pressures of a busy teaching schedule. As these factors affected the author, who cares about advising, it is likely that they had an even greater effect on those instructors who were less committed in the first place. The lived experience reported demonstrates that for quality advising to occur, demotivating factors should also be addressed.

For the author, advising was one of the most rewarding educational duties. It is rare that instructors have an opportunity to meet individually with students in a structured setting, especially those who are not members of their own classes, with the opportunity to hear and learn from them about their experiences at university. Further, students may open up and share more with instructors who are not their own teachers. Therefore through advising, instructors may attain a more insightful understanding of a student's perspective. As noted earlier, researchers have commented that advising connects the student to the university. Interestingly, I found that by being able to better know the student's perspective, it deepened my connection to the students and the university. When it is possible to deliver high quality advising, a genuine, meaningful human interaction occurred, which can be a positive experience for both the instructor and the student.

My effort to make advising as pleasant and positive an experience as possible was validated when, at the session's end, most students expressed sincere thanks, and when others sent thank you messages later on. An indirect form of positive feedback was that after some time had passed following their advising session, students did not disappear, but followed up with questions as needed. This is noted because there is a marked tendency for Thai students to avoid asking questions of teachers if they do not feel comfortable with them. It is worth noting further that multiple advisees informed the author that they highly appreciated advisors who obviously cared, which in their experience was rare. This clearly highlights the importance of advisors being caring and empathic. A lack of those qualities can make the process feel like a robotic task.

To advance the professionalization and quality of advising, a number of recommendations are made. These suggestions arise from the author's lived experience, yet are based on and aligned with the extant body of advising literature. First, university leadership should actively support advising and treat it as a function critical to the university's success. The following are four ways that leadership can directly support advising.

Improve training. Training should not be solely information based (Hutson, 2013). As the key to successful advising is the development of a relationship built on trust, effective training should incorporate a component on soft skills, which should receive an equal (if not greater) allocation of time than that given to the informational component. Increasing the duration of training to at least one full day would give more opportunity to achieve this aim. Moreover, ongoing professional development activities specific to advising should be conducted.

Improve the evaluation system. Assessment criteria should be explained to faculty so that advisors know exactly what aspects of advising are being evaluated, and why (Hart-Baldridge, 2020). It is difficult, if not impossible, for instructors to deliver quality advising without clearly knowing what is expected of them. The evaluation results should be shared with the instructor at the end of each semester, and be included as a component of the instructor's year-end performance evaluation. This feedback should be used constructively and contribute toward the growth and professional development of instructors.

Reward high quality advising. A formal reward system should be designed and implemented. Incentives for excellence in advising may be either intangible (e.g., a certificate of excellence or appreciation) or monetary (i.e., advising could be a factor in promotions or salary increments) (McGill, 2021).

Enhance students' understanding of advising. Achieving this goal may involve educational efforts. One suggestion would be to incorporate an educational component on advising into freshman seminars and student activities and workshops, as well as incorporating such a component into relevant courses like Psychology for Daily Life.

Researchers such as Hart-Baldridge (2020), Springer & Tyran (2022), and White (2015) have called for a "culture of advising." A culture of advising can be seen as one where discrete factors are interconnected holistically to generate a set of values, beliefs, and best practices that support effective advising. The components of an advising culture include, but are not limited to, ongoing training that incorporates a focus on interpersonal and soft skills; clearly communicated expectations; a performance evaluation system that is used to provide regular feedback to instructors for their professional development; and a reward system for high performing instructors. In this way, each of the above recommendations can be seen as interconnecting holistically to promote such a culture of advising.

The argument is made here that in order to develop a culture of advising in Thai higher education, it is critical to shift from the traditional, prescriptive paradigm of advising to a more modern developmental, holistic approach. The target university's prescriptive approach is not likely to be either unique or singular, but rather represents the predominant approach among Thai universities. While students today need help to navigate the increasingly complex curricula of modern education, they also do not want to be treated as if they are merely a student identification number, to simply be told what classes to take, and in what sequence. Students appreciate feeling that they are valued and cared for by their university. The approach to advising taken by the current investigator, very briefly described earlier, represents such a holistic approach. A comment I received from more than one advisee strengthens this assertion: "Thank you so much [for your advising]. … I've never had an advisor who showed that they cared."

To reify the holistic approach and its benefits, a further example is provided from the author's lived experience. In one instance, an advisee had an unresolved issue with an administrative office. The student felt stymied as to how to handle it and requested advice from the author (their advisor). This student was frustrated and upset with university administration, and was strongly considering asking his parents to intervene in this situation. I suggested that prior to taking that step, it would be better to first make a greater effort to obtain more information from that office. Further, to do so, the student would need to prepare by being polite and respectful, having a well-groomed appearance, and generally behaving in a professional manner. Second, the advisee needed to think through the situation in more detail to crystallize their specific needs and questions. The overall emphasis was to act in a professional manner. In response to these recommendations, the advisee stated that this was the first time to carefully consider an actual interaction with administrative staff. For this student, it was a novel approach. Weeks after the session, the student sent an appreciative message of thanks, explaining that by following the advice given, the matter had been successfully resolved without needing to involve his parents. This case illustrates several benefits of holistic advising: (a) how advisors can support student autonomy (in this case, helping a student learn how to solve a problem independently, (b) how the university benefitted from effective advising by the student not involving parents, (c) how the university also benefitted from effective advising when the student felt empowered and cared for by the advisor (a representative of the university), and (d) how effective advising also serves to connect instructors to students (the author felt more connected to the student knowing that the student had been helped to solve this problem).

Conclusions and Limitations

The present article presented a reflection on the author's lived experience in delivering academic advising at a university in Thailand. It was suggested that a culture of advising should be developed, in which advising is valued for its ability to generate a sense of connection for the student with the university and that promotes an approach that strongly emphasizes interpersonal skills and qualities of warmth, caring, and empathy, which are fundamental to the advising relationship. Along this line, it was argued that, as has been noted in the literature, a developmental, holistic approach may be better suited for today's students, and may confer more benefits to the university than a prescriptive approach, which is likely the predominant approach in Thai universities. Examples were provided from the author's lived experience of how a holistic approach can support students beyond the classroom.

This being an ethnographic paper, a natural limitation was that one individual's subjective experience cannot be generalized to the broader population. Thus, my experience is not intended to be applied to the entire Thai higher education system. Furthermore, I recognize potential biases that may have unknowingly influenced the expression of ideas in this article. However, the author strove for objectivity and neutrality, and hopefully a balanced interpretation of his experience has been shared. Multiple avenues for future research are called for. Given how little we know about advising in Thai higher education, a fundamental question has been asked in this paper. How similar or different was the author's experience to the experience of instructors/advisors at other Thai universities? In addition, as no advising association exists in Thai higher education, national data on advising programs has not yet been collected. An overarching need is to collect quantitative data across Thai universities in areas such as the predominant types of organizational advising models; the use of technology in advising, theoretical approaches; advisors' and students' attitudes towards and perceptions of advising; methods of assessment of advising; types and effectiveness of training; and the governance of advising, including staffing (e.g., academic advising department headcounts, job entry requirements, and workloads), and funding. In conclusion, advising is a key function of institutes of higher education, one which is needed now more than ever. In writing this article, the hope was to spark much needed further research and discussion on the contemporary status of advising in Thai higher education, and how its further professionalization can best be supported.

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The Mediating Role of Perceived Behavioral Control on the Relationship Between Financial Knowledge and Saving Intention: A Study of Vietnamese University Students

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Abstract

Young people, particularly university students, are often believed to desire a lifestyle associated with complete enjoyment, leading to money saving issues. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of financial knowledge on the saving intention of Generation Z university students majoring in business and economics in Vietnam, as well as the mediating role of perceived behavioral control in this relationship. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The primary data was collected from respondents (*N* = 625) majoring in business and economics and in Vietnam and analyzed. The results indicated that while financial knowledge did not exert a direct influence on saving intention, perceived behavioral control mediated the relationship between financial knowledge and saving intention. Additionally, there were differences in saving intention among demographic groups, namely, gender, income, financial support from family, and household living arrangement. The results have relevance for educational institutions, financial organizations, and individuals, especially students in the disciplines of business and economics.

Keywords: *Financial knowledge, perceived behavioral control, saving intention*

Introduction

Credit Karma's survey of the financial aspirations of Generation Z, specifically those born between 1997 and 2005, reached 1,006 adults in March and April 2023. The results showed that 36% of Generation Z expected to retire at the age of 50, and 66% expected to retire at 60. However, three quarters of Zoomers did not have any private pension fund, and half of them didn't have a savings account (Credit Karma, 2023).

The same situation is true for Vietnamese youth, especially Generation Z. About 67% of Vietnamese surveyed felt hesitant about financial management, and the percentage of people who admitted not knowing how to manage money was the highest among the 10 countries surveyed (Backbase, 2021). For many people, the biggest challenge in financial management was saving (67%), and other difficulties included debt, setting aside money for retirement, managing money, or managing portfolios (Backbase, 2021). Moreover, Generation Z has a lifestyle that prefers freedom and experiential pursuits. Some individuals who have a desire to control their spending do not have the right tools and methods to realize their goals (Tien & Quynh, 2022). Generation Z is confronted with the issue of saving both locally and abroad, particularly with regard to not having sufficient reserves to handle future financial setbacks.

University students are preparing to enter the labor market and earn an income, so understanding their saving intention will help to more accurately predict their financial behavior and their financial well-being in the future. Business and economics students are exposed to subjects related to economics and finance in the curriculum, so they have a certain amount of financial knowledge (Huang et al., 2023). Therefore, the researchers chose to investigate the saving intention and related factors for Generation Z students majoring in business and economics.

Satsios and Hadjidakis (2018) applied the Theory of Planned Behavior in investigating saving behavior among Pomak households, and found that perceived behavioral control had a positive effect on saving intention. Peiris (2021) studied the effect of financial knowledge on saving among employed individuals, and found that financial insights had a substantial effect on saving intention. The effects on saving intention of demographic factors, financial insights, or the ability of individuals to control themselves have been examined previously (e.g., Davis & Hustvedt, 2012; Keat et al., 2020; Shim et al., 2009). However, equivalent studies on the impact of the aforementioned factors on saving intention have been few in Vietnam, especially among university students, as most of the preceding studies were conducted among employed individuals and households.

To fill this research gap, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was used in this study, which posits that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence an individual's intention and decision-making (Ajzen, 2005). The financial well-being model proposed by Shim et al. (2009) was used to emphasize the effect of financial knowledge on saving intention of university students majoring in business and economics, with the mediating role of perceived behavioral control.

The following research issues were addressed in this study:

1. What are the differences in saving intention among demographic groups based on gender, monthly income, financial support from family, and household living arrangement?
2. How do financial knowledge and perceived behavioral control affect saving intention?
3. How does perceived behavior control affect the relationship between financial knowledge and saving intention of university students?

Literature Review

Saving Intention

Lewis et al. (1995) and Warneryd (1999) illustrated that saving can be viewed as the outcome of a decision-making process, representing the regular allocation of resources. The act of consistent saving was driven by future considerations, such as unforeseen expenses or upcoming goals, which compelled individuals to set aside income (Ismail et al., 2013). These considerations prompted individuals to develop the intention to save, defined as the inclination to commit to the behavior of accumulating money for unforeseen events or future achievements (Widyastuti et al., 2016). We examined saving intention from the standpoint of utilizing surplus income after consumption to accumulate funds for the future through various methods, such as saving money in deposit accounts, purchasing life insurance, or acquiring and storing gold.

Investigators have employed the TPB of Ajzen (1991) to investigate saving intention (e.g., Do et al., 2023; Mohamed & Mohamed, 2018; Nizar et al., 2021). Using this theory as a foundation, Shim et al. (2009) formulated a model for student financial well-being, wherein factors such as financial knowledge, financial attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control served as determinants influencing financial behavioral intention. Others have investigated the influence of financial knowledge on the dependent variable of saving intention (Peiris, 2021; Yuniningsih et al., 2022). The combination of the TPB model and the factor of financial knowledge in predicting saving intention was also explored by Widjaja et al. (2020) and Widyastuti et al. (2016).

The impact of financial knowledge on saving intention has remained inconclusive. While studies by Peiris (2021) and Widjaja et al. (2020) indicated that financial knowledge strongly influenced the formation of saving intention, others were unable to show a statistically significant relationship (Widyastuti et al., 2016; Yuniningsih et al., 2022). Moreover, these studies primarily surveyed working individuals, with potential variations in saving intention compared to the situation with university students (Ando & Modigliani, 1963). Nevertheless, in the context of Vietnam particularly among Generation Z students, there was a lack of research on the application of the Planned Behavior Theory and the financial knowledge factor in predicting saving intention.

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control has been defined as an individual's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control represented the degree of control over the performance of the behavior, rather than the outcome of the behavior (Ajzen, 2002). In the context of saving, perceived behavioral control is used to describe an individual's perception of having the necessary knowledge and resources to perform saving behavior, i.e, the perception of the degree of control an individual has over one’s own saving behavior.

The research of Satsios and Hadjidakis (2018) on households in Pomak, Greece, showed that the perceived behavioral control factor could explain 31.5% of the variation in the saving intention factor.

In the Asian context, a study on community college students in Malaysia conducted by Nizar et al. (2021), showed that perceived behavioral control had a positive statistical effect for saving intention of .302, which meant that self-control impacted behavioral intention. The easier that students felt it was to save, the more likely they were to form saving intentions. Similar results and conclusions have come from other studies, which indicated that perception of the degree of control, or perceived behavioral control, was a significant factor influencing the intention to perform saving behavior (Davis & Hustvedt, 2012; Sari et al., 2023). In Vietnam, Hang et al. (2023) highlighted that individuals who perceived a sense of control over their financial situation might develop an intention to save, while a lack of control over their finances could diminish such inclinations. However, research in Malaysia on low-income households showed that feelings about control of saving did not have a significant effect on saving intention (Rabun et al., 2023). This might have occurred for the simple reason that low-income individuals find it hard to save money.

Based on the results of the past studies, we proposed the first hypothesis:

H_1: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on saving intention.

Financial Knowledge

The definition of financial knowledge has been discussed frequently in many papers. The majority of researchers have treated financial literacy and financial knowledge as interchangeable terms (Huang et al., 2013; Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014), a perspective adopted in the present study. Worthington (2006) defined financial knowledge as the ability to apply mathematical knowledge and understanding of financial terminology. In addition, financial knowledge was defined by Schagen and Lines (1996) as the ability to make informed judgments and effective decisions regarding the use and management of money. Thilakam (2012) highlighted that financial knowledge was related to the ability to understand finances, which referred to the set of skills and knowledge that enable an individual to make informed and effective decisions regarding financial issues. We utilized the concept of financial knowledge proposed by Thilakam (2012).

The influence of financial knowledge on the intention to save has been debated. Widjaja et al. (2020) showed that financial knowledge had the strongest influence on saving intention, with an impact level given at .650. This meant that the deeper an individual's financial knowledge, the stronger was the intention to save. Research conducted by Shim et al. (2009) on undergraduate and graduate university students in the southwestern United States showed that financial knowledge had a modest impact on financial behaviors, including saving (β = .10). This implied that increasing financial knowledge could increase an individuals' saving intention. However, some studies have shown that financial knowledge and saving intention are not related (Hati et al., 2020; Keat et al., 2020). This means that even with low financial knowledge, individuals still intended to save, and conversely an individual with good financial knowledge might not be motivated to save.

In Vietnam, Nguyen and Doan (2020) found that financial knowledge positively influenced saving behavior. However, a certain distinction exists between an individual's intention to perform a behavior and the actual behavior (Sheeran & Webb, 2016). The direct relationship between financial knowledge and saving intention has not been thoroughly investigated in Vietnam, especially among the younger generation. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H_2: Financial knowledge has a positive impact on saving intention.

Research in Malaysia among working people aged 40, which focused on the intention to save for retirement, showed that financial knowledge was a strong factor impacting perceived behavioral control (She et al., 2023). The investigators suggested that individuals with a high level of financial knowledge could demonstrate the ability to understand the consequences of overspending, which was associated with the perception of behavioral control. Hence, a good financial knowledge could increase individuals' level of control over their behavior to better manage their finances, or such knowledge might lead individuals to think that saving was easier. Approaching financial knowledge from the perspective of planning preparedness, Croy et al. (2010) showed that financial knowledge was a significant factor impacting perceived behavioral control. This meant that financial knowledge was associated with financial self-beliefs, meaning that a positive change in financial knowledge could lead to positive changes in perceived behavior control. Hence, the third hypothesis was proposed:

H_3: Financial knowledge has a positive impact on perceived behavioral control.

Sobaih and Elshaer (2023) examined the intention of students to participate in financial activities, particularly investment activities, at three leading public universities in Saudi Arabia. They found a significant positive mediating effect of perceived behavioral control in the relationship between financial knowledge and behavioral intention. Sufficient financial knowledge could enhance students' confidence in their skills and capabilities, thereby fostering an increased intention to participate in financial activities. Similarly, Mulyono (2021) in Indonesia found that individuals with strong financial knowledge excelled in analyzing and managing their personal financial situations. This demonstrated that financial competency ultimately elevated the intention to participate in financial activities. Recognizing the absence of studies exploring the mediating role of perceived behavioral control in the relationship between financial knowledge and saving intention, the present research team formulated the fourth hypothesis:

H_4: Financial knowledge positively influences saving intention through the mediating effect of perceived behavioral control.

Control Variables

Gender. Various opinions have been expressed about the influence of gender on saving intention. Qiao (2012) indicated that there were no significant differences in financial behaviors between male and female college students, including saving. Fisher (2010) also reached a similar conclusion, and it seemed that the difference between men and women in saving was often associated with the purpose of their savings, and their actual saving behavior.

Bashir et al. (2013) indicated that a higher percentage of males saved as compared to females. However, Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) pointed out that intention and actual behavior, including financial behavior, were dissimilar. Actually, the gap between intention and behavior was significant. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H_{5a}: There is a difference in saving intention between respondents of different genders.

Monthly income and family's financial support levels. Friedman (1957) indicated that savings in households was stable and did not depend on income differences, while Dharmarathna and Kumari (2021) obtained the opposite result. Maison et al. (2019) also pointed out the positive and significant relationship between individuals' financial situations and their saving status. However, Sherraden et al. (2004) indicated that the relationship between income level and saving was negative. Since the previous results seemed contradictory, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H_{5b}: There is a difference in saving intention among respondents with different monthly income levels.

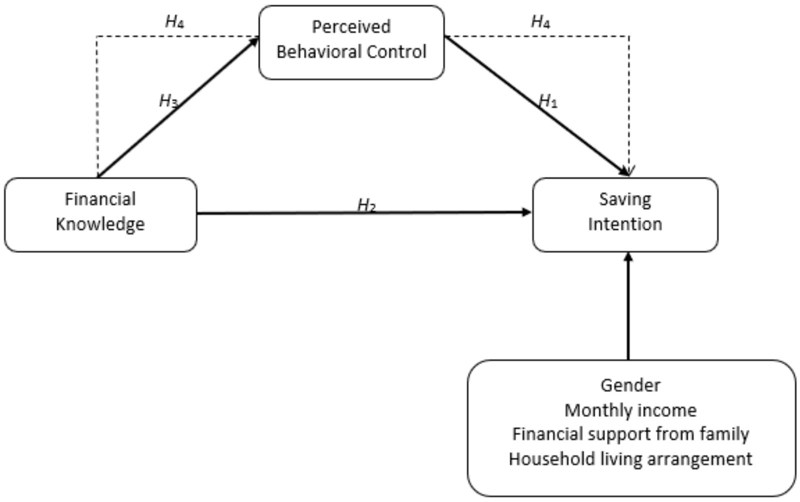
Additionally, due to the fact that our research targeted university students with modest and unstable incomes, and many depended on financial aid from family, another hypothesis was proposed to shed light on the current issue:

H_{5c}: There is a difference in saving intention among respondents with different family financial support levels.

Household living arrangements. This item refers to the organization and makeup of a person's home, encompassing the number of individuals in the household and their interrelationships with each other (Russel & Breaux, 2019). While there was no previous research regarding this issue, our qualitative research specifically indicated that students who lived in different social environments were thereby influenced in their tendencies to save. Therefore, we proposed a final hypothesis:

H_{5d}: There is a difference in saving intention among respondents with different household living arrangements.

Figure 1 *The Proposed Research Model*



Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used: for the qualitative method, in-depth interviews were conducted lasting from 20–30 min to get a comprehensive view of the saving intention of university students studying business and economics. Ten participants joined the in-depth interviews. Through the participants' answers and observations of their behavior, preliminary awareness of their intention to save money was obtained, as well as some information being gained about the factors that influenced the intention of saving. Perceived behavior control and financial knowledge were predicted to have a positive impact on saving intention.

In the quantitative research, questionnaires were distributed via online as a Google Form, with 19 questions related to Generation Z students studying business and economics at universities in provinces and cities in Vietnam. The questionnaires were randomly distributed; the number of surveys received was 640, of which 625 responses were valid. Financial support given is shown in Table 1. Males constituted 18.7% of the survey population and females 81.3%.

Table 1 *Financial Support Received by the Respondents (N = 625)*

Feature Considered	Percentage	Feature Considered	Percentage
Monthly Income		*Family's Financial Support Levels*	
Below VND 1 million	13.8	Below VND 2 million	32.0
VND 1 million to VND 3 million	24.6	VND 2 million to VND 3 million	26.4
VND 3 million to VND 5 million	6.7	VND 3 million to VND 4 million	15.7
VND 5 million to VND 7 million	5.9	More than VND 4 million	12.5
More than VND 7 million	5.9	No family's financial support	13.4
No monthly income	43.1		

The measurement scales for the factors, namely, financial knowledge, perceived behavioral control, and saving intention were all evaluated based on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire propositions are shown in Table 2.

The data analysis process involved sequential steps, starting with Reliability Analysis, followed by Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to assess the scale's reliability. During the Exploratory Factor Analysis stage, the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was utilized to evaluate the validity of factor analysis. The Rotated Component Matrix was used to identify robust statistically observed variables, retaining those with a factor loading coefficient greater than or equal to .50 and appearing only once. Variables not meeting these criteria were excluded (Hair et al., 1998).

Table 2 *Measurement Scales for Variables*

Variable	Statement	Source
Financial Knowledge	I understand financial concepts and terminology. I can combine skills, resources and knowledge to make financial decisions. I have the ability to discern financial decisions and discuss financial issues without feeling overwhelmed. I can make effective financial choices.	Widyastuti et al. (2016)
Perceived Behavioral Control	I believe I have the ability to save. If it were up to me to save, I would be confident that I could save. Whether I save is entirely up to me. I am confident that I can save. I feel I have control over my own savings.	Kidwell & Jewell (2003)
Saving Intention	I am interested in starting to save money. I desire to have savings. I am likely to save money in the future. I have a very clear intention of starting to save money. I will try my best to save money. My goal is to have savings in the future.	Zhao et al. (2005), Armitage & Conner (2001), and Linan & Chen (2009)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis followed and was designed to determine, test, and adjust the measurement model. Finally, Structural Equation Modeling was employed to analyze multidimensional relationships among multiple variables, allowing conclusions to be drawn about hypotheses (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004).

Results

Cronbach's Alpha Values

Cronbach's Alpha was determined for all variables measuring scales, and all values were greater than .75 for accepted items. Peterson (1994) stated that a minimum Cronbach's Alpha value for a variable to be considered acceptable was .70. Hence, the analysis demonstrated that all observed variables had adequate reliability. The Corrected Item-Total Correlation values calculated were all higher than the value (.30) specified by Nunnally et al. (1994) as indicating acceptable measurement scales.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The Bartlett test was used to determine whether or not the observed variables were correlated, whereas the KMO coefficient was adopted to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis. Hair et al. (2010) stated that combining independent and dependent variables in a single factor analysis and then using the resultant factors to support dependence relationships was inappropriate. Thus, each of these variables were examined independently. The results of the summarized analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 *Summarized Exploratory Factor Analysis Results*

Item	KMO Value	Sig.	Variance Explained (%)	Factor Loading	Conclusion
FK	.796	.000	65.92	> .50	Qualified for analysis
PBC	.821	.000	73.82	> .50	Qualified for analysis
IN	.882	.000	63.24	> .50	Qualified for analysis

Note. FK = financial knowledge; PBC = Perceived behavioural control; IN = Saving intention.

The results obtained showed that the KMO values of the variables were within the required range of .50 to 1.0 suggesting that exploratory factor analysis was pertinent to the data obtained from the research survey. The results featured under Total Variance Explained for financial knowledge, perceived behavioral control, and saving intention were all higher than 50%, implying that the Exploratory Factor Analysis model was appropriate. According to Hair et al. (2010), an observed variable with a loading factor of .50 was a good quality observed variable, and the minimum should be .30. All the variables used in the research had a loading factor value above .50, indicating that the observed variables were statistically significant. All the variables, as well as observed variables, were qualified for the next phase of analyzing.

Model Fit

The model fit testing data obtained are shown in Table 4. The quality of the suggested research model using Confirmatory Factor Analysis was evaluated after testing if the measurement model and the data met the requirements. The criteria outlined by Hair et al. (2010) were employed.

Table 4 *The Test Result of Model Fit*

Analysis	Test Result	Cut-off Criteria	Assessment
CMIN/df	4.173	CMIN/df ≤ 2 – Good CMIN/df ≤ 5 – Acceptable	Acceptable
CFI	0.948	CFI ≥ .90 – Good CFI ≥ .95 – Very good CFI ≥ .80 – Acceptable	Good
GFI	0.930	GFI ≥ .90 – Good GFI ≥ .95 – Very good	Good
RMSEA	0.071	RMSEA ≤ .08 – Acceptable RMSEA ≤ .03 – Good	Acceptable

The above results showed that the model fit indicators varied from acceptable to good. It signified that the research model was appropriate with the data obtained, and further analysis was justified.

Hypothesis Testing

The research group used 1,000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals to examine the direct and indirect effects. Table 5 shows that financial knowledge had a direct effect on perceived behavioral control and saving intention, and perceived behavioral also directly affected saving intention with a significance value below .05. The analysis results also indicated that financial knowledge had an indirect effect on saving intention, with a significance-value of .001.

Table 5 *Bootstrap Result for Direct and Indirect Effects*

Direct Effect	FK	PBC	IN
PBC	.003		–
IN	.059	.002	–
Indirect Effect			
PBC	–	–	–
IN	.001	–	–

Note. FK = financial knowledge; PBC = Perceived behavioural control; IN = Saving intention.

In order to further examine the relationship between the variables, Structural Equation Modeling techniques were used. It was found that perceived behavioral control positively influenced saving intention with a standardized regression weight of .562, and the *p*-value coefficient was below .05. Therefore, H_1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 was rejected as the *p*-value coefficient was above .05, so financial knowledge did not influence saving intention. On the other hand, financial knowledge had a significant impact on perceived behavioral control (β = .431). In addition, saving intention was positively influenced by financial knowledge through the mediation of perceived behavioral control, with a standardized regression coefficient of .243 and *p*-value coefficient below .05. Therefore, H_3 and H_4 were supported.

The Differences in Saving Intention Based on Demographic Variables

For gender, the *t*-test significance was .011 < .05, which meant there was a difference in the average saving intention between different genders and that H_{5a} was supported. In more detail, the statistical results indicated that the average savings intention for males was 4.25 (maximum range up to 5.0), while for females, it was 4.07. Therefore, it can be concluded that males had a higher average intention to save than females. Although females made up the majority of respondents (81.3%), the sample structure reflected a difference consistent with the reality in Vietnam, where there are more female students studying in the field of business and economics compared to male students.

In terms of financial support from family, the *p*-value of the ANOVA test was .118, which did not reach statistical significance. This meant there was no difference in saving intention among students with different levels of family financial support. Hence, Hypothesis 5_c was rejected.

In addition, the data showed that students with different income levels had different average saving intentions (p = .002). Moreover, the results also indicated that individuals with incomes ranging from VND 3 million to VND 5 million had the highest saving intention, and the lowest were those with incomes ranging from VND 5 million to VND 7 million. Thus, Hypothesis 5_b was supported.

Finally, for household living arrangements, the *p*-value was .000, which meant that there was a significant difference in the average saving intention among students living with family, living with friends, and living alone. In detail, the data indicated that students living alone had the lowest average saving intention of the three groups, with the highest being those living with friends. This meant that Hypothesis 5_d was supported.

Discussion

The results indicated that the influence of perceived behavioral control on saving intention is significantly high, accounting for up to 56.2% of variance. This outcome suggests that if students believe saving is easy and have the ability to do it, their saving intention are likely to be higher. The previous studies of Davis and Hustvedt (2012), Nizar et al. (2021), Satsios and Hadjidakis (2018), and others have also shown similar results. However, the impact of perceived behavioral control on saving intention in our study context is the greatest. This means that for Vietnamese students majoring in business and economics, being able to control their own financial behaviors is very important when aiming to achieve saving goals in the future. This also emphasizes the essential role of self-control skills in the process of personal financial management.

The data show that financial knowledge had no impact on saving intention, which can be explained by the characteristics of the study participants. All respondents were students majoring in business and economics, implying a certain level of financial knowledge. The findings of Grable and Joo (2000) indicated a positive correlation between increased financial knowledge and greater risk tolerance. Additionally, Nguyen et al. (2016) highlighted that investors with a higher risk tolerance tended to allocate a larger portion of their investments to risky assets. Therefore, students majoring in business and economics tended to invest more than save, with the expectation of gaining experience, applying theory knowledge into practice, and furthermore generating larger amounts of money in the future. However, with the mediating effect of perceived behavioral control, financial knowledge had a positive impact on saving intention, with an influence level of 24.3%. Mulyono (2021) and Sobaih and Elshaer (2023) came to a similar conclusion. The results suggest that a solid financial knowledge foundation can help students develop better expense management skills, as it provides essential insights into personal finance and how to manage financial resources. Thus, the intention to save is strengthened.

Similar to studies of Croy et al. (2010), Serido et al. (2013), and She et al. (2023), our data also indicated that financial knowledge strongly impacts perceived behavioral control, evidenced by an impact level of 43.1%. Financial knowledge helps university students make financial decisions wisely because they have to adopt a spending plan to ensure they do not exceed their financial capacity.

Additionally, the results illustrated that male students had higher saving intention than females. Female students often have more personal spending needs, such as buying clothes, cosmetics, and hair care, while the spending needs of males are simpler. Besides, monthly income level also impacts on the intention to save. More specifically, students who generated from VND 5 million to VND 7 million had a tendency to spend more and intended to save less each month compared to other income groups, a conclusion in line with the data of Sherraden et al. (2004). With a high income level, individuals can feel financially safe, and are often willing to purchase luxury goods. Furthermore, household living arrangements constituted an important influenceon students' intention to create a saving plan. When living alone, they have to cover all expenses for renting, food, and transportation. Therefore, the amount of money they can set aside is often less than those who live with friends, because they can share these expenses with each other.

This study contributes to refining the theoretical framework on the impact of financial knowledge on saving intention by investigating the mediating role of perceived behavioral control. By focusing on young individuals, the study also enhances the research model concerning the financial health and financial well-being of future generations.

Limitations, Implications, and Future Research

Our investigation had some shortcomings. First, the sample size used for our research was limited. Moreover, we did not choose ppils from other majors; instead, we concentrated on university students studying business and economics, so this convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias and affected the validity of the research results. Third, theoretical limitations should be addressed and discussed. Our research study was done using the Theory of Planned Behavior, but we have focused on just one factor of this basic theory—perceived behavior control–and did not examine two others, which are attitude and subjective norms. Furthermore, there might be other factors influencing saving intention besides financial knowledge, perceived behavior control, and control variables.

Based on these limitations, future works may broaden the scope to include wider samples from other fields to obtain more comprehensive responses and reliable results. Moreover, future researchers should track and compare with historical results to make outcomes more generalizable. Upcoming works should include more variables related to the base theory as mentioned above, and other independent variables including risk tolerance, social influence, or self assurance.

Implications

Financial institutions offering saving products. First, as students may have difficulties with some real-world situations and require expert assistance from financial advisors, institutions may assist and counsel students who wish to save by making deposits. Second, financial institutions should establish connections with universities to spread knowledge about the advantages of early savings. Additionally, they should add special saving products for university students, because that encourages them to increase their saving intention. In order to reach the target audiences in the most effective and efficient way, organizations should focus on designing their communication messages and campaigns. Specifically, firms may deliver content that provides audiences with financial knowledge, hence making them feel that saving is easy, and eventually boosting their saving intention.

Educational institutions. First, it is recommended that Vietnamese educational institutions should add some subjects related to Personal Finance in their curricular programs because this is related directly to students' awareness and to their saving intention. Moreover, some additional classes about specific saving and investing topics would be a wise choice that could encourage students' intention to save. Second, these institutions could work with well-known speakers, influencers, or entrepreneurs to provide public speaking opportunities to address students. This may have an impact on students' intention to save because the majority of prosperous businessmen and entrepreneurs are often more mature, experienced, and able to impart their life and professional experiences to younger people, thus influencing students to save more.

University students. According to our research, students' saving intention depends on their income levels and whether they are living with family, friends, or alone. Therefore, it is advised that students with a high monthly income level (5 million to 7 million VND) focus more on learning how to budget their expenses so that they have money left over at the end of each month. Students who live alone should also make a list of everything they need to buy in order to make the most of their income and raise the responsibility and awareness about saving. Second, as financial literacy contradicts our first premise, and the fact that individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 are more likely to invest in securities and foreign exchanage markets, students who possess a high degree of financial knowledge ought to understand potential investment risks.

Conclusions

To sum up, the research sheds light on undiscovered issues regarding the influence of financial knowledge on the saving intention of Generation Z students majoring in business and economics in Vietnam. Specifically, financial knowledge exerted no direct impact on saving intention, but it showed an indirect relationship with saving intention, catalyzed by the mediating role of perceived behavioral control. Moreover, perceived behavior control had a strong impact on saving intention. The research also indicated that students who live with their friends are most likely to form saving intentions, and students who have a moderate monthly income, from VND 3 to 5 million, had the highest saving intention. These results can be applied by educational institutions, financial institutions offering saving products, and individual students themselves to promote the saving intention among Generation Z business and economics students in Vietnam.

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Effect of Organizational Support in Terms of Training, Autonomy, and Technology on Work Engagement at Private Universities in Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

With rapid changes in technology, working styles in universities have also changed from traditional face-to-face to online and hybrid teaching. This study focused on the work engagement of faculty and staff at three private universities in Bangkok. The focus of the investigation was on how organizational support, in terms of training, autonomy, and technology, influenced the work engagement of faculty and staff in adopting new working styles. A self-administered questionnaire was used in the study. Valid questionnaire responses (N = 329) received were subjected to ordinal linear regression analysis. The results obtained indicated that organizational support in terms of training, autonomy, and technology was positively associated with work engagement (p = .009, .009, and .000 respectively). It is suggested that the universities need to provide sufficient training, autonomy, and technological know-how to their faculty and staff to help them transition to new ways of working smoothly. Finally, some managerial implications from the study are provided.

Keywords: *Training, autonomy, technology, work engagement, working innovations*

Introduction

With the development of technology, teaching and working styles in universities are changing, especially in the post-pandemic era. Teachers have more tools to assist their students in learning. Teaching styles have changed from traditional face-to-face to hybrid, online, or other technology dependent styles. Likewise, university staff also use high-tech systems to complete tasks more effectively, such as class scheduling, course offerings, library systems, and remote working duties. Moreover, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, particularly ChatGPT, is forcing teachers and staff to adjust their teaching and working styles. The impact of technology and new working styles may change the work engagement of teachers and staff, especially for elderly and senior employees. Since they might not easily adapt to the rapid, dynamic, and changing environment, organizational support is important to help them adapt and adjust to new ways of working.

Work engagement has been widely discussed in the business and management fields: for example, in areas such as human resource management (Jaeyoung et al., 2020), strategic management (Biggs et al., 2014), leadership management (Amor et al., 2020), and job satisfaction and performances (Bayona et al., 2020). Moreover, many scholars have studied organizational support and work engagement (Yang et al., 2023). Previous researchers commonly have found that organizational support and organizational resources impacted employees' work engagement (Yang et al., 2023).

Despite the findings from the previous studies, there has been limited research on organizational support and work engagement in universities and the education sector. The aim of the present research was to investigate how organizational support, in terms of training, autonomy, and technology, affected the work engagement of teachers and staff in adopting new ways of working in the private university sector. Another objective was to investigate how new working styles has changed the work engagement of faculty members and university staff in these organizations. Therefore, the study can fill this research gap and provide some suggestions and ideas relevant for private universities.

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Literature Review

Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as a favorable, sufficient, and energizing mental state associated with one's occupation, and is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Different researchers in their studies have come to similar conclusions, namely, that higher levels of employee engagement lead to better performance, with positive behaviors and attitudes observed in their work (Mazzetti et al., 2023). In universities, making sure that faculty members are engaged happily in their teaching and working is the key to delivering high-quality teaching outcomes.

Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' "global beliefs" about how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). More recently, perceived organizational support has been defined as a type of cooperation or help required to do a task effectively (To & Huang, 2022). Organizational support was identified as one of the most important characteristics within organizations that should be carefully managed. According to Hameed et al. (2019), organizational support can be both tangible and intangible. Tangible organizational support involves providing such resources as working facilities, equipment, and instruments. Intangible organizational support could involve the support of supervisors and co-workers, and the facilitation of interaction in social networks.

Training is one of the most important organizational support characteristics, especially for new employees. It is also required when the organization develops new systems or employees transition to new positions. Moreover, it was also found that training can relieve employees' stress and nervousness due to uncertainty about their new roles and tasks. Additionally, Bakker and van Wingerden (2021) found that perceived organizational support, self-efficacy, and training were positively related to work engagement. In the context of new ways of working, faculty members and staff need to adapt to using new technology or alternative ways to conduct their work. This might involve using hybrid or online teaching methods. Training them on how to use the new systems and getting them familiar with and used to using the new system or working styles would enable them to improve their work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H_1: Organizational support, in terms of training, is positively related to work engagement in private universities in Thailand.

In an organization, perceived autonomy plays an important role in motivating employees in their work. Ryan and Deci (2006) defined autonomy as self-regulation and it entails exercising free will and experiencing the power of decision. Based on the self-determination theory, autonomy is exemplified by having the strongest possible level of reflection to support one's actions (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Autonomy empowers people to choose their own activities. When motivation is built on autonomy, it is more linked with personal goals, beliefs, and interests, and it eventually leads to intrinsic motivation (Van Dorssen-Boog et al., 2020). This is the case in the education industry, especially in universities. The management team should give enough autonomy to faculty members since they produce and transfer knowledge to the students. The main scales to measure teaching performance are teaching outcomes and learning outcomes. Additionally, with the new ways of working, faculty and staff need to adjust and know which way is best and most suitable for them to teach and work. The methods, tools, and styles that they use to teach students might differ, especially with different majors and courses. They might also need to design different teaching methods based on different levels of student abilities and backgrounds. At this point, faculty members should have enough perceived autonomy to manage their courses. Hence, the researcher proposed the following hypothesis:

H_2: Organizational support in terms of autonomy is positively related to work engagement in private universities in Thailand.

With the rapid development of technology, organizations also need to transition new technologies so that modern methods and applications are available. The goal of investigating technology acceptance is to understand how people's views influence both their intentions to use technology and their actual usage of it. The extensive adoption of new tools and devices has made it more important than ever to understand the factors that can affect how people react to new technologies (Molino et al., 2020). Therefore, promoting technology acceptance among employees is also crucial. Molino et al. (2020) found that information training is positively associated with technology acceptance, and technology acceptance is positively related to work engagement. The faculty members and staff who work in universities need to learn frontier technology, adapt it, and introduce it to students. This is especially relevant in majors like IT, design, and science where rapid advances have been experienced. It makes universities and organizations consider supporting technology and related facilities. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H_3: Organizational support in terms of technology is positively related to work engagement in private universities in Thailand.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

According to FreeApply (2023), there are sixty universities and colleges in Bangkok, and twenty-seven of them are private universities (UniversitiesintheWorld, 2023). The present study focused on three private universities in Bangkok. The researcher contacted these private universities, targeting their faculty members and staff as potential participants. After introducing the purpose of the study, permission from these universities was received to collect data from their employees. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the participants, and a convenience sampling method was applied. Both an online survey and a hard-copy survey were used to collect data. The researcher collected the email addresses of faculty and employees at the three private universities, as well as walking into the universities to distribute a hard copy of the questionnaires. A screening question was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire “Are you currently working in a private university?” If the screening answer was “Yes,” then the respondent was able to complete the questionnaire. A total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed. Three hundred and thirty-six responses were received; seven responses contained missing data, yielding 329 valid completed questionnaires (a 32.9% response rate). Respondents’ characteristics and demographics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 *Descriptive Characteristics of Participants*

Factors	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	162	49.2
	Female	167	50.8
Age	18–25 years old	22	6.7
	26–35 years old	146	44.4
	36–45 years old	40	12.2
	46–55 years old	56	17.0
	56–65 years old	57	17.3
	66–75 years old	6	1.8
	> 76 years old	2	0.6
Job Tenure	< 1 year	56	17.0
	1–3 years	113	34.3
	3–5 years	64	19.5
	5–7 years	24	7.3
	7–10 years	41	12.5
	> 10 years	31	9.4

Measurement and Data Analysis

The study questionnaire was developed based on previous studies. The scales used had already been tested and confirmed by previous researchers. Hence, the validity and reliability of the responses received were ensured (Slattery et al., 2011). The measurement scale of training was developed based on Brown and Mitchell (1991), which included four items, such as "sufficient training [is] provided by my university." The autonomy measurement scale developed was based on Sekhar et al. (2018) and included three items, such as "I have the autonomy to decide when to start and finish tasks at my university." The technology measurement scale was developed according to the Molino et al. (2020) study, which included four items. An example of the information asked was: "Technologies are easy to use and [are] useful." The measurement scale for work engagement was developed based on Salanova et al. (2003), which included six items, such as "I feel happy when I am working intensely." All the latent variables' scales were measured on a Likert five-point scale. This ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Apart from that, some control variables that might also influence respondent work engagement were included such as age, gender, and job tenure.

In this study, ordinal linear regression was used to analyze the data. The data were tested initially for normality, validity, reliability, and multicollinearity. After that, relevant correlations and coefficients were determined.

Results

The normality distribution test was first applied. Kurtosis and skewness are scales that measure normal distribution. According to D'Agostino (2017), the kurtosis and skewness figures ideally range from -1 to +1; if the values are outside of this range, it indicates that the data might not be normally distributed. In this study, kurtosis and skewness ranged from -0.985 to 0.709, which is within the suggested range. The detailed information gathered is displayed in Table 2. These results indicated that it was acceptable to proceed with the validity test.

Convergent validity and discriminant validity are criteria that display validity tests. Zikmund et al. (2013) recommended that the factor loadings should be greater than .50 to satisfy the convergent validity requirement. In this study, the factor loadings ranged from .494 to .764. One question from work engagement section was below the figure and was eliminated. For the discriminate validity test, Zikmund et al. (2013) suggested that each value produced for the latent variable's average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than the values returned for other latent variable squared correlations. Table 3 shows the detailed AVE values obtained. The data indicated that all latent variable AVE values were greater than other squared correlations. Therefore, both convergent validity and discriminate validity were satisfied.

The reliability test was also another important factor that needed to be tested. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability tests are criteria that measure reliability. Joe et al. (2019) recommended that Cronbach's alpha should be greater than .70 in order to satisfy the reliability requirements. On the other hand, Hair et al. (2017) suggested that the coefficient value of composite reliability should be greater than .70. Table 3 shows that all Cronbach's alpha values were greater than .70; in fact, the lowest was .737 (technology). All coefficient values of composite reliability were also greater than .70. Therefore, the reliability of the respondents' data was substantiated.

The multicollinearity test also needed to be applied. The variance inflation factor (VIF) is a scale to measure and diagnose whether the latent variables had multicollinearity problems. According to Hair et al. (2007), the VIF should be lower than 3.30; if the VIF is higher than the threshold, it indicates that there might be a potential multicollinearity problem. However, based on Eberl (2010), it is suggested that the VIF value should be less than 5.0 since some latent variables have high correlations. Hence, if the VIF value is greater than 5.0, it means that there are potential multicollinearity problems. In this study, the VIF values ranged from 1.054 to 3.325, which were for gender and autonomy (Table 3). The VIF values obtained were lower than Eberl's (2010) suggestion. Therefore, no major multicollinearity problems occurred in this study.

Table 2 *Normality Distribution Test Results*

Feature	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
Gender	-2.011	0.031
Age	-0.802	0.549
Job tenure in the organization	-0.727	0.657
Training 1	-0.005	-0.821
Training 2	0.240	-0.910
Training 3	-0.985	-0.532
Training 4	-0.391	-0.511
Autonomy 1	-0.464	-0.723
Autonomy 2	0.696	-0.977
Autonomy 3	0.233	-0.960
Technology 1	-0.132	-0.584
Technology 2	0.603	-0.385
Technology 3	0.551	-0.932
Technology 4	0.709	-0.985
Absorption 1	-0.124	-0.723
Absorption 2	0.344	-0.452
Absorption 3	-0.501	-0.683
Absorption 4	-0.690	-0.448
Absorption 5	-0.198	-0.898
Absorption 6	0.602	-0.579

Table 3 *Correlations, Square Roots of Average Variance Extracted, and Variance Inflation Factor*

Variables	GED	AGE	JT	TRN	AUT	TEC	WE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR Coefficient	VIF
GED	(1)							N/A	N/A	1.054
AGE	.045	(1)						N/A	N/A	1.289
JT	-.020	.469***	(1)					N/A	N/A	1.297
TRN	-.011	.053	.092	(.765)				.763	.849	2.909
AUT	-.096	.044	.047	.780***	(.834)			.779	.872	3.325
TEC	-.155	.033	.069	.724***	.748***	(.770)		.737	.835	2.797
WE	-.095	.048	.073	.615***	.636***	.666***	(.675)	.747	.827	N/A

Note. CR = Composite reliability, GED = Gender, JT = Job tenure, TRN = Training, AUT = Autonomy, TEC = Technology, VIF = Variance inflation factor, WE = Work engagement. *** $p < .01$; square roots of average variance extracted of the latent variables are displayed in parentheses.

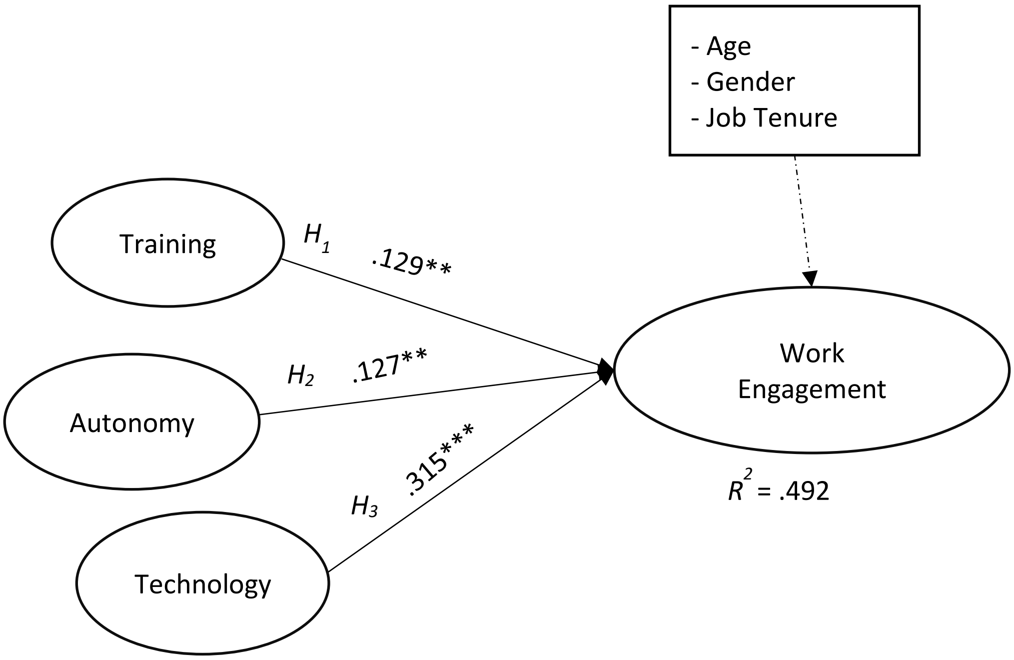
After testing the validity, reliability, and multicollinearity, the next step was to undertake a multiple regression analysis and apply the coefficient hypothesis test. The results are displayed in Table 4 and Figure 1. The data presented show that Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were all supported. The beta coefficients of training (β = .129, *p* = .009), autonomy (β = .127, *p* = .009), and technology (β = .315, *p* = .000) were all positive, which means that organizational support in terms of training, autonomy, and technology were positively related to work engagement. Moreover, the *p*-values were all less than .05, indicating that training, autonomy, and technology were statistically significantly related to work engagement. Besides the latent variables, the control variables were gender (β = -.012, *p* = .733), age (β = .003, *p* = .817), and job tenure (β = .004, *p* = .736). Since the *p*-values of control variables were all greater than .05, this meant that gender, age, and job tenure were not significantly related to work engagement. In addition, the R^2 value was equal to .501, and the adjusted R^2 value was equal to .492. This indicated that organizational support in terms of training, autonomy, technology, and control variables could explain and predict 49.2% of the faculty members and staff's work engagement according to the model adopted.

Table 4 *Hypotheses Testing Results*

H	Feature	Non-Standard. Coefficients		Stand. Coeff.	*t*	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for β		Collinearity Statistics	
		β	*SE*	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	1.954	0.148		13.159	.000	1.661	2.246		
	Gender	-.012	0.034	-.014	-0.342	.733	-.079	.056	.949	1.054
	Age	.003	0.014	.010	0.231	.817	-.024	.031	.776	1.289
	Job tenure	.004	0.012	.015	0.338	.736	-.020	.028	.771	1.297
H_1	Training	.129	0.049	.177	2.637	.009	.033	.226	.344	2.909
H_2	Autonomy	.127	0.048	.189	2.631	.009	.032	.222	.301	3.325
H_3	Technology	.315	0.052	.398	6.049	.000	.213	.418	.358	2.797

Code. H = Hypotheses

Figure 1 *Hypotheses Testing Results*



Note. ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion and Recommendations

In this research study, organizational support theory was applied and it was found that organizational support in terms of training was positively associated with work engagement. The finding is consistent with Bakker and van Wingerden's (2021) study. They used a quasi-experimental method to compare the differences between training intervention groups and non-training intervention groups and their respective influences on work engagement. It was found that intervention groups that received training had a significant positive influence on workers' work engagement.

The present study also found that organizational support, in terms of autonomy, was positively related to work engagement. Malinowska et al. (2018) investigated job autonomy in relation to work engagement at an international outsourcing company in Poland. They found that job autonomy was positively associated with employees' work engagement. Meanwhile, it also was found that job autonomy increased intrinsic motivation. Additionally, the study indicated that organizational support in terms of technology was positively related to work engagement. Molino et al. (2020) undertook research on technology acceptance and work engagement in an Italian company. The respondents were white-collar and blue-collar workers. They found that no matter whether white-collar or blue-collar workers were involved, technology was strongly related to their level of work engagement. Our results point in the same direction.

The present study added more supporting evidence to indicate how important organizational support is to work engagement, especially in the areas of training, autonomy, and technology. This applies not only to business and industry, but also to the higher education field. In the context of new ways of working, universities should help faculty members and staff to transfer easily from the traditional working style to new working styles. This applies to the introduction of different teaching systems, remote online meeting programs, and collaboration programs. Training is the best way to let faculty and staff know how to use and apply these new systems in their work. Training can help them release their frustration and nervousness, especially when older employees who are not familiar with or comfortable with the new approaches are involved. Therefore, universities can hold different themed training sessions and seminars. Moreover, universities might also be able to exchange their training seminars to introduce new and trendy programs. After training, feedback and evaluation of the training results are also important. Universities can collect feedback and suggestions from faculty and staff to know how the training sessions helped them in order to improve future programs. Universities could also offer training to their staff, such as sensitizing them to becoming service minded so as to better assist lecturers and students. Universities can also encourage their staff to develop their knowledge and work on higher degrees for their career development. For example, some staff members might become teaching assistants.

Besides that, providing job autonomy to faculty and staff members is also important. Lecturers teach different courses and introduce knowledge to students. Teaching and learning outcomes are the main criteria to measure teaching quality. Giving autonomy to the lecturers to design the best way to help students learn and absorb knowledge is important. It also helps to promote and develop innovation and creativity. Meanwhile, job autonomy is also important for university staff. They provide services to lecturers and students to make the teaching and learning run more smoothly regarding such matters as class scheduling, classroom arrangements, accessing library books or databases, and completion of necessary paperwork. Universities could provide more autonomy and flexibility to the staff to facilitate their work in these areas.

Additionally, technology is also a crucial factor in the new ways of working. After the COVID-19 pandemic, many universities adjusted their teaching methods from face-to-face to online or hybrid teaching. Technology is fundamental to online and hybrid teaching. Meanwhile, the approaches to examinations, class participation, and grading should also be changed when the teaching method is changed to online or hybrid modes. It is important for universities to upgrade their technology and operational systems to support a dynamic work environment. On the university staff side, universities could upgrade the course scheduling system and classroom booking system and allow them to work or collaborate online. This might help university staff to work more efficiently and effectively. All of the above-mentioned suggestions may help faculty and staff to perceive the presence of organizational support and see how valuable it is. Eventually, this will help to improve their work engagement.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

This study had some limitations. First, it only focused on three private universities in Bangkok, so the data obtained may not be applicable to explain work engagement in other universities, in other cities, and particularly in public universities. Therefore, further studies could use the model developed to test these variables in other universities that are located in different cities or countries. Moreover, it might also be possible to compare the differences between private universities and public universities.

Second, the present researcher only applied quantitative research methodologies in the investigation. Hence, more detailed information about the lecturers and staff members' feelings and thoughts were unknown. Future research could apply mixed methods approaches to interview respondents and gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and thoughts. Third, this study only tested the effects of training, autonomy, and technology on the work engagement of lecturers and staff who worked in private universities in Bangkok. There might be other factors that influence their work engagement that were not tested for in this study. Therefore, further studies could test more factors to see whether other aspects also influence work engagement.

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Have Your Say! Malaysian X (Twitter) Users Speak Their Minds About COVID-19 Vaccination

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Abstract

In this study, Malaysian X (formerly Twitter) users' views were examined on COVID-19 vaccination. The specific objectives were to identify issues that were important to X users, and identify changes in views on COVID-19 vaccination. Tweets were collected from 1 January to 31 December 2021; altogether 5,766 tweets (199,900 words) were collected, and 150 tweets (5,200 words) were systematically selected for analysis. Thematic analysis showed that the tweets were more concerned about administration of the COVID-19 vaccine (56.7%) than its impact (35.3%) or COVID-19 control measures (8%). Positive sentiments increased during the 12 months. In Phase 1 (1 January–23 February 2021), the public were uncertain and sceptical while waiting for vaccination. In Phase 2 (24 February–24 September 2021) when vaccination was underway, the tweets reflected an informed stance, and X users were even proactive in promoting vaccination benefits and correcting misinformation. By Phase 3 (25 September–31 December 2021) when vaccination for teenagers and s booster shot program began, there was a dilemma of wanting to return to normal life vis-à-vis prioritizing health and safety. The study data indicated more anti- than pro-vaccination tweets, but the X community had self-correcting mechanisms when vaccine hesitancy surfaced.

Keywords: *X, Twitter, COVID-19, Malaysia, COVID-19 vaccination*

Introduction

Social media has been a site for the public to exchange health information. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media became an even more important site for information dissemination (Tsao et al., 2021). Poor knowledge of the new disease at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 led to circulation of false information on social media, creating vaccine hesitancy that hampered the immunization program. Although the COVID-19 situation has now been contained, it is crucial to know public views over the timeline of the infectious disease spread because seasonal influenza, like the H_1N_1 strain, can develop into epidemic proportions, and knowledge of public responses can assist in disease control measures. As the pandemic progressed, Malaysians surveyed were found to have good knowledge of how the virus functioned and spread, and held positive perceptions of COVID-19 preventive measures (Elnaem et al., 2021; Hassim et al., 2021; Nor et al., 2020). Nonetheless, questionnaire results are susceptible to social desirability bias. It has been well said by Ninan (2020, p. 1) that "[d]ata from survey questionnaires, focus groups, experiments, and interviews are all collected by the intervention of the researcher."

On the other hand, naturally occurring data like social media posts are written for expression, and can reveal on-the-ground attitudes towards COVID-19. In the early part of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic started, social media messages contained more positive sentiments than negative sentiments (Hung et al., 2020). In fact, there were more expressions of negative sentiments among women than men (Saleh et al., 2021), and among X users from US and Europe than those in Asia and South America (Ansari & Khan, 2021). Hussain et al. (2021) found more negative sentiments on X than on Facebook in the UK and the US. The dominant negative emotion shown was fear at that time (Saleh et al., 2021). These were the sentiments about COVID-19 in general.

In the later part of 2020, COVID-19 vaccines were developed. Negative attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccination may have led to low uptake of vaccination and affected disease control. In Malaysia, Jafar et al. (2022) found that vaccine hesitancy was caused by low confidence in the effectiveness of the vaccine and low trust in the ability of authorities to control the disease spread. Newspapers kept

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the public informed about government plans and progress in containing COVID-19, but the four mainstream newspapers analysed also highlighted anti-vaccination views (Iskandar & Mohamed, 2022). The negative sentiments attracted more attention, but studies showed that there were more positive than negative views on vaccination. For example, Adamu et al. (2021) reported that there were more neutral sentiments (47%) in tweets on COVID-19 vaccines than positive (31%) or negative (22%) sentiments. However, in January–February 2022, there were fewer neutral tweets (15.8%) and more positive (49.6%) than negative (34.6%) sentiments (Ong et al., 2022).

Analysing naturally occurring data using techniques like thematic analysis can help researchers uncover new phenomena, particularly when the data are contextualized in the sequence of events. In a pandemic, the timeline of key incidents is important because views change with the progression of events. Previous sentiment studies took snapshots of attitudes towards COVID-19 at a particular point in time, making comparison of findings difficult. Some researchers did not clearly state their data collection period (e.g., Adamu et al., 2021). Thus far, our literature search did not find studies that took into consideration the timeline for the analysis of social media messages on COVID-19 vaccination. Hence, the question remains: How did views of COVID-19 vaccination change from pre- to post-vaccination?

In this study, Malaysian X (Twitter) users' views were examined on COVID-19 vaccination from 1 January to 31 December 2021 covering three phases of vaccine administration. The specific objectives were to identify issues that were important to X users, and identify changes in views on COVID-19 vaccination.

Literature Review

Public views on emerging diseases shift in the wake of events in a pandemic, and they find an outlet in the virtual realm. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic of COVID-19 virus that was first reported in Wuhan, China. Countries implemented strict policies to fight the pandemic, including lockdowns at home, shutdown of schools and workplaces, cancellation of events and public gatherings, and limitations on public transportation.

To lower the risks from transmission of the virus, a vaccination program was implemented as soon as countries authorized the use of vaccines in December 2020. Approximately 70% of the population needs to be vaccinated for a country to achieve herd immunity (Aguas et al., 2020). Vaccination and past infection offer protection against an infectious disease.

Conversation on COVID-19 concerns was rife in social media and face-to-face interactions. For instance, the rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines sparked negative responses marked by high levels of worry, uncertainty, and hesitancy. A typical vaccine development timeline takes five to 10 years to assess the vaccine's safety and efficacy in clinical trials (Johns Hopkins University, 2023). The rapid vaccine development caused speculation and incorrect information on vaccinations to spread.

According to some earlier studies on disease outbreaks such as Ebola (Lazard et al., 2015; Mondragon et al., 2017) and H_1N_1 (Chew & Eysenbach, 2014), fear was the most prevalent emotion, and the public's main concerns were the symptoms and prognosis of the virus, disease transmission, and government management of the diseases. However, for more familiar diseases like measles, the main sentiments expressed on social media were irritation, humor, sarcasm, concern, and relief (Mollema et al., 2015). When it first broke out, COVID-19 was a new disease and was not understood, which led to the circulation of inaccurate information. When people are exposed to inaccurate information, it affects their willingness to get vaccinated, but their reluctance and negative tendencies are repressed (Piedrahita-Valdes et al., 2019). The World Health Organization identifies vaccination hesitancy as one of the top 10 global health issues (Kunneman et al., 2020).

As individuals often express their opinions on social media, social media might offer a window into thoughts regarding many aspects of COVID-19 such as control measures and reluctance to get vaccinated. Among the various social media platforms, X (previously Twitter) was one of the key channels (Rufai & Bunce, 2020) utilized to encourage vaccination and decrease the cumulative number of positive COVID-19 cases during the pandemic (Rosli, 2021). According to Google Trend, the terms

"COVID-19" and "COVID-19 vaccination" trended on online search engines from February 2020. During public health outbreaks, social media text analysis can provide first responders with crucial information about public worries and developing issues (Lachlan et al., 2014; Yoon et al., 2013). Analysis of social media communication will provide health authorities with crucial information about public concerns and identify issues.

Methodology

The descriptive study focused on views of Malaysians talking about COVID-19 vaccination on the X platform. The three phases of developments pertaining to COVID-19 vaccination in Malaysia from 1 January to 31 December 2021 were as follows:

1. Phase 1: 1 January–23 February 2021; waiting for the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine.
2. Phase 2: 24 February–24 September 2021; the beginning of vaccination.
3. Phase 3: 25 September–31 December 2021; implementing vaccination for teenagers and booster shots.

Platform X was selected rather than other social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn for practical reasons. The data could be collected without getting consent to analyse each tweet. In X, the public posts (the default setting) are visible to anyone, and people can follow updates without first getting the approval of the account owner. Furthermore, it is easy to retrieve data, as key incidents and news stories on X are centred around a hashtag. Most importantly, tweets capture discussions of issues by any individual in the society unlike Facebook, which is confined to certain groups.

A one-year data collection period was selected, which allowed analysis of changes in views on COVID-19 vaccination. The period chosen exceeds the duration in other COVID-19 studies such as 10 months (Saleh et al., 2021) and one month (Ansari & Khan, 2021; Hung et al., 2020).

The selection criteria for the tweets were: (a) mention of COVID-19 (e.g., Coronavirus, COVID-19, C-19), and (b) use of vaccination-related words (e.g., vaccine(s), vaccination(s), vaccinate(d), vaccination drive, booster, and immunization). To collect the data, the search terms used were "COVID-19", "vaccine" and type of vaccines (e.g., Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Sinovac, Sputnik V, Moderna, Janssen, Sinopharm, Covaxin, and CanSinoBIO). Malaysian X users were selected by using geo-tagged data in TweetDeck. No restriction was placed on gender and tweet length. There were also no restrictions placed on languages and dialects, which is why there were tweets in English and Malay.

The data collected were 5,766 tweets (199,900 words). Systematic sampling was conducted to select 150 tweets, using the n^{th} name selection technique or 38^{th} tweet in this study. The tweets were spread across the three phases–that is, 50 tweets per phase, amounting to 5,200 words. The average number was 2.88 tweets per week. This was considered adequate to reflect the discussions on COVID-19 vaccination. Moreover, the analysis was conducted manually without the assistance of any software, which is why it was not feasible to analyse a larger number of tweets.

Before analysis, the data were pre-processed following the American Standard Code for Information Interchange procedures to "clean" the tweets. Also referred to as the text normalisation phase, this included filtering the vaccine keywords, removing duplicate tweets, URL links, and usernames.

The selected data were exported to Microsoft Word and analysed. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis conducted began with rereading to gain familiarity with the meanings and patterns in the tweets. Then, initial codes for themes were generated (e.g., "sarcasm towards vaccination" and "vaccines as a global issue"), and relationships were identified among themes. The relevance of the initial themes was tested by rereading the tweets, and the coding was refined. For example, the initial theme "vaccines as a global issue" was put under "politics in relation to vaccination" because the remarks were about activities associated with the governance of a country or area pertaining to COVID-19 control. The results were reported in the form of a concept map and examples of tweets for the qualitative analysis, and a table of frequencies for the quantitative analysis.

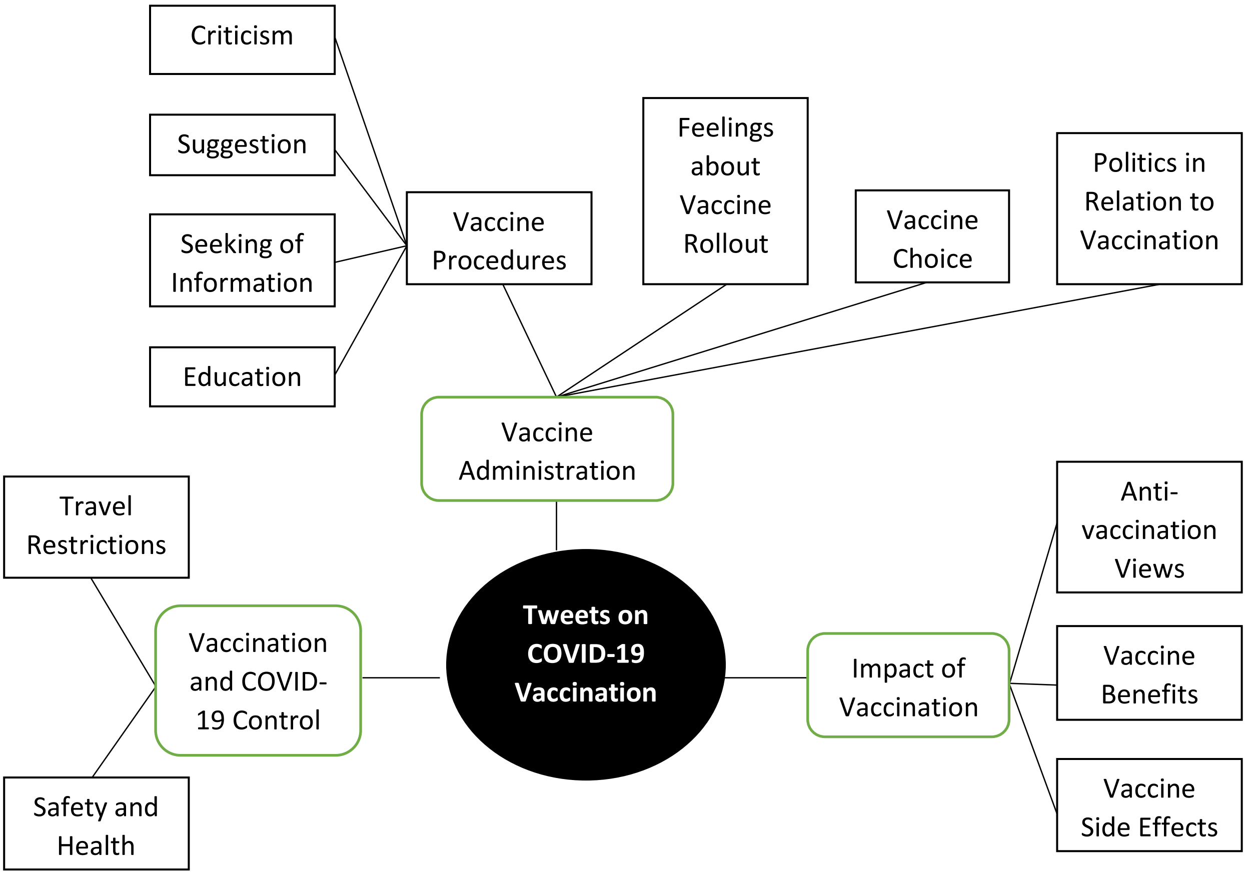
Results

In this section, the tweets are labelled to indicate the phase (P1 for Phase 1, P2 for Phase 2, and P3 for Phase 3) and tweet number (Tweet 1 to Tweet 150). For example, P2-Tweet 70 refers to tweet number 70 that was written during Phase 2.

Themes and Sub-Themes in Tweets on COVID-19 Vaccination

Figure 1 shows that there were three main themes on the tweets, namely, impact of vaccination, vaccination and COVID-19 control, and vaccine administration by authorities. First, under the impact of vaccination theme, the sub-themes chosen were anti-vaccination views, vaccine benefits, and vaccine side-effects. Second, under the theme of vaccination and COVID-19 control, the sub-themes were travel restriction, safety and health, and impact on personal life. Finally, regarding the question of vaccine administration by authorities, the sub-themes were politics in relation to vaccination, vaccine choice, feelings and vaccine rollout, and vaccine procedures. In the following section, examples are provided for the themes and sub-themes describing Malaysian X users' views on COVID-19 vaccination.

Figure 1 *Concept Map of Themes and Sub-Themes in Tweets on COVID-19 Vaccination*



Theme 1: Tweets on Vaccine Administration

Figure 1 shows that the tweets on "vaccine administration" (Theme 1, 85 tweets) revolved around four sub-themes: Vaccine procedures, feelings about vaccine rollout, politics in relation to vaccination, and vaccine choice. The tweets were full of ideas on how Malaysia should handle the vaccination procedures.

The first sub-theme "vaccination procedures" was prominent from before the arrival of the vaccine (Phase 1) to implementation of booster shots (Phase 3). This is because in COVID-19 control, vaccination was crucial for people to develop immunity against the disease, considering that lockdowns and movement control could not be enforced indefinitely.

The first aspect of vaccination procedures was criticism and the second aspect was suggestions, both of which were negative because suggestions were veiled criticisms. To the public, the sooner they got vaccinated, the sooner normal life could return. Excerpt 1 showed P1-Tweet 21 expressing envy that Singaporeans were ahead and Malaysians were still waiting for the arrival of the vaccine.

> Excerpt 1: "I am very jealous that people in Singapore have gotten the vaccine already. It's just pure incompetence for the delay here in Malaysia, nothing else." (P1-Tweet 21)

Other tweets written in Phase 1 also criticized the shortage of vaccine stock that caused the delay. In fact, suggestions on vaccine procedures can also be seen as indirect criticisms, which were particularly frequent during the implementation of the first shot. The tweets were often triggered by problems in the vaccination process, either experienced first-hand or gathered from recounts by other people. However, by the time everyone knew how to register for the vaccination (end of Phase 2, September 2021), the criticisms of the vaccine procedures came to an end.

The third aspect of the sub-theme vaccine procedures was seeking information, and the fourth aspect was provision of information. The tweets gradually shifted from seeking information, particularly in Phase 1 (Excerpt 2), to providing information in Phase 3 (Excerpt 3). In Excerpt 2, P3-Tweet 106 highlighted a glitch in MySejahtera, an application developed by the Malaysian government to record COVID-19 vaccination and health status (infected or not). This was a direct request for assistance, although the tweet was not directed at any particular authority. However, other X users came in to share their experiences of how to resolve the problem.

> Excerpt 2: "@JKJAVMY my fully vaccinated status in mySJ has been changed to not vaccinated after i updated my COVID-19's self-test result. Please assist. Thank you in advance." (P3-Tweet 106)

The contents of Excerpt 3 illustrate how X users played a role in helping authorities to educate the community, indicating that the constant dissemination of information on vaccine efficacy and logistics of administering vaccines had increased the knowledge of some members of the public. P1-Tweet 48 explained the government's target to have 80% of the population vaccinated.

> Excerpt 3: "Our National Vaccination Programme main objective & mission is to vaccinate a sufficient percentage of population e.g. 80%, with an end view to buildup herd immunity." (P1-Tweet 48)

The second sub-theme of "vaccine administration" involved "feelings about the vaccine rollout." The tweets in this category were mostly positive. Excerpt 4 illustrated the optimism and support for the vaccination efforts among Malaysian Twitter users from before the arrival of the vaccine to the implementation of booster shots. The P2-Tweet 76 was an up-to-date on the government's vaccination plans and acted as a "government voicebox."

> Excerpt 4: "Glad they've opened another rollout for registration for senior citizens this Sunday. Register your elderly loved ones!" (P2-Tweet 76)

Interestingly, in Phase 1 when people did not have any idea of the vaccine procedures, there were also no expressions of negative feelings. When the vaccination began in Phase 2, dissatisfaction about preferential treatment in the vaccine rollout surfaced, as illustrated in Excerpt (5).

> Excerpt 5: "So sad like this, even if you want a vaccine, you have been discriminated." (P2-Tweet 79)

The third sub-theme of "vaccine administration" involved "politics in relation to vaccination." We saw a need to differentiate the politics rather than categorizing the blame with "feelings about the vaccine rollout." This is because the negative feelings were targeted at the government agencies involved in administering the vaccine. For example, the tweet in Excerpt 6 was written before the vaccine rollout, and questioned the Ministry of Health and the Director-General of Health on the decision to give priority to certain groups.

Excerpt 6: "Who has priority over vaccination, MPs Ministers and their families, or OKUs?" (P2-Tweet 57)

The first group to be vaccinated was the frontliners, followed by the senior citizens aged 60 and above, and the public accepted the rationale. However, there were cases where ministers' families jumped the queue, and the preferential treatment came to the knowledge of the public. By September 2021 (end of Phase 2), when the population had the opportunity to get their second vaccination, there were no more politics-related tweets. The very presence of the politically related sub-theme indicates that X users were aware of the role of political actors in shaping the distribution, access, and uptake of vaccines, and they were concerned because vaccination is a public health intervention that can have significant health, social, and economic implications.

The final sub-theme for "vaccine administration" was "vaccine choice." Malaysia started with the administration of the Pfizer vaccine to frontliners and senior citizens, and the Sinovac vaccine for the general public. Different individuals had different preferences, and P1-Tweet 50 preferred Pfizer (Excerpt 7). However, at that point in time for the first and second vaccine shots, Malaysians could only choose AstraZeneca if they did not want Sinovac.

Excerpt 7: "If apply for the vaccination programme, can we choose only Pfizer brand? Hahahaha." (P1-Tweet 50)

By Phase 3, when the booster shot (third shot) program was implemented, there was little talk about vaccine choice in X. The Malaysian public were given the Pfizer vaccine for their booster shots.

Theme 2: Tweets on Impact of Vaccine

Theme 2 on the "Impact of vaccine" was categorized into three sub-themes, namely, "anti-vaccine views," "vaccine benefits," and "vaccine side effects." "Anti-vaccine views" was needed as a sub-theme because the views were not necessarily medical information about vaccine benefits and side effects. For each sub-theme, there were positive and negative aspects recorded on the impact of vaccine.

For the first sub-theme "anti-vaccine views," there were more positive tweets in support of vaccination than anti-vaccination views. Excerpt 8 (P1-Tweet 6) appeared to be written by a very well-informed X user, and addressed views that the COVID-19 vaccines were sub-standard (not shown in the excerpts, but found in other tweets) because of the speed with which they were released for use (Excerpt 8). On the other hand, Excerpt 9 showed that P1-Tweet 34 did not understand the traditional way of making vaccines (e.g., Sinovac) using weakened bacteria/viruses. In view of this, the public would have even greater challenges in understanding how Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines were made.

Excerpt 8: Summary: "The vaccine was able to be completed in a short time with equally good quality because we spent more money & scientists spent less time waiting for money to come in or for volunteers to sign up. There was also a lot more collaboration & better technology made it faster." (P1-Tweet 6)

Excerpt 9: "Vaccines contain weakened bacteria/viruses. In other words, injecting a vaccine into the body means injecting bacteria/viruses! How can the injection of bacteria/viruses into the body become immunization when the injection contains bacteria?" (P1-Tweet 34)

The second sub-theme used for "Impact of vaccine" was "vaccine benefits." As more information about the effectiveness of vaccines became available in the year 2021, X users shared their personal experiences on how vaccination protected them from developing severe COVID-19 symptoms, such as P3-Tweet 117 in Excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10: "Candidly, I had Covid infection early last month, but luckily, my symptoms were just minimal. I think it's because of my 2 doses of Pfizer vaccination." TQ Pfizer! (P3-Tweet 117)

The tweets categorized under the sub-theme "vaccine benefits" were not all positive and in favour of vaccination. There were also some tweets doubting the use of vaccinations, but the concerns were different early and later in the year 2021. In Phase 1, the doubts were with the effectiveness of the vaccine as a protective measure, but in Phase 3, the doubts were with the need for a third dose of the vaccine when the body had already developed immunity. By that time, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 had surfaced, and individuals who had two doses of the Sinovac vaccine were urged to take a third dose as the efficacy of the vaccine waned in three months.

The final sub-theme chosen for "Impact of vaccine" was "vaccine side effects." This consisted of tweets that highlight the side effects of vaccines and tweets that refuted them. These tweets were particularly pronounced in Phase 3 when individuals experienced side effects. Some individuals like P3-Tweet 124 (Excerpt 11) said that the booster dose made him develop symptoms that were like COVID-19, while P3-Tweet 133 (Excerpt 12), who experienced the same symptoms, brushed them aside and even urged all Malaysians to go for the Pfizer booster shot.

> Excerpt 11: "The booster dose felt the worst for me, my whole body was just weak, and I had fever. Then I went to the KK [Klinik Kesihatan, Health Clinic], they didn't wanna accept me, said I had covid-like symptoms." (P3-Tweet 124)

> Excerpt 12: "How do I feel after my Pfizer booster shot? 6 Common Side Effects after 24hrs Injection site pain, Muscle Pain, Fatigue – Yes. Headache, Fever & Chills - No. All Malaysian go for it." (P3-Tweet 133)

There are some tweets describing severe side effects of COVID-19 vaccination, usually involving males younger than 30 years and after the second dose of the vaccine. Excerpt 13 (P3-Tweet 122) linked a death to COVID-19 vaccination.

> Excerpt 13: "A close family friend passed away today morning. Stroke n diabetic patient was forced to take Pfizer vaccination if not no salary. He was unconscious at 5am today, called 999 for emergency assistance, took 40min to reach. Pronounced dead." (P3-Tweet 122)

This was unverified news because no postmortem was performed on the deceased to determine if the cause of death involved comorbidities like stroke and diabetes. P3-Tweet 122 not only reported a death, but made it known that some organisations were forcing their employees to be vaccinated.

Theme 3: Tweets on Vaccination and COVID-19 Control

Theme 3, "Vaccination and COVID-19 Control," revolved around the return to normal life and how certain aspects of life were affected by the aftermath of the pandemic, namely, "travel restrictions," "safety and health," and "personal life."

The first sub-theme of "Vaccination and COVID-19 Control" was "Travel restrictions," and reflected the eagerness of people to travel to other countries. In 2020, the Malaysian government restricted travel within the country, but in 2021 Malaysians were allowed to visit family during the Hari Raya (Muslim New Year), and in May and June, Kaamantan and Gawai harvest festivals. As for international travel, P3-Tweet 116 (shown in Excerpt 14) had found out that Sinovac vaccinations were not recognized by Saudi Arabia, and this would prevent them from travelling there for their pilgrimage.

> Excerpt 14: "Sinovac hasn't approved yet from Arabic Saudi how to perform Umrah." (P3-Tweet 116)

However, this issue was resolved on 12 October, 2021, when Saudi Arabia announced that individuals vaccinated with Sinovac would be permitted to conduct the *umrah* if they had received a third dose.

Based on the analysis of the tweets, Twitter users were more concerned about the health aspects of COVID-19 control in Phase 3 rather than the travel restrictions, when vaccination for teenagers and booster shot program began in Malaysia. Tweets on "safety and health" were about wearing face masks and staying away from big gatherings. As an example, P3-Tweet 126 operator tried to educate other Twitter users that vaccination does not prevent infections, but it was the physical distancing, masks, and hand hygiene (Excerpt 15).

> Excerpt 15: "Vaccine alone don't prevent the spread of infections. Combining them with other measures/SOPs do i.e ventilation, mask usage, avoid crowd, TRIIS, reduce risk factors, boosters' vax, etc." (P3-Tweet 126)

Overall, the analysis of the tweets revealed a shift from uncertainties and skepticism while waiting for the vaccines to arrive (Phase 1) to an informed stance when vaccination began (Phase 2). The X users were even proactive in promoting the benefits of vaccination and refuting doubts about the vaccine. Phase 3 tweets showed awareness of how returning to normal life might affect health and safety.

Changes in Views on COVID-19 Vaccination in Tweets in the Year 2021

Table 1 shows that the Malaysian X users were more concerned about administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, indicated by 56.7% of the tweets on this, compared to the impact of the vaccine (35.3%), and other COVID-19 control measures (8%). Interest in vaccine administration climbed from Phase 1 to Phase 2 when vaccination was underway, but dropped in Phase 3 when procedures had been tested and were smooth. Interest in the impact of vaccines was higher in Phases 1 and 3 when X users were speculating and sharing about the effects of the vaccination, respectively, than when the vaccination program was underway. Interest in vaccination as a COVID-19 control measure was high in Phase 3, as X users were discussing how vaccination could help them return to a normal life as before the pandemic. The rest of this section focused on the frequencies of the sub-themes to provide details on changes in views on COVID-19 vaccination.

Table 1 *Frequency of Themes and Sub-Themes Based on Phase (N = 150)*

Theme		Sentiment	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Freq.	%
1. Vaccine Administration			**30**	**35**	**20**	**85**	**56.7**
Vaccine procedures	Criticise	Negative	7	9	0	16	
(*n* = 47)	Suggest	Negative	3	8	4	15	
	Seek information	Neutral	4	2	2	8	
	Providing information	Positive	2	2	4	8	
Feelings about vaccine rollout (*n* = 23)		Positive	6	7	5	18	
		Negative	0	3	2	5	
Politics in relation to vaccination (*n* = 8)		Negative	5	3	0	8	
Vaccine choice (*n* = 7)		Neutral	3	1	3	7	
2. Impact of Vaccines			**18**	**13**	**22**	**53**	**35.3**
Anti-vaccine views	Advocate	Negative	10	1	4	15	
(*n* = 33)	Refute	Positive	5	7	6	18	
Vaccine benefits	Advocate	Positive	2	3	5	10	
(*n* = 13)	Doubts	Negative	1	0	2	3	
Vaccine side effects	Advocate	Negative	0	1	4	5	
(*n* = 7)	Refute	Positive	0	1	1	2	
3. Vaccination and COVID-19 Control			**2**	**2**	**8**	**12**	**8.0**
Travel restrictions (*n* = 5)		Neutral	1	1	3	5	
Safety and health (*n* = 7)		Positive	1	1	5	7	
Total			**50**	**50**	**50**	**150**	**100**

Notes. Phase 1: 1 January–23 February 2021; waiting for the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine.
Phase 2: 24 February–24 September 2021; beginning of vaccination.
Phase 3: 25 September–31 December 2021; implementing vaccination for teenagers and booster shots.

There were 85 tweets on Theme 1, "Vaccine administration." For the first sub-theme on "vaccine procedures," the tweets were mostly criticism (16 tweets) and suggestions (15 tweets), particularly in Phase 1 and Phase 2 (implementation of the first shot). Suggestions were veiled criticisms, and this tended to surface in Phase 2 when the X users had experienced or heard of how the vaccines were administered, and had counter suggestions on better ways of implementation. Before the arrival of vaccines in Malaysia, X users did not show much interest in seeking information (8 tweets) or in giving information to educate others (8 tweets). Seeking information was neutral, but providing information on vaccine procedures was considered positive, as the latter helped other individuals to correctly register for the vaccination without hassle. Interest in vaccine administration was initially high in Phase 1 (30 tweets) and Phase 2 (35 tweets), but became a matter of routine by Phase 3 (20 tweets).

For the second sub-theme under "vaccine administration," the positive "feelings about vaccine rollout" were stable throughout the year 2021 (Phase 1, 6 tweets; Phase 2, 7 tweets; Phase 3, 5 tweets). There were no expressions of negative feelings about the vaccine rollout when X users were waiting for the vaccines to arrive, but they expressed some dissatisfaction when vaccination began.

The third and fourth sub-themes for "vaccine administration" were "politics in relation to vaccination" and "vaccine choice," respectively. The eight tweets about politics in relation to vaccination were negative because they brought up unfairness in allocation of turns for vaccination, but such issues decreased as the vaccination program progressed. Interest in vaccine choice was low mainly because people were not given a choice. These tweets were considered neutral as they were not clearly pro- or anti-vaccination.

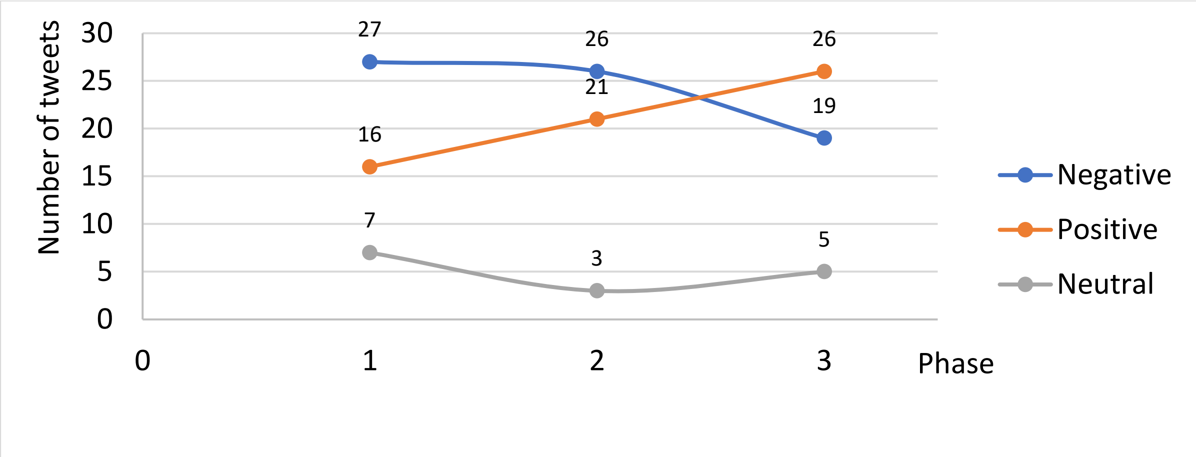
Next, there were 53 tweets on Theme 2, "Impact of vaccines." For this, there were more anti-vaccine views (33 tweets) than medical aspects of vaccine benefits (13 tweets) or vaccine side effects (7 tweets). Table 1 shows a clear decrease in anti-vaccine views as soon as the vaccination program began. The results obtained indicate that lack of knowledge can lead to unhealthy speculation about vaccination and spur talk about vaccine hesitancy, but once people were vaccinated, they could experience the benefits for themselves. This was shown by a steady increase in tweets about vaccine benefits across the three phases (from 2 in Phase 1 to 5 in Phase 3). Altogether, there were 10 tweets advocating benefits of vaccination versus three that expressed doubts.

The X users did not post any tweets on vaccine side effects before the arrival of the vaccines. By Phase 3, when the booster shots were administered, there were five tweets on vaccine side effects, most of which were negative. Earlier, Excerpts 11 to 13 highlighted sharing about symptoms like fever and fatigue, to alleged fatality. The increasing number of tweets "advocating vaccine benefits" across the three phases suggested a growing understanding of the positive impacts of vaccination.

Finally, there were only 12 out of 85 tweets on Theme 3, "Vaccination and COVID-19 control," and mostly posted in Phase 3. Interest in talking about COVID-19 vaccination had waned and revolved around relaxation of travel restriction and consequences for safety and health.

The changes in views on COVID-19 vaccination in tweets during the year 2021 are summarized by adding up the positive (63 or 42%), negative (72 or 48%) and neutral tweets (15 or 10%) in Table 1 above. Figure 2 shows an increase in positive sentiments, a decrease in negative sentiments, and stability in neutral sentiments across the three phases. Based on Figure 2, the increase in positive sentiments was mostly from vaccine procedures (providing information), impact of vaccines (advocating vaccine benefits), and vaccination and COVID-19 control (safety and health). The increase reflects an awareness of the usefulness of vaccination as a protective health measure. The decrease in negative sentiments was mostly about vaccine procedures (criticism, suggestions, politics in relation to vaccination) and the impact of vaccines (anti-vaccine views). The results suggest that as the vaccination program progressed, negative views decreased. Problems in implementation were ironed out, and evidence about the benefits of vaccination reduced reservations. There were only slight fluctuations in the number of neutral tweets.

Figure 2 *Positive, Negative, and Neutral Sentiments on COVID-19 Vaccination Across Three Phases*



Discussion

Two findings from the analysis of tweets related to COVID-19 vaccination written by Malaysian X users are discussed. First, there were more negative tweets (48%) than positive tweets (42%) in 2021. Before this period, there were fewer negative sentiments (22%) and more positive (31%) and neutral sentiments (47%), based on Adamu et al.'s (2021) analysis of 7,608 tweets on COVID-19 vaccines in Malaysia. In the United States, Hung et al.'s (2020) machine learning analysis of 902,138 tweets revealed that 48.2% were positive, 31.1% negative, and 20.7% neutral; the dominant themes were health care environment, emotional support, business economy, social change, and psychological stress. Negative sentiments increased further after 2021. From January–February 2022, when Ong et al. (2022) collected 788 tweets in Malaysia containing COVID-19 vaccine booster keywords of analysis, they found 49.6% positive sentiments, 34.6% negative, and 15.8% neutral sentiments for three important topics: (a) type of vaccination booster, (b) effects of vaccination booster, and (c) vaccination program operation. A comparison of these four studies (including the present study) shows that vaccine hesitancy was evident in tweets, particularly from 2021 to early 2022.

Second, the analysis of tweets on COVID-19 vaccination, according to phase in the vaccine administration, produced insights that were hitherto not available because other researchers (Adamu et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2022) did not demarcate the tweets according to a timeline. In social media, negative views on COVID-19 vaccination initially overshadowed positive views. The present study showed that at the height of negative views about COVID-19 vaccination, the issues were with vaccine procedures and the impact of vaccines. A newspaper article said that anti-vaxxers were preventing Malaysia from achieving the target of having 100% of the adult population vaccinated with at least the first dose (Babulal, 2021). Based on their framing analysis of 287 news articles in four mainstream Malaysian newspapers from 1 January 2019–30 September 2021, Iskandar and Mohamed (2022) concluded that anti-vaccination views may have been sensationalised, and suggested that newspapers should include interviews with researchers and lecturers to provide the public with sufficient scientific and credible information. However, the present study showed that when vaccination was underway in late 2021, more X users themselves were explaining scientific details on the virus, transmission, and containment in response to negative views about vaccination. This reflects the success of public service announcements and other efforts by the government to educate the public on COVID-19, but this process took time. The World Health Organization report (Lo & Safinaz, 2021) showed that in 2020, 78% of individuals in Malaysia believed that the virus was "not too dangerous", but in 2021, 99% of individuals considered the virus to be "dangerous" to "very dangerous." It is also a case of "seeing is believing." When the public experienced vaccination for themselves, they believed in its benefits as a COVID-19 preventive measure and stopped bashing vaccination in social media.

Conclusion

This study on COVID-19 vaccination tweets posted by Malaysian X users in 2021 showed that there were more negative tweets than positive and neutral tweets. There was a change in views from the time people waited for the vaccine to arrive. After February 2021, the uncertainties and skepticism in the pre-vaccination period turned to an informed stance during the vaccination period, and X users were even proactive in promoting the benefits of vaccination and correcting misinformation. By September 2021 when vaccination for teenagers and the booster shot program began, the tweets showed an eagerness to move on with life. Analysis according to the phase of vaccine administration revealed the ebb and flow of positive and negative sentiments, and the key points of concern for the public. Monitoring and analyzing social media communication in real-time will produce valuable on-the-ground feedback for authorities to plan for public health. The World Health Organisation stated that in times of uncertainty when the public has doubts and worries about the virus and the vaccines, listening to public concerns is central to a successful immunization campaign (Lo & Safinaz, 2021). However, the present study was limited by the small number of tweets that could be feasibly analyzed using thematic analysis. Using a machine learning approach in future studies may provide more speedy feedback on concerns in real-time for interventions. Text mining can be employed to determine the public's rejection and acceptance of vaccination to contain the spread of diseases, as well as media representation of the disease, and control measures to find out if media content manipulates the public's sentiments.

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Exploring Factors Influencing In-Service Teachers' Motivation to Teach English in Thailand: An Exploration of Possible Language Teacher Selves

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Abstract

The motivation of in-service English language teachers in Thailand was examined through the lens of possible language teacher selves. With English as a lingua franca and Thailand's emphasis on English proficiency, understanding teacher motivation is crucial. The qualitative narrative approach was adopted, involving semi-structured interviews with three participants having a minimum of three years of teaching experience. The study addressed the gap in literature regarding English teachers' possible selves and retention. The findings revealed the interplay of intrinsic and altruistic motives, self-concept, and career aspirations. Participants' motivations aligned with their ideal, actual, ought-to, and feared possible selves. Their reasons for teaching were in harmony with their aspirations, current self-perception, perceived obligations, and the desire to avoid negative outcomes. The findings have relevance for tailored professional development, student-centered approaches, recognition of non-native speaker strengths, and strategies to enhance teacher well-being. While limited by sample size and design, this research contributes to understanding teacher motivations and their implications for educational institutions.

Keywords: *English teachers, possible language teacher selves, motivation*

Introduction

Of approximately 7.8 billion individuals, 1.5 billion people globally were proficient in English by 2023 (Statista, 2023), emphasizing the significance of English as a global lingua franca. Thailand, as an ASEAN country, has adapted to this linguistic shift (Crocco & Bunwirat, 2014), where English education plays a crucial role in the face of increasing global connectivity (Baker, 2012). Consequently, English teachers in Thailand bear the responsibility of equipping students with language skills and knowledge.

To enhance language teaching methods and elevate students' language skills, both private and public educational institutions across Thailand have employed significant numbers of native and non-native English-speaking teachers (Ulla, 2018). Students generally hold a more positive view of native English-speaking teachers in comparison to non-native speakers (Grubbs et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the former are stronger language models but somewhat lacking in explaining grammar concepts, whereas the latter excel in teaching grammar lessons (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2014).

Foreign teachers, regardless of their previous occupations, have various reasons and aspirations for relocating to Thailand. These motivations include seeking freedom from rules and limitations, the desire to be global citizens, or the pursuit of excitement and new experiences (Hickey, 2018). Thailand, aiming to improve its students' English skills, seeks the assistance of foreign teachers. Despite challenges like language barriers and homesickness, foreign teachers, including non-native speakers facing issues such as lower pay and job insecurity, still decide to teach. The question then arises: What motivates them to teach in the face of such challenges?

Literature on teacher motivation exists, especially in the realm of second language (L2) teaching (Afrianto, 2014; Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2013; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014), but there remains a gap in qualitative exploration of L2 teacher motivation using the "possible selves" theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and in particular Kubanyiova's (2007, 2009) concept of "possible language teacher selves." Existing research provides insights into the interplay between language teachers' perceptions of their ideal, ought-to, and feared selves and the factors influencing their professional choices (Kubanyiova, 2009; Hiver, 2013; Kumazawa, 2013; Smid, 2018;

Sahakyan et al., 2018). However, there is still a distinct gap in understanding the motivations of English language teachers in Thailand, particularly concerning teacher retention.

The knowledge gap relating to the motivations of in-service English language teachers in Thailand presented a research opportunity to gain a nuanced understanding of English language teachers' unique motivations, hence contributing to a more comprehensive idea of the role of possible selves in shaping teacher motivation and retention.

A qualitative study was conducted, using the concept of possible language teacher selves, to explore the motivation of English language teachers. Three English language teachers with diverse backgrounds and a minimum of three years of teaching experience in Thailand were selected as participants. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect diverse stories and perspectives, aiming to explore in-service English language teachers' motivation in Thailand.

Literature Review

Teacher's Motivation to Teach

According to McDonough (2007), motivation is the driving force behind actions in English language teaching, influencing teacher retention and students' language learning outcomes. Motivated teachers seek engaging teaching methods, fostering a successful learning environment. Bergmark et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of understanding motives for entering the teaching profession to attract more educators, improve training, and enhance teaching quality.

Three primary teacher motives exist: Extrinsic (salary, holidays), intrinsic (personal interest, fulfillment), and altruistic (positive impact, helping students) (Moran et al., 2001). Reeves and Lowenhaupt (2016) underscored altruistic motives as significant in choosing teaching as a career. Altruism, including helping, making a difference, and contributing to society, is a motivation for educators (Afrianto, 2014; Flores & Niklasson, 2014; Osguthorpe & Sanger, 2013). Intrinsic motivation, linked to dedication and enthusiasm, is also valued (Erten, 2014; Sinclair, 2008).

Despite entering for altruistic reasons, teachers often leave due to workload, pupil behavior, and salary (Dolton & Klaauw, 1995). The profession's complexity and demanding nature contribute to a high attrition rate (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Burnout, inadequate support, and job dissatisfaction are significant predictors of quitting (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Madigan & Kim, 2020). Foreign teachers in Thailand face unique challenges, including language barriers, homesickness, and non-native status-related issues (Frederiksen, 2014; Hickey, 2018).

Possible Selves Theory

The possible selves theory involves imagining one's future self, known as possible selves, which includes three main categories: Ideal selves, ought-to selves, and feared selves (Markus & Nurius, 1987). In other words, possible selves refers to ideas of what people might become, would like to become, and are afraid of becoming. This can be based on how they see themselves now and how they were in the past. The possible selves theory initially was primarily focused on social psychology (Markus & Nurius, 1987), but later practical applications of this framework in applied linguistics began to emerge, as highlighted by Hiver (2013). The possible selves theory is associated with providing incentives and envisioned futures that could significantly influence an individual's motivation (Erikson, 2018). The theory can be illustrated through qualitative case studies focusing on the interplay of possible selves and factors involved, analyzed and presented using narrative inquiry techniques. In this way, researchers can investigate how teachers invest in the professional development process to improve their learning pedagogy and skills, in terms of the congruence of ideal and ought-to selves, combined with goal-setting and attitudes toward professional development (Kammayee & Tepsuriwong, 2024). To bridge the gap between academic attainment and academic possible selves among low-income and minority teens, some extensions of possible selves theory have incorporated the "authentic" notion of the "true self," linked with plausible strategies and connected with social identity (Oyserman et al., 2006).

Possible Language Teacher Selves

Possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1987) is embraced in this article. It involves imagining future selves, which include ideal, ought-to, and feared selves. This framework, initially coming from social psychology, was used in applied linguistics in the late 2000s (Hiver, 2013), and is associated with enhancing motivation (Erikson, 2018).

Possible Language Teacher Selves is an extension of Possible Selves Theory, introduced by Kubanyiova (2007, 2009). It includes three constructs:

1. Ideal Language Teacher Self: Represents desired professional identities, motivating teachers to excel and achieve their goals.
2. Ought-To Language Teacher Self: Reflects societal, educational, and institutional expectations, shedding light on the pressures teachers feel.
3. Feared Language Teacher Self: Encompasses negative versions of teachers' identities, revealing anxieties and potential barriers to effective teaching.

Karimi and Norouzi (2019) recently found the constructs to be reliable measures. Teachers' fears about their future selves can limit their sense of control (Yuan, 2016). Fearful selves might encompass undesirable outcomes, while desired selves involve positive aspects (Dunkel & Anthis, 2001). A teacher's focus on ideal or feared selves depends on their tasks (Hamman et al. 2010).

Empirical Studies

A series of studies have focused on teacher motivation and possible language teacher selves. Kubanyiova (2007, 2009) explored Slovakian EFL teachers, highlighting the influence of a teacher development program on their teaching approaches and the importance of the gap between desired and actual selves in driving learning and growth. Hamman et al. (2013) investigated 10 teacher candidates from a large southwestern US university and the regulative role possible selves had on their learning-to-teach behaviors. They found the participants regulated behaviors via strategies, employed future thinking to obtain information about progress, and derived motivation about themselves as teachers. For many, possible selves changed, relatively quickly, due to experiences, mentors, and reflection. Smid (2018) explored the motivations of Hungarian students aspiring to become English teachers, with a focus on how their possible selves shaped their motivation. Intrinsic motivation and ideal selves directly influenced their motivation, but indirect influences came from feared selves, language learning experiences, and extrinsic motivation.

A qualitative study with seven Korean English teachers conducted by Hiver (2013) revealed a dynamic interplay between their actual and possible language teacher selves. Their motivations primarily revolved around addressing self-perceived shortcomings, especially in language proficiency. Alexander et al. (2020) examined teacher motivations, self-perceptions, and external perceptions in relation to teacher retention with 1,165 in-service teachers in Australia. Intrinsic and altruistic factors were key motivators, with teacher self-concept playing a pivotal role.

Changes over time and with experience can occur. Interviews of novice English teachers in Japan by Kumazawa (2013), showed that the initial differences between their possible and actual selves initially dampened motivation. However, on self-reflection, changes occurred in self-concept and motivation increased. Sahakyan et al. (2018), working in Armenia with six English language instructors, studied the progress of teachers' motivation in relation to their ideal and ought-to selves. Initial possible selves rooted in past experiences were transformed over time into a practical self-concept balancing ideal, ought-to, and feared selves.

These studies offer insights into the intricate relationship between language teachers' possible selves and their motivations. Despite the valuable insights provided, a notable gap exists within the context of English language teachers in Thailand, especially concerning teacher retention. Nattheeraphong's (2020) study focused on L2 motivation among underprivileged students in Thailand and left a void in understanding how possible language teacher selves influenced the motivation and retention of in-service English language teachers. Consequently, the aim of the present study was to explore the motivation of such English language teachers in Thailand through the lens of possible language teacher selves, bridging the gap in existing knowledge.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors influencing the in-service teacher's motivation to teach English in Thailand?
2. How does the role of possible selves influence the motivation and retention of in-service English language teachers in Thailand?

Methodology

The methodology utilized was a narrative approach, well-suited for qualitative research, to explore participants' experiences and motivations. It involved analyzing data from case studies, surveys, and observations (Harappa Education, 2021). This narrative method focused on uncovering themes in each participant's unique story, providing a nuanced understanding of their motivations for teaching English in Thailand. Narrative methodology can be effective for studying possible selves as it encourages individuals to envision future versions of themselves, unlike questionnaires or structured interviews (Whitty, 2002).

Participants

Participants in this study were in-service English language teachers currently teaching in Thailand with a minimum of three years of experience, encompassing both Thai and foreign teachers. The focus on those with at least three years of teaching aimed to ensure depth of experience, enabling insights in a variety of contexts. Inclusion of teachers representing different nationalities aimed to capture cultural diversity inputs. Participants were selected through connections from the researcher and the advisor.

Data Collection

Potential participants were contacted through personal messages, explaining the purpose and value of the study. To ensure diverse perspectives, participants were chosen from various nationalities, institutions (public and private), and educational levels (primary, secondary, tertiary). They provided an overview of their teaching experience, motivation, and current context. The screening ensured they met the criteria of at least three years of teaching experience in Thailand. Rapport was established through pre-existing relationships and introductions during interviews fostered mutual comprehension. Participants were informed of ethical guidelines, including the right to withdraw and confidential data handling, and gave informed consent. A final selection, with selected participants scheduled for interviews, considered diversity and potential insights.

Instruments

One-on-one semi-structured Zoom interviews were used with the three in-service English teachers in Thailand to gain insights into their opinions, behaviors, experiences, and perceptions regarding their language teacher identities. The interviews consisted of 16 questions focused on three key themes, including possible selves, professional development decisions, and language teaching experiences. These interviews aimed to provide a structured approach for understanding participants' perspectives (Seidman, 2006) and yielded consistent and reinforcing insights (Hayes, 2005).

Research Procedure

The following steps were undertaken:

1. The research proposal and other required documents were submitted for IRB approval by the researchers.
2. Participants were recruited by the authors via email correspondence. Then Interview consent was obtained from them after their agreement to participate.
3. Individualized Zoom interviews were scheduled and a one-hour interview was conducted in English and recorded.

4. The interviews were transcribed and then organized within the chosen framework by the researchers.
5. Motivations were identified by the researchers through a comparison of participants' responses to semi-structured interview questions.

Data Analysis

The recorded audio data was transcribed using a technological transcription program and edited by the researchers. Participant responses were categorized based on the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A). Data were presented through individual narratives, including participants' backgrounds, personal and professional histories, and exploration of their motivations as English teachers. This approach provided a comprehensive view of their experiences and goals.

Results

Narratives of three in-service teachers in Thailand, each with a minimum of three years of teaching experience, were analyzed in detail. They reflected on their English teaching journey and motivations, covering their background, actual selves, and possible language teacher selves (ideal, ought-to, and feared). Demographic information relating to these participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1 *Demographic Information of Participants*

TEACHER (AGE)	NATIONALITY	GENDER	POSITION	DEGREE(S)	TEACHING EXPERIENCE
X (26)	Filipino	Male	Part-Time Teacher	BSc (Physical Sciences) MA (Applied Linguistics for English language teaching)	6 years
Y (39)	American	Female	Online Tutor	BA (Theatre) MA (Material and Visual Culture) Certificate of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages CELTA)	8 years
Z (55)	Malaysian	Female	Full-time University Lecturer	BA (ESL) MA (ESL) Working on completing a doctoral degree in leadership	29 years

Possible Selves Story: Participant X

Background. Male Participant X, a 26-year-old teacher from the Philippines, had teaching experience in Thailand for about six years. Now located in Nonthaburi and holding a bachelor's degree in Physical Science, he teaches science. Additionally, he worked part-time as a lecturer in English Language at a Thonburi university. During his free time, he enjoyed social media and Netflix. He is an introvert and had no prior teaching experience in the Philippines, but his family's background in teaching influenced his career choice. While teaching in a foreign country initially did not attract him, an invitation from family in Thailand changed his perspective. He quickly recognized the importance of English in Thailand and enrolled in a master's program. Now he aspires to build a long-term career as an English teacher, particularly in a university setting.

Actual language teacher self. Participant X acknowledged his current career dissatisfaction and a desire for continuous improvement, setting goals to enhance contentment. He described himself as adaptable and not goal-oriented. Recognizing his strengths and areas for growth, he was aware that his introverted nature's impacts on student relationships, particularly in communication-intensive roles like teaching. As a part-time English teacher, he aspired to work full-time, showing determination to improve career prospects. He is actively searching for opportunities aligned with his long-term goals.

Ideal language teacher self. Participant X envisioned an ideal English teacher as someone with strong communication skills, deep language knowledge, passion, and an active teaching style. He recalled how a passionate teacher with an active approach inspired him to engage and observe.

As an introvert, he recognized the need to enhance student relationships and stated, "I need to be more sociable to my students ... as an English teacher, I need to have a lot of communication skills ... I need to build [a] stronger relationship [with] my students." Additionally, he believed pursuing higher qualifications, such as a master's or PhD, would expand his career prospects, allowing for research and other opportunities beyond teaching.

Ought-to language teacher self. In his teaching role, Participant X was tasked with creating lesson plans, teaching materials, and striving to engage students through innovative activities. While juggling student and parent expectations, he acknowledged that certain factors, like fatigue, hindered full compliance.

When teaching adult learners like KMUTT staff, he prioritized professionalism and subject expertise. In all his lessons, he ensured preparation and effective delivery to meet his students' expectations. He reflected:

> Because they are adult learners … So they are quite older than me …. How can I make them follow my instruction? Or follow what I'm teaching so I have a kind of a reflection of how should I do that? First, I need to be more professional, be more knowledgeable enough with your topic. So that everything that they ask, I could answer. And everything I need to deliver, I can do it well, I can teach them well.

Feared language teacher self. Participant X, a part-time lecturer teaching English to university staff, aimed to meet adult learners' expectations. He contemplated his role, saying, "I need to be more professional, be more knowledgeable ... so I think I reach their expectation for them."

He was concerned about the repetitive nature of the teaching routine, fearing it would diminish his motivation and that of his students.

Possible Selves Story: Participant Y

Background. Female Participant Y, a 39-year-old from Louisiana, pursued theater and art studies despite having no interest in acting. She later earned a master's degree in Material and Visual Culture in London, focusing on women's dress in Laos. Her English teaching journey began part-time and evolved into a full-time role, complemented by work with various organizations and teacher training.

She currently was pursuing a master's in Applied Linguistics in Thailand, she enjoys non-fiction reading, traveling, and immersing in local cultures. Participant Y values research-based opinions and is open to changing her views.

Initially, she viewed Westerners teaching English in Southeast Asia negatively, considering it temporary for those without qualifications. However, circumstances led her to Laos, where teaching became fulfilling and impactful, contributing to society. She realized the significance of her role. She commented: "This skill in Lao is life-changing. It really is. ... in Lao, this particular skill takes people very far."

Seeking an international school in Laos, she encountered limited options, low pay, and a toxic environment. She desired anonymity and moved to a bustling Thai metropolis, finding the similarity in the primary language comforting.

Actual language teacher self. Participant Y, despite a strong teaching background and a CELTA certification, often has been considered technically underqualified. She recognized the advantages of being a native English speaker and white, saying "[these qualities] can only take [me] so far." To be more competitive and advanced, she understood the need for additional qualifications. Becoming a university professor in Thailand carries significant social standing and respect. It represents a prestigious appointment but also acts as a stepping stone to enhance one's appeal to future employers. She said:

> You need qualifications if you want to be able to keep moving up. Working university professors in Thailand have a lot of social standing and the job is very highly respected …. Working at a university will dramatically change potential employer's outlook of me as a teacher.

Ideal language teacher self. Participant Y preferred a classroom setting within a structured environment. She expressed her desire, saying,

> Right now, it's not what I want. Like if this [tutoring online] is what I thought life was going to be forever, I'd be bored. But it suits what I need for my life right now. But yeah, I want to be back in a classroom.

As a teacher, she aimed to enhance students' independence and emphasized that nobody was perfect. Creating a safe space for open discussions was crucial, even if challenging. She valued qualities like humility and compassion in teachers. She disliked the term "lecturer" because it implied a one-way communication. She wanted to avoid being an authoritarian teacher who stifled student participation and who feared making mistakes.

Ought-to language teacher self. As an online English tutor, Participant Y conducted one-on-one teaching sessions, focused on explaining concepts, provided examples, and facilitated discussions to enhance students' language skills. She customized lessons based on each student's unique needs, pace, and areas of improvement, including conversational English and IELTS exam preparation.

She recognized varying expectations in language learning, including the desire for perfect grammar and pronunciation, or the belief that teachers should possess complete language knowledge. Participant Y was mindful of these expectations, understood the challenge they posed and that teachers cannot be expected to know everything.

Feared language teacher self. Participant Y faced challenging situations that extended beyond teaching, such as students showing signs of self-harm or being in abusive situations. She described these situations as making her "feel powerless" and uncertain about the best way to help while respecting boundaries. She explained as follows:

> You want to help, but there are still boundaries as a teacher. And sometimes when you want to help, what you think you should do may not be helping. And I think for me, those are the biggest concerns when I'm facing them, basically just human issues.

Dealing with social exclusion or silent suffering issues can be emotionally difficult for teachers, and these situations do not get easier to handle over time. Despite valuing a safe space, these circumstances can test a teacher's adequacy and raise doubts about the best course of action.

Possible Selves Story: Participant Z

Background. Participant Z, a 55-year-old woman from Malaysia, taught at a private university in Thailand. She described herself as friendly and helpful, with a background in English education. Her teaching journey began in a local school where she taught Malay. Despite early challenges in classroom management, she found joy in sharing knowledge and interacting with students, realizing that teaching was her calling.

Growing up with limited English proficiency, Participant Z was initially afraid to speak in English and felt "really stupid" for not knowing how to use the language. However, her determination to overcome these challenges stemmed from her belief in the importance of English. This belief led her to decide to teach English to help others learn the language. She said:

> I think because of the difficult experience I had, I would like to help more people to know [how to] speak English. That's how I came to decide to teach in English because I believe English was a very important language. It's like opening a world that you have not seen before.

After her graduate studies, Participant Z taught in Singapore before the college relocated to Thailand, where she continued her teaching career.

Actual language teacher self. Participant Z had reached a stage in her teaching career where she felt great comfort with her knowledge and was genuinely excited about entering the classroom. She experienced increased happiness and ease in her teaching abilities compared to the past.

As a non-native English speaker, Participant Z acknowledged her challenges, particularly with aspects like prepositions and pronunciation. She accepted her non-native status and focused on contributing her knowledge rather than striving for native-like proficiency. She believed that most students do not need to speak like a native but only require a practical understanding of the language for daily life.

Participant Z found value in her own experiences as they allowed her to easily relate to students' confusion and explain concepts in a way they could understand. Her struggles with English make her an empathetic teacher who comprehended the challenges students faced in language learning.

Ideal language teacher self. According to Participant Z, an ideal language teacher should have a genuine love for teaching and be genuinely concerned about their students' well-being. She emphasized the importance of a teacher's willingness to help struggling students understand.

Moreover, she believed that ideal language teachers should possess expertise in their subject matter, a deep understanding of the learning process, and a strong commitment to ongoing learning and development.

If given the opportunity, Participant Z would like to create her own English grammar textbook, drawing from her extensive teaching experience. While she had the knowledge, she acknowledged that it would require time to put everything together. Additionally, she aimed to enhance her technological skills to support both online and in-person teaching, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and improvement in her profession.

Ought-to language teacher self. In her current role, Participant Z juggled administrative duties and teaching English classes. She recognized the fundamental responsibilities of a teacher, which involved class preparation, student assessment, and progress reporting to the department.

She believed that she could fulfill the basic requirements and expectations by planning and preparing for classes as anticipated. However, she acknowledged that constraints like limited time could hinder her from investing more effort in her classes or providing individual feedback in large classes. She reflected on the tension between her desires and the reality she faced, saying,

> *Now, sometimes I would like to do more for the classes, but time is not on my side for instance. So that could be problematic. Because I can't implement what I really want to do because of limitations, or I would like to give individual feedback for students but in a very big class. How can I do that without sacrificing my sleep? So that's the tension between desire and the reality.*

Feared language teacher self. Participant Z feared stagnation in learning, believing it halted personal growth and “harms the brain.” Participant Z often found unfamiliar words, especially the difficulty in pronouncing them acceptably, to be intimidating. In instances where she was corrected in class, she viewed it as an opportunity for learning rather than feeling embarrassed. She dreaded becoming too teacher-centered and was concerned about forgetting her students in lesson planning.

Summary of Results

Table 2 provides the condensed overview of the participants' selves.

Table 2 *Overview of Participants' Possible Selves*

TEACHER	ACTUAL	IDEAL	OUGHT-TO	FEARED
X	Dissatisfied due to introverted nature, seeks to improve, and build student relationships.	Proficient teacher with strong communication skills, interactive classroom.	Prepares engaging lessons, professional and knowledgeable.	Stuck in repetitive routine, has challenges in student relationships.
Y	Finds fulfillment in teaching, values impact on individuals.	Safe, open classroom, humility, compassion, continuous improvement.	Tailors lessons, adapts to different expectations.	Handles challenging student issues while maintaining a safe space.
Z	Joy in teaching, comfortable with knowledge, values shared experiences.	Create a comprehensive textbook, student-centered emphasis, continuous learning.	Balances admin and teaching, effective communication.	Stagnant learning, forgetting student needs, losing growth mindset.

Discussion

This study delved into the motivations of in-service English language teachers in Thailand by exploring their possible selves as educators. The findings revealed a complex interplay between motivations and self-concept, offering insights into the factors shaping their motivations (Hamman et al., 2013).

The primary finding underscored that participants' motivations were chiefly rooted in intrinsic and altruistic factors, in line with their possible selves as English language teachers. This aligns with prior research in Australia (Alexander et al., 2020), which highlighted similar intrinsic and altruistic motives. For instance, Participant X's drive for self-improvement and university teaching resonated with his ideal and ought-to possible selves, while Participant Y's commitment to societal impact aligned with her actual and ideal selves. These motivations reflect an acknowledgment of Thailand's growing emphasis on English proficiency as life-changing. This connection mirrors Osguthorpe and Sanger's (2013) observations about the desire to positively impact students' lives among teacher candidates.

The second significant finding was that participants' possible selves strongly influenced their motivations and career aspirations. Their ideal possible selves as English teachers served as powerful motivators, while their feared possible selves encouraged them to take action to avoid undesirable outcomes. This finding echoes Smid's (2018) research highlighting the direct impact of ideal selves on motivations for learning and teaching English. Participant Y's determination to enhance students' experiences aligns with Lutovac's (2020) findings that teachers' possible selves motivate support and encouragement.

The third key finding indicated that participants' desire to persist in teaching aligned with their possible selves and career trajectories. This agrees with Kubanyiova's (2009) emphasis on the gap between desired and actual selves driving learning and growth. Participant Z's commitment to refining her teaching skills and creating a comprehensive English grammar textbook aligned with her ideal and ought-to possible selves. The participants' aspiration to continuously learn and maintain student-centered approaches reflects how teachers' possible selves drive learning and development.

For all three participants, it is also possible to discern the use of strategies to attain their ideal and ought-to possible selves to meet goals, which agrees with Hamman et al. (2013). Agreement was also found with Kammayee and Tepsuriwong's (2024) data. The teachers' motivation to invest in professional development was shown by preparing engaging lessons and tailoring lessons, and showing a desire to construct a comprehensive textbook.

Finally, in line with Karimi and Norouzi (2019), we found the concept and frame of possible selves to be a reliable and useful way of engaging with, supporting, and potentially motivating, teacher candidates.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the motivations of in-service English teachers in Thailand, offering a nuanced understanding through the lens of possible selves. The findings reveal the intricate interplay of intrinsic motivations, self-concept, and career aspirations that drive teacher commitment.

By analyzing participants' ideal, actual, ought-to, and feared possible selves, we uncovered the complex web of motivations influencing their choices as educators. The alignment of these possible selves with motivations and career paths underscores the significant impact of self-perception on teacher motivation.

The implications of the study for educational institutions is that it highlights the importance of tailored professional development, student-centered teaching, recognizing non-native speaker strengths, supporting continuous improvement, prioritizing teacher well-being, and aligning strategies with inner motivations. These insights offer practical guidance for schools and policymakers striving to foster teacher growth, enhance student experiences, and improve education quality.

In summary, this research contributes to the literature on teacher motivation, emphasizing the role of possible selves in shaping career aspirations and commitment. As education evolves, understanding teacher motivations remains crucial for developing effective strategies to improve teacher well-being, enhance education quality, and increase teacher motivation and retention.

Limitations

This study had its limitations, such as a small sample size, the use of convenience sampling, reliance on self-reported data, and utilizing a cross-sectional design. Future researchers might consider larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal studies, and a mixed-methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of teacher motivation and possible selves.

Ethics Declaration

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (Approval code: KMUTT-IRB-COE-2023-089)

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Appendix A
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Part I: Background
1. Can you tell me some things about yourself?
2. When did you start teaching English?
3. How did you end up in the field of teaching?
4. What caught your interest in teaching English?
5. Why did you choose to teach in Thailand?
6. So far, how do you feel where you are at in your English teaching career?

Part II: Ideal Language Teacher Self
1. How has your career shaped your life?
2. What are some goals you would like to achieve as an English teacher?
3. What are some important traits an English teacher should have?

Part III: Ought-to language teacher self
1. What are some duties and responsibilities you are required to do as a teacher?
2. Are you able to do what people expect you to do as an English teacher?
   a. If yes, what do you do?
   b. If no, what do you plan to do?
3. Are there any other factors that influence your ability to become an ideal teacher?

Part IV: Feared language teacher self
After discussing your ideals and responsibilities as a teacher...
1. Do you have any worries regarding your responsibilities?
2. What are some things you might be afraid of in your career?
3. What do you want to avoid as an English teacher?

Part V: Conclusion
1. Do you think you will continue/leave after teaching English for a certain length of time?
   a. Why or why not?

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Intimate Partner Violence and Suicide Attempt Among Women in the Philippines: The Protective Role of Help-Seeking Behavior

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence is among the leading women's health issues globally. Hence, the primary aim of this study was to determine if intimate partner violence (IPV) against women is a significant risk factor in suicide attempts, and whether such an association is moderated by help-seeking behavior. A predictive correlational design was employed to determine associations between the variables of interest. The study sample consisted of 1,413 currently married or cohabiting Filipino women with exposure to IPV. In the direct effects model, physical IPV, psychological IPV, and sexual IPV emerged as significant risk factors for suicide attempts. In the moderation analysis, help-seeking behavior did not demonstrate a significant interaction with IPV in predicting suicide attempts. The current data highlight the importance of identifying and screening IPV-abused women in communities who may be at risk of attempting suicide. Additionally, suicide prevention strategies must consider the potential role of help-seeking behavior in increasing the risk of suicide among IPV-abused women.

Keywords: *Help-seeking behavior, intimate partner violence, suicide attempt*

Introduction and Literature Review

Violence in intimate relationships is a foremost health concern among women around the globe. Intimate partner violence (IPV) pertains to harmful physical, psychological, or sexual acts perpetrated within an intimate relationship [World Health Organization (WHO), 2012]. Various forms of IPV have been conceptualized and investigated throughout the years. Physical violence involves intentionally inflicting physical force, including "scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, hair-pulling, slapping, punching, hitting, burning, use of a weapon, and use of restraints or one's body, size, or strength against another person" (Breiding et al., 2015, p. 11). The most commonly reported type of IPV is psychological violence (Dokkedahl et al., 2019), which is the "use of verbal or non-verbal communication with the intent to: (a) harm another person mentally or emotionally, and/or (b) exert control over another person" (Breiding et al., 2015, p. 15). In contrast, the least common form of IPV is sexual IPV (Gubi et al., 2020), which is "a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without the given consent of the victim or against someone unable to consent or refuse" (Breiding et al., 2015, p. 11).

Intimate partner violence is a worldwide phenomenon that transcends societal and cultural boundaries. Global estimates by the WHO revealed that 1 out of 3 women suffer from IPV (WHO, 2018). Specifically, the incidence of IPV has been documented in various nations worldwide, such as 15.3% in Slovenia (Selic et al., 2011), 38.0% in Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2017), 27.0% in Uganda (Wandera et al., 2015), 9.2% in Vietnam (Krantz & Vung, 2009), 14.0 to 38.0% in Kenya (Eminike et al., 2008) and 54.4% in El Salvador (Navarro-Mantas et al., 2018). In the Philippines, the rate of IPV perpetrated against Filipino women who have been married was 12.7% for physical IPV, 5.3% for sexual IPV, and 21.5% for psychological IPV in 2013 [Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) & ICF International, 2014].

Intimate partner violence has been associated with a host of detrimental consequences on women, such as physical disability, neurological injuries, and psychological harm (Schuler et al., 2016). One of the most devastating responses to IPV is suicidality among female victims. A multi-country study by the WHO on women's health indicated that IPV is among the most salient risk factors for suicide attempt (Devres et al., 2011). Correspondingly, a preponderance of studies has demonstrated that IPV against women was associated with suicide ideation and/or attempt (e.g., Devries et al., 2011;

Gibbs et al., 2018; Haarr, 2010; Indu et al., 2020; MacIsaac et al., 2017; McLaughlin et al., 2012; Reviere et al., 2007; Sansone et al., 2006; Seedat et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 2022). For example, a study in the USA revealed that 23% of IPV-abused women had attempted suicide (Seedat et al., 2005). In Tajikistan, women who experienced sexual IPV and/or physical IPV were more likely to display suicidal thoughts and behaviors than those without marital violence exposure (Haarr, 2010). A hospital-based case-control research in India also found that IPV in married women was a unique risk factor for suicide attempts (Indu et al., 2020). Considering that suicide is a major contributor to the global burden of disease among women (Devres et al., 2011) and that Asia constitutes 60% of the suicide incidence in the world (Indu et al., 2020), it is important to examine suicide attempts among IPV victims in the Asian context. Doing so may advance knowledge and understanding of women's experience of IPV and its link to suicidal behaviors, which in turn may be used for the design of intervention strategies.

Extensive research has investigated help-seeking behavior among IPV-abused women (e.g., Cornally & McCarthy, 2011; Gerino et al., 2018; Haarr, 2010; McCleary-Sills et al., 2015; Paul, 2016; Satyen et al., 2019; Shannon et al., 2006; Tenkorang et al., 2017; Vyas & Mbwambo, 2017). Help-seeking behavior refers to an "intentional action to solve a problem that challenges personal abilities" (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015). In Bangladesh, 19.0% of currently married young adult women who experienced physical IPV reported seeking help, mainly from informal sources (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015), while in India, 24.0% of battered women sought help from different sources (Paul, 2016). Among Nigerian women who had been victimized by physical and sexual IPV, 39.7% sought help (Linos et al., 2013). However, a majority of Tanzanian female victims of IPV were reported to never seek help (Shannon et al., 2006). Further, among the few who did, only 10% had access to formal sources of help (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015). Notably, not all IPV-abused women seek help despite the severity of their experiences (Satyen et al., 2019). Given that help-seeking behavior is one of the coping mechanisms for exposure to violence (Sere et al., 2021), these empirical results indicated that a great majority of female IPV victims do not seek help. This warrants concern and further investigation. Taken together, evidence from the extant literature indicates that suicide attempt and help-seeking behaviors are associated with women's IPV experiences. However, what is not yet clear is whether help-seeking behavior can protect IPV-abused women from engaging in suicidal behavior.

The resilience model provides a framework for understanding the relationships between suicide attempts, IPV, and help-seeking behavior. Resilience pertains to an "interactive concept that refers to a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences or the overcoming of stress or adversity" (Rutter, 2006, p. 1). Numerous studies have implicated IPV as one of the chief risk factors for suicidal ideation and attempts in women (e.g., Gibbs et al., 2018; Haarr, 2010; Indu et al., 2020). Likewise, previous studies have identified help-seeking behavior as a main protective factor for IPV-abused individuals (Gerino et al., 2018). The resilience theory postulates that favorable psychological outcomes are achieved amid exposure to adverse life events (Rutter, 2006), when a person's adaptation systems are functioning adequately (Masten, 2001). External resources such as support and help from the community are considered protective factors that facilitate positive outcomes despite experiencing adverse situations (Zimmerman, 2013). Still, research to date has not been able to provide reliable evidence for the potential buffering effect of help-seeking behavior against the suicidal impact of IPV on women. Thus, assessing both risk and protective factors in a multivariable conceptual framework is necessary to gain better insights into the detrimental impact of IPV.

Although the weight of empirical evidence has demonstrated a significant relationship between IPV and suicide attempts in women, most studies have been restricted to IPV-abused women who presented themselves to clinics, shelters, or healthcare hospitals; hence, findings in the existing literature may not represent the general community of women. Furthermore, there is scarce information on the profile of IPV-abused Filipino women who have attempted suicide since most pertinent studies have been conducted in Western or non-Southeast Asian settings. As emphasized by Aliverdinia and Pridemore (2009), more empirical studies on the link between suicide attempt and IPV must be carried out to know if the findings can be replicated in diverse countries and cultures. Investigating suicide attempt among Filipino IPV-abused women will augment the design of culturally tailored prevention and intervention efforts to control IPV and its damaging consequences on the health and well-being of women. In light of the aforementioned gaps in the literature, the primary purpose of this research was to assess the extent that IPV affects suicide attempt in an understudied and underrepresented community-based sample of Filipino women. This study also investigated the potential role of help-seeking behavior in protecting women victims of IPV against suicide attempts. In particular, the present study tested the following hypotheses:

H_1: Physical IPV exposure significantly increases the probability of suicide attempt among women.
H_2: Exposure to psychological IPV significantly elevates occurrence of suicide attempts among women.
H_3: The probability of suicide attempt is significantly greater among women with sexual IPV experience than their counterparts.
H_4: Help-seeking behavior significantly protects women exposed to physical IPV from attempting suicide.
H_5: Help-seeking behavior is a significant protective factor for suicide attempt among women victimized by psychological IPV.
H_6: Help-seeking behavior is a significant buffer against suicide attempt among women with sexual IPV experience.

Methodology

Data and Participants

The present research utilized secondary data from the 2017 Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2017). The Demographic and Health Survey is a nationally representative research project that gathers a wide array of information, including women's exposure to IPV, reproductive behaviors, as well as maternal health (Barra & Barra, 2019). For this investigation, only the data on women who answered questions about IPV experience were included in the analyses. Overall, the analytical sample comprised 1,413 married or cohabiting Filipino women at the time of the data collection in 2017, who were selected from all 17 regions of the country. The sampling procedure for the 2017 NDHS is described in greater detail by the PSA and ICF International (2018).

Measures

The measures for all the main research variables were taken from the Women's Safety Module of the 2017 NDHS survey booklet. Three exposure variables related to IPV were employed—physical IPV, sexual IPV, and psychological IPV. Physical IPV was measured through an item that asked respondents if their husband or partner has subjected them to any of seven forms of physical IPV, including, pushing, slapping, punching, and kicking. Psychological IPV was gauged by a question that asked if the respondent's husband or partner has ever manifested any of seven forms of psychological violence, including humiliating them in front of others, threatening to harm them, or having other intimate relationships. Sexual IPV was measured by three survey items that asked the respondent if her husband or partner had ever forced or threatened her to engage in sexual acts against her will. The three exposure variables were dichotomized for the statistical analysis: that is, a score of 0 (*no*) was assigned to respondents who did not experience any manifestations of IPV (i.e., three for sexual IPV, and seven for physical as well as psychological IPV); whereas a score of 1 (*yes*) was assigned to those who experienced at least one indicator of IPV.

The outcome variable, suicide attempt, was measured by a single item that asked the respondents if they had ever attempted suicide (Responses: 0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). Help-seeking behavior was assessed using an item that asked if the respondent had ever tried to seek help from any source due to their experience of IPV. Responses were coded into 0 (*did not seek help*) or 1 (*sought help*). As demographic characteristics are important markers for the risk of suicide (MacIsaac et al., 2017), respondents' age (in years), years of education completed, and employment status were included as potentially confounding variables.

Statistical Analysis

Univariate descriptive statistics were employed to describe the demographic profile of participants and the proportion who had experienced IPV, suicide attempts, and help-seeking behavior. Next bivariate analyses, particularly, the Chi-square test of independence and the *t*-test for independent means, were utilized to identify if suicide attempt was associated with IPV, help-seeking, or demographic factors. Then binary logistic regression investigated the multivariable association between the variables. Model 1 tested the direct effects of the exposure variables on suicide attempt. Model 2 assessed help-seeking behavior as a moderator; hence, three two-way interactions were examined. The odds ratio (OR) was used to determine the significance of the predictors. For both the bivariate and regression analyses, alpha was set to a *p*-value of < .05. The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 29 for Mac.

Ethical Approval

The ICF International Review Board approved the conduct of the 2017 NDHS. A more complete description of the ethical procedures carried out by the Demographic and Health Surveys Program [n.d., (DHS)] implementers is accessible on the official webpage of the DHS Program. In addition, the present study was approved by the Mindanao State University-Main Campus Research Ethics Committee, with MSUM-REC Code 2023-018.

Results and Discussion

The present study investigated 1,413 Filipino women who have experienced intimate partner violence perpetrated by their respective husbands or cohabiting partners. As shown in Table 1, women aged 35–39 comprised the highest proportion of IPV victims with 20.7%, closely followed by those in the age group of 30–34 and 25–29. In terms of education, over half of the respondents (54.6%) who have been exposed to IPV reported secondary education as their highest educational attainment. In contrast, only 0.20% had never attended school. Correspondingly, a slight majority of the respondents reported being employed, whereas almost half (45.7%) were unemployed.

Table 1 *Distribution of Respondents According to the Research Variables (N = 1,413)*

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
20–24	185	13.1
25–29	269	19.0
30–34	278	19.7
35–39	292	20.7
40–44	200	14.2
45–49	189	13.4
Highest Educational Attainment		
No education	3	0.2
Primary	356	25.2
Secondary	772	54.6
Higher	282	20.0
Employment status		
Working	767	54.3
Unemployed	646	45.7
Physical IPV Victim		
Yes	1244	88.0
No	169	12.0
Psychological IPV Victim		
Yes	981	69.4
No	432	30.6

Sexual IPV Victim		
Yes	464	32.8
No	949	67.2
Attempted Suicide		
Yes	177	12.5
No	1236	87.5
Sought Help		
Yes	460	32.6
No	953	67.4

Three forms of IPV were investigated in this study. As may be gleaned from Table 1, most of the respondents (88.0%) had experienced physical IPV victimization, whereas 69.4% reported experiencing psychological IPV. In contrast, only 32.8% percent of the respondents had been exposed to sexual IPV. A comparison of these findings with other studies (e.g., McLaughlin et al., 2021; Tenkorang et al., 2017) confirms that physical IPV and psychological IPV are more commonly reported than sexual IPV among female victims. Moreover, only 32.6% of IPV-abused women reported seeking help. This result is in keeping with the relatively low prevalence of help-seeking behavior among IPV-abused women found in previous research (e.g., Linos et al., 2013; McCleary-Sills et al., 2015; Parvin et al., 2016).

Bivariate analyses were carried out to examine if the predictor variables had significant associations with suicide attempts, as well as to identify potentially confounding demographic factors. Looking at Table 2, it is apparent from the Chi-square results that IPV was significantly associated with suicide attempts. Accordingly, the proportion of women exposed to physical IPV (13.7%), psychological IPV (16.3%), and sexual IPV (15.7%) who attempted suicide were all greater than their counterparts. Employment status and age were likewise significantly associated with suicide attempt; hence these demographic variables were included as potential confounders in the regression analyses.

Table 2 *Bivariate Association of Suicide Attempt with the Predictor Variables*

Variables	%/*M*	χ/*t*
Physical IPV		χ = 14.12***
Yes	13.7%	
No	3.6%	
Psychological IPV		χ = 41.92***
Yes	16.3%	
No	3.9%	
Sexual IPV		χ = 6.48*
Yes	15.7%	
No	11.0%	
Employment status		χ = 6.60*
Yes	14.6%	
No	10.1%	
Age (in years)	*M* = 33.54	*t* = 1.02
Education (in years)	*M* = 8.88	*t* = 3.25**

Note. %/*M* denotes the proportion of the respondents who attempted suicide; * denotes $p < .05$; ** denotes $p < .01$; *** denotes $p < .001$.

The primary aim of this study was to determine whether IPV is a risk factor for suicide attempt among IPV-abused Filipino women. Model 1 in Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses that identified which, among the three forms of IPV, have a significant main effect on suicide attempt, over and above other predictor variables in the equation. Model 1 explained between 8.4% (Cox & Snell *R* Square) and 15.9% (Nagelkerke *R* Square) of the variance in suicide attempt and correctly classified 87.5% of the cases. The results of the direct effects model revealed that holding all other variables in the model constant, exposure to physical IPV, psychological IPV, and sexual IPV significantly predicted suicide attempt, thereby supporting H_1, H_2, and H_3 of this study respectively. Specifically, the odds of attempting suicide were higher among women who experienced physical IPV ($p < .000$), psychological IPV ($p < .000$), and sexual IPV ($p <. 000$) than those who did not experience these forms of intimate partner violence. Similar significant findings were generated in Model 2, which already took into account the interaction effects. These findings mirrored those of previous studies (e.g., Gerino et al., 2018; Paul, 2016; Vyas & Mbwambo, 2017) in which intimate partner violence against women was found to be a significant determinant of suicide attempt.

Table 3 *Logistic Regression for Predicting Suicide Attempt*

Variables	Model 1 OR (95% CI)	Model 2 OR (95% CI)
Help-seeking	2.68*** (1.91–3.75)	9.65* (1.18–78.87)
Physical IPV	4.89*** (2.03–11.79)	5.75** (1.93–17.13)
Psychological IPV	3.37*** (1.99–5.72)	5.17*** (2.32–11.52)
Sexual IPV	1.83*** (1.28–2.62)	2.09** (1.22–3.59)
Age	0.97* (0.95–0.99)	0.97* (0.95–0.99)
Employment	1.57* (1.10–2.24)	1.58* (1.11–2.25)
Physical IPV x Help-seeking		0.66 (0.10–4.28)
Psychological IPV x Help-seeking		0.41 (0.14–1.19)
Sexual IPV x Help-seeking		0.81 (0.40–1.65)

Note. * means $p < .05$; ** denotes $p < .01$; *** means $p < .001$; OR represents Odds Ratio; CI denotes Confidence Interval.

The results of the moderation analyses are presented in Model 2 in Table 3. The findings show that none of the three interaction terms was significant. Accordingly, help-seeking behavior did not have a significant interaction with physical, psychological, and sexual intimate partner violence in predicting suicide attempt, thereby failing to provide support to H_4, H_5, and H_6. The addition of the interaction terms in Model 2 did not considerably improve the amount of variation in suicide attempts from Model 1. Accordingly, Model 2 explained between 8.7% (Cox & Snell R Square) and 16.3% (Nagelkerke R Square) of the variance in suicide attempt.

On the contrary, the hypothesized moderating variable, help-seeking behavior, made a unique statistically significant contribution to Model 2, suggesting that the odds of attempting suicide were higher among women who sought help ($p < .05$) than those who did not seek help. In the main effects analysis in Model 1, help-seeking behavior likewise displayed a positive association with suicide attempts ($p < .000$). It may be inferred from the findings that help-seeking behavior did not emerge as a significant moderator (i.e., protective factor) because it instead increased risk of suicide attempt. While this finding appears counterintuitive, literature evidence indicates that help-seeking behavior may have adverse consequences on women exposed to intimate partner violence. Empirical investigations have reported that victims of intimate partner violence experience greater levels of societal stigmatization, including, self-blame, shame, social isolation, and negative social reactions when they seek help (Kennedy & Prock, 2018), with such stigmatization resulting in self-destructive behaviors such as suicide (Alix et al., 2017).

Conclusion, Implications, and LImitation

This research was primarily undertaken to assess the association of IPV with suicide attempts among Filipino women. Among the three types of IPV examined, physical IPV was the most prevalent, then psychological IPV, and finally sexual IPV. All three forms of IPV are significantly associated with suicide attempt in both the bivariate and multivariate analyses.

In general, the present study has provided additional empirical evidence with respect to the role of intimate partner violence and help-seeking behavior as risk factors for suicide attempt among Filipino women. The significant findings of this study have theoretical and practical implications that are worth mentioning. First, the outcomes of this research did not lend support fully to the resilience model in explaining the occurrence of suicide attempts among IPV-abused women. While this study was able to establish that physical, psychological, and sexual forms of intimate partner violence are significant risk factors for suicide attempts, help-seeking behavior did not emerge as a protective factor. Second, the findings of the present study can be utilized in the creation of policies and intervention strategies for mitigating both intimate partner violence and suicide attempt among married or cohabiting women. Additionally, the promotion of help-seeking behavior as a protective factor against a suicide attempt needs to be investigated further before it can be incorporated when designing programs for IPV-abused women, as it may not have a buffering impact.

However, a few limitations of this research need to be acknowledged. One issue with the current study was that the study population was limited to married and/or cohabiting women of reproductive age, which limited the generalizability of the findings. Never-married and elderly women may also be exposed to IPV. Future research involving this group of individuals is strongly recommended. Second, given the cross-sectional design of this study, causal links between IPV and suicide attempt could not be drawn. Third, retrospective data were utilized that may be subject to recall biases. Lastly, only help-seeking behavior was examined as a potentially protective factor against suicide attempt among IPV-abused women. Hence, future studies must employ other research designs and investigate other protective factors (e.g., social support) to gain a deeper understanding of suicide attempt in women.

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Multiple Perspectives of Working From Home: Lessons Learned During the Pandemic

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the varied experiences of professionals working from home in eight different countries (Asia, Australia, Brazil, and the USA) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-depth structured open-ended interviews (10) were conducted using online video calls in 2022. Most people shifted to working from home (WFH) during the lockdown. The participants responded differently to this new working norm, reporting different productivity levels and distractions. Participants in IT departments experienced heavy workloads and long working hours. Many organizations transitioned from traditional to digital work methods as they found new ways to meet organizational goals. Some respondents preferred the hybrid working mode after the lockdown ended, while two preferred working entirely from home and four working entirely onsite. One participant moved his IT department to remote work to save office leasing costs as his employees preferred WFH after the pandemic. Some businesses were negatively impacted, and one restaurant closed permanently. This study provided valuable insights from the participants' WFH experiences and their post-pandemic working preferences.

Keywords: *Remote work, telework, working from home*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic generated a major disruption causing complex personal and social changes in the lives of people and businesses around the globe (Alrikabi & Jasim, 2021; Chinvararak et al., 2022; Kniffin et al., 2021). Employees and their families were forced to deal with severe uncertainty that negatively affected their physical and mental health (Chinvararak et al., 2022; White, 2021). Millions of people all over the world had to switch to working remotely/telework (Kniffin et al., 2021), which was no longer an option but a "compulsory requirement or a mandatory order" (Wang et al., p. 18, 2021; White, 2021) and was popularly dubbed as the "new normal" (Wang et al., 2021; White, 2021). Shocked with the rapid transition of working from the office to working from home (WFH) (Högberg, 2022), employees and organizations alike were suddenly plunged into the unfamiliar without any preparation or warning (Bloom, 2020). Organizations were in a completely new and unknown environment where they had no significant experience or understanding of WFH operations and the complexities that came with it (Chow et al., 2022; Ngotngamwong, 2023). They had to learn suddenly and work hard towards reorganizing their operations and strategies to accommodate remote working (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). Financial security and the fear of losing jobs were major concerns for employees, since pay cuts and layoffs accompanied the pandemic (Monster, 2020; Parker et al, 2020), while employers' concerns were on productivity and achieving business success during the sudden disruption (Monster, 2020).

The purpose of this study was to explore the WFH experiences of working professionals from multiple industries who resided in different countries. It provides readers with deeper insights into the real-life experiences of those whose lives were disrupted and how they adapted to these changes. This study offers valuable insights gathered from 10 participants with unique backgrounds, ultimately contributing to an enriched and holistic understanding of WFH experiences during the pandemic. These insights not only expand the existing body of knowledge about remote work, but also serve as a significant resource for the future. What can these experiences and strategies teach businesses and employees about more productive methods of work in the present and the future?

Literature Review

Work-From-Home

Work-From-Home, also termed as "'telework,' 'telecommuting,' 'remote working,' 'e-work' and 'virtual work' (Sullivan, 2003, as cited in Green et al., 2020, p. 5), is supported by the utilization of information and communication technology at one or more offsite locations such as the employees' homes, satellite offices, or coworking spaces (Offstein et al., 2010). Working remotely was not widely practiced prior to the pandemic (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018), and was commonly practiced only in certain industries (Statistics NZ, 2019) or by highly skilled professionals with a high level of autonomy, such as managers or IT specialists (Milasi et al., 2021; Statistics NZ, 2019). It was a completely new working experience for most employees (Singha & Sivarethinamohan, 2021) who were forced to go through many stark changes in their working practices (Hunter, 2020).

Both workers and organizations had very little experience and were completely unprepared for this huge change, and organizations were unprepared to provide the necessary support (Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, there were no contingency plans to cope with this sudden development (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). By providing continuous online training and learning, the IT know-how of employees was gradually improved. They became better equipped to manage a challenging workplace (Hunter, 2020) that relied heavily on digital technologies in a virtual work environment (Orth & Schuldis, 2021). Employees learnt how to adapt to the new normal by "attending meetings through videoconferencing, creating virtual workflows and exploring new software to replace physical processes" (White, 2021, p. 16). Many WFH employees hardly took any vacation time during the pandemic (Monster, 2020), which easily led to unsustainable stress and sometimes resulted in burnout (White, 2021). Some who worked longer hours were fully absorbed in their work, and lost track of time as they were more focused in a quiet environment that was devoid of workplace noise and social interactions. Thus, overwork was an issue with some who lost track of time, while others had no such problem. Some took more breaks during the day, while others were so absorbed in their work that they neglected break times. Allowing schedule flexibility gave employees the opportunity to plan their schedules so that they could spend time with families. Many were able to start and end work earlier (Chow et al., 2022). Although some organizations maintained the same work schedules, others saw increases in the number of hours worked.

In general, singles experienced more benefits than couples, and those with families and children had a more difficult time. Men were reported to have a better work-life balance than women, who devoted more time to household duties and their children (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020). Self-discipline was a powerful individual factor/personal trait during remote working. Those with high levels of self-discipline were reported to have completed their tasks more efficiently, while still being able to maintain a good work-family balance. Employees with less self-discipline, on the other hand, were less productive and experienced procrastination and cyberloafing, an indication of self-control failure (Wang et al., 2020).

Negative Impacts of WFH

The pandemic negatively impacted economies, worldwide individual lifestyles, physical health, and more importantly, employees' mental health; common problems included anxiety, depression, distress, stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Xiong, et al., 2020). Some professions, particularly individuals working in Health Care, experienced extended working hours which led to anxiety, burnout, and PTSD (Amanullah & Shankar, 2020; Tan et al., 2020). Many were ergonomically challenged, without suitable work chairs or adjustable work surfaces, and spent long hours at undesirable work positions (White, 2021). This contributed to a significant rise in musculoskeletal complaints, along with new aches and pains, particularly in the back, neck, and shoulders (Bevan et al., 2020). The WFH arrangement proved to be a very isolating experience (Lopez-Leon et al., 2020), and remote workers suffered from emotional exhaustion (Vander Elst et al., 2017). Such a development could be helped through organizational social support platforms to boost social interaction among employees (Wang et al., 2020).

Benefits of WFH

The WFH experience was not entirely bad. Literature published prior the pandemic pointed out that "WFH is beneficial for employee wellbeing and performance, and organizational outcomes, notably productivity, retention, and business continuity in times of disruption" (Green et al., 2020, p. 5). Looking from the positive side of physical and mental wellbeing, WFH saved traveling time, allowed longer sleeping hours, and provided a healthier work life balance as employees could spend time with their families, exercise, cook, and walk their dogs (Chow et al., 2022). The WFH experience was positively related to "higher job satisfaction and performance, lower work-family conflict, and lower turnover propensity," along with an "increase in the worker's perceived autonomy afforded by WFH" (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007 as cited in Green et al., 2020, p. 5). Relying heavily on digital communication, information sharing was not only more effective but easier, as team members were more approachable and available digitally by email or phone. Moreover, digital meetings were more efficient, punctual, and effective as more meetings could be scheduled within a day (Chow et al., 2022). On a more personal level, it opened opportunities for individual self-development, reskilling, and employability improvements (Hunter, 2020). The shift from paper to digital documents (Lopez-Leon et al., 2020) is more environmentally friendly and sustainable, while less traveling not only reduced traffic congestion, but is also good for the environment (Mello, 2007; Siha & Monroe, 2006, as cited in Green et al., 2020). The WFH change also conferred financial benefits with savings on transportation expenses such as gas, tickets, tolls, transport cards, and food and beverages (Chow et al., 2022; Saho et al., 2021). While organizations incurred less capital costs for leasing office spaces, WFH had a negative impact on real estate companies (Atkyns et al., 2002; Mello, 2007, as cited in Green et al., 2020).

Challenges of Working from Home

Home-based work has many challenges. Although it had been practiced on a much smaller scale prior to the pandemic, it was very different on a global scale. Four main remote work challenges were identified in a Chinese study and included "work-home interference, ineffective communication, procrastination, and loneliness." "Four virtual work characteristics" further modifying these challenges were "social support, job autonomy, monitoring, and workload," as well as self-discipline (Wang et al., 2020, p. 16). Relying almost entirely on digital communication during the new normal was a practice that sometimes led to communication problems, which resulted in low productivity (Wang et al., 2020). Virtual meetings were particularly challenging as communication and engagement were difficult with large groups, especially when some members dominated meetings and when many people were conversing at the same time. The missing social aspect meant lost opportunities for networking, social interaction, feedback, performance management, team help, and support.

Other complications were IT related such as Internet access, bandwidth issues, and sharing drives and printers (Chow et al., 2022). Engagement in non-work related activities such as social media and long breaks led to procrastination and missed deadlines. Supervisor monitoring, such as daily reports, turning on cameras, and clocking in and out was positively received, as it helped workers to focus on their tasks and avoid procrastination (Wang et al., 2020). Productivity was another challenge with the clash of home and work life, the absence of the family connections, and a lack of tools needed to work (Monster, 2020). Employees who resided with their families faced family life distractions and encountered difficulties focusing on their work at home, which affected work effectiveness (Wang et al., 2020; White, 2021). This was a problem particularly for parents with children, as they had to simultaneously work and take care of their children (Chow et al., 2022; Park et al., 2020), leading to exhaustion (Wang et al., 2020). The separation between work and home was borderless for some, and having home access to a laptop tempted some to keep working, which ultimately resulted in a high workload being experienced from early morning to late evenings (Chow et al., 2022).

Leadership Challenges with WFH

Leaders found the pandemic extremely challenging for, like their employees, they had to informally learn from experience how to respond to tremendous changes when they were suddenly thrown into unusual and threatening circumstances (Högberg, 2022). This quick adaptation meant that traditional leadership methods were no longer effective or adequate in the WFH scenarios (Bell et al., 2019; Contreras et al., 2020). This forced them to "reframe their leadership role and how they 'did' leadership" (Bjørkelo, 2018, as cited in Högberg, 2022, p. 14), which resulted in them coming up with a new leadership style appropriate during the pandemic (Högberg, 2022). Leaders had to learn how to manage from home, while attending and managing what seemed like endless virtual meetings. High levels of stress and anxiety made it difficult for leaders to focus and be productive during the first few months of WFH (Sutton, 2020). Leading from home was complicated as managers no longer had access to face-to-face communication, corridor informal conversations, and "reading" their co-workers. This forced them to communicate, manage, and "learn new ways of approaching and interacting with their co-workers," (Högberg, 2022, p. 12). Successful WFH implementation requires open-minded leaders who "explore, support, and adjust to alternative ways of working." The WFH enforced experiment offered "a significant learning opportunity for organizations to evaluate what 'worked' and what did not, and in what ways WFH could be best managed to benefit both workers and organizations" (Green et al., 2020, p. 12).

Insights from WFH After the Pandemic

The WFH model proved to be a success, and flexible work practices continued to be used after the pandemic (Singha & Sivarethinamohan, 2021; Wang et al., 2020). The crisis may be over, but the impacts of the pandemic on work practices are highly evident, and many organizations continue to allow new ways of working (Orth, & Schuldis, 2021) as they refine operations, leadership practices, and leader-follower interactions (Högberg, 2022). Moving back to the office after WFH needs to be well-managed, as some find it stressful and threatening physically and mentally as they have to relearn some coping skills (Green et al., 2020).

In a study conducted by Chow et al. (2022), over 90% of participants expressed a strong desire to continue with WFH in the future as it fostered a better work life balance. Moreover, flexible work options, such as WFH or hybrid arrangements are excellent recruitment strategies for attracting skilled employees (Chow et al., 2022). Some post-pandemic jobs may become permanently remote (Sytch & Greer, 2020), and many who experienced WFH appreciated the benefits and desired it to continue in some form (Green et al., 2020) as deduced from comments such as "people do not feel compelled to return to the office," or simply said, they "have no plans to work in an office full-time" (Saran, 2021, p. 15). For such a transition to be successful, organizations will have to "implement formalized WFH policies that consider work-home boundary management support, role clarity, workload, performance indicators, technical support, facilitation of co-worker networking, and training for managers" (Chow et al., 2022, p. 9). The future is uncertain, and WFH may become a necessity in a future disaster or pandemic (Chow et al., 2022).

Objectives and Research Questions

Organizations found themselves suddenly moving from traditional onsite work to WFH to cope with the global crisis. As reactions to these new arrangements differed among industries and professions, a study of participants' experiences was deemed interesting and worthy of investigation. The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic on different professions in different countries. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What were the working experiences of participants' during the lockdown?
2. What were participants' working preferences, along with helpful suggestions to guide future remote workers after the pandemic?

Methodology

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted people from all walks of life world-wide, and since their experiences were deemed worth exploring, a qualitative phenomenology research methodology was selected for the study. This allowed the various reactions of participants had towards working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic to be investigated.

According to Creswell (2015), three to 10 participants represent the recommended sample size in a phenomenology qualitative research, therefore, 10 participants were selected to participate in the study. Moreover, in order to gain a broader perspective of what was happening in various countries as WFH became a worldwide phenomenon, participants from different countries and professions, most of whom worked in service businesses, were approached. Convenience sampling was used in this study, as the participants were from the researchers' professional and personal networks who were willing to share their WFH experiences. The participants were contacted, their informed consent to participate in the study was obtained, and an e-survey was sent out to collect demographic information via Google forms.

Video call interviews were conducted via Messenger and LINE platforms for about 30 to 45 min over a period of five months from May to September 2022. A structured open-ended interview protocol covered the following topics: (a) the impacts of the pandemic on the organization; (b) working during the pandemic; (c) feelings about working during the pandemic; (d) the impacts of WFH on productivity; and (e) working preferences after the pandemic. The in-depth interviews provided insights "into the world of participants" who described "their perceptions and reactions … to their experiences in detail" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 388). Studying the multiple perceptions of the said phenomenon, as experienced by different participants, enabled common themes to be identified (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Results

The participants' profiles are outlined in Table 1. The percentage of participants who switched jobs during the pandemic was 40% while the remainder continued in their jobs.

Table 1 *Participant Profiles*

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Industry	Residence	Age Range
P1	Thai	Male	IT	Thailand	46–50
P2	Cambodian	Male	Advertising	Cambodia	21–25
P3	Myanmar	Female	Banking	Myanmar	26–30
P4	Australian	Female	Public Hospital	Australia	36–40
P5	Thai	Male	Video Production	Thailand	26–30
P6	Brazilian	Male	IT Startup	Brazil	36–40
P7	Thai	Female	Audit	U.S.A.	26–30
P8	Vietnamese	Female	Plastic	Thailand	31–35
P9	Vietnamese	Male	Hospitality	Singapore	31–35
P10	Thai	Male	Travel/Tech	U.S.A.	26–30

The process of data analysis, as the recorded interview data, was coded on Excel spreadsheets. Clusters from similar codes were then combined into categories and eventually grouped into three different major themes as shown in Table 2. These included (a) Theme 1: The Impact of Working from Home on Employees and Organizations; (b) Theme 2: Working from Home and Its Effects on Productivity; and Theme 3: Working Preferences after the Pandemic.

Table 2 *Summary of Themes*

Theme	Description of Sub-Themes
Theme 1. Impact of Working from Home on Employees and Organizations	1. Transitioning to Digital Platforms 2. Positive Impacts on Virtual Operations 3. Negative Impacts on In-Person Operations
Theme 2. Working from Home and Its Effects on Productivity	1. More Work but Better Productivity 2. Struggles in Adapting to Online/Hybrid Work 3. Little/No Work and Decreased Productivity
Theme 3. Working Preferences after the Pandemic	1. Hybrid Mode a More Popular Choice 2. Reasons for Remote Work Preferences 3. Reasons for In-Person Work Preferences

Theme 1: Impact of Working from Home on Employees and Organizations

Shutdowns and mandatory remote work had a variety of impacts on organizations. Not surprisingly, the type of business and nature of work processes were important factors that moderated the intensity of these impacts. Some participants found it necessary to overhaul most business operations, while others encountered hardly any impact on their duties. While most businesses suffered during the pandemic, a few actually had more work and prospered in spite of it.

Sub-Theme 1.1: Transitioning to digital platforms. Lockdowns in Thailand caused an IT firm's (P1) customers to "engage in digital online mobile banking, online purchases, resulting in a significant jump in customer transactions that required larger servers, database servers, application services while employing the same number of employees." This was also true at a Myanmar bank (P3), where a sudden shift from traditional to mobile banking by both businesses and local customers was extremely taxing. At a public hospital in Australia (P4), the IT department's workload increased substantially because of the need to constantly update COVID patient medication and ward information, while supporting "a lot of tech enhancements with video consultations for patients." A huge transformation occurred in the marketing industry in Cambodia (P2). Firms moved away from marketing through traditional media, such as TV, billboards, concerts, and events to social media platforms, which were well accepted by customers.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Positive impacts on virtual operations. Respondent P7 works in the Public Accounting Industry in the US; she reported that there had been no lost business as "it's a regulatory thing for all companies, big or small, to be audited." She added that the job market was very hot as WFH allowed employees to work from anywhere, and the turnover had been very high. An employee in an IT startup company in Brazil (P6) stated that "the impacts had been very positive with increases in business, and employees were leading a better quality of life as they could reap the benefits of WFH."

Sub-Theme 1.3: Negative impacts on in-person operations. Sales dropped tremendously for Vietnamese factory manager P8, whose firm produced plastic tubes and wires. When the pandemic struck, her country experienced a drastic drop in demand for materials throughout the construction industry. A hospitality consultant who worked in the food industry in Singapore (P9) sadly shared that "my food business was closed down, and it was really difficult to hire foreign food services workers as they had returned back to their countries." Respondent P10, who worked in the travel-tech industry, said that "the lockdowns that meant little or no travel, and hotel and cruise bookings basically died. There were layoffs, a huge cutback in employees, and restructuring." He actually left his company, and returned later when the situation had improved. Another firm that was greatly affected by the pandemic was a movie production company in Thailand (P5) that helped produce foreign movies filmed in Thailand. Fleeing from the complicated and expensive quarantine requirements in Thailand, these customers moved to other destinations with less stringent quarantine requirements.

Theme 2: Working from Home and Its Effects on Productivity

Each participant had a different working experience during the pandemic, with variations in reported levels of productivity and distractions. Most found that their ways of working were transformed; some became even more productive; while others struggled mightily to adapt. A few faced extreme disruptions, and in some cases had no choice but to wait for the pandemic to end.

Sub-Theme 2.1: More work but better productivity. An IT Vice President (P1) started working in a hybrid mode on account of the need to sign documents at the office, but eventually transitioned to 100% WFH once a digital signature system was in place. Video conferences with a 33% increase in attendance replaced onsite meetings, but this also meant longer preparation times and research to answer questions. His greatest challenge was dealing with social loafers, but he greatly enjoyed no longer having to spend 2.5 hours daily travelling to and work in a traffic-clogged city. He could manage his schedule better, immediately approve documents digitally, spend more time following up important matters, and even was able to exercise more regularly. He estimated that his overall productivity increased by 20%.

A Cambodian advertising manager (P2) found his work completely revamped, and had to immediately adapt to new ways of digital marketing. While this was a new and strange experience, it was also fun and interesting at the same time. A work schedule and tracking system helped him "to stay on track and be more productive" despite experiencing difficulties at first. Working up to 17 hours on a daily basis, he found it difficult to relax and maintain a good work-life balance. Though he preferred working onsite, he learnt more about himself through remote work; WFH increased his communication skills and introduced him to new and better ways of working.

The military coup in Myanmar resulted in lockdowns and bank runs, exacerbating service disruptions already set in motion by the pandemic, and led to greatly increased working hours for P3. She had to cope with the sudden transition to digital mobile banking by masses of people, and worked extremely hard to improve the bank's services. She had to come up with "a lot of initiatives to improve the overall banking service to stop deposit run-offs," along with new strategies to retain and attract depositors.

Moving from an educational position to an IT start-up was a very happy transition for P6; it was great to "have a very flexible work schedule that allowed me to work at any time." His work did not really change, as "everyone was already working remotely, and everything was going at exactly the same pace, pre and post pandemic." His only new challenge was a big surge in demand and drastic increase in customers. He found that he could get more done in less time, working whenever he wanted to–even at 10 pm. He would take breaks for swimming and return to work feeling refreshed, which made him more productive.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Struggles in adapting to hybrid/online work. Adapting to new ways of working remotely was a necessity for many. Hybrid work was a pleasant experience for P4, a digital health manager, as she had a better work-life balance with more flexibility and convenience. She enjoyed commuting to work only three days a week, while working the same number of hours and producing the same output in a non-distracting work environment. However, when she had to WFH daily during lockdowns, her workload increased during this very stressful period, and she felt a little depressed.

Also enjoying the flexibility of WFH, an audit manager (P7) could "log on and off whenever I wanted, wake up at 6 am to work, and schedule flexibility in my work hours, while being able to use the restroom, cook, and eat whenever needed." However, "WFH did not accomplish the benefits of listening and talking with each other in the same room to learn and get things done." Having to sit in long online meetings was tiresome, as was trying to get her work done between them. She found it difficult to disconnect from work since her laptop was at home, and felt pressure to continue working if her boss or coworkers were online. She had to "determine how to effectively balance the meetings during work," but having everything available in a digital format was helpful, and she eventually learned how to effectively train new team members. Everyone in her firm was gradually learning how to adapt in spite of the challenges to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The first month of WFH was fine for P10, a travel professional; but he soon felt bored staying at home all the time. He preferred a hybrid work mode where he could meet people and socialize, and felt that online collaboration was not as effective as working together in the office. Cooking lunch was a major distraction for him and, while his working hours remained the same, food and the freedom to talk with friends on the phone led to a significant decline in his productivity. But things started to improve once the vaccinations were available, and people started returning to their workplaces.

Sub-Theme 2.3: Little to no work and decreased productivity. Life was very difficult for a videographer (P5) when the borders closed, as almost all of his local work for foreign films disappeared overnight. The lack of work left him feeling unmotivated, discouraged, and somewhat depressed. On top of that, his girlfriend decided to leave him after he became jobless. While he was struggling, some of his friends' businesses were flourishing. Eventually one of his friends hired him to do a local advertisement for the first time, which greatly encouraged him. After that, he was able to shoot more local ads while the pandemic dragged on.

Individual P8 managed a plastic factory in Vietnam, but found herself marooned in Thailand during the pandemic. Trying to work with customers online was far from ideal, particularly when facing issues that were difficult to resolve online; she complained that "it took more time compared to working offline." Since she "could not return back to Vietnam due to closed borders, I had to resort to working online and conducting business through my capable assistant in Vietnam." To adapt to the situation, product lines and production runs were reduced.

Unemployed when his food business in Singapore closed, P9 decided to change directions entirely. He completed a Master's degree in hospitality, ventured into an entirely new profession, and opened a consulting business in Singapore for Vietnamese hospitality markets after borders reopened.

Theme 3: Working Preferences after the Pandemic

Sub-Theme 3.1: Hybrid mode a popular choice. Many participants in this study (four out of 10) hoped that hybrid work would be possible in the future. Interestingly, this number included three out of the study's four female participants. A bank manager (P3) loved "the flexibility to do both," while P4, a hospital digital health professional, replied without any hesitation that she would "love to work hybrid so that I don't have to go to the office every day." An audit manager (P7) said that she enjoyed the flexibility of being able to work at home. Spending some time in the workplace would be a necessity, as "it's easier to learn when you are sitting next to someone, as you will be able to talk, learn, and build relationships, which are important in public accounting." Individual P10 (a travel/tech engineer) was also happy with the current hybrid mode, and hoped to continue working that way.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Reasons for remote work preferences. Two participants (both male) mentioned that they would be happy to continue working remotely all the time. An IT manager (P1) preferred 100% remote work, and he was in a position to move his entire department to WFH. This decision helped to reduce his firm's office lease expenses by 50%, and also slashed traveling time and expenses. Everyone would also "have a better quality of life such as waking up later than the usual 5 am." Another IT data analyst (P6) "would love to continue to work in the exact same way, which is 100% remote work."

Sub-Theme 3.3: Reasons for in-person work preferences. The remaining participants (four out of 10) preferred to resume full-time in-person work. This included a videographer (P5) who worked in the movie production industry, and a plastic factory manager (P8) who wanted to resume meeting with customers. Her firm had made many changes in its production processes and had worked around pandemic-causes labor shortages by relying more heavily on automated machinery. The reopening of borders facilitated traveling to and from Vietnam to meet consulting clients (P9). Another participant, who favored returning to the office full-time, was an advertising professional (P2), who found it difficult to fully focus on his work when he was at home.

Discussion

Accelerated Adoption of Digital Platforms

The compulsory lockdowns brought about a tremendous transformation of organizational operations (Chow et al., 2022; Ngotngamwong, 2023) that produced many good and positive outcomes. The rapid shift from traditional to digital operations (Orth & Schuldis, 2021) during the pandemic, particularly in developing countries like Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, helped to foster economic development. In the meantime, customer habits moved into a new digital era through a major and sudden shift from traditional shopping and banking arrangements to more efficient and convenient online transactions. Employees found themselves shifting as quickly as possible to increased use of social media and digital platforms to accommodate the needs of customers and colleagues.

Working During the Pandemic

Working during the pandemic was an unforgettable worldwide experience. Companies had to quickly devise new methodologies (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020) and moved operations to digital platforms at a much more rapid pace than before. This revealed that people adapt and learn rapidly in times of crisis, as demonstrated by the sudden shift to new work methodologies to cope with the need to work, live, and function from home during lockdowns (Ngotngamwong, 2023). All of these experiences created vast opportunities for self-development and reskilling to survive and thrive in the "new normal" conditions (Hunter, 2020).

Each participant's working experience during the pandemic was unique, and all were challenged to adapt to the new normal in their own way. These new experiences transformed mindsets and ways of working on a permanent basis. After having a taste of WFH, views of working underwent drastic changes. Companies that allowed the option of hybrid work and/or remote working found it far easier to retain their employees going forward, compared to those that stuck with traditional 100% in person attendance requirement. According to research findings, the high preference of many employees to continue to WFH is an indication that organizations are headed into a different world of WFH in the future (Green et al., 2020; Saran, 2021; Sahoo et al., 2021). However, not every employee or industry can successfully implement hybrid or WFH arrangements, as some departments, positions, and businesses find it unsuitable. From a managerial point of view, acquiring the skills necessary to lead and manage remotely were a challenge, as traditional leadership styles had to be modified to fit into WFH scenarios (Bell et al., 2019; Contreras et al., 2020; Högberg, 2022; Sutton, 2020.

Work-Life Balance

Being able to achieve a better work-life-balance is increasingly important, particularly in the thinking of Generations Y and Z. The WFH or a hybrid approach provided better work-life balance for some than was possible prior to the pandemic (Chow et al., 2022). This new outlook has led to a viewpoint that WFH can lead to a better quality of life. On the other hand, others experienced little or no improvements in work-life balance because they were forced to use the same space to work and live (Chow et al., 2022 and Park et al., 2020), and so their quality of life worsened with increased workloads and longer hours.

Recommendations

Although the pandemic was a worldwide crisis that resulted in compulsory lockdowns and a new normal of working from home for many employees, this study indicated that the outcomes of this crisis were not totally negative. To quickly cope with the lockdown, operational innovations in many businesses were quickly developed. Hence, the pandemic was largely responsible for the introduction of new and more efficient ways of working, resulting in cost savings for many organizations within a short period of three years. Organizations need to continue moving forward and exploring better and more efficient ways of working. The sudden and fast digital shift for individuals, consumers, employees, and organizations as a whole, particularly in developing countries, rapidly narrowed technology gaps amongst countries. The three pandemic years was a period of learning, adjusting, adapting, and developing. As the gap in technology usage and know-how shortens, it is a good time for countries to work together to align in their digital pace and synchronize as much as they can.

Organizations need to continue learning about new ways of doing things, while embracing flexibility and including their employees in decision-making as they move forward. Firms that allow WFH options might want to offer extra benefits such as paying for wifi, desks, chairs, printers, and other equipment needed to comfortably WFH. As WFH means little or no human socialization, it would be a good idea to plan monthly get-togethers or other activities to build team and organizational spirit. Human Resource Departments should continue to study and improve hybrid and WFH options for the betterment of both employees and organizations.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

Working will never be the same again. More and more organizations are realizing the need to turn away from traditional working norms, and adapt to the new trends of working hybrid or transitioning to remote work entirely. For businesses that are able to do this, they will find it easier to retain valuable employees and increase job satisfaction. By operating wisely in this regard, organizations will also be able to reduce expenditures significantly for workspaces and slash utility bills while reducing carbon emissions because of less traveling. Although WFH has existed for many years now, it is a topic that warrants further exploration and study. It is recommended that further studies address the strengths and weaknesses of hybrid work and working from home to investigate what further progress can be made wisely.

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The Cointegration Behavior and Diagnostic Stability of Philippine Monetary Policy Implementation During the Period From 1990 to 2022

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Abstract

The observations made in this study were used to evaluate the diagnostic stability of the Philippine Central Bank's selected monetary policy targets, namely, the Gross Domestic Product and inflation, with money supply, credits, interest rates, and exchange rates, as independent variables, using the autoregressive distributed lag and error correction model analysis. The co-integrating behavior depicted that all *p*-values of less than the 5% significance level generated different behaviors. However, analysis of the Central Bank's performance showed that there were no unit roots at all ($p >$ .05) that signified a strong indication of cointegration behavior. The diagnostic stability of the Philippine monetary policy implementation was established over the period from 1990 to 2022. Further, money in circulation caused increases in domestic prices, interest rates, and inflationary pressure, and ultimately affected GDP (ppp). Understanding cointegration behavior is an imperative implication for policy makers to observe and take into consideration.

Keywords: *Philippine central bank strategy, monetary policy, stability*

Overview

The three pillars of the Central Bank of the Philippines (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, or BSP) are price stability, financial stability, and an efficient payments and settlement system. The country's monetary policies are based on the long-run growth equation of inflation or Δy_t (INF), and national income or Δy_t (GDPg), which are interacting with the country's money supply or M_0/GDP, interest rate changes or Δi, domestic credit development (CRE/GDP), and exchange rate of the Philippine Peso (EXCH). A monetary policy is defined as a set of tools employed by the BSP to control the volume of the country's money supply, particularly money in circulation (M2), plus bank deposits among others, through the institution's open-market policies, as well as promoting economic growth through the banking system's interest rates and reserve requirements. These are embedded in three main goals of any country's monetary policy; i.e., controlling inflation, keeping the employment rate under control, and maintaining a stable exchange rate in terms of the US Dollar. Even though they do not indicate a particular level of effectiveness, they reflect how monetary policy is performing.

In the Philippines, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an income indicator, increased 6.7% during the period of study. After the 1998 Asian financial crisis, the GDP increased at a rate of 7.3% while inflation declined from 2.3% to 1.9%, not to mention other monetary indicators (Table 1). Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (2023) has forecasted an inflation rate of 3% for the period 2023–2026 merely to comply with a stable monetary policy implementation.

Table 1 *Indicators of Philippine Monetary Variables (1990–2022)*

Year	**Gross Domestic Product** (ppp)† USD-Billion	**Target Inflation** %	**Money Circulating** P-Billion	**Interest Rate** %	**Domestic Credit Development** P-Billion	**Exchange Rate** P/USD
2022	404.3	5.8	15,895.5	7.1	10752.7	54.5
1998	74.5	9.2	1,138.4	16.8	1279.7	40.9
1990	50.5	12.2	297.3	24.1	270.4	24.3
Growth %:						
1990–2022	6.7%	-2.3%	13.2%	-3.7%	12.2%	2.6%
After crisis	7.3%	-1.9%	11.6%	-3.5%	9.3%	1.2%

Data Source. World Bank (2022). *Code.* †ppp represents nominal and purchasing power parity.

Mathai (2023), on behalf of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), clearly affirmed that in any monetary policy implementation, priority must be given to target inflation (INF) and output increase (GDP in ppp), which corresponds to the formulae used in this study.

Chen and Phelan (2023) supported this approach as a special and urgent priority, while Smets (2014) reiterated the importance of linking monetary policy and price stability in any monetary system. This is how a stable level of output is achieved using the monetary variables under study.

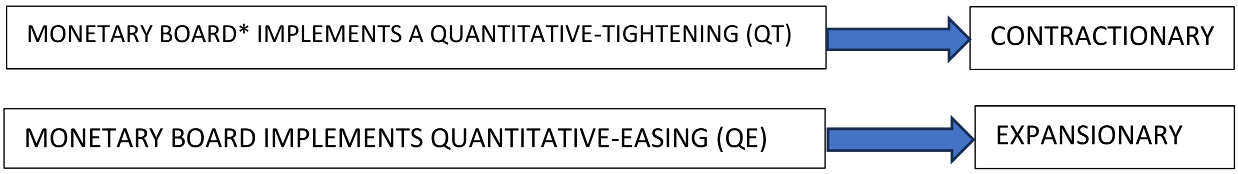
Monetary Conditions

Money supply (M), coined by the IMF, is comprised of money in circulation and in business vaults (M1), money in circulation M2, or M1 plus banking system deposits, and M3, which consists of M2 plus large time deposits and money market short-term investments (Lim & Sriram, 2003). The changes in the elements of money supply in the economy indicate the volume of economic transactions, as Suman (2023) explained. A greater supply of money will trigger more business in the economy, and vice versa. Suman cited Irving Fisher's equation on the theory of money: M x V = P x T, where

M = Money supply,
V = Velocity or turn-over of money changing hands,
P = Level of prices in the economy, and
T = Trade or business transaction in the economy.

The above changes noted in money supply should indicate how the economy is behaving. The changes may be contractionary or expansionary, as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Simple Behavior of How Monetary Conditions React to Money Supply Changes*



Code. * The Monetary Board normally consists of the Minister of Finance (chair), Governor of the Central Bank (secretary), treasurer, and related governmental agencies.

Brunner and Meltzer (1972) argued about Friedman's theory of how the behavior of monetary conditions must be complemented without implementation of the government's fiscal policy, which the Keynesian economic school of thought had theorized to affect the volume of economic transactions.

Monetary Policy

As mentioned earlier, monetary policy affects money supply in the economy, which leads to the economic growth and development of a country. Friedman (1968), a well-known economist who introduced modern monetary theory, explained that monetary policy affects money supply and drives interest rates down in the short run, but up in the long-run as the level of national output increases. He indeed emphasized that money supply was the main driver of a higher level of economic transactions, as explained earlier in Fisher's theory of money. Responding to this definition, Mehar (2023) further argued that the common strategy of testing the effectiveness of monetary policy was to observe the impact of interest rates on GDP growth, investment, and the inflation rate.

Several monetary tools are utilized in adoption of the following goals of a monetary policy: Increasing a country's national income or expressed in terms of GDP (in nominal and purchasing power parity, or ppp values), controlling inflation (INF), money supply (M), interest rate management (i), credit management of the banking system (CRE), and managing exchange rates of the local currency in a prevalent reserve currency such as the US Dollar (EXCH).

The monetary tools available to the monetary board are as follows:

1. Open-Market Policy. This policy affects the money supply in the economy. First, a quantitative-tightening or QT is exercised by the government (the Central Bank and/or the Treasury Office) by selling government securities like Treasury Bills, Treasury Bonds, and other government or private securities to the market. By selling those securities, the money supply that circulates in the economy is reduced.

Second, a quantitative-easing or QE is exercised by the government by buying government and private entities' securities from the market. By buying these securities, the money supply that is in circulation will increase.

2. Adjusting the Discount Rate. The interest rate in the market depends on the discount rate set by the Central Bank. In a QT cycle, the discount rate will be increased to make credit more expensive, and vice versa in a QE cycle.

3. Adjusting the Reserve Requirement Imposed on the Country's Banking System. A higher reserve requirement tends to curtail the credit granted to the market in a QT, and vice versa in a QE.

Types of Money and Their Functions

Having known the essential characteristics of a monetary policy, it is worthwhile to observe how money is classified, including how it functions.

There are fundamentally three main types of money: fiat money, commodity money, and commodity-based money. Fiat money, also termed as the legal tender of a country, takes the form of paper money, and is a unit of account that specifies how much an asset is worth as an investment (store of value) or money settlement (medium of exchange). Second, commodity money is money that is made of precious metals with significant intrinsic value such as gold or silver. After the Bretton Woods conference from 1944 until 1971, gold could be converted into US Dollars and vice versa. However, due to inadequate availability of gold stock to serve the world's international trade, the convertibility of currency into gold was ended (Zoeller & Bandelj, 2019). Third, commodity-based money is a type of currency guaranteed by a certain commodity like gold orsilver, as well as other commodities, to facilitate confidence in the currency.

The functions of money vary according to the types. The main roles of fiat money are as a medium of exchange, a store of value, and a unit of account. A market is formed when a buyer pays the price of goods to the seller in the medium of exchange. An investor in a gold or silver investment expects the store of value to remain high, with less depreciation. Unit of account refers to something that is used to value goods, services, keep track of investment and debt value, and most of all, for calculation of profit and loss, as well as a measure of wealth.

Research Gap, Questions, and Hypotheses

Though extensive research has been done in the past on monetary policies, it appears that there is a need for more study of efforts by the Philippine Central Bank to bring stability to the country's monetary policies during the past 30 years; this is the research gap that was the focus of this study.

In this study three main research questions were asked as follows.

First Research Question

Were there any unit roots in the cointegration variables of the Philippine's monetary variables? How did they behave in the order of integration?

The null hypothesis (H_0) of this question was: The cointegration of the Philippine's monetary variables had unit roots.

Second Research Question

Were domestic prices and GDP (ppp) growth, as the main objectives of the Philippine BSP monetary policy, diagnostically stable in the long run?

The null hypothesis (H_0) of the question was: Domestic prices (INF) and GDP (ppp) growth were not diagnostically stable in the long-run.

Third Research Question

Should diagnostically stable monetary policies exist, did targeted GDP and inflation as monetary goals Granger-cause changes in the money supply (M2), interest rate (i), credits (CRE), and Peso exchange rate (EXCH)?

The null hypothesis (H_0) of the question was: Targeted GDP and inflation as monetary goals did not Granger-cause changes in the money supply (M2), interest rate (i), credits (CRE), and Peso exchange rate (EXCH).

Research Methodology

In this section, the method of research, data and their analysis, and the relevant cointegration formulae that were used are explained.

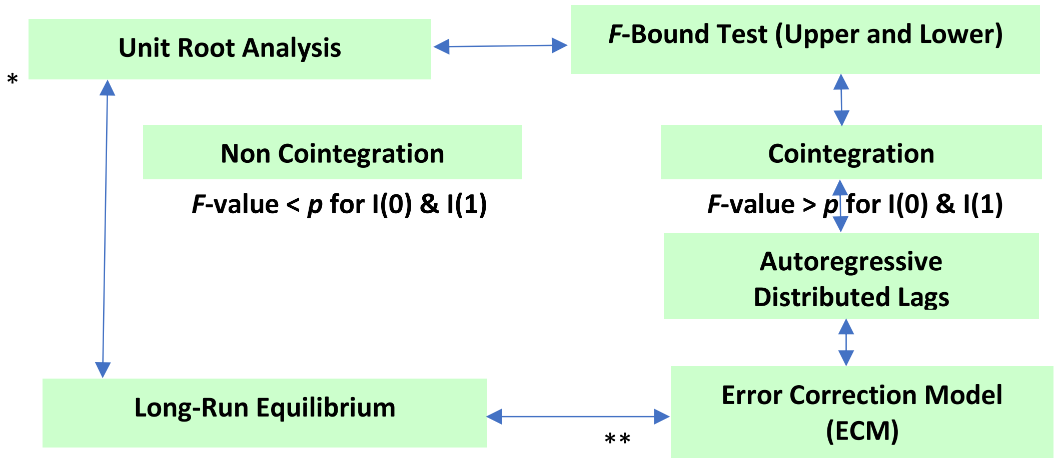
Method of Research

The study used a quantitative cointegration analysis that sought to test the theory of Frank Smets (2014) from the European Central Bank, who discovered that financial stability must start from the right implementation of the central bank's monetary policy.

Data and Their Analysis

The data used in the study were the panel time series of the Philippine monetary policy indicators during the period from 1990 to 2022, particularly price monitoring or Δy_t (INF) and the country's GDP growth, or Δy_t (GDPg) in the midst of other variables like the country's broad money supply or M_0/GDP, interest rate changes or Δi, credit as a percentage of GDP or CRE/GDP, and the exchange rate of the Philippine Peso in terms of the US Dollar or EXCH.

Figure 2 *Framework of the Long-run Equilibrium of Monetary Policy Targets*



Code. *Unit root and *F*-bound test leading to ARDL for short-run. **ECM for the long-run equilibrium.

The data were all gathered from international institutional statistics like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Bank of International Settlements, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. Other sources included the ASEAN Financial Innovation Network, ASEAN Banking Integration Framework, and Ernest & Young Fintech Census reports.

The first research question was answered using the unit root test in the cointegration analysis, while the second research question was answered using autoregressive distributed lags, or ARDL, for the Philippines short-run monetary policies implementation, and error correction model, or ECM for the long-run implementation. The third research question was answered using the Granger-causality test to explore behavior of the monetary policy variables on a two-vector relationship (Figure 2).

Bhatta and Shrestha (2018) confirmed that unless the order of integration does not have any unit roots or is expressed as I(0), the method of vector autoregressive or VAR should not be used in the cointegration analysis. Instead of the VAR test run using the trace and maximum eigenvalue tests (Johansen, 2020), the long-run equilibrium of the normalized hypothesis was determined through the error correction model and the Granger-causality relationship test.

Relevant Cointegration Formula

The time series of the Philippine monetary policy variables interact on the basis of short and long-term trends. The short-term relationships were tested with the *F*-bound test, and the long-run relationships were tested with the ECM, which refers to the $\Lambda\ ECM_{t-1} + e_t$ as presented below.

Δy_t (INF) and Δy_t (GDPg) = $a_0 + \Sigma\ \beta_{1i}\ y_{t-i} + \Sigma\ \beta_{2i}\ M_0/GDP_{t-i} + \Sigma\ \beta_{3i}\ i_{t-i} + \Sigma\ \beta_{4i}\ CRE/GDP_{t-i} + \Sigma\ \beta_{5i}EXCH_{t-i} + \Sigma\ \beta_{6i}GDPg_{t-l}$ or $(\Sigma\ \beta_{6i}INF_{t-l})) + \Lambda\ ECM_{t-1} + e_t$ where

Δy_t **(**INF) or the CPI (price consumer index) and Δy_t **(**GDP growth) or the GDP in purchasing power parity or ppp, as the measure of price stability.

a_0 = Alpha or the constant
$\beta_{1i}y_{t-1}$ = Coefficient of y, value in the period t and before t.

The same applies with those for $\beta_{2i}M0/GDP_{t-1}$ (money/GDP), $\beta_{3i}\ i_{t-l}$ (interest rate), β_{4i} CRE/GDP_{t-i} (credits in the Philippine banking system/GDP), $\beta_{5i}EXCH_{t-l}$ (Δ Philippine Peso exchange rate), $\beta_{6i}GDPg_{t-l}$ (GDP growth) (*short-run equilibrium*)

$\Lambda\ ECM_{t-1}$ = The Λ of the error correction model generates the values that determine the long-run equilibrium posed by the ECM (*long-run equilibrium*)

et = vector of error terms.

Results and Discussion

The research questions posed were analyzed, and the outcomes are presented and discussed under a number of headings in this section.

First Question—Unit Root and F-Bound Test

By means of the unit root test and the *F*-Bound test, an attempt was made to answer the first research question. The pattern of the cointegration behavior was investigated, which further demonstrated the types of order integration, or I(0) or I(1 and > 1). The information obtained led to rejection of the H_0 that unit roots were found. It was shown that there were no unit roots at all (p > .05), which signified a strong indication of cointegration behavior.

Table 2 *Unit Roots Analysis of BSP's Monetary Policy Target (1990–2022)*

Variable	**MONETARY POLICY TARGET**					
	GDP and INF	**Unit Root Statistics**		***F*-Bound Test Result**		
	ADF	*p*	Order	*F*-Bound	I(0)	I(1)
GDP*	-2.964	.000	Level	20.169	2.390	3.380
CPI (INF)**	-2.971	.000	1st	9.754	2.390	3.380
M (M/GDP)	-2.968	.000	1st	4.123	2.390	3.380
CRE (CRE/GDP)	-2.972	.035	1st	9.870	2.390	3.380
I	-2.972	.002	1st	7.954	2.390	3.380
EXCH (EXCH g)	-2.964	.001	Level	12.785	2.390	3.380

Note. * & ** These were the two BSP monetary policies under examination.

The analysis in Table 2 revealed that there was a mixture of the I(0) or order at level and I(1) or order at first difference with most *p*-values less than the 5% significance level. This implies that compliance with the stationarity rule of the GDP (ppp) and CPI (INF) was giving rise to a good level of cointegration in the monetary policy indicators. The GDPppp (*F*-Bound = 20.169) and EXCH (*F*-Bound = 12.785) had the highest ratio of explained variance to that which was unexplained. All Philippine monetary policy indicators also had a comfortable level of integration at order 1 or I(1), which were all > than 3.380 order of I(1). And with the asymptotic *N* = 1000, the period under observation (1990–2022) or 32 years indicated critical *t*-values of 2.390 and 3.380 for the order of integration of I(0) and I(1), respectively. The data would normally be interpreted to mean that a cointegration existed at a certain order of integration statistically, even though its diagnostic stability must be tested first.

Second Question—Diagnostic Stability of BSP Monetary Policies

The testing of the diagnostic stability of Philippine monetary policy indicators was taken to mean that the BSP had indeed done a good job in the implementation of monetary policies for the country during the period from 1990 to 2022. The null hypothesis (H_0) that "Domestic prices (INF) and GDP (ppp) growth are not diagnostically stable in the long-run" was rejected. Hence, there was strong evidence of diagnostic stability. Since the unit roots varied, the autoregressive distributed lags or ARDL and the error correction model or ECM were used to reveal behavior over time. With the mixture of I(0) and I(1), the *F*-Bound test scheme is a good tool to use for reflecting the long-run and short-run equilibrium in the diagnostic stability through ECM and ARDL, respectively.

Using Breusch-Godfrey serial correlation, the target values of monetary policies implementation indicated no serial correlation that would cause estimated variances of the regression coefficients to be biased or would lead to unreliable H_0 testing. With this finding, the equation formulation for the short and long-run equilibrium of the BSP monetary policies target was derived as follows:

GDP (ppp) target: Δy_t (GDP ppp) = GDP (ppp) target: Δy_t (GDP in ppp) = -0.002 + 0.057GDP (-1) – 0.106M/GDP (-1) - 0.044i (-1) + 0.164CRE (-1) + 0.002EXCH (-1) + 0.097INF (-1) - 0.884ECM (-1) + e_t

INF (inflation) target: Δy_t (INF) =-0.004 - 0.330INF (-1) - 0.258M/GDP (-1) + 1.013i (-1) - 0.048CRE (-1) - 0.162EXCH (-1) - 0.278GDP (-1) - 0.948ECM (-1) + e_t

Table 3 *Implementation of the BSP Monetary Policy Targets to Test Their Diagnostic Stability*

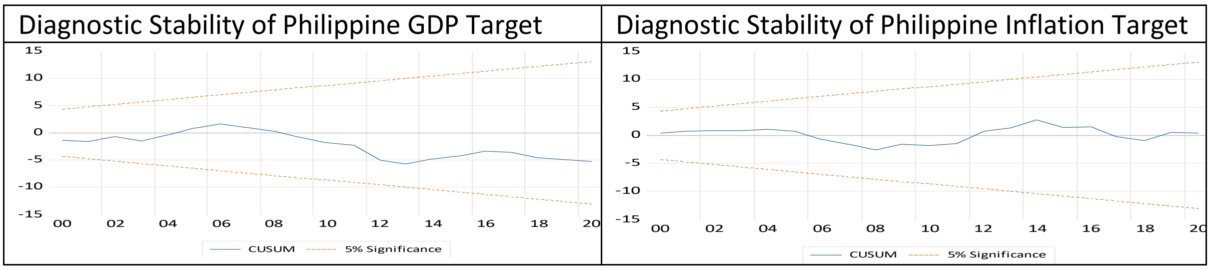
INDICATOR	**GDP($_{ppp}$) TARGET**			**INF TARGET**		
	Coefficient	*t*-value	*p*	Coefficient	*t*-value	*p*
C	-0.002	-0.352	.728	-0.004	-1.078	.293
d(GDPppp (-1))	0.057	0.349	.730	-0.278	-2.470	.022
d(INF(-1))	0.097	0.566	.577	-0.330	-1.995	.059
d(M(-1))	-0.106	-0.619	.542	-0.258	-1.960	.063
d(i(-1))	-0.044	-0.122	.904	1.013	3.689	.001
d(CRE(-1))	0.164	1.07	.297	-0.048	-0.405	.689
d(EXCH(-1))	0.002	0.055	.956	-0.161	-4.891	.000
ECM (long-run)	-0.884	-3.062	.006	-0.948	-3.980	.000

In terms of diagnostic stability, the cumulative sums (CUSUM) of the two BSP monetary policy targets significantly depicted the long-run equilibrium within the +5% level of significance upper bound and -5% level of significance lower bound, without showing any deviations or structural breaks. Besides, the chance for any errors to be corrected during the next period was high at 88.4% and 94.8% for the monetary policy targets GDP_{ppp} and INF, respectively (Figure 3).

Third Question—Two-Vector Granger-Causality Relationship

Based on the highest *F*-values of the two selected important BSP monetary policy target indicators, the Granger-causality relationship clearly revealed the specific phenomena of Philippine money supply (M) policy that caused INF and GDP at the rates of (*F*-value = 11.902, p = .002) and (*F*-value = 8.472, p = .007), respectively.

Figure 3 *Diagnostic Stability Chart of BSP Monetary Policy Targets (GDP_{ppp} and INF)*



Other strong causality in Philippine monetary policy implementation was the interest rate (i) to inflation (INF) at the rate of *F*-value = 19.093 and p = .000. Other indicators, in spite of the acceptable level of their Granger-causalities, did not indicate a strong significance like those of the previous two policies, i.e., the demand for money and its Granger-causality toward the interest rate (CRE to i) and GDP (CRE to GDP) at the rates of (*F*-value = 4.733, p = .039) and (*F*-value = 5.095, p = .032), respectively. The related hypothesis was properly tested.

Based on the analysis of the observation, the following findings, implications, and conclusions on the pattern of diagnostic stability of the BSP's monetary policy implementation, during the period from 1990 to 2022, are presented below.

Summary of Findings

1. The behavior of GDP (ppp) and EXCH (Peso/USD) at an order of I(1) integration varied from the rest of Philippine monetary policy variables. In comparison with other cointegration studies reported in Tan et al. (2020), they reflected the following similarity, difference, and benefit for other economies.

Similarities. The cointegration behavior reflected the same effects on the monetary policy targets as in the present study.

Differences. In spite of the relatively similar monetary variables with the present study, fragmentation of cointegration behavior was indicated in the study conducted by Tan and colleagues (2020). Interest rate had a negative impact on economic growth, as well as on fiscal policy variables that were not used in the present study.

Benefits for Other Economies. Any other Asian country's Monetary Board may use the same uniform findings to test for monetary and fiscal policy stability. However, the study reported here did not include the latter.

2. In terms of diagnostic stability, the cumulative sums of the two selected BSP monetary policy targets, gross domestic product (GDP_{ppp}) and inflation (INF), indicated a good level of cointegration with the following findings:

- With the error correction model (ECM), the long-run equilibrium of the monetary policy targets were within the upper and lower bounds with a probability of .884 (GDP_{ppp}) and .948 (INF) for deviations to be corrected during the later period.
- Hence, they clearly indicated a good performance of the Philippine BSP in keeping the selected monetary policy targets stable during the period from 1990 to 2022 with the following emphases. First, increased GDP (ppp) generation (*F*-value = 20.169, p = 0.000); second, management of Philippine Peso exchange rate (*F*-value = 12.785, p = 0.001); third, money demand through the Philippine banking system credit management (*F*-value = 9.870, p = 0.035); and fourth, consumer and industrial prices management (*F*-value = 9.754, p = 0.000).

In comparison with other cointegration studies in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Langka, Nasreen and Anwar (2023) reflected the following similarities, differences, and benefits for other economies.

Similarities. Using the same ARDL method, the cointegration behavior of the five Asian countries demonstrated the same correlation between monetary policy variables and financial stability.

Differences. The existing study strictly used the related monetary policy variables (GDP, INF, M, i, EXCH), while Nasreen and Anwar's (2023) study resulted in different reactions to stability in inflation (INF) experienced by the five Asian countries.

Benefits for other economies. Any other Asian country's Monetary Board may use the same uniform findings, particularly with regard to the monetary goals (GDP and EXCH), to plan for its monetary stability, but not for inflation (INF).

3. The Granger-causality test clearly revealed that Philippine money supply (M2) did cause inflation (INF) and GDP (ppp) growth, as well as money supply (M), and interest rate (i) to inflation (INF). In comparison with the other cointegration studies in the India and Pakistan, Pradhan et al. (2017) reflected the following similarities, differences, and benefits for the other economies.

Similarities. The ARDL bound test, as found in the existing study results, showed the same cointegration behavior in inflation (INF) and GDP growth variables as in India and Pakistan.

Differences. The existing study strictly used the related monetary policy variables (GDP, INF, M, i, EXCH), while Pradhan and colleagues (2017) added financial depth into the equation.

Benefits for other economies. Any other Asian country's Monetary Board may use these findings, particularly with regard to its monetary goals (INF, i, and EXCH) to plan for its monetary stability.

Implications

First, given evidence of monetary stability in the Philippines, the Monetary Board–with the assistance of the country's banking system–must further endeavor to improve the system's efficiency in payments and settlements, as well as in real-time cross-border transactions (Popescu, 2022). Delivorias (2021) and Wang et al. (2022) referred to a Central Banking Digital Currency as a revolution leading to an improved monetary system, which is expected to give increased stability to the system.

Second, the cointegration behavior of monetary policy variables seems to need additional relevant variables, such as financial depth and currency volatility, in terms of the US Dollar as the existing reserve currency, whether it is fiat or digital money. Iancu et al. (2020) evaluated the importance of a reserve currency in an evolving international monetary system, which Zhang (2020) reinforced with the proposed introduction of a new form of digital money for monetary stability. Kurup (2018) commented that this implication stemmed from how financial technology has been disrupting the financial and banking sector, particularly in the payments and settlements system.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, it was concluded that the analyses had clearly shown convincing the diagnostic stability behavior of the BSP's monetary policy implementation during the period from 1990 to 2022 with the following insights for the future.

- It is high time now for the Philippine Monetary Board to study the further implementation of a Central Banking Digital Currency or other digital currency in the quest for a newly designed monetary system for the country.
- The new design may include investment in modern, digital payment infrastructure to enable swift and secure domestic transactions.
- The implementation of a new monetary system design for the Philippines must always be aligned with that of ASEAN's monetary policy stability framework.

Once the diagnostic stability behavior of the BSP's monetary policies implementation has been duly tested, the question for Philippine, as well as other countries' policymakers, is "what's next then?" The answer seems to be an innovative monetary policies system that facilitates digital payment infrastructure like the Central Banking Digital Currency or other digital currency system for domestic transactions, hand-in-hand with the existing fiat money system.

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Digital Human Resource Professionals: Empowering Talent in the Tech Era

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the skills and desirable characteristics of human resource professionals in the digital age, with the aim of enhancing their competitiveness. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in the study. A sample size of 380 was available for the quantitative portion, while the sample size was 10 in the qualitative section. The results of the research indicated that human resource professionals need to possess various skills in the digital age. These include entrepreneurial and business skills, knowledge and abilities, digital skills, human relations skills, and leadership skills. Furthermore, the overall characteristics required of human resource professionals in the digital age were identified. These include characteristics and duties, organizational management, knowledge, personal qualities, and organizational communication. Based on these findings, guidelines were generated for cultivating desirable skills and attributes in human resource professionals. Employers ideally should implement a framework that facilitates the development of these skills and characteristics at a high level. Also, strategic management practices should be incorporated to assess forthcoming trends and enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords: *Skills, desirable characteristics, human resources, digital competitiveness*

Introduction

As the world undergoes constant changes, the work environment for Human Resource (HR) professionals is also evolving. In order to thrive in today's highly competitive environment, HR professionals need to adapt and equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the digital age. This requires a transformation in mindset and organizational culture across various sectors. The role of HR professionals holds importance in both the public and private sectors, as they play a crucial role in adapting to the demands and capabilities of the contemporary era. It is essential for HR professionals to stay updated with relevant information and adjust their responsibilities in organizational and employee development to tackle future challenges. They need to understand changing management styles, utilize technology effectively, improve workplace communication, and foster innovation and creativity among employees. They need to have a business mindset as they contribute to the decision-making process within organizations.

To support their work, HR professionals can utilize a human resource information system (HRIS), which facilitates the collection, storage, and processing of business transactions. This system helps in fostering the development of employee performance, while also focusing on cost-benefit analysis and generating value for the organization. The HRIS places emphasis on enhancing employee competencies, particularly in the context of developing a multi-skilled workforce. In the future, HR professionals will need to be prepared for technology-related challenges, such as the increasing demand for high-level digital talents in areas like data management, data analytics, and user experience design. This will intensify the competition for talent in the HR field.

Desirable characteristics for HR professionals in the digital age include having digital literacy, promoting technology usage and understanding, designing work systems that support operations, and utilizing technologies to provide feedback to the organization. By effectively incorporating modern technologies into HR practices, professionals can leverage them as a business partner.

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To further enhance competitiveness and employability, the skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals in the digital age must be understood. The aim of this research was to establish guidelines for the development of these skills and characteristics, ultimately enhancing the competencies of HR professionals and students in the digital era. The findings obtained have the potential to provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs, agencies, and businesses seeking to cultivate the necessary skills and attributes of HR professionals to gain a competitive edge.

Literature Review

The function of human resource management in the 21st century, as mentioned above, is an important indicator that will require HR students to review their roles and competencies. According to Manuti and De Palma (2018), the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in the future must be up-to-date, especially in the fundamentals of HRM professionals. Individuals who will work in this field need to be role models for employees in an organization because they have to make organization rules and regulations and regulate them, making sure that they are enhanced with positive ideas. They need to have a positive attitude towards an organization as a whole, listen to employee concerns/ problems, possess good analytical skills, as well as leadership ability, which is a basic qualification for increasing credibility and trustworthiness. In the technology era, HR students must have numeracy abilities, using data to analyze trends and relationships based on the principles of logic. This creates credibility in HRM information. It is especially important to know and understand a company's financial statement, such as being able to read a profit and loss statement or balance sheet, having acceptable presentation skills to give a clear picture of a company, and ability to use these data for a job analysis (Pulyaeva et al., 2019).

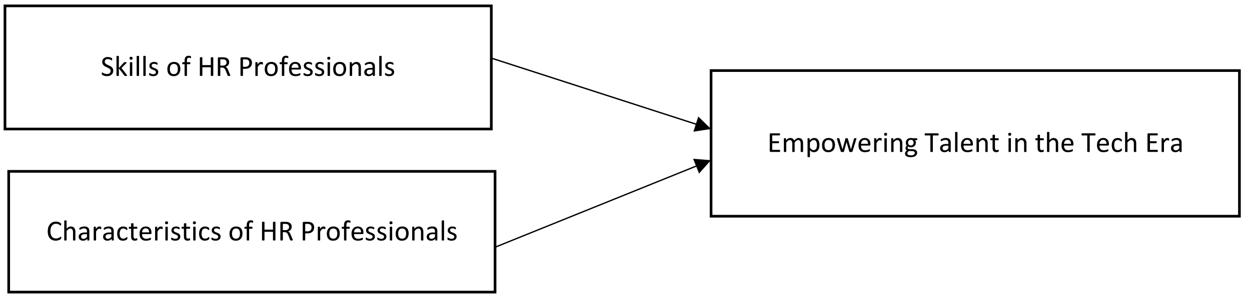
The HR representative is a person who takes into account the consciousness of entrepreneurial management that emphasizes transparency, profit, and society. Human resource managers should thus not focus on one side, and forget the organization as a whole. Some HR personnel place a lot of importance on management, but forget the main objective of their business or organization. They need to strike a balance between human development and profitability (Hunsberger, 2017), especially in digital marketing, where HR students must understand who their customers are and analyze what customers want from them, as well as when, how, and how much. Public relations are also needed to make sure people understand HR department responsibilities and services provided, including what they have done in each period. It is commonly thought that in the absence of a responsible person, help may be found in the Human Resources Department. Then even though it may not be our responsibility, we help these people out. This leads employees to understand that this is the responsibility of Human Resources Department. If the HRM provides them with good results, then they appreciate this help, but if not, complaints will be forthcoming (Jesuthasan, 2017).

In a rapidly evolving world in the era of technology, empowering talent has become paramount. The tech industry is expanding exponentially, creating numerous opportunities and challenges for individuals seeking to thrive in this dynamic environment. In this article, a conceptual framework and theory are presented for empowering talent in the tech era, which may serve as a guide for organizations and individuals alike. In the tech era, acquiring and enhancing technical skills is crucial. Organizations need to invest in training programs and initiatives to equip talented individuals with the necessary technical competencies. This includes providing resources for learning programming languages, data analysis, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies. Additionally, fostering collaboration and cross-functional skills can enhance problem-solving abilities and promote innovation. Continuous learning in a rapidly evolving tech landscape is essential. Organizations should encourage a culture of lifelong learning by providing access to online courses, workshops, conferences, and mentorship programs. Emphasizing the importance of personal and professional development will empower individuals to proactively seek new knowledge and skills.

Research Conceptual Framework

In the present study, a mixed methods research design was used. The researcher developed a conceptual framework for the study, which is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Research Conceptual Framework*



Research Questions

1. What key skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals are needed in the digital age?
2. What are the guidelines for developing these skills and characteristics in HR professionals?

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The target demographic consisted of employers who were entrepreneurs and who hired graduates with degrees in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, or Public Administration within the province of Chiang Mai. The formula proposed by Cochran et al. (1953) was used to determine an appropriate sample size. A purposive sampling technique was used to choose a sample of 380 individuals from a population that satisfied the inclusion requirements. The sample was gathered via a field survey, specifically targeting entrepreneurial employers who met the criteria for data collection. The inclusion criteria for the research period encompassed the following: (a) employers who are entrepreneurs and employed graduates holding degrees in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, or Public Administration, and operated their businesses in the region of Chiang Mai; (b) individuals aged 20 years or older; and (c) individuals who willingly chose to participate in the research project and were able to sustain their involvement throughout the entirety of the project. The exclusion criteria used throughout the study period included two categories: (a) individuals who failed to match the predetermined inclusion requirements; and (b) those who did not willingly consent to engage in the research project.

Research Tools

Questionnaires and evaluation forms were used in the research process. A survey instrument was designed to gather data on the skills development and desired traits of HR professionals, with the aim of enhancing their employability and increasing competitiveness. The questionnaire sought to assess the extent of feedback received on the aforementioned abilities and characteristics. The survey consisted of a combination of closed-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, and opinion/ comment/suggestion forms that adhered to certain criteria. Additionally, open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to freely express their thoughts and provide recommendations. The subsequent component of the fourth section involved the use of a five-point Likert rating scale. This tool was used to evaluate the efficacy of online media development in enhancing learning abilities and cultivating desired traits among digital HR students. The Likert rating scale was further subdivided into four distinct sections.

Furthermore, an evaluative framework measured knowledge, comprehension, and essential proficiencies required for enhancing the future competitiveness of digital HR professional in alignment with the demands of their employers. This section consisted of a combination of closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice options and opportunities for respondents to provide their ideas, comments, and recommendations depending on certain criteria. In addition, open-ended questions were administered that allowed respondents to freely express their opinions and provide suggestions. The subject matter was partitioned into three distinct sections.

The process of content validation involved the use of three experts who assessed and evaluated questions based on predetermined scoring criteria. The purpose of this assessment was to determine the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) for each question, specifically focusing on questions with an IOC value over .50. The appropriateness of the questions in the questionnaire was determined to be satisfactory and suitable for usage. All surveys exhibited an IOC of .94, indicating an acceptable value. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of .70 or higher. Hence, the reliability of the questions was deemed satisfactory according to Considine et al. (2005). The overall reliability coefficient for the questions pertaining to digital HR professional was found to be .85. Similarly, the overall reliability coefficient for the characteristics of HR professional was determined to be .80. Furthermore, the questions concerning the development of skills and desirable characteristics of digital HR professional exhibited an overall reliability coefficient of .90. The aforementioned values were used in order to examine the progression of abilities and desired attributes among human resources experts, with the aim of augmenting competitiveness.

In order to assess the development of online media in enhancing learning skills and desirable characteristics of digital HR professional to improve competitiveness, the researcher employed a simple random sampling technique. The sample consisted of 10 employers who are entrepreneurs and had hired graduates with degrees in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, or Public Administration in Chiang Mai province. The aim of the study was to create a model for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness, and to create online media and courses for learning these skills and characteristics among HR professionals.

Data Collection

1. The collection of quantitative data included the acquisition of field data via the use of research instruments specifically designed for the purpose. The aim of the survey was to gather information on the skills development and desirable characteristics of HR professionals in order to enhance competitiveness. Another goal was to explore the learning models for online media development and the skills and characteristics desired in digital HR students. Furthermore, an additional objective was to assess the knowledge, understandings, and desirable skills necessary to support the future employment of digital HR students, with the ultimate goal of enhancing competitiveness.

2. The collection of qualitative data was conducted through participatory seminars and workshops involving the researcher and five employers who recruited graduates with degrees in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, or Public Administration, three HR students, and two graduates with degrees in these fields in Chiang Mai Province. The data collection period spanned from June to August 2022.

Statistical Methods Used in the Research

The process of examining the quantitative data involved the use of both fundamental statistics and inferential statistics, specifically in the context of elemental analysis by categorization of satisfaction levels based on average scores (five levels were recognized, see below). This approach can be used in various contexts, such as satisfaction surveys, employee feedback assessments, or product reviews.

1. Lowest: This level of satisfaction corresponds to average scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.50. It indicated the lowest level of satisfaction, suggesting that there was significant room for improvement or that the experience fell well below expectations.

2. Low: This level of satisfaction corresponded to average scores ranging from 1.51 to 2.50. It signified a relatively low level of satisfaction, indicating that there were areas that needed attention and improvement.
3. Moderate: This level of satisfaction corresponded to average scores ranging from 2.51 to 3.50. It suggested a moderate level of satisfaction, indicating that while there may be some areas for improvement, overall, the experience was fairly satisfactory.
4. High: This level of satisfaction corresponded to average scores ranging from 3.51 to 4.50. It represented a high level of satisfaction, suggesting that the experience met or exceeded expectations and that there were relatively few areas that needed improvement.
5. Highest: This level of satisfaction corresponded to average scores ranging from 4.51 to 5.00. It indicated the highest level of satisfaction, implying that the experience was exceptional and met or exceeded all expectations.

Research Results

Part 1: Findings from Opinion Scale on Skills and Desirable Characteristics of Digital HR Professionals

Objective 1. The objective was to enhance employability via the acquisition of skills and desirable characteristics by human resource professionals. Based on the findings shown in Table 1, it is evident that digital HR professionals possess exceptional proficiency in their whole skill set, as indicated by the high mean score (M = 4.21). Upon careful examination of each element, it was determined that the mean values obtained were consistently at a high level across all aspects. The descending order found was as follows—entrepreneurial and business skills, followed by knowledge and abilities, digital skills, human relations skills, and leadership skills.

Table 1 *Overall Means and Standard Deviations of Digital HR Professionals' Skills*

Questions	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
.1 Abilities	.423	0.67	High
.2Entrepreneurial and Business Skills	4.25	0.64	High
.3 Digital and Technology Skills	4.20	0.65	High
.4 Human Relations Skills	.418	0.63	High
.5 Leadership Skills	.417	0.64	High
Total	4.21	0.65	High

According to the data shown in Table 2, the overall characteristics of HR professionals were at a high level (M = 4.38). When considering each aspect, it was found that the mean was at a high level when all aspects were investigated. The descending order found was as follows—characteristics and duties of a job, followed by organization management, knowledge, personal characteristics, and organizational communication.

Table 2 *Overall Means and Standard Deviations of Digital HR Professionals' Characteristics*

Questions	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1. Knowledge	.439	0.62	High
2. Characteristics and Duties of Job	.445	0.65	High
3. Personal	.435	.066	High
4. Organizational Communication	.430	0.67	High
5. Organization Management	.442	0.64	High
Total	4.38	0.64	High

Objective 2. The objective was to study guidelines for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness. According to the data shown in Table 3, the overall mean of models for developing skills and desirable characteristics was at the highlevel (M = 4.47). When considering each aspect, it was found that the mean was at a high level in all aspects. The descending order found was as follows—professional organizations should provide training for

HR professional to be able to analyze future trends, followed by HR professional should study further in management skills, development, laws and HR practices. Next in descending importance was the idea that business organizations should develop knowledge, competency and professional skills in HR profession, followed by HR professional should develop their skills, including technology, change management and foreign language, and finally business organizations should provide ethical and professional training.

Table 3 *Overall Means and Standard Deviations of Skills Development and Desirable Characteristics*

Questions	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1. Business organizations should develop knowledge, competency and professional skills in HR profession.	.447	0.66	High
2. Business organizations should provide ethical and professional training.	4.43	0.65	High
3. Professional organizations should provide training for HR professional to be able to analyse future trends.	4.52	0.64	Highest
4. HR professional should study further in management skills, development, laws and HR practices.	.450	0.69	High
5. HR professional should develop their skills, including technology, change management and foreign language.	.445	0.65	High
Total	4.47	0.66	High

Part 2: Results of Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis (H_1) was as follows: Skills of digital HR professional are correlated with guidelines for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness.

Factor analysis was conducted on the recommendations for developing skills and desired traits of HR professionals to boost competitiveness. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of .827 was obtained, which is close to the ideal value of one. The analysis yielded a significant association between the variables, as shown by Bartlett's Test. The test statistic was found to be 8,062.85 following a Chi-Square distribution. Furthermore, the obtained *p*-value of .000 was lower than the predetermined significance level of .05, leading to acceptance of H_1. In the subsequent stage, a factor analysis was conducted to categorize 25 variables into factors based on their loadings. Based on the test findings, the first component was referred to as "The Factor of Strategic Human Resource Management Skills" in relation to decision-making. The second element was referred to as "The Factor of Human Resource Management Information." The third element was "The Factor of Data Analysis Skills." The fourth aspect was "The Factor of Communication and Collaboration Skills." The final component was "The Factor of Professional Skills Specialized in Human Resource Management."

The second hypothesis (H_2) was as follows: Characteristics of digital HR professional are correlated with guidelines for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness.

Based on an examination of the correlation between the attributes of digital HR professional and recommended competencies and desired abilities to improve the competitiveness of HR professionals, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was determined as .878, indicating a strong level of correlation. Hence, it may be inferred that there exists a correlation between the variables. This was supported by the application of Bartlett's Test, which yielded a test statistic of 3,652.12, following a Chi-Square distribution. The obtained significance value was .000, which is less than the predetermined threshold of .05. Hence, H_2 was accepted. Subsequently, a factor analysis was conducted to categorize 15 variables into factors based on their loadings. Based on the findings of the examination, the first component identified was "Intellectual and Analytical Personality Characteristics." The second component was "Communication and Teamwork Characteristics," while the third factor was "Information Technology Characteristics."

Hypothesis Test Conclusions. Based on the analysis of data and hypothesis testing conducted within the framework of a conceptual model, the following conclusions were made (Table 4).

Table 4 *Hypothesis Test Conclusions*

No.	Hypotheses	SIG	Hypothesis Test Results
1	Digital HR students' skills correlate with the guidelines for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness.	000.	000. Accept H_1
2	Digital HR students' characteristics correlate with the guidelines for developing skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals to enhance competitiveness.	000.	000. Accept H_2

Part 3. Guidelines to Develop Skills and Desirable Characteristics to Increase Employability

In this study, content analysis was employed to ascertain the recommendations for enhancing competitiveness via the development of skills and desired traits in HR professionals. The results of the quantitative research, obtained through the administration of questionnaires, were synthesized. Additionally, the findings of qualitative research, derived from the seminar method and workshops, were analyzed. The qualitative research findings in the document indicated that HR professionals in the digital age need to possess various skills. These skills include:

- Entrepreneurial and Business Skills: HR professionals need a strong understanding of business principles and entrepreneurial abilities to contribute effectively to organizational success.
- Knowledge and Abilities: HR professionals should have a broad knowledge base and possess the necessary abilities to handle the complexities of the digital age. This includes staying updated with industry trends, understanding technology advancements, and adapting to changing circumstances.
- Digital Skills: HR professionals need to be proficient in using digital tools and technologies. This includes skills in data management, data analytics, and user experience design.
- Human Relations Skills: HR professionals need strong interpersonal skills to effectively interact with employees, understand needs, and foster positive relationships within organizations.
- Leadership Skills: HR professionals need to possess leadership qualities to guide and inspire teams. This includes skills in decision-making, problem-solving, and strategic thinking.

Based on qualitative research findings, Digital HR Professionals' characteristics can be categorized into Knowledge and Abilities, along with Characteristics and Duties of the Job, as highlighted below.

Knowledge and Abilities

- Technical Understanding: HR professionals need to possess a solid understanding of digital tools, technologies, and platforms relevant to HR practices. This includes knowledge of HR information systems (HRIS), data analytics, digital recruitment methods, and online employee engagement platforms.
- Business Acumen: HR professionals should have a good grasp of business concepts and be able to align HR strategies with organizational goals. This includes understanding financial statements, profit and loss analysis, and the ability to contribute to decision-making processes within the organization.

Characteristics and Duties of the Job

- Adaptability: Digital HR professionals need to be flexible and adaptable to rapid changes in technology and industry trends. They should be open to learning and upgrading their skills to keep up with the evolving digital landscape.
- Problem-Solving Skills: HR professionals should possess strong analytical and problem-solving abilities to address challenges, and optimize HR processes using digital solutions.
- Ethical Conduct: Professionals in the digital HR field should demonstrate ethical conduct and maintain confidentiality when handling sensitive employee data and information.

- Creativity and Innovation: Digital HR professionals should be creative in finding new ways to leverage technology for HR practices and drive innovation within the organization.
- Emotional Intelligence: HR professionals should possess emotional intelligence, including empathy and understanding, to effectively address employee concerns and foster a positive work environment.
- Continuous Learning: Being proactive in seeking new knowledge and upgrading skills is important for digital HR professionals to stay abreast of the latest trends and technologies in the field.
- Organizational Communication: Digital HR professionals should be able to collaborate and work effectively with cross-functional teams, including IT, marketing, and operations, to implement digital HR initiatives.
- Transparent Communication: HR professionals should ensure clear and transparent communication within the organization regarding HR policies, procedures, and initiatives.
- Change Management: Digital HR professionals should be skilled in change management and effectively communicate and manage the transition to new digital HR systems or processes.
- Organizational Management—Strategic Thinking: Digital HR professionals should have a strategic mindset, understanding the long-term goals of the organization and aligning HR practices accordingly.
- Performance Management: Digital HR professionals should be adept at utilizing digital tools and technologies for performance management, including setting objectives, tracking progress, and providing feedback to employees.
- Employee Development: Digital HR professionals should design and implement digital learning and development programs to enhance employee skills and competencies in alignment with digital transformation.

These findings highlight the important characteristics and duties of Digital HR Professionals, emphasizing the need for a strong knowledge base, adaptability, effective communication, and strategic management skills in the digital era. By embodying these traits, HR professionals can effectively navigate the digital landscape and empower talent within their organizations.

A framework categorizing the skills and characteristics to empower digital HR professionals in the tech era is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 *Skills and Characteristics to Empower Digital HR Professionals*

Skills	Characteristics
Knowledge and Abilities	Broad knowledge base Stay updated with industry trends Understand technology advancements Be adaptable to changing circumstances
Entrepreneurial and Business Skills	Strong understanding of business principles Possess entrepreneurial abilities Contribute effectively to organizational success
Digital Skills	Proficient in using digital tools and technologies Skills in data management Skills in data analytics Skills in user experience design
Human Relations Skills	Strong interpersonal skills Effectively interact with employees Understand employee needs Foster positive relationships within the organization
Leadership Skills	Possess leadership qualities Skills in decision-making Skills in problem-solving Skills in strategic thinking

The information gathering for quantitative analysis came from 380 participants, and 10 interviews and data were subjected to statistical analysis followed by the generalization of findings to a larger population. On the other hand, the qualitative portion of the research involved gathering in-depth information and insights from 10 participants followed by qualitative analysis. The combination of these methods in the research allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the skills and desirable characteristics of HR professionals in the digital age. The quantitative portion provided statistical data and trends, while the qualitative portion offered deeper insights and perspectives from individual participants who expressed a preference for a developmental framework that facilitated acquisition and evaluation of proficiencies in HR management technology.

Subsequently, respondents also indicated a desire for the inclusion of human capital management and change management, which are utilized in operational contexts. Based on these findings, the researcher participated in seminars and workshops that highlighted the need to create an online curriculum for the purpose of cultivating the necessary competencies and desired attributes of HR professionals. This curriculum should include several domains, including but not limited to knowledge acquisition and evaluation, in order to effectively equip individuals with the requisite skills and qualities in the field of HR. The three main areas of focus should be: (a) Human Resource Management (HRM) information for decision-making; (b) Technology and its Applications; and (c) Strategic Management.

Discussion

A number of important points emerged from the research findings. There is a significant need for enhancing overall employability and various skills and characteristics of graduates in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, and Public Administration in Chiang Mai Province. Employers place a high value on the possession of entrepreneurial and business abilities by HR students, since these competencies are seen essential for their position in management and growth. The ability to anticipate long-term developments is crucial for effective decision-making in this field. It is vital for individuals to have a forward-looking perspective in order to effectively strategize and oversee the management and enhancement of individuals' skill sets into the future. This may be classified as a kind of strategic planning with a focus on long-term objectives. In practical terms, students studying HR may find it necessary to establish strategic plans that outline department-level strategies and measurable activities for success.

Additionally, these students should prioritize acquiring knowledge and skills related to HR functions and HR development, particularly in the context of digital HR. This will enable them to effectively address employee issues within their respective departments by utilizing various tools and techniques, such as coaching methods for skill enhancement and interviewing techniques for appropriate employee selection. Furthermore, proficiency in digital and technological skills is crucial in this field. The aforementioned statement aligns with the findings of Sen (2020), whose study focused on the competencies and adaptability of HR professional in the context of a rapidly changing world. The findings indicate that HR professionals should prioritize adaptive technology/digital skills as the most important feature of using information technology. This is closely followed by the collaboration skills of HR students, as well as measurable learning skills and emotional and thinking management abilities. These findings align with research conducted by Mitrofanova et al. (2018), who investigated the use of technology in facilitating human resource planning for comprehending and managing the operational aspects of line agencies. This approach emphasizes the importance of possessing a deep understanding of an organization's business, a role commonly referred to as a strategic partner in contemporary contexts. Furthermore, it is vital for individuals to possess the capability to accurately discern the ways in which human resource operations contribute to the overall advantage of a business.

Employers in Chiang Mai Province desire that graduates with degrees in Human Resource Management, Management, Political Science, or Public Administration are proficient in many areas. They are particularly interested in cultivating desirable attributes among digital HR students.

Employers want HR students who possess a range of qualities and fulfill certain work requirements. These desired attributes include organizational management ability, a solid foundation of knowledge in HR management, favorable personal traits, and effective communication skills. These factors together contribute to a mean value that employers consider when evaluating potential candidates. These findings are aligned with the research outcomes reported by Heric (2018), who conducted a study on "Desirable HR Students." The findings indicated that HR professionals need to possess a strong proficiency in intellectual capabilities, technical and functional skills, personal skills, human relations and communication skills, as well as organizational and business management skills. The findings of Di Romualdo et al. (2018) were also aligned with this observation, since their study examined the impact of HR students' characteristics on performance success. The findings indicated a strong association between the acquisition of work skills, diligent practice, successful outcomes, effective team coordination, and proficiency in many languages, along with accomplished performance, good interpersonal connections, consistent practice, successful execution of operations and services, and a sense of responsibility.

The HR professional should develop healthy interpersonal connections. In order to enhance corporate competitiveness, it is crucial for organizations to establish and maintain an effective system for managing and developing their human resources. The involvement of several stakeholders is necessary, with particular emphasis on line managers and HR professionals, who play a crucial role in actively collaborating on human resource initiatives inside a business.

The findings of this study pertaining to the enhancement of competitiveness through the development of skills and desirable characteristics among HR professionals indicate the necessity of establishing a comprehensive management framework. It should encompass the acquisition of knowledge and its subsequent assessment, as well as the provision of training opportunities for contemporary HR professionals to effectively analyze forthcoming trends. It is imperative to equip these individuals with competencies in areas such as management and development, legal matters, and decision-making. Furthermore, leadership and strategic management courses, as well as communication and teamwork courses, should incorporate guidelines for HR practices. The findings of Larkin's (2017) study were consistent with these research outcomes, as it examined recommendations pertaining to the professional growth of HR professionals in the era of digital advancements. Research has shown that in order to meet the demands of the digital age, it is essential for HR professionals to acquire proficient technical abilities. Furthermore, the incorporation of analytical thinking and contemporary management practices emerges as a crucial element in enabling companies to surmount the obstacles associated with digital transformation. This is particularly pertinent given the evolving nature of work, characterized by dynamic shifts in employment patterns, relocations, promotions, and other related issues.

Hence, the responsibility of HR experts includes the establishment of norms and standards, as well as development of a supportive structure to facilitate organizational changes. This requires a high level of knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the nature of these changes. Furthermore, it is essential for HR professionals to assume the role of change agents by embracing a contemporary management system for organizational growth. In order to ensure effective course and curriculum creation for the field of HR, it is essential to include the concepts of career planning. By doing so, the challenges arising from the dynamic nature of contemporary society may be effectively addressed, therefore preparing individuals for success in the more competitive global landscape of the future. Human resource professionals need a set of tools to effectively address challenges. These tools include a knowledge system that encompasses knowledge production, communication, and learning. Of particular importance is the ability to generate new knowledge in order to effectively communicate correct information that can be effectively used in practical situations. The role of an HR development professional encompasses that of a change leader, responsible for guiding behavioral transformations within an organization to align with its strategic objectives. As such, HR professionals are entrusted with duties of coordinating and developing all aspects related to human resources within the organization, which includes education and training initiatives.

Recommendations

This study contributes to the existing knowledge by presenting a framework that can be used to enhance the competencies and desired attributes of human resources professionals, as well as informing the design of HR curricula and courses. There is a need to implement ongoing improvements. In light of the dynamic transformations occurring in the digital era, it is imperative for HR professionals to ascertain the extent that the personnel under their purview possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively meet customer demands and attain a competitive edge. Furthermore, they must possess the ability to foster growth and address deficiencies in these areas. Business organizations may utilize this approach in order to cultivate the skills and attributes of digital HR students, as well as to identify and recruit graduates with backgrounds in suitable fields who possess entrepreneurial qualities. Moreover, this framework can serve as a valuable resource for employers, government entities, and private agencies, providing them with guidelines for fostering the development of skills and desirable characteristics among HR professionals, thereby enhancing their competitive edge.

Educational institutions and entrepreneurs need to provide support for HR activities when approached or solicited for collaboration by HR departments in many areas, recognizing their significance as a form of valuable assistance. In the context of employee development, it is important to provide ongoing training to workers. Online learning courses and assessments are provided by both government and commercial entities. These courses and assessments specifically target HR professionals and aim to boost their competitiveness by concentrating on the skills and characteristics of digital HR students. Future study should aim to comprehensively investigate these problems, including a wide range of individuals at a national level. This research should delve into several aspects such as the demand and supply dynamics of professional Human Resource Management abilities, as well as the development of models for enhancing these skills. Additionally, it is important to examine strategies for structuring activities that may effectively garner approval and support from other agencies. Human resource professionals are required to possess a comprehensive grasp of behavior science and psychology, since these disciplines serve as the foundation for comprehending the motivations behind human existence. This knowledge equips HR professionals with the ability to develop strategies and initiatives that effectively align with employee behavior.

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In Two Different Worlds: Distance Education Narratives of Filipino Learners Living in The Emirates While Studying in the Philippines

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Abstract

As a result of the most recent global health crisis, academic institutions have made significant transitions towards virtual platforms, enabling students to pursue their studies from remote locations while being physically situated elsewhere. Such separation can create a cross-cultural psychological dilemma. The investigation of this phenomenon centered on 12 Filipino senior high school students residing in the United Arab Emirates who studied virtually in educational institutions in the Philippines. They were selected using a purposive, convenience sampling technique. The findings obtained indicated that participants encountered various difficulties during their distance education experiences, such as time zone discrepancies, cultural and linguistic barriers, technological problems, and interruptions from their surroundings. Notwithstanding, the students derived personal advantages from their immersion in the academic and cultural milieu of the Philippines, such as development of their identity and connections, readiness for advanced education, and personal values. Additionally, participants realized the benefits of broadened social networks and developed a heightened recognition of the importance of ongoing education. The findings of this research can be utilized to create effective approaches and support mechanisms to improve the quality of distance education and cross-cultural pedagogical practices.

Keywords: *Distance education, cross-country, learning experiences, narrative inquiry*

Introduction

The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic was moderated by remote learning possibilities being embraced by educational institutions (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Mishra et al., 2020; Shahriar et al., 2021), which provided flexibility, accessibility, and the ability to reach students beyond physical boundaries (Dhawan, 2020; Simamora, 2020). Educational institutions worldwide took the lead in providing online education from the beginning of the pandemic and have continued to do so.

Meanwhile, reports show that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the lives and livelihoods of people across the globe (Decerf et al., 2021; Workie et al., 2020). Migrants and workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), like overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), have had their livelihoods, well-being, and financial stability impacted (Lemana et al., 2023; Tesorero, 2021). The loss of employment or reduction in income affected their ability to sustain their current lifestyles and meet their financial obligations (Cleofas et al., 2021). Filipino families in the UAE have considered enrolling their children in less expensive schools. Studies (e.g., Goel, 2020; Xie et al., 2020) have indicated that the introduction of distance education by schools worldwide has provided an opportunity for households to enroll their children in more affordable educational institutions. For children of Filipino families living in the UAE, virtual studies in schools in the Philippines are such an option.

Distance education poses significant challenges to students, such as technical difficulties, where students may encounter issues with Internet connectivity, device access, software compatibility, or navigating online learning platforms (Dhawan, 2020; Elshami et al., 2021; Moawad, 2020). Other challenges include a lack of in-person interaction that can lead to feelings of isolation, reduced social interaction, and limited opportunities for immediate clarification of doubts (Aldosari et al., 2022; Azmat & Ahmad, 2022; Milan & Lemana, 2023). However, online learning also has provided advantages. For example, there is great flexibility and convenience, enabling students to devise their study schedules and access educational resources from any location (Danchikov et al., 2021). Students have access to a wide range of learning resources, enhancing their knowledge and skill sets, i.e., digital literacy and technological competencies essential in contemporary society (Rini et al., 2022). Students have come to acknowledge the significance of self-motivation and have assumed responsibility for their education (Dalilan, 2021). They also have acknowledged the significance of proficient time management and prioritization (Syauqi et al., 2020) and have developed an elevated level of self-regulation and the ability to maintain concentration within a digital setting, which means they have enhanced their self-awareness, self-sufficiency, and ability to persevere in their educational pursuits (Palalas et al., 2020; Song & Kim, 2021).

Moreover, distance education is characterized by use of digital platforms for the teaching and learning process, which has reduced traditional face-to-face classes. In many instances, students' geographical location was in the same area as their educational institutions. However, minimal research has been undertaken to delineate learners' narratives concerning distance education experiences when their location differed from that of their teachers, classmates, and school. Distance education in a unique context, when a student is studying in a school in one country (e.g., the Philippines) while physically living in another (e.g., UAE), accentuates peculiar cultural and psychological challenges, gains, and realizations. There is a four-hour time difference between the UAE and the Philippines. In terms of distance, the two countries are separated by approximately 6,000 km (3,728 mi). This distance, coupled with the time zone variance, reflects the significant spatial and temporal separation between the two nations.

Grounded in the tenets of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 2002; Keith, 2019), it is postulated in this study that more profound challenges may arise due to time zone differences, cultural adjustments, and potential language barriers as students interact with the curriculum and navigate the intricacies of their virtual learning environment. Cross-cultural psychology is a field that deals with how cultural factors influence human behavior, cognition, and social interactions (Bery, 2002; Gunawardena et al., 2003; Keith, 2019; Liu & Gallois, 2014). Given that culture profoundly shapes individuals' beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors, the theory explores the impact of cultural diversity on various psychological processes, emphasizing that people from different cultural backgrounds may have distinct ways of perceiving the world, solving problems, and interacting with others.

In this qualitative study, a narrative inquiry was employed to contribute new insights into the above-delineated form of distance education. Examining the narratives of students engaged in this type of virtual education represents a crucial step toward developing tailored support systems specifically designed to address the distinctive needs of such cohorts. By delving into the intricacies of their experiences, teachers can gain invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities these students encounter, thereby enhancing their ability to provide targeted assistance. This has the potential to significantly elevate the overall educational experience and academic achievement of students navigating virtual education from a foreign location. Moreover, the outcomes of such an exploration can contribute to expansion of options and improvement of accessibility for students confronting similar circumstances. A greater appreciation of specific challenges posed by virtual education in an international context allows educational institutions to implement measures that facilitate a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for such students, transcending geographical barriers. In addition, lessons gleaned from student experiences who are engaged in virtual education overseas can serve as a valuable resource for refining online learning practices. This knowledge can inform the development of effective strategies, instructional methods, and support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of students navigating distance education.

Methods

A narrative inquiry format was used in this study. This approach focuses on exploring and understanding the lived experiences of individuals through the collection and analysis of personal stories or narratives (Benson, 2014; Murray, 2009; Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Researchers seek to comprehend the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences, emphasizing the subjective nature of these accounts and the importance of the context in shaping the narrative (Wang & Geale, 2015).

The study was conducted in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where the main author was residing and working during the time of the study. A purposive, convenience sampling technique was used to select participants (i.e., Grade 12 senior high school students) with the guidance of a set of inclusion criteria—participants must be residing in the UAE, enrolled/studying as a Grade 12 student in a school based in the Philippines, and willing to be interviewed for the study. Informed consent was obtained from adult participants (those aged between 18 and 19 yr), and explicit consent was obtained from minor participants (those who were 17 yr old), as well as their parents or guardians.

A mutually agreed timetable was obtained for the semi-structured interviews on Microsoft Teams; the format was validated by a panel of five research experts. Participants were told that confidentiality of their identity and information would be secured. Thus, each participant was given a pseudonym (i.e., SHS1—senior high school 1 to SHS12). Also, they could opt to withdraw their participation at any time.

The lead author conducted one-on-one interviews with participants (40–60 min each interview). Participants were prompted to tell stories about their perceived and encountered obstacles, benefits, and insights with regard to their situation of engaging in remote education in the Philippines. Transcripts with necessary translations were then produced and disseminated to the participating individuals for member checking. The researchers also took detailed field notes during and after interviews or narrative sessions.

Riessman's (2008) thematic analysis approach for narrative inquiry studies, as cited in Creswell (2013), was employed to treat the data in this study. The process began with the researchers familiarizing themselves with the data. They then broke down the narratives into smaller segments or units of meaning. They assigned descriptive codes to the segments based on their content, capturing the narrative's essence and organizing the data for analysis. Through a process of iterative analysis, they then identified patterns or themes. Themes were refined and interpreted in relation to the research questions. A meticulous audit trail was kept together with a reflective log, guaranteeing that the conclusions drawn were grounded solely on the collected data and analyzed in accordance with robust theories and previous research. Ultimately, the veracity of data analysis was validated by three external research intercoders.

Results

Profile of the Participants

A total of 12 senior high school students participated in this study. All of them lived in Abu Dhabi, UAE with their parents since they were born. Three of them were 17 years old, eight were 18, and one was 19; seven were boys, and five were girls. Each of them was enrolled and studying in a private school in the Philippines located in the country's national capital region.

Thematic analysis of these narratives revealed significant themes. They shed light on the intricate landscape of struggles, gains, and realizations experienced by the learners. The overarching themes were further dissected into subthemes, offering a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature inherent in the distinct dynamics of their unique distance education experience. Notably, the findings delineated the cross-cultural and psychological dimensions involved, and gave a richer insight into the challenges and adaptations of students' in their educational journeys.

Theme 1: Connecting virtually, struggling in reality. The global outbreak of COVID-19 significantly impacted the education sector, necessitating a transition to remote learning modalities. Online learning afforded students the chance to pursue their academic endeavors amidst the pandemic, but it also engendered a distinct array of obstacles and predicaments, particularly for students in the UAE who were engaged in virtual instruction in Philippine educational institutions. Under this theme, the challenges and difficulties these students faced in their pursuit of online education are delineated, and attempts were made to examine the implications of these challenges on their academic and personal well-being.

Time zone differences. Time zone differences can be a significant challenge for Filipino students in the UAE attending virtual classes in Philippine schools. Due to the geographic distance between the two countries, there was a time difference of several hours, which resulted in disrupted sleep schedules for students attending synchronous classes in real-time. As for the participants, the disrupted sleep schedules affected their overall health and well-being.

> Attending synchronous classes in the Philippines while in the UAE means that I have to stay up all night, which has been challenging. I try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule, but it's hard when my classes start as early as 4 am. This lack of sleep has affected my ability to concentrate during the day and has caused me to miss a few classes. – SHS1

Moreover, some students opted to attend asynchronous classes to avoid waking up early, which resulted in missed opportunities for real-time interactions with teachers and peers.

> I have missed several classes because of the time difference. My teachers have been understanding, but I know that it has affected my grades. I try to catch up by watching recorded lectures, but it's not the same as participating in real-time discussions. It's frustrating because I want to do well in school, but the time difference is making it difficult for me. – SHS8

The participants then expressed a desire for more flexible options for scheduling synchronous classes that would work for all students. They stated that it was frustrating to miss out on real-time discussions and interactions with their teachers and peers because of the time difference.

***Cultural and linguistic barriers*.** Another subtheme that emerged from the challenges that Filipino students in the UAE faced involved adaptation to cultural and linguistic differences between the UAE and the Philippines when attending virtual classes. As for the cultural side, Filipino students in the UAE experienced culture shock in different ways such as feeling overwhelmed or confused by differences in communication styles, social norms, and customs between the UAE and the Philippines. They also experienced a sense of homesickness or nostalgia for their own culture and familiar environment.

> I felt a sense of culture shock that was overwhelming at times. I had to navigate the stark differences in communication styles between the two countries, which made it challenging to connect with my classmates and teachers in the Philippines. While I was used to a more reserved and formal communication style in the UAE, my counterparts in the Philippines were more expressive and casual in their language. – SHS2

On this note, cultural differences have also been explained in terms of the teaching methods adopted in the two countries. One participant shared that he would often find himself comparing the teaching methods and educational philosophies of the UAE and the Philippines.

> While the UAE placed a strong emphasis on discipline and structure in the classroom, the Philippines was more focused on collaboration and creativity. This made it difficult for me to adjust to the teaching methods in the Philippines, and I often felt that the expectations were too different to adapt to easily. – SHS5

In the case of Filipino students in the UAE, they encountered language barriers as they were accustomed to speaking English as their primary language, while their counterparts in the Philippines primarily spoke Tagalog. These language differences sometimes resulted in difficulties in understanding and communicating with each other during online classes and discussions.

> The language barrier was especially difficult during group projects where communication and collaboration were crucial. There were times when my groupmates would discuss in Filipino, and I would feel left out and unsure of what to contribute. This sometimes led to misunderstandings and delays in completing the task. – SHS10

As a result, these language barriers created a sense of exclusion and frustration among Filipino students in the UAE, further exacerbating their challenges in adapting to virtual learning in the Philippines.

> Sometimes I feel like an outsider because I don't speak Filipino fluently. It's like everyone else has this shared language and culture that I'm not fully a part of, and it can be isolating. – SHS4

Theme 2: Overcoming distance, unlocking gains. While the previous theme shed light on challenges and obstacles faced by these learners, this theme focused on the transformative experiences or gains that arose from students' virtual learning journey. Within this theme, participants shared their progress, personal growth, and opportunities as they navigated the virtual educational landscape, which offered a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of their online learning experiences.

***Immersion in the Philippine academic and cultural landscape*.** For participants, the opportunity to immerse themselves in the Philippine academic landscape brought with it a multitude of gains. By navigating the intricacies of the Philippine educational system, they gained a comprehensive understanding of the nation's cultural nuances, academic traditions, and educational values.

> Being part of the Philippine academic system virtually has been awesome! I've gotten to dive into our own unique way of learning, connect with our culture, and understand how education shapes who we are. It's like discovering a whole new side of myself that I never knew existed! – SHS1

> Studying virtually in Philippine schools has been a game-changer for me! I've gained a whole new perspective on education, made friends with fellow Filipino students, and explored different ways of learning that have challenged and inspired me. It's like a journey of self-discovery that's opened up exciting possibilities! – SHS4

Likewise, for participants, this exposure allowed them to embrace their roots, develop a deeper sense of identity, and forge meaningful connections with their Filipino peers.

> Through interactions with my Filipino peers during online classes, I have developed a deeper sense of belonging and a stronger bond with my fellow students who share the same heritage. – SHS6

Participants also mentioned that this experience provided an opportunity to prepare for their college studies. Since they intended to pursue higher education in the Philippines, this experience allowed them to familiarize themselves with the Philippine academic landscape and cultural aspects, making possible a smoother transition and setting a stronger foundation for their future academic endeavors.

> Interacting with Filipino classmates and teachers during virtual classes has allowed me to build connections and networks even before setting foot in the country for my college studies. It's comforting to know that I'll have familiar faces and supportive peers when I start my degree in the Philippines soon. – SHS8

> I am grateful for the chance to immerse myself in the Philippine education system before officially starting college. This experience has not only deepened my understanding of the country's rich cultural heritage but also instilled in me a sense of excitement and readiness to fully embrace the college life that awaits me there. – SHS12

***Flexibility and adaptability*.** Virtual learning taught participants to be adaptable and flexible in managing their schedules, navigating different time zones, and accessing online resources. These skills have extended beyond their academic pursuits, benefitting their future careers and personal lives.

> Virtual learning has taught me to be a master of flexibility and adaptability. I've become a pro at adjusting my schedule, dealing with different time zones, and finding awesome online resources to help me rock my studies! These skills are going to set me up for success in college and whatever comes my way in the future. – SHS7

Independence and self-motivation. According to the participants, studying virtually provided them an opportunity to cultivate self-discipline, self-motivation, and time management skills. They learned to take ownership of their learning process, set goals, and work independently to accomplish tasks, which contributed to their personal growth and development.

> So, like, during virtual learning, I figured out that I could totally do things on my own, you know? I didn't need someone always telling me what to do. I got this self-motivation thing going on, where I set my goals, managed my time, and did my work without anyone pushing me. It's like discovering this independent superhero inside me! – SHS3

> Studying virtually has given me the opportunity to cultivate important skills like self-discipline and time management. I had to learn how to prioritize tasks, manage my time efficiently, and stay on track with my studies. It's made me more self-reliant and prepared for the independence that awaits me in college. – SHS6

Expanded networks and connections. Engaging in virtual learning enabled the participants to connect with peers, educators, and professionals beyond their immediate physical surroundings. They were able to establish networks and build relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds, potentially opening doors to future collaborations, mentorships, and career opportunities.

> Participating in virtual study groups and collaborative projects has provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of students. I've been inspired by the different perspectives and strengths each person brings, and together we have been able to tackle challenges and learn from one another. – SHS9

> Thanks to virtual learning, I've become part of online communities and clubs where I've met people who share my interests and passions. We discuss topics, exchange ideas, and support each other. It's like having a global network of like-minded individuals. – SHS11

Theme 3: Beyond the screen realizations and reflections. After exploring the challenges, gains, and transformative experiences of participants' virtual learning journeys, they were prompted to reflect on the realizations and lessons learned from their overall experiences to uncover deeper insights from their encounters with distance education. By delving into their reflections, a comprehensive understanding of the profound impact virtual learning had on their perspectives, values, and aspirations may be gained.

Filipino learner: Thriving here and there. This theme captured the essence of participants' ability to flourish and succeed in both their immediate physical environment in the UAE and their remote educational setting in the Philippines. It highlighted participants' experiences of navigating the challenges and opportunities that arose from studying virtually in a different country and acknowledged the unique context in which they found themselves, where they were physically present in the UAE while simultaneously connected to their schools in the Philippines through online platforms.

> Despite the physical distance, I feel a strong sense of belonging to my school in the Philippines. I've actively participated in online discussions, engaged with my classmates and teachers, and even formed study groups to support each other. It's amazing how technology has allowed me to thrive academically, despite being physically located in the UAE. – SHS5

> What can I say about Filipino learners? Filipino learners are incredibly versatile, succeeding anywhere they are. Whether studying in the Philippines or abroad like in the UAE, we adapt, persevere, and achieve. Our resilience, resourcefulness, and strong work ethic drive us to overcome challenges and reach our goals. As a Filipino learner, I firmly believe in my ability to thrive and succeed, regardless of location. – SHS7

Embracing the reason, finding the direction. This subtheme emphasized participants' journey of understanding the purpose or motivation behind their unique educational arrangements and discovering the paths that they needed to follow to achieve their goals. By embracing the reason behind their virtual education in the UAE and finding direction that aligned with their aspirations, they could develop a sense of purpose and focus.

> At first, I was like, 'Why am I studying online from the UAE?' But then, I started seeing the bigger picture. I realized that this virtual setup gives me the chance to connect with top-notch schools back in the Philippines while still being here. It's like having the best of both worlds! – SHS1

> Even though it was tough, I started seeing how this whole thing could actually be good for me. I trusted my parents' call and believed in the process. It hit me that this experience could totally open up my world and make me a global citizen. Like, I've realized that I want to make a real difference in the world through international relations. Being a Filipino student doing virtual school in the UAE has toughened me up and made me super determined to chase after that dream, no matter what. – SHS2

Self: One's best ally, worst foe. This subtheme captured the dual nature of the individuals' relationship with themselves. On the one hand, self could be their best ally when they exhibited determination, self-motivation, and a positive mindset, enabling them to succeed in the virtual learning environment. On the other hand, self could become their worst foe if they struggled with self-discipline, time management, and negative self-perceptions, hindering their academic progress and well-being.

> I've come to realize that I can be my greatest ally in online learning. When I am motivated, determined, and resilient, I find the strength to overcome challenges and succeed academically. Yet, there have been moments when I have become my worst enemy during online learning. I've struggled with self-discipline and managing my time effectively. Procrastination and distractions have occasionally gotten the best of me, leading to setbacks and feelings of frustration. – SHS2

Given the internal struggle discussed, here is a piece of advice shared by a participant:

> It's essential to find a balance between self-motivation and self-care. While being driven is important, I've learned that taking breaks, practicing self-care activities, and seeking support from peers and teachers are equally vital for my well-being. By nurturing both my academic and personal needs, I can optimize my online learning experience. – SHS8

Discussion

In this study the narratives were explored of Filipino students in the UAE who were engaged in distance learning with schools in the Philippines. Several major themes were identified in the study that highlighted their struggles, gains, and realizations.

On Struggles Experienced

The findings in the study resonate with ideas coming from cross-cultural psychology by highlighting the intricate ways in which cultural differences influenced students' experiences in distance education (Gunawardena et al., 2003; Liu & Gallois, 2014). They emphasize the need for educational institutions to consider these cultural factors and implement strategies that accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds to create more inclusive and effective learning environments. For example, in regards to the challenge concerning time zone differences between the two countries, if students resorted to attending asynchronous classes to avoid waking up early, this resulted in missed opportunities for real-time interactions with teachers and peers. Previous researchers have found that a lack of real-time interaction between students and teachers or peers can impact students' learning outcomes and social engagement (Karcher et al., 2022; Parkes & Barrs, 2021). Moreover, research on international distance education has highlighted the challenges faced by students in different countries due to time zone disparities (Demuyakor, 2020; Elshami et al., 2021; Gewin, 2020; Gillett-Swan, 2017). Studies have shown that time zone differences can disrupt students' schedules, leading to sleep deprivation, fatigue, and decreased well-being. It is worth noting that while asynchronous learning offers flexibility, it reduces immediate interaction opportunities (Dhawan, 2020; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Perveen, 2016). The findings of the present study are aligned with the existing literature highlighting how some Filipino students opted for asynchronous classes to accommodate the time zone differences, resulting in missed opportunities for real-time interactions. Hence, the challenges that participants faced in attending synchronous classes and the subsequent reliance on asynchronous learning highlights the need for educational institutions offering distance education to consider alternative strategies and support mechanisms to ensure inclusive and engaging learning environments despite time zone disparities.

Cultural and linguistic barriers also emerged as prominent challenges. In particular, the participants experienced culture shock, feeling overwhelmed or confused by the differences in communication styles, social norms, and customs between the UAE and the Philippines. Culture shock has been widely studied in the field of international education, and several studies (e.g., Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Hussain & Shen, 2019) have highlighted its influence on the adjustment and academic performance of students studying abroad. Specific studies, such as those by Ma et al. (2020) and Shan et al. (2020), indicate that cultural differences and challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment can lead to stress and apprehension among students, impacting their overall adjustment.

The findings of the current study underscore the importance of providing appropriate support and resources to help students navigate the cultural transition effectively. By acknowledging and addressing the challenges associated with culture shock, educational stakeholders can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students, promoting their overall well-being and success (Ahrari et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study participants also encountered language differences, with English being their primary language while Tagalog is predominantly spoken in the Philippines. These language barriers led to difficulties in understanding and communicating with classmates and teachers during online classes and discussions, creating a sense of exclusion and frustration. Previous researchers (Erturk & Luu, 2022; God & Zhang, 2019; Heng, 2017) have found that language differences hindered effective communication and interaction among international students, leading to feelings of exclusion and frustration. Such studies are aligned with these results, which indicated that Filipino students in the UAE, whose primary language was English, faced difficulties engaging with classmates and teachers who predominantly used Tagalog during online classes. The language barriers exacerbated their adaptation to virtual learning in the Philippines, where limited proficiency in Tagalog hampered their understanding and communication with peers and instructors. The findings highlight the need for language support and strategies to facilitate effective communication and inclusive learning environments for students who face language barriers in virtual classrooms. Addressing these language challenges can enhance students' engagement, participation, and overall adaptation to virtual learning.

On Gains Acquired

The findings indicate that virtual learning provided participants with various benefits and opportunities. One main gain was immersion in the Philippine academic and cultural landscape, which helped them understand the country's educational system, cultural nuances, and academic traditions. This exposure also allowed them to embrace their roots, develop a stronger sense of identity, and establish meaningful connections with Filipino peers in the Philippines where they planned to study in person in the future. These findings suggest that immersion in the Philippine academic and cultural landscape has multifaceted benefits. As Marijuan and Sanz (2018) imply, immersion promotes personal growth, resilience, and the development of a broader perspective, leading to increased cultural sensitivity and meaningful connections. It also allows individuals to directly experience and engage with a country's culture, traditions, and way of life (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). In the same way, immersion challenges individuals to step out of their comfort zones and adapt to a new environment (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017). As individuals navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by learning in a new country, they develop resilience, empathy, and a broader perspective, leading to a greater appreciation for the host country (Chen et al., 2018; Hussain & Shen, 2019; Ma et al., 2020).

Virtual learning also taught participants valuable skills such as flexibility, adaptability, and time management. They learned to manage their schedules, navigate different time zones, and access online resources effectively. This finding suggests that virtual learning experiences not only provide participants with academic knowledge but also equip them with practical skills that can benefit them in their future careers, personal lives, and ongoing learning endeavors. Several studies (e.g., Palalas et al., 2020; Song & Kim, 2021; Syauqi et al., 2020) have indicated that virtual learning experiences not only promote academic knowledge, but also foster the development of crucial skills such as adaptability, flexibility, and time management. Furthermore, Rini et al. (2022) noted that online learners cultivate adaptability by navigating technology, adapting to diverse learning environments, and engaging in self-directed learning. While studying virtually, participants develop independence, self-discipline, self-motivation, and resilience, take ownership of their learning process and work independently to achieve their goals. These skills contribute to personal growth and development, equipping individuals with the necessary tools for success in an evolving educational landscape (Keener et al., 2021).

Lastly, these findings showed that engaging in virtual learning expanded participants' networks and connections beyond their immediate physical surroundings, and this, is another gain acquired from their distance education experience as students living in the UAE while studying virtually in the Philippines. Research has indicated that virtual learning not only facilitates knowledge acquisition, but also fosters networking and connection-building opportunities (Gee, 2018; Ito et al., 2018). This implies that by connecting with peers, educators, and professionals from diverse backgrounds, learners can expand their professional networks, forge collaborations, find mentors, and explore potential career pathways.

On Realizations Constructed

The findings of the present study captured the participants' reflections and lessons learned from their virtual learning journeys. For instance, they realized that they had the ability to flourish and succeed in both their physical environment in the UAE and their remote educational setting in the Philippines, which suggests their adaptability and resilience in overcoming the challenges associated with studying virtually in one country while living physically in another. In other words, virtual learning can be a transformative and enriching experience for students, enabling them to thrive and succeed in different physical and educational environments. Previous studies (Keener et al., 2021; Naidu, 2021) have highlighted the potential of online learning to cultivate adaptability and resilience in students. By providing them with opportunities to navigate through digital environments, take ownership of their learning, and overcome challenges, online learning can contribute to the development of these important skills. It is thus suggested that educators and institutions should continue to explore and develop virtual learning opportunities and resources that allow students to engage with different cultures and educational contexts (Ali, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Participants in the present investigation also understood the purpose and motivation behind their unique educational arrangement. These students embraced their educational situation and made the most of their opportunities. They were motivated, goal-oriented, and found purpose in their studies, even though they were physically located in a different country from their virtual learning environment. The results obtained imply that when individuals understand the purpose and motivation behind a challenging endeavor, such as the unique educational arrangement described in this study, it can indeed lead to increased productivity and a higher likelihood of achieving success by providing them with clarity, intrinsic motivation, resilience, and a stronger commitment to their goals. The self-determination theory indicates that individuals, who have a clear understanding of their autonomous motives (motivation driven by personal interest, values, and choice), tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement, effort, and overall performance. Literature depicting the self-determination theory framework supports the idea of a positive relationship between understanding one's motives and productivity/success (Deci et al., 2017; Manganelli et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The last finding of this study relates to participants' complex relationships with themselves. On the one hand, self can be a powerful ally, supporting them through determination, self-motivation, and a positive mindset, which leads to success in the virtual learning environment. On the other hand, self can also become a formidable adversary, causing difficulties with self-discipline, time management, and negative self-perceptions, ultimately impeding academic progress and well-being. This duality highlights the significant impact of individuals' internal mindsets and behaviors on their educational outcomes and overall mental state during virtual learning, which social cognitive theory also can explain. According to this theory, individuals' behavior, cognitive processes, and environmental factors interact and influence each other (Bandura in Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Zalazar-Jaime & Medrano, 2021). In the context of virtual learning, the theory suggests that individuals' internal mindsets and behaviors, such as self-efficacy, self-regulation, and self-perception, play a crucial role in determining their educational outcomes and mental state.

Conclusions

This study focused on the struggles, gains, and realizations of Filipino senior high students who physically resided in the UAE while studying virtually in schools in the Philippines. The findings obtained revealed that this particular type of distance education poses unique challenges to students, including time zone differences and cultural and linguistic barriers leading to disrupted sleep schedules and difficulties in communication and understanding. Challenges experienced by these students can extend to personal, sociocultural, linguistic, and academic issues, making them more challenged compared to other students who took distance education in the same country where they were residing. Despite the difficulties encountered, students gained opportunities to develop personally, as distance education allowed them to become immersed in the Philippine academic and cultural landscape, foster a deeper sense of identity and connections, prepare for future higher education, develop flexibility and adaptability, cultivate independence and self-motivation, and expand networks and connections with other individuals. With these challenges and benefits, they realized their ability to thrive in dual settings, appreciated the value of continuous education, and reflected on the dual nature of their relationship with themselves. These insights revealed their growth and self-awareness development during their virtual learning journeys. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of distance education in terms of the challenges, benefits, and realizations of students residing in one country while studying virtually in another. Though not generalizable, these findings may provide a deeper understanding of the experiences encountered in distance education, and can inform the development of strategies and support systems to enhance virtual learning experiences in similar contexts.

Beyond the rich and insightful findings, it is worth discussing the limitations of the study. There was a sample bias in that the focus was only on Filipino students in the UAE studying virtually in Philippine schools. Hence, the generalizability of the findings is limited. The absence of quantitative data reduces the generalizability of the findings; reliance on thematic analysis alone may affect reliability. The narrow perspective adopted in the study excluded the viewpoints of teachers, administrators, and parents. Future research should address these limitations for a more comprehensive understanding of distance education, which may include diverse student samples from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds who are engaged in distance learning.

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Acculturation and Openness of Generation Z Consumers to New Cultural Goods and Services

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Abstract

Acculturation is the process of signifying the human potential to adapt and grow for productive living. What implications does acculturation have on Generation Z consumer's willingness to explore new cultural goods and services? Gen Z consumers' receptivity to cultural products and services comes via acculturation benefiting marketers utilizing transformants to achieve success of a firm. The purpose of this research was to comprehend the process by which Gen Z adjusts to and embraces various cultures in a diversified setting, and to establish a framework that relates this acculturation with consumer enthusiasm for cultural products and services. Twelve respondents in a multicultural setting who were going through the process of acculturation were surveyed. Ideas about how acculturation affects consumer readiness for new experiences were developed through a qualitative approach that employed grounded theory analysis techniques. The level of Gen Z individuals' openness to seek new experiences offered by other cultures (appreciating new goods, different value systems, and approaches to life), to learn new languages, and travel were significant findings of the study. A model termed the "Hierarchy of Acculturation-Needs Cycle" was constructed with the aim of advancing research and discussion on the topic of acculturation.

Keywords: *Acculturation, openness, consumers, Generation Z, cultural products/services*

Introduction

Acculturation and openness to new cultural products and services are of increasing importance due to globalization and consumers' openness to acquaintance with people from foreign cultures. When individuals from different cultural groups come into contact, they undergo a twofold process of cultural and psychological transformation known as acculturation (Schwartz & Unger, 2017). The key idea in the psychology of acculturation is integration (Boski, 2008). Acculturation is the process whereby norms and practical strategies are exchanged between cultures in order to make life easier. Acculturation occurs at the individual, social, and organizational levels. Adaptation to aspects of the host culture can be beneficial.

As a result of exposure to and familiarity with technology, and openness to a wide variety of cultural contexts, members of Generation Z (hereafter Gen Z) are receptive to cultural products and services. Gen Z customers' understanding of their surroundings influences opinions of sustainability (Su et al., 2019).

Acculturation and openness are closely related concepts that exist within the realm of human adaptation based on cognitive perception. Consumer perception of the appropriateness/usefulness/acceptability of a product or service in relation to a particular aspect of life is influenced by aspects related to culture. The cultural importance of a product changes consumers' opinions early on and makes them more likely to make purchases (Pantano, 2011). Openness to new cultural products and services involves a psychological process of learning that reflects a largely permanent change in behavior brought about by experience. The processes of acculturation and openness are advanced more quickly in surroundings that are multicultural. This may be observed in an educational institution, where a range of cultures are found among instructor and student populations. Openness is a concept related to acculturation. As a result, the significance of consumers' acculturation and openness has a positive impact on the area of research, on society, and on the ability to assist in finding solutions of issues dealing with the needs of consumers.

Literature Review

Acculturation

When individuals interact with people who were raised in a different culture (Schumann et al., 2020) they become acculturated as a consequence of their interactions (Berry, 2019). Acculturation is the source of change in a person's behavior associated with adaptation as a means to integrate new understandings, ideas, and values. Acculturation is initiated by the individual. Each cultural element contains its own challenges. Examples of such challenges can be norms and objectives associated with other cultures, the degree of effort required in order to acculturate, openness to growth, and other elements (Nayeem, 2012).

Globalization influences social identities as well as changing value systems, reshaping culture, and, in the end, changing the attitudes and actions of consumers everywhere (Cleveland, 2018). People are the channel through which culture is passed down, and cultures are manifested through the development of economic, political, and ethical factors as well as through the production of goods and services, customs, religious beliefs, and rituals and practices. Cultures blend the ways of the past with the ways of the present based on demographic, economic, political, religious, and other factors (Shoham et al., 2017).

Acculturation and Growth

The least favorable mental health and family functioning have been reported in adolescents who showed no change in any area of acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2015). It is undeniable that acculturation is a growth pathway. The process of growth involves transforming a cognitively significant past or present state. Through a process of weighing the benefits and drawbacks of change, individuals acquire knowledge prior to adjusting to the ideas and values of a foreign culture (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Gen Z Consumers

Comprehending Gen Z consumers is crucial for corporate success and achieving a competitive edge. This is a unique generation born between 1995 and 2012 whose natural environment is technology. Studies indicate that about 90% of Gen Z members cannot function without the Internet (Adriana-Camelia, 2015). Having grown up in a society that is completely linked via the Internet and mobile devices, with access available around the clock, members of Gen Z are the first genuine digital natives. Almost 100% of Gen Z people use social media and cannot live without it (Irfan et al., 2022). Diversity in cultures and their experiences with various goods and services are made possible by social media. A willingness to travel to distant countries for work-related purposes is another facet of diversity adaptation (Dolot, 2018). Internet content has an impact on Gen Z and their travel interests. They tend to form strong ideas, which allow them to develop attitudes of adaptation. Compared to their parents and mentors, members of Gen Z are more open to new ideals and have a better comprehension of new behavioral patterns towards foreign cultures (Törőcsik et al., 2014). In comparison to members of Generation X, Gen Z individuals exhibit much higher levels of self-improvement and openness to change (Harari et al., 2023). This openness is especially noticeable in the emergence of specialized market places and customized experiences.

Acculturation and Psychological Concerns

According to cross-cultural psychology, interactions between cultural groups is one of the main factors that influences how human behavior develops and is manifested. Both cultural and psychological changes are brought about by cross-cultural interaction. One significant discovery is that of correlations between a person's acculturation and the ability to integrate and adapt to live more happily in a larger society (Sam & Berry, 2010). In comparison to those who choose marginalization, those who pursue an integration strategy encounter less stress and make better adaptations; those who pursue assimilation or a separation strategy encounter intermediate degrees of stress and adaptation (Berry, 2005).

Openness of Gen Z Consumers

The desire for financial gain and interpersonal pressures are two main moderators of the relationship between cultural identity priority and acculturation tactics. Additionally, acculturation strategies will affect the social networks and organizations that immigrants choose to join, as these decisions can have an impact on their prospects for advancement, employment, and income (Samnani et al., 2013).

Both home-culture contact and host-culture interaction have a significant impact on this process. Home culture core values are rarely abandoned in favor of host culture core values. Although retaining a strong sense of identity from one's native culture is likely to occur during acculturation, bicultural competence is achievable (Barker, 2015). In other words, integration (or accommodation) will eventually occur when continuous and prolonged contact between cultural groups is maintained (Daiute et al., 2018).

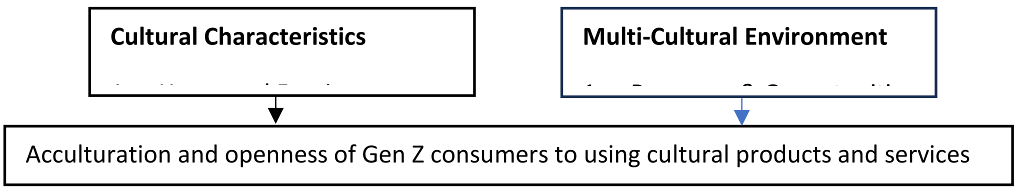
The openness of Gen Z consumers to new experiences has a positive and significant effect on their purchasing behavior of unfamiliar cultural products and services (Triwijayati, 2024). A person's tendency to adapt increases when interacting with foreigners on a regular basis in a variety of situations. Gen Z customers have a positive inclination towards distinctive products/services and enjoy creative pursuits (Cho et al., 2022). Gen Z customers' appetite for new fashions is displayed in a willingness to try out new styles (Gazzola et al., 2020). Indeed, a remarkable level of interest in cultural experimentation was observed at an international university in Thailand, where mingling with classmates from other cultures in a respectful setting sparked a noticeable interest in trying new types of clothing, food, language(s), and forming cross-cultural friendships, illustrating Gen Z customers' favorable attitudes and openness toward goods and services from different cultures. This led to the formulation of a research question to further investigate the association between acculturation and openness among Gen Z customers.

Research Outline and Methodology

Individual consumers engage with people from different cultures to share and trade values, ideas, and cultural goods/services. This process of learning establishes a foundation for openness of Gen Z consumers to use new cultural products and services. The aim of the present research was to determine the values and ideas held by Generation Z consumers concerning acculturation and their openness to new cultural products and services. The research question posed was: What effects does acculturation have on Gen Z customers’ openness to new cultural goods and services?

The conceptual framework used in this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework*



Methodology

Grounded theory, originally postulated by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is a methodical approach to qualitative research that involves using evidence acquired from the field to construct or improve theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Using this method, a new theory may be produced by repeatedly collecting and analyzing empirical data. In the present study, quantitative data were collected from respondents on their openness to and consumption of new cultural products and services. The following procedure was used.

Research Procedure

A two-part self-developed questionnaire was used to collect: (a) participants' demographic data (Table 2), and (b) information about their experience with and openness to new cultural experiences (Table 3). Open-ended questions inquired regarding respondent's likes and dislikes about their own and other cultures, how their culture could benefit others, and potential dangers of learning about foreign cultures.

Following the collection of data, coding of the more than 200 responses was undertaken. First-order concepts were created from this data and second order themes were then derived. The data were analyzed with a goal of drawing inferences. Based on the findings, a Hierarchy of Acculturation Needs Cycle Model was developed to understand the acculturation and receptivity of Gen Z consumers. Data collection and analysis was conducted concurrently. This framework involved various elements, such as descriptions, definitions, and justifications for variables and their relationships and boundaries (Shribe, 2023).

Table 1 *Research Method*

Research Methods	Data Type	Analysis	Qualitative/Quantitative
Survey–Sample Profile	Primary	Descriptive	Quantitative
Survey–Gen Z consumers openness to new cultural products/services	Primary	Descriptive	Quantitative
Interview–Written comments	Primary	Grounded Theory 1st Order Concepts 2nd Order Themes Aggregate Dimensions	Qualitative

Sampling

Information was gathered from Gen Z respondents at an international university in Thailand. A convenience sampling technique was used in which the participants were selected based on their accessibility rather than through a random selection method. Sample details are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Sample/Respondents Profile*

Respondents	Country	Gender	Age Group	Year of Study	Faculty
1	Cambodia	Female	21–25	Senior	Business
2	Myanmar	Female	26–30	Junior	Education
3	China	Male	15–20	Junior	Business
4	Thailand	Female	21–25	Sophomore	Business
5	India	Female	15–20	Sophomore	Business
6	Thailand	Female	21–25	Junior	Business
7	Laos	Female	21–25	Senior	Education
8	Cambodia	Male	21–25	Sophomore	Business
9	Myanmar	Male	15–20	Junior	Business
10	Myanmar	Female	21–25	Junior	Education
11	Myanmar	Female	21–25	Junior	Education
12	Myanmar	Male	26–30	Junior	Education

Data Retrieval and Interpretation

A brief summary of respondents' experiences with other cultures is shown in Table 3. Of interest, it was noted that 63% of all cultural outfits were from the home country. About a third of people had some preference for food products from other cultures, while the majority readily accepted foreign cultural food. Acculturation and openness was illustrated well in this regard.

Table 3 *Generation Z Consumers Acculturation and Openness–Products/Affiliations/Languages*

Questions: Products/Affiliations/Languages	**Mean Response**
No. of languages known (s)	2.92
No. of languages known (r-w-s)	Four respondents = 4.25; Eight respondents = 2.13
No. interested to learn new language(s)	Minimum of one and maximum of two
No. of daily acquaintances with foreign cultures	7.0
Attracted to foreign culture(s)	1.3 foreign cultures
Familiarity of home culture (%)	69.2%
Favorite foreign cultural food	Somewhat prefer = 33%; readily accept = 67%
No. of home cultural outfits	63%
No. of foreign cultural outfits	37%
No. of foreign friends	4 to >15
Attend foreign cultural programs	All attended
No. of multi-cultural-fest presentation/participation	2.8
Are you interested to work in foreign countries?	All expressed a desire to work abroad

On average, some interaction with seven cross-cultural acquaintances were recorded daily and 1.3 of these had a foreign cultural affinity. A multicultural environment offers a variety of products and services, and this process of getting to know others and learning about them helps to overcome obstacles to openness and acceptance of new customs, behaviors, and practices. Openness to learn new languages was significant. Every respondent had an interest to learn a minimum of one and a maximum of two.

Acculturation was significantly among the respondents in that (a) an average of seven people from different cultural backgrounds were among the respondents' daily acquaintances, (b) all those surveyed participated in international cultural events/programs, (c) between four and more than fifteen of the respondents' friends were from foreign cultures, (d) respondent’s cultural-fest presentation participation was between two and five, and (e) all the respondents said they would be open to working abroad.

The data above amply illustrates the scope for acculturation and the degree to which Gen Z consumers were open to products, associations, languages, and acculturations in other people groups. Consumers in Gen Z view it as innovative because it is novel and an opportunity for them to expand their experiences and there may be some practical value attached.

Grounded Theory Data Analysis

The first-order analysis (Tables 4a and 4b), adhered closely to the information provided by informants and little effort was made to narrow down categories. Consequently, the number of categories was large. Thirty-four second order theme categories were identified, which yielded up to eighteen aggregate dimensions. The whole is greater than some of its parts, according to the Gestalt theory of analysis.

Table 4 *Grounded Theory Analysis: 1st Order Concepts, 2nd Order Themes, and Aggregate Dimensions*

1st Order Concepts	**2nd Order Themes**	**Aggregate Dimensions**
My culture is helpful to…		
Respect elders’, diversity, and everyone around. It influences others to know about our cultural details.	Respect everyone is a benefit	
Express kindness and be ready to help people. Sow love. Think of the needs of others. Sharing, collectivism, hospitality, attitude of belongingness, and promote the art of giving. Show unity in dance and festivals. Be loyal.	Warm, welcoming, collectivistic, united, loyal, and friendly.	Positive-values mindset

Simplicity is a blessing. We show this in our events and traditions. Nurturing values. Celebrate different ethnic cultures. Make others see that our culture is nice, mature.	Promoting simplicity, diversity, cultural tolerance, and ideals.	
Philosophy, natural food, and spirituality.	Physical, cognitive, and social benefits	Overall identity benefits
Other cultures help me to…		
Be broadminded, receive perspectives, new insights, foster understanding, promote tolerance, close to my parents through expression of words, develop worldview, freedom to try new things, & exchange ideas, open minded to receive and accept feedback. Learn values, food, and languages.	Cultural influences and helps initiate growth	Acculturation influences growth, behavior, and empathy
Adding Western ideas to curriculum improves academic life. Makes me simple, confident, & disciplined.	Rationalism and inspiration change my behavior.	
Learn from people’s struggles, promotes empathy, and beliefs.	Stories teach and promote empathy.	
Enriches my cultural identity. Understand differences, diversity, ethics, values, and recognize similar attitudes.	Disseminating cultural identity, beliefs, and values.	Acculturate to cultural identity.
Respect and love each other. Be wise.	Respect and love gain show wisdom.	Acculturation fosters love, respect, and acceptance.
Exercise judgment and criticism. Openly identify opportunities.	Value and cherish the wisdom of others.	
Is it risky to learn about other cultures?		
It is not risky because the benefits out-weigh the disadvantages. It develops critical thinking. Helps a person to behave well in society. It is helpful, interesting, promotes friendships, increases comprehension to my growth. I deal well with my work, learn more for living well.	The capacity to easily accept criticism and judgment.	Acculturation adapts to acceptance of criticism and judgement.
Expressing thoughts freely. Learn others’ beliefs. Identify my culture clearly. Thai and Cambodian cultures overlap. Learn more of a culture.	Differential and comparable cultural identities	
With culture shock we accept other cultures. But when we go back home, we find it hard to adapt to the home culture. Yes. Insecure can develop about my own culture. Find them offensive in some cases. Worry of forgetting my own culture. Afraid of rejection in my own culture.	Acculturation raises concerns about losing the home culture.	Acculturation threatens to eliminate home culture.
Yes, a bit but not much. Sometimes. My perspective towards others is changing.	Being afraid of losing one's cultural identity.	

Is learning about different cultures a threat to one's native culture?		
I don't fear losing my culture because of acculturation. It enriches my understanding. It helps me to adjust and understand different points of view. Although I am a good cultural adapter, I still love my own. I adapt. It doesn't matter how many cultures I can adapt to and understand. At the end I practice my own culture. I will never lose home culture. I want to keep my culture and show who I am to others. I will practice my culture wherever I stay. It stimulates a nice atmosphere and positive relationships.	Learning about different host culture(s) does not negate one's culture.	Acculturation is not detrimental to home culture.
Acculturation changes my cultural perspective on beliefs. Yes, it is risky to learn other cultures to a certain extent and I forget my home culture. If I regularly engage in other cultures, I lose sight of my own.	Assimilating another cultural identity impairs my cultural beliefs and values.	Acculturation erodes home culture.
Acculturation is risky sometimes. Yes, I should practice my culture. I don't want to forget my culture. My experience points to my identity being lost. I got shaped a lot by the Thai culture.	Trading cultural values and beliefs with others weakens the home culture.	
What aspects of other cultures do you dislike? I don't like a tipping culture.	Eliminating tipping culture from acculturation.	Negative or harmful traits/behavior belittle one's cultural identity.
I hate aggressiveness. Bad words. Answering rudely.	Dislike aggressiveness, bad words, and rude responses.	
People don't wear shoes.	Sensitivity of image identity	
I don't like biases and like being indirect instead of being direct, overconfidence, and gossiping.	Detrimental effects of exclusion	
The gap between parents and children is uncomfortable. Women wearing short clothes.	Adverse effects of belongingness	
Rules, behavior & certain daily practices. People speaking loudly in public is annoying & disrespectful to people around. Calling first names without respect.	Extreme liberal behavior is a hindrance	Coercive, hateful, violent, and extreme behavior impairs acculturation.
Looking down on women and forced marriage.	Against individual freedom	
Extreme exotic cuisine. Dislike certain cultures' cuisine.	Extreme food avoidance	
I don't like killing people for God and idol worship.	Violation of spiritual liberty	
I like the following about my home culture…		
Respecting and honoring elders. Politeness, simplicity, and respectfulness. The expression of hospitality in my culture. Welcoming everyone known and strangers.	Respect, hospitality, & considering strangers too	Being humane actuates cultural identity creating cohesiveness.
Sharing, unity, helping the needy, relatives, and strangers means to build relationships. Be kind and loving towards others.	Sharing personal resources with the needy	

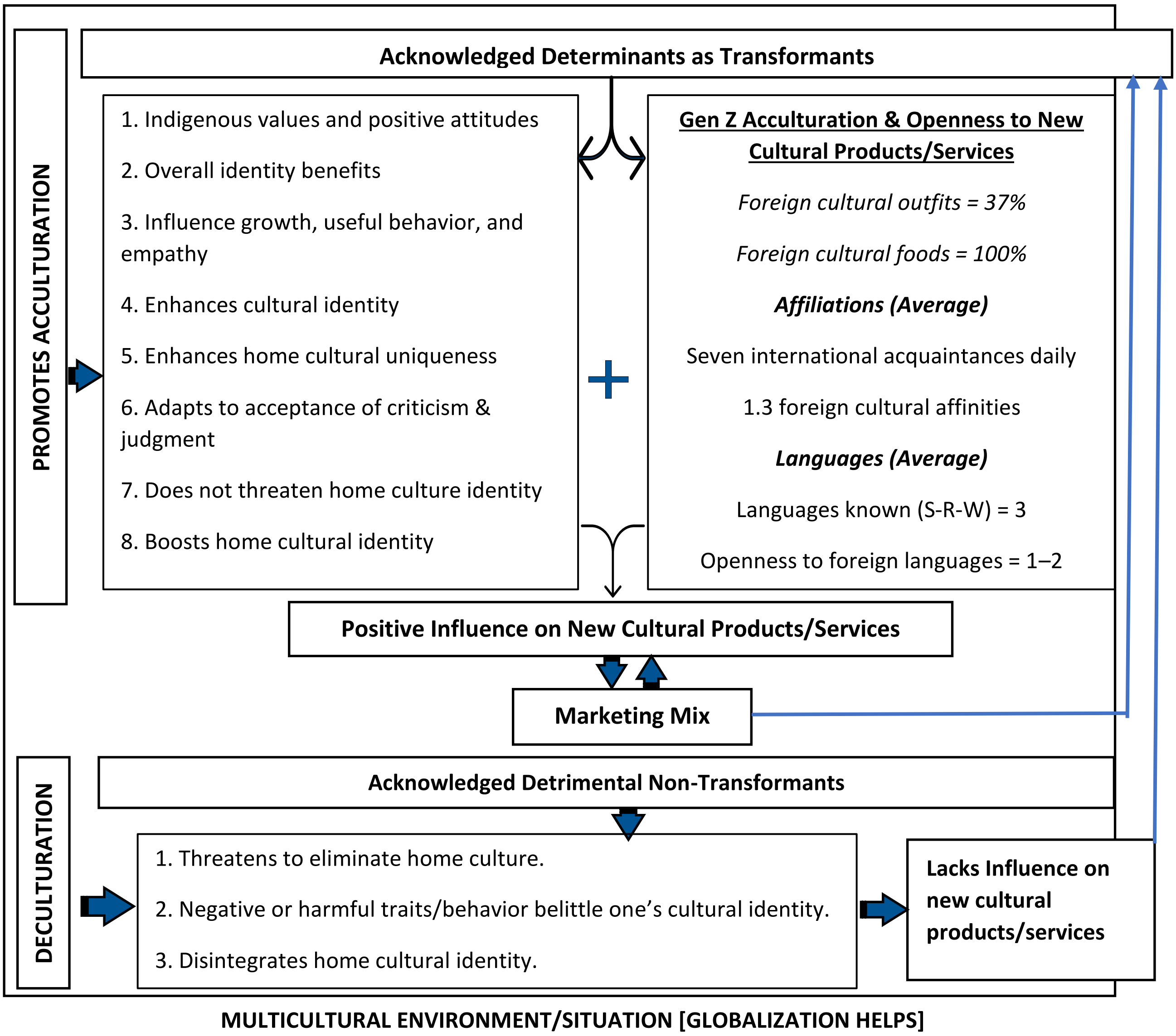
I like my food and traditional medicine, festivals, occasions, events of that are graceful and peaceful. I like all my home culture, language, history, and customs.	Traditional food, medicine, festivals, events, language, history, and positive vibes	Traditional cultural aspects are acculturation touch points.
Friendly personality/behavior. An ideal personality. Resting in other's houses without appointment. Easy going. Eating anything available and sleeping anywhere. Those from hardworking backgrounds who are resilient and strong.	Good personality, friendliness, and living is pleasant and desirable	
Way of dressing, clothes, sumptuous delicacies. Presentation of diverse regions and religions.	Socially acceptable gestures and behaviors	Love home culture's diversity.
After marriage women being in the house.	Limiting women's role in society	Dislike belittling woman's rights
Resemblance, practice my home culture after 5 years…		
I don't think I will be the same. Culture changes and I follow it. Hard to follow my home culture.	Culture is subject to social changes	Acculturation is dynamic and versatile.
I will change if I work in other cultures. I will change to be humble, kind, easy going, understanding, and sociable. I will be a mix-culture. Learn new cultures.	Acculturation will change me	
Yes, I will be the same. I am open to all, but I am comfortable with only my own home culture. I will not change if I work in my culture. I will not forget my culture. I will be developing my own culture by spreading to others. I want others to know my cultures.	Love for one's culture. Uncertainty of the unknown	
I am not sure. It depends where and in which culture I live.	Unpredictable future and identity ambiguity	

Data Structure to Grounded Theory

The terms and ideas of acculturation provided from informant daily lives encountered in a multicultural setting formed a basis for first-order concepts. Responses were primarily a product of their acculturation and ideas about acceptable beliefs and values. Positive mental openness towards improved living was demonstrated. First order concepts, such as how one's own culture can benefit other cultures and vice versa, dangers/rewards of learning other cultures without losing sight of one's own, preferences for/dislikes about both native and foreign cultures, and the certainty of one's future cultural orientation, formed a basis for the second order themes. Creation of a favorable cognitive environment for new products or services was largely dependent on these attributes in individuals. Aggregate dimensions derived from second order themes appear in the third column. Development of grounded theory linking the acculturation environment to openness to new products and services makes use of these dimensions.

The derived information, based on grounded theory analysis, shows that promotion of acculturation is based on acknowledged determinants as transformants (Figure 2).

Figure 2 *Determinants of Acculturation of Gen Z Openness to New Cultural Products and Services*

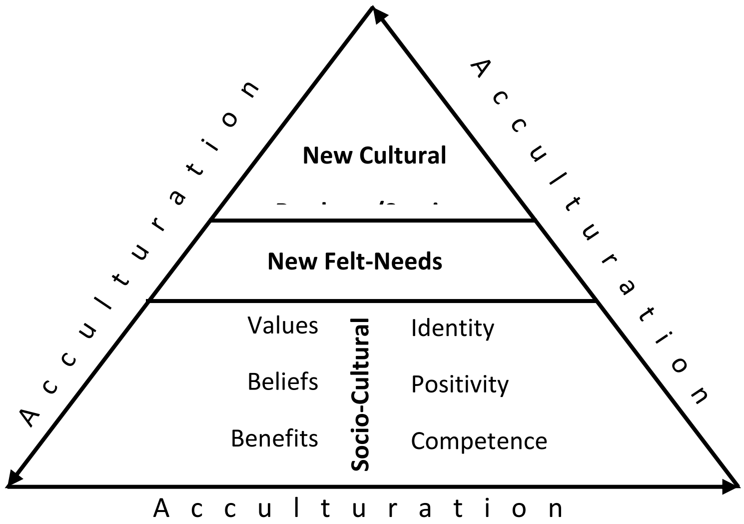


Code. Languages known (S-R-W)—refers to Speaking, Reading, and Writing another language.

These might be indigenous values and positive attitudes. Overall, identity may be benefitted, growth influenced, useful behavior and empathy encouraged, and cultural identity and uniqueness enhanced. Individuals adapt to and accept criticisms and judgments, acculturation does not threaten home culture identity but rather advances its prominence. A certain academic acculturation, a humane attitude develops, while traditions and love for one's home culture remain. Deculturation acknowledges the detrimental non-transformants. Deculturation can occur when a few members of a weak culture find themselves in a powerful culture and when a high level of proficiency is achieved in the host language. This can increase the risk that the home culture will change or be marginalized (Ullah, 2022). Other change agents have been identified, but immersion in another culture for intermediate periods of time (as with returning missionaries) does not necessarily mean a loss of the home culture. Individuals were enriched by their immersion in a different culture (Callahan, 2020).

Acculturation causes consumers to be more receptive to new needs, whether basic or more profound. If a product or service offers a solution to an existing problem (an issue or need), the acculturation process introduces a new set of problems (new needs), which potentially can be satisfied by new cultural products or services. Figure 3 is a simplified version for application of the theory formulated in this research.

Figure 3 *Hierarchy of Acculturation-Needs Cycle*



The derived Hierarchy of Acculturation Needs Cycle is a pyramid that is top-down and bottom-up. It is derived from the ideas stated above. Through the influence of cultural behaviors, goods, and services—in addition to actual surroundings and circumstances—acculturation leads to adaptation and the emergence of different needs. Those at a lower level are shown in Figure 1, which identified socio-cultural factors as initiating new felt needs in consumers. These needs are the result of acculturation. Consumers engage with new felt needs when growth occurs. The contributing factors to growth are values, beliefs, growth, benefits, identity, positivity, competence, academics, love, and nature. The apex of the pyramid represents new goods and services that marketers believe would benefit their target market consumers, based on their market research. Reaching the top level does not represent the end of the process. Instead, through the cyclical effect on acculturation and continual improvement, new products are produced.

Discussion and Conclusions

Humans go through a constant process of acculturation. One way to describe acculturation is that it involves a deepening of knowledge about people, things, and occasions. New interests and demands for a better life are sparked by the adaptation brought about by acculturation. In a multicultural setting, this learning process is accelerated. However, when dealing with situations involving a single culture, adaptation happens far more slowly than when dealing with multicultural settings. The question may be posed: In what ways does the increasing acculturation of consumers influence product innovation among marketers? The analysis of the sociocultural elements influencing the choices made by entrepreneurs to start new ventures out of already established ones is under-researched. There is agreement, however, that socio-cultural factors play a role in decisions to commence new businesses. Furthermore, the success of economic enterprises cannot be separated from dynamics existing in social environments (Thornton et al., 2011). Economic relationships are no longer solely rational acts of exchange and utility maximization. Instead, market, moral, and sociocultural factors are increasingly being considered when determining the demand for new goods and services (Stehr & Adolf, 2010). During the new product development process, team members may become accustomed to a foreign culture (Darawong & Igel, 2012). For example, different consumer tastes are one of the most important factors to deal with, as was evident when Kraft and its management encountered problems when Oreo entered the Chinese market (Reddy & Sproule, 2012). Acculturation encourages gradual growth in both individuals and organizations.

New felt needs are created as the result of the process of acculturation. Indeed, customers' constantly changing needs are recognized as a major cause of market turbulence and a factor in the uncertainty around product success (Chong & Chen, 2010). The decisions that consumers make about products are influenced by social, personal, and psychological variables (Lautiainen, 2015).

According to the law of equilibrium, when customers acculturate to a degree that falls within a reasonable range, they are better equipped to accept new products. However, when growth occurs, new innate needs tend to surface in consumers. To meet these newly identified needs, innovation is needed. Numerous factors impact the attainment of this situation. Subsequent research on an acculturation factor connected to a particular product innovation factor may provide more important insights. Beyond the obvious physical aspects of existence, humans have adapted to survive. When offered better utility, humans are flexible in satisfying their needs as long as the host culture does not break its norms. The acculturation process involves both internal and external environments. External variables that affect an individual's behavior towards adaptation include those that are economic, political, technological, ecological, demographic, and sociocultural. An individual's cognitive domain is continuously and adaptably altered by these acculturation processes in order to produce desired behaviors (Dow, 2011).

Limitation and Delimitation

This research was limited to the acculturation and openness of Gen Z consumers in a single location to new cultural products and services. The study referenced new cultural products/services as a consequence of acculturating individuals who encountered culturally related products/services, such as cultural clothes and foods. Their affinity to work in foreign nations, and genuine interest in learning new languages to identify and blend with foreign culture(s) were documented. The study also established the determinants of positive and negative acculturation in a multicultural setting. As there were only 12 responders, the sample size is undoubtedly too small to allow the findings to be generalized.

Additional research might be conducted to explore the relationship between acculturation, creativity, and innovation.

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1.2. Manuscripts should be written in correct and standard academic English.
1.3. Manuscripts should be single-spaced.
1.4. Manuscripts should use Calibri font size 11.
1.5. Manuscripts should contain minimal formatting (bold and italics commands are acceptable).
1.6. Manuscripts should not contain editorial controls of any kind.
1.7. Manuscripts should also contain a 150-200 word abstract of the article. Provide at least three keywords, but do not exceed seven.

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2.2. *HBDS* follows the APA guidelines for endnotes (preferred), in-text citations and references.
2.3. Referencing Samples: Please refer to http://www.apastyle.org/ for questions about referencing, and serialization in the APA format.

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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 Description of procedure	Past Present perfect	Participants completed a survey 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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