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# Ruffling and Un-Ruffling *Feathers*: Magical Realism as a Tool of Postcolonial Dissent and Transcendence

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## Abstract

This paper claims that the Egyptian movie, *Feathers* (El Zohairy 2021) uses the genre of magical realism as a tool of postcolonial dissent and transcendence: by providing insight into social injustice, by transcending norms and realities, and by deflecting censorship. The paper argues that *Feathers* has used magical realism to both provoke (ruffle) and deflect (un-ruffle) political outrage. This movie depicts the liberating journey of a rural housewife whose bullying husband has been magically turned into a chicken, relentlessly echoing the traditional Egyptian proverb that ‘one woman is worth a hundred men’ (‘El sett B 100 ragel’). The film received international critical acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival. But nationalistic critics and directors have used post-colonial discourse to accuse its director of Othering and belittling Egypt. This paper in contrast uses multimodal discourse analysis to explore the ways in which *Feathers* uses magical realism to highlight and personalize and transcend the social injustice in Egypt, and in the Third World. On the other hand, *Feathers* deflects political outrage by using magical realism to locate its characters and plot in the past, by depicting local businesses rather than transnational investments and megaprojects, and by exploring the magic of personal transformation. By using magical realism as a tool of postcolonial dissent and transcendence, the director has portrayed important truths behind Egyptian norms and realities, and at the same time miraculously protected both the movie and himself.

**Keywords:** *Feathers*, Postcolonial Dissent, Transcendence, Magical Realism

## 1. Introduction

Film director Omar El Zohairy’s black comedy, *Feathers* achieved the Grand Prize at Critics' Week in Cannes – the first Egyptian film that has ever succeeded in this part of the Cannes film festival (The National 2021).

This avant-garde movie uses magical realism to tell the story of a housewife who has to take care of herself and her young family because her husband, the traditional, stereotypical, authoritarian, patriarchal, Middle East father figure, has been turned into a chicken by the magicians that have been invited to their four-year-old son's birthday

party. The magicians can't turn him back again. She discovers that her husband is behind on their rent so she has to find a job. The film is about her struggle for survival and dignity.

The director's assessment of his movie places it directly in the genre of magical realism as he informs us that the film is 'about a woman who believes her husband is a chicken' (ibid). He also tells us that the central character should evoke our sympathy, because 'she has the survivor problem,' and that 'to survive, she has to face her fears' (ibid). True to the magical realism genre, he tells us that 'the chicken was a bridge to jump into her character and see the world through her eyes' (ibid).

The director attributed the success of the film to his artistic vision and commitment, saying, 'It is so bold to give the film the prize. It proves that if you believe in your artistic vision and don't compromise, it can take you to good places' (ibid).

*Feathers* hit the screens in Paris in mid-July, 2021, winning the Critics' Week Grand Prize (during La Semaine de la Critique) and collecting the International Federation of Film Critics Award for best first feature film at the 74th Cannes Film Festival. In an official ceremony at the Egyptian National Centre of Cinema, the Egyptian Minister of Culture in Egypt lauded this historic achievement 'as it is also the first Egyptian participation in the competition,' (El Ahram 2021). In August 2021, it also won best film, best director, and best screenplay award at Cairo's Arab Cinema Centre. Here, 167 film critics representing 68 different countries recognised the value of this piece of magical realism.

However, the international and national success and acclaim of *Feathers* has been shadowed by political repercussions. In August 2021, at the El Gouna Film Festival, in a prominent and prestigious luxury resort on the Red Sea, *Feathers* indeed ruffled feathers. Renowned representatives of the Egyptian film industry seized this opportunity to 'perform' and promote their nationalistic beliefs and interests, by declaring that *Feathers* portrayed Egypt in a negative light, and storming out (El Ahram 2021). One actor and household name, Sherif Mounir charged the filmmaker with defaming Egypt 'by deliberately focusing on poverty and by ignoring the government's achievements in eradicating shanty towns' (ibid).

The official national newspaper, El Ahram on the other hand rallied to the defense of the film. It denounced this 'aggressive social media debate about patriotism and freedom of speech' as 'sycophantic and hypocritical hate speech,' and announced that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and the Decent Life Initiative, dedicated to the modernization of rural communities supported the film and the director (ibid).

This paper argues that magical realism played an important role in the success and survival of this film, its main role being to critique political injustice, inequality, and patriarchy, to highlight the drab spectacle of poverty, repression, and marginalization in Egypt and in the Third World.

It also claims that *Feathers* deflects political outrage by using magical realism, 1) to locate its characters and plot in the past, 2) to depict grubby local businesses rather than gleaming transnational investments and megaprojects, and 3) to explore the magic of personal transformation. By using magical realism, the director has portrayed important truths behind Egyptian realities and protected both the movie and himself.

In short, this paper claims that the Egyptian movie, *Feathers* (El Zohairy 2021) uses the genre of magical realism as a tool of postcolonial dissent and transcendence: by providing political, social and economic insight into a repressive regime, by transcending national norms and realities, and by muting censorship.

This paper will therefore explore the theoretical and practical use of magical realism in general and in this film in particular in order to provide insight into the use and usefulness of magical realism as a tool of postcolonial dissent, as a method of critiquing and transcending political, social and economic realities, and as a method of avoiding censorship.

## 2. General insight into magical realism

Flores (1995, p. 112) argues that magical realism is ‘the amalgamation of realism and fantasy’. He defines magical realism as the ‘transformation of the common and everyday into the awesome and the unreal’ where ‘time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality’ (pp. 114-15). Roh (1995) discusses the role of magical realism, claiming that its role is to enlighten us: to return us to reality ‘by uncovering its hidden mystery’ (p. 16). He suggests that the goal of magical realism is to reveal the mystery that ‘hides and palpitates behind the represented world’ (ibid).

Leal (1995) concurs. He argues that magical realism is based on confronting reality, and trying to untangle it (p. 121). He suggests that the central purpose of magical realism is ‘not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds’ but rather ‘the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances’ that cannot in the end be reduced to logic (pp. 122-123).

Alshehri (2022) makes an important distinction between realism and magical realism. She argues that realism is connected to one-sided single empirical realities and truths. But magical realism in contrast promotes the peaceful coexistence of the natural and the supernatural. She suggests that magical realism is double-edged, reflecting ‘the presence of fantastical elements that depart from a recognisable, real physical world. Thus, magical realism is characterised,

‘by two conflicting, but autonomously coherent, perspectives, one based on an enlightened and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality’ (Chanady 1985, pp. 21-22).

Faris (1995) provides more detailed insight into the main elements in magical realism. Firstly, she explores the ‘irreducible element of magic’ in magical realism that disrupts the logic of cause and effect (p. 167). The reader is therefore caught between different readings, between interpreting those magical transformations as hallucinations, miracles or allegories (pp. 171-72). On the one hand there is a strong sense of the real, and in some cases of historical realities such as genocides (pp. 169-70). But there is also a closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds’ such as the one between the living and the dead (p. 172) or between fact and fiction (p. 173). Here magical realism questions objective reality. But last and perhaps most important of all is the transformation of characters that compels the reader to ‘question received ideas about time, space and identity’ (ibid).

In conclusion, magical realism often reflects ‘ancient systems of belief and local lore’ designed to challenge the claims and illusions of the modern world (p. 182).

## 3. Magical realism as a tool of postcolonial dissent and transcendence

Bowers (2004) argues that magical realism tends to be postcolonial, because ‘much of it is set in a postcolonial context and written from a postcolonial perspective that challenges our authoritative colonialist attitude’ (p. 90). She understands postcolonialism to be ‘the political and social attitude that opposes colonial power’ and argues that postcolonialism is not just about one nation ruling over another but also about ‘changing the colonised people’s thinking and belief’ and imposing ‘a homogeneous, authoritative, historical and cultural identity on the colonised nation’ (p. 91). Based on this postcolonial context, she argues that magical realism ‘provides a means to recover not only the past but also the creative and spiritual aspects of the colonised people’ (p. 91).

This paper is based on two important streams of postcolonial thought and political communication: Orientalism (Said 1979), hybridity, and the interstice (Bhabha 1990; 1994). In the classic postcolonial text, *Orientalism* (1979), Edward Said argues that the colonial powers portrayed the East as either inferior or in need of corrective study. Orientalism creates ‘an absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior’ (p. 300). Orientalism is colonial or colonised knowledge,

'Knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing' (p. 41).

This colonial portrayal of the Orient as the Inferior Other reinforced colonisation 'because it reinforced, and was reinforced by, the certain knowledge that Europe or the West literally commanded the vastly greater part of the earth's surface' (ibid). Orientalism is therefore based on the distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (p. 142), and between Us (Westerners) and Them (Orientals) (p. 45), thereby limiting 'the human encounter between different cultures, traditions and societies' (p. 46). Parker and Starkey (1995) suggest that the colonial and neo-colonial media 'construct' the East, noting that the European colonists considered vast regions of the world merely as blank spaces, lands that lie beyond the colonial narrative, that they are waiting to map, mine, and write into existence. Said concludes that Orientalism reflects colonial intent to 'control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world' (Said 1978: 12).

Homi Bhabha (2004) on the other hand challenges the claim that the Orient is the passive object of hegemonic colonial control, arguing instead that the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is reciprocal. Bhabha is optimistic about postcolonial communication and about magical realism as a tool of critique and transcendence. Accordingly, Bhabha portrays magical realism as 'the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world' (1990, p. 7).

Bhabha argues that the individual who has been colonised identifies both with the coloniser and with the colonised. Colonised cultures are based on hybridity: hybridity opens up the interstice, a liminal, in-between space that 'gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (Bhabha 1994, p. 37). In this third space, meanings and identities are negotiated, and transcend hierarchies (Bhabha 1994, p. 4). Magical realism is therefore committed to speaking out against social injustice, marginalization and oppression, creating counter-discourses that challenge colonial hegemonies (Hart & Ouyang 2005).

Zamora and Faris (1995) agree that 'magical realism is a mode suited to exploring—and transgressing—boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic' (p. 5). They claim that magical realism is subversive: 'their in-betweenness, their all-at-oneness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures' (p. 6). Alshehri (2022, p. 4) makes a similar claim, arguing that magical realism is marginal to the dominant values of communities, and that the goal of magical realism is to subvert mainstream ideologies. She suggests that magic realism has been used in the Middle East to represent the perspectives of marginal communities, and argues that magical realism has been used 'to destabilise the coloniser/colonised relationship' and to provide a voice to the marginalized, because,

'Magical realism is art in itself and art that acts to question how human experience is shaped, restricted, and unjust. Magical realism functions therefore as an ideological discourse. It undermines the Western way of thinking which is based on science and logic [by inserting] mythical and supernatural elements' (p. 33).

Magical realism therefore challenges 'the predominant and hegemonic Western mode of realism, which is, at least in general, based on empirical knowledge and grounds its invented worlds on objectively verifiable physical environments and actions' and laws of causes and effect (ibid). Magical realism is based on 'the juxtaposition of objective and subjective realities in ways that call the objective into question, allowing the authors to challenge official readings of social, political, and historical events' (Rodgers 2004, p. 284). Lang (2020) concurs, arguing that 'one of the most distinctive thematic concerns of magical realism is the exploration of the margins ... marginal subjectivities, classes, spaces, and ways of thinking [that challenge] dominant centres of power in late-capitalist culture' (p. 177). Summing up, Warnes (2005) argues that writers choose magical realism as a narrative technique because of an 'urge to reclaim what has been stolen or lost, to critique the assumptions and conventions of the metropolis, to recover and affirm identities, and to assert autonomy in the face of hegemony' (p. 18).

The Colombian magical realist author, Gabriel Garcia Marquez takes up this thread during his Nobel Prize lecture on 8 December, 1982. Here he questions the one-sided inflexible nature of colonial realism, and the insatiable

creativity of the colonised, the sorrow and beauty 'that lives in us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths'. He suggests that this is 'the crux of our solitude' and that magical realism is 'a means to render our lives believable'.

#### 4. Important examples of magical realism

This part of the paper compares and contrasts two important examples of magical realism, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* (1995), in order to understand the political and social dimensions of this genre in more depth and detail.

Magical realism has a broad geographical, intercontinental, cultural scope. For instance, Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) reveals unknown aspects of the land and people of Latin America. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) reflects on India's independence from British colonialism. Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982) addresses gender and class inequality. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) responds to the slavery of Black people in America. Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* discusses political injustice in Egypt.

Both these masterpieces of magical realism challenge social injustice and the rigid boundaries of the dominant Western realism by incorporating magic. This magic often has its source in indigenous cultures and local belief systems.

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) chronicles one hundred years in the history of an imaginary town in Colombia called Macondo, documenting the harrowing effects of colonization and modernization. *Arabian Nights and Days* (1995) similarly documents the harrowing effects of tyranny and corruption in an imaginary alley in Egypt.

Both of these masterpieces of magical realism are allegories of political and social injustice. *Solitude* (1967) discusses the history of repression and uprising in Colombia from the Spanish Conquest to the Thousand Days' War between Liberals and Conservatives in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the labour struggles and the massacre of protesters in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. *Arabian Nights* (1995) discusses the history of Egypt during the 1970s, the injustice and inequalities that resulted from the Open Door (Infitah) policies, Islamic fundamentalism, corruption and unemployment. Harsh realities include the Bread Riots (1972), the Egypt-Israel conflict and peace agreement (1979), and the arrest of 1,500 intellectuals (1981).

Both of these novels use magical realism as a postcolonial tool of dissent and transcendence. In one chapter of Gabriel García Márquez's *Solitude*, the legendary hero, José Arcadio Segundo miraculously survives a massacre of three thousand four hundred and eight demonstrators who strike against the United Fruit Company. Then magic descends on Macondo in the form of insomnia so no-one can remember the horrors that the military regime had inflicted on them.

Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights*, in contrast is set in Shahriyar's sultanate after one thousand and one nights, after he has supposedly pardoned Shahrazad and seen the errors of his ways. Supernatural forces intervene, producing 'a series of murders, arrests, interrogations, confessions, and executions' (Abdel Nasser 2015). The chief of police Gamasa al-Bulti is transformed into Abdullah of the Land. One of the demons, Aneel al-Galees causes a madness 'engulfed the quarter like a deluge' (p. 134). This demon seduces the rulers of the alley and threatens to expose their utter shamelessness.

In this piece of magical realism, reality, dreams and nightmares are intertwined: in Chapter 4, Sanaan al-Gamali's suffering begins in a dream where he hears a voice 'which provokes him to commit a murder which costs him his life' (Abu Jweid 2020). She is the voice of the oppressed, so she tells him 'What troublesome creatures you are! You don't stop yearning to enslave us in order to achieve your vile objectives. Have you not satisfied your greed by enslaving the weak among you?' (*Arabian Nights* 1995, p. 12).



## 5. Method

This paper uses multimodal discourse analysis to explore the use of magical realism in the film, *Feathers* (El Zohairy 2021), claiming that this film uses magical realism to critique and personalize and transcend the social injustice in Egypt, and in the Third World.

This article uses multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the interaction between language, audio and video in this film. This type of discourse analysis provides useful insight into the power and significance and persuasiveness of multimodal productions (Kress 2011). Multimodal discourse analysis is particularly insightful because it recognises the crucial role of polysemy (Phillips and Ghalwash 2019), because the interweaving of semiotic resources – the language (Halliday 1978), the audio (Pauletto 2012), the video (Block 2007) – all contribute to the power and meaning of the text. This interpretation of the postcolonial, transformational significance of *Feathers* (2021) is therefore based on a nuanced interpretation of interwoven multimodal elements such as language, audio (silence, speech, music, sound effects), and video (space, line, shape, tone, colour, movement, and rhythm).

## 6. *Feathers* (El Zohairy 2021)

The purpose of this part of the paper is to explore the use of magical realism in *Feathers*: providing insight into social injustice, into transcending norms and realities, and into deflecting censorship.

The main character in this movie is a wife and mother representing the traditional low-income Egyptian family unit and proletariat. In the beginning of the film, she is living a stereotypical traditional life with her husband and three children. Her subservient lifestyle is depicted according to the dictates of realism, the patriarchal language of the husband and the silence of the wife are reflected in the public and domestic roles of the husband and father (humiliated in the factory, lording it over his family) and the wife and mother (humiliated at home, doomed to the endless drudge of domestic service and child raising).

Then magical realism kicks in. Her husband is magically transformed into a chicken, and her journey of personal transformation begins.

### 6.1. *Insight into political, social and economic injustice*

#### 6.1.1. Patriarchy

The movie explores the repressed status of women in traditional Egyptian society, revealing the hardships that women must go through alone as single mothers or as the main bread winners as their husbands become unproductive and marginalised, and returning again and again to the central proverbial theme of ‘El sett B 100 ragel’: ‘one woman is worth a hundred men’. The movie shows the submission of women in the home and in the outside world. Traditional patriarchal relations are replicated in the factory too. Her survival is premised on betraying her husband.

In the beginning, the protagonist presents herself as dependent on her husband. Her body language, lowered gaze, silences, and lowered voice reflect and perpetuate her submissiveness. The husband represents himself as the master of the house and breadwinner through the orders and instructions he issues to his wife. This is also reflected in video and audio: his overpowering body language, his peremptory use of language and voice, tone and volume. In two scenes, the wife is depicted, head lowered in deference, as she gives her husband his shoes and coat to wear and he outlines her domestic duties that include the food she must prepare and he unpeels the notes. She doesn’t eat with him. Traditional domestic routines are updated in the modern world. She does her domestic chores as the father and children sit in front of the Television.

The husband is her only connection to the outside world; he is the one that bring gifts for the children. He issues peremptory orders such as, ‘Don’t want any mess tomorrow,’ to which the housewife replies, without a trace of

irony, 'Okay, Pasha.' He brings myths of the outside world into the house, telling her that on one occasion, on being invited as part of a delegation, 'Everyone got a small genetically modified cow on a plate'.

The house itself echoes the miserable condition of the Egyptian proletariat. Everything that should be white has been greyed by the factory smoke. The walls and tiles are stained; the cupboards are scratched; the yellow sponge is protruding from the armchair; there are shots of the discoloured inside of a toilet bowl.

This drab realism continues even after the magic of the chicken has been performed. She is helpless and marginalised and propelled into the next cycle of patriarchal abuse at the hands of the factory boss. Here the intersectional critique of patriarchy and capitalism kicks in. Usurping the role of the husband and father magically turned into poultry, he bribes the mother with perfume and the children with gifts. The corruption at the base of capitalism is laid bare. He uses his ownership of the means of production and the ideological state apparatus (traditional music) to lay claim to her body, playing Fazia Ahmed's *On the Face of the Moon* to seduce her,

'On the Face of the Moon and in the sound of the rain,  
On the trees' leaves I will write to you, my love.  
On the streets and in the return of the dawn  
I will write the two initials of your name and my name  
I will draw a heart with an arrow.'

#### 6.1.2. Industrial capitalism and the police state

The opening scene savagely portrays the scars of industrial capitalism in the Third World: beginning the film in darkness, the sound of a match struggling to ignite, the roar of flames and agony, the burning man silhouetted against the ghostly scaffolding of the factory. Once her husband has been transformed into a chicken, her very existence is threatened. The Ministry of Housing sends her the first message from the repressive state apparatus, notifying her that the rent payment is overdue, and that she will soon be homeless. Then, the Ministry evokes 'Penalty no. 4'. Nor can the neighbours help, because their position is also precarious. Later, the Ministry intervenes, confiscating her possessions, and leaving her destitute.

The implications of Third World capitalism pervade this film where everything is regularly reduced to bureaucratic procedures and capital, 'dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt' (Marx 1867, p. 834). Every little piece of support that the housewife and mother receives has to be paid for, and not just once. Some even refuse, because of the rules. For example, the magician at the circus is not allowed to help her out. This is ironic considering their precarious existence among the rubble and smoke of the factory.

Nor is money the solution to their grave existential problems, in fact the opposite. Professional advice is a profitmaking scam. One magician advises her to 'Stop eating birds and eggs until things get better!' Treating the chicken as she should be treated, giving her vitamins and putting her in an incubator 12 times a day, does not address the problem head on. The doctor promises that the husband will recover, even though he is clearly beyond the pale. But still she must pay the piper (capitalism) that plays the professional tune. The lewd boss peels off old notes in his periodic lame attempts to seduce her; it takes a bribe of chicken and rice to get him beaten up.

The police state, the ultimate repressive state apparatus is also indifferent to (perhaps complicit in) the plight of the husband and the family. The police abruptly dismiss the housewife as soon as she has reported her husband's disappearance. The final appearance of the police evokes bitter memories. The husband has been discovered among a group of homeless men without ID, he supposedly 'hasn't spoken or moved since he was arrested,' and his blackened stilled body evokes memories of political disappearances.

Her financial position renders her powerless, powerless even to mitigate the negative power of the magic. The children's screaming alert the mother to a chicken that has lost consciousness and has vomited. The magician admits his own limitations and sends her to a vet, that she can't afford. Her fleeting job as a domestic servant exposes the injustice in the class system. The woman of the house has untold riches and food, so the protagonist

steals some treats, and is caught by a dog that is treated better than her. He gets to eat the scraps of meat that she needed to feed her children. She is excluded from the labour market and her child has to sell his labour instead. Finally, seeing a hungry homeless man at the police station, she can finally feed him-- thereby, escaped the chains of poverty, like 'one woman out of a hundred men' (Egyptian proverb).

### *6.2. Transcending norms and realities*

The magical transformation of the husband into a chicken is comically downplayed. The magician is insulted, accused of being possessed, and of being swindler, because he managed to turn the husband into a chicken but not to turn him back. He resorts to the usual subterfuges that repairmen use to calm their customers down, promising to fix it in half an hour, and later in ten minutes. He strokes the chicken's head, and conjures the husband's watch out of the chicken's nether regions, but to all intents and purposes it looks like he doesn't know what he is doing.

But the magic of the chicken precipitates a magical transformation in the character of the wife and mother.

In the beginning she is sympathetic towards her chicken husband, and dedicates time to his rescue. But over time she is uncomfortable with sleeping with the chicken in the same room, and she becomes empowered. Her husband returns home, helpless, motionless, and speechless, but she now looks down on him. She loses her fear of the capitalist boss, and becomes disgusted. In her thirst for freedom, she smothers her husband and slaughters the chicken that he has become.

Her bloody hands sear that Egyptian proverb into the minds of the audience, because she is clearly worth a hundred men at least. Like this, she fulfils the ideals of magical realism, by revealing the mystery that 'hides and palpitates behind the represented world' (Roh 1995).

Her own magical transformation and liberation is echoed in the final song,

'Hey Morning, cheer up  
Hey Roses, open up  
Hey Birds, sing in the silky breeze.  
The sunrise is here, and the night has gone  
This is our morning  
Let's listen to the tune of the universe'

### *6.3. Deflecting censorship*

Finally, this paper argues that magical realism has been used to avoid censorship. Firstly, because this is the core of its purpose, to critique repressive regimes, to challenge governmental monopolies on writing and re-writing history, to demonstrate 'the agonies of the persecuted,' and 'to emerge from those parts of the world where dictatorships prevail and as a result freedom of expression is under suppression' because, 'It is not possible for a writer to criticize a dictator explicitly and get away with it' (Inanç 2020, p. 3).

One of the techniques that this film has used to deflect censorship is to set it in the past, because 'Censorship of Artistic Works continues to curb films that criticise current regimes' (Ghazal 2018, p. 2) or challenge the ideologies of current leaders (p. 10). Methods include the grubby paper notes that are out of circulation, the box where the grubby notes are stashed, the retro television set, the old cassette player, the assorted bunch of old photos of all sizes that are used to identify (or not) the magician: this has all been digitalised during the current regime.

This technique in the end saved both the film and the director from the onslaught of disingenuous charges levelled by actors such as Sherif Moneer who stormed out of the official screening, declaring, 'I walked out because I saw exaggerated pictures that distorted our image – a family living in torment, and filth' because 'this made me feel very upset!' (The New Arab 2021) and MPs such as Mahmud Badr that used Twitter to denounce the 'making of a movie depicting your country as if there was no development' (The Arab Weekly 2021).

This all backfired because the director of *Feathers* blithely un-ruffled feathers, by asserting that there has been development in Egypt (side-stepping a critique of the status quo), and by suggesting that the film addressed the past rather than the glorious present or future of transnationalised Egypt (ibid).

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has claimed that magical realism is a powerful tool of postcolonial dissent and transcendence. The Egyptian movie, *Feathers* (El Zohairy 2021) provides important insights into the use of magical realism: critiquing social injustice, transcending repressive norms and realities, and protecting itself against censorship.

The paper has explored both the general nature and use of magical realism, and the political role of magical realism in postcolonial struggles. It concludes that there are two main streams in magical realism, one based on enlightened realism and the other on acceptance of the supernatural (Chanady 1985, pp. 21-22), and that the goal of magical realism is to inject magic in order to explore the mysterious relationship between people and the worlds that they inhabit (Leal 1995, pp. 122-123). Realism is often used to explore harsh realities such as genocides, and magic is often used to shatter the logic of cause and effect (Faris 1995).

This paper also insists that magical realism has a postcolonial role, and has been used to resuscitate ‘the creative and spiritual aspects of the colonised people’ (Bowers 2004, p. 91). The paper subscribes to the notion that hybrid postcolonial identities can transcend the ‘absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior’ (Said 1978, p. 300), and that the interstice ‘gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 37). Magical realism is therefore committed to speaking out against social injustice, and challenging and transcending colonial hegemonies (Hart & Ouyang 2005; Alshehri 2022).

This paper has used multimodal discourse analysis to provide insight into postcolonial aspects of the film, *Feathers*, arguing that this film has used magic realism to critique and transcend political and social barriers, norms and realities.

On the level of realism, this movie shows the stereotypical submission of Eastern women in the home and outside, where her survival is premised on betraying her husband. His dominance and her dependence are represented in intertwined multimodal discourses of language, audio and video. He is the Pasha, and her lowered gaze and voice and silence reflect and perpetuate her inferior position. Her lowered gaze, silences, and lowered voice reflect and perpetuate her submissiveness. The miserable state of the house echoes the miserable state of the Egyptian proletariat. His old boss usurps his patriarchal role, using his position to seduce her, and laying bare the corruption at the base of capitalism. He bribes the mother with perfume, chocolate, and romantic music. How could she resist?

‘On the Face of the Moon and in the sound of the rain,  
On the trees’ leaves I will write to you, my love.  
On the streets and in the return of the dawn.’

The film is a savage critique of industrial capitalism and the police state, beginning with the suicide in the opening scene, the silence, the alienation, the sole burning man silhouetted against the scaffolding. Capitalism reduces the life of the protagonist to making payments. The survival and dignity of her and her family is premised on this. She has to pay the Ministry of Housing to keep her home. She has to pay the magician, the vet and the doctor to provide dubious professional advice. The magician recommends that she stops eating birds and eggs. The vet advises her to put the chicken in an incubator. The doctor promises her that her husband will recover even though he is a hopeless case. The lewd boss peels off old notes in his attempts to seduce her. Her job as a domestic servant exposes the injustice in a class system that places a pedigree dog above her. The police state is also indifferent to, or complicit in their plight. The charred lifeless body of the husband materialises in their station, evoking bitter memories of police brutality.

On the level of magic, there is a magical transformation in her character as she shoulders her proverbial role as the woman that is worth a hundred men. In the beginning she is sympathetic towards her chicken husband, but as time progresses and capitalism closes in, she becomes empowered. She loses her fear of the capitalist boss, smothers her husband, and slaughters the chicken that used to be him, thereby revealing the mystery that 'hides and palpitates' (Roh 1995) behind the reality. The mystery behind the reality in Egypt is that she, the Egyptian woman, is willing to bloody her hands in the struggle for survival. In the words of the song, there is no life or hope in Egypt without her,

'Hey Morning, cheer up  
Hey Roses, open up ...  
This is our morning  
Let's listen to the rhythm of the universe'

Finally, magical realism has allowed this director to deflect censorship, by embedding this revolutionary message in this cautionary tale of a factory hand turned into poultry.

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# Leadership, Inclusiveness, and Ethical Compliance: Lessons from Eaton Corporation's Best Practices and Commitment to Sustainable Development Goals

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## Abstract

This paper explores the best practices of Eaton Corporation, a global leader in power management, focusing on leadership, inclusiveness, compliance, ethical business practices, and its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through a qualitative analysis of case studies, corporate reports, and academic literature, the paper examines how Eaton's strategic decisions and corporate governance align with established theories such as Transformational Leadership, Stakeholder Theory, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The study reveals that Eaton's success is deeply rooted in its ethical leadership, robust compliance framework, and commitment to diversity and sustainability. These practices not only enhance the company's reputation but also provide valuable lessons for other organisations seeking to achieve long-term success in a complex global market. The methodology includes a thematic and comparative analysis of secondary data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of Eaton's corporate strategies. While the findings are specific to Eaton Corporation, the insights gained can serve as a model for other businesses aiming to integrate ethical and sustainable practices into their operations.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Ethical Business Practices, Inclusiveness, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Transformational Leadership

## 1. Introduction

Based in Bloomfield, NJ, Eaton Corporation is a diversified power management company and global leader. Over the ensuing decades, the business would transform from a broad-based industrial conglomerate to what it is today – centred around power management and intelligent energy solutions. In this article, we showcase Eaton and some



of the lessons that can be learned from its leadership practices, inclusiveness, compliance & ethics in business, and dedication to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the frame of several well-established theories and the literature around them, we examine how Eaton's practices may provide important lessons for other organizations hoping to have similar successes in these areas.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Leadership Theories

Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985): Eaton's leadership can be underpinned by Transformational Leadership Theory. This theory relates to how leaders empower and motivate their team members to go beyond expectations creating an innovative performance culture that creates an environment characterized by high ethical standards. Eaton's strategic evolution, as represented in the Harvard Business School case study (Esty, Mayfield & Fisher 2021) highlights how its leaders drove change and managed a complex portfolio transformation.

### 2.2 Inclusivity and diversity

This fits with Eaton's focus on inclusiveness, consistent with the **Social Identity Theory** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the **Business Case for Diversity** view pioneered by Cox & Blake (1991). The company has documented its sustainability efforts to build a more diverse and inclusive workplace, laying out goals for greater female representation in management ranks. This is underpinned by evidence that teams such as these are more innovative and commercially successful (McKinsey & Company, 2015).

### 2.3 Ethical Business practices

A review of the foundational underpinnings of their ethical practices with a lens on Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), establishes that Eaton integrates stakeholder perspectives into its corporate-level decision-making. This theory states that all stakeholders need to be considered by a business when making decisions. Eaton gaining its place in the World's Most Ethical Companies (Ethisphere, 2024) gives a good example for ethical business, and engages to act on Corporate Social Responsibility principles (Carroll, 1991).

### 2.4 Compliance and Corporate Governance

**The Agency Theory** (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) perspective looking at Eaton's framework: is concerned with safeguarding the interests of shareholders and ensuring that managers' behaviour is motivated towards generating wealth as efficiently. The Harvard Business School case study on Eaton's portfolio transformation sheds light on how the company was able to successfully navigate complex regulatory terrains while maintaining a staying deeply committed to ethical governance (Esty et al., 2021)

### 2.5 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The link of Eaton with the SDGs, specifically to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) as well as Goal 13 on Climate Action, is greatly anchored in **Sustainable Development Theory** (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Sustainability reports released by the company illustrate a path to carbon emission reduction, energy efficiency promotion and climate neutrality ambitions for 2030 once again underlining its leadership in corporate sustainability (Eaton, 2024).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

A qualitative and descriptive approach was adopted in this paper, with the aim of exploring and synthesising existing literature, case studies, and corporate reports; and providing a comprehensive analysis of Eaton Corporation's practices in leadership, inclusiveness, compliance, ethical business, and sustainability. The adoption

of a qualitative approach is underscored by the need for an in-depth understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of the various identified practices within the context of a global corporation.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The data for this paper was collected from multiple sources:

- **Case Studies:** Key information was taken from the Harvard Business School case study, *Eaton Corporation: Portfolio Transformation and The Cost of Capital* (Esty, Mayfield, & Fisher 2021). This case study provided an extensive insight into Eaton's strategy, leadership and governance.
- **Corporate Publications:** Eaton Corporation's official website was another crucial source, especially with regard to the sustainability reports and other documents that detail the company's focus and achievements in aligning itself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Eaton, 2024). These documents were crucial in shedding light on Eaton's approach to sustainability and corporate responsibility.
- **Academic Journals and Books:** Academic books and journal articles were explored for relevant theories such as Transformational Leadership, Stakeholder Theory, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (e.g., Bass, 1985; Freeman, 1984; Carroll, 1991), as they helped to provide the theoretical foundation for analysing the practices of Eaton Corporation.
- **Industry Reports:** Reports from financial analysis platforms such as Yahoo Finance and Zacks Investment Research were also accessed with the aim of understanding how Eaton's business strategies and ethical practices have impacted its fortunes.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis involved synthesising information from the collected sources that established practices of Eaton Corporation, alongside existing business and leadership theories. The data was then analysed thematically, in an attempt to identify patterns and themes across the various areas of interest — leadership inclusiveness & compliance as well as business ethics sustainability.

- **Thematic Analysis:** The study used thematic analysis in order to identify themes that point to leadership, inclusiveness, compliance, as well sustainability. For example, the data from the case study on Eaton portfolio transformation was analysed in relation to Transformational Leadership Theory and Agency Theory.
- **Comparative Analysis:** The actual practices of Eaton Corporation were compared to certain theoretical frameworks in order to evaluate how closely these reflected one another and how practically useful each framework was within a corporate environment. This comparability was needed in order to get an understanding of how the strategies employed by Eaton have made a difference in their overall success and profile.

### 3.4 Validation and Reliability

Credible and authoritative sources were used to ensure the reliability of this study. Triangulation of the data was performed through multiple sources, which included peer-reviewed journals, reputable case studies and official corporate reports. The study was validated further due to findings that were consistent with the already present theories as well as industrial standards.

### 3.5 Limitations

The research herein being based on secondary data may have inherent limitations as case studies and reports tend to carry some level of bias. Further, since the paper discusses one specific organization — Eaton Corporation — its results may not be generalizable to all other companies. The analysis could be expanded in future research to include primary data from interviews or surveys with Eaton stakeholders.

## 4. Leadership at Eaton Corporation

### 4.1 Leadership Philosophy and Approach

Eaton's leadership philosophy is heavily influenced by **Transformational Leadership** and **Ethical Leadership** principles. The Harvard Business School case study (Esty et al., 2021) outlines the way in which Eaton's executives have steered the company with substantial strategic changes with respect to employee engagement, integrity and innovation. Aside from helping to strengthen Eaton's reputation as an industry expert, this approach has also increased employee engagement.

### 4.2 Transformational Leadership in Action

The company's strategic shift towards power management and intelligent power solutions exemplifies its transformational leadership. Eaton's dedication to sustainable technologies and a transformative leadership style are closely related in terms of the company's overall strategy. This leadership approach keeps executives focused longer on the need for change and long-term success, steering the company towards continuous improvement (Bass, 1985). The Harvard Business School case study (Esty et al., 2021) provides a detailed account of Eaton's portfolio transformation, which involved the acquisition of more than 70 companies and the divestment of 50.

### 4.3 Leadership Development and Succession Planning

Eaton's strategy is contingent upon the development of leadership, to ensure its sustained competitive advantage in a fast-evolving global market. Eaton's leadership programs focus on the cultivation of future leaders who can drive innovation and uphold the values of the company. Eaton's sustainability reports offer an insight into the company's initiatives towards the development of its leaders, with a strong emphasis on inclusiveness and a commitment to ethical leadership (Eaton, 2024).

## 5. Inclusiveness and Diversity

### 5.1 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Eaton also integrates diversity and inclusion as part of its corporate mission. When it comes to diversity, the company has rolled out extensive training programs, in addition to setting up Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for marginalized groups at their workplace. These are aligned with the Business Case for Diversity, which suggests that diverse teams lead to better business results (Cox & Blake, 1991) The documented commitment of Eaton to diversity is also manifest in their appearance on numerous industry reports as well as the extensive documentation provided about sustainability by the company (Eaton, 2024).

### 5.2 Impact of Inclusiveness on Business Outcomes

Proof of Eaton's success in inclusive policy can be found in how these strategies positively affect the company. Research such as the one conducted by McKinsey & Company (2015), shows that companies with inclusive workforces are statistically more innovative and better able to respond in an agile way to market forces. The proof of concept is in higher employee engagement, lower turnover rates, and better financial performance — all by-products that yield from the kind of diverse and inclusive environment Eaton has prioritized.

### 5.3 Case Studies or Examples

Initiatives designed to enhance gender and racial balance in management positions at Eaton are a shining model of the diversity standards it sets throughout its organization. Its sustainability reports display particular aims and accomplishments of how Eaton creates a culture of inclusivity for all its employees irrespective of their class (Eaton, 2024). This coincides with research demonstrating the positive correlation between diversity of leadership and benefits such as better decision-making skills, and enhanced organisational resilience (Cox & Blake 1991).

## 6. Compliance and Ethical Business Practices

### 6.1 Compliance Framework

Eaton's compliance framework is designed in such a way that ensures the company's adherence to all laws and regulations that apply within its operational landscape while maintaining the utmost ethical standards. The Harvard Business School case study (Esty et al., 2021) provides an insight into how compliance mechanisms at play at Eaton have been critical in managing its complex global operations. The Company Code of Conduct, which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, outlines the ethical expectations for all employees. It also provides guidance on how ethical dilemmas should be managed.

### 6.2 Ethical Business Practices

Eaton's dedication to ethical business practices is highlighted by its recognition as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies (Ethisphere, 2024). The company's ethical practices are guided by **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** principles, which emphasise that social and environmental factors must be considered in decision-making by organizations when forming strategic requirements for a business course (Carroll, 1991). Eaton's ethical business practices, from responsible sourcing to reduction in environmental impact and community development initiatives, are detailed in its sustainability reports (Eaton, 2024).

### 6.3 Impact of Compliance on Corporate Reputation

Eaton has established itself as a leader in corporate responsibility as a result of its robust ethical standards and compliance framework. The Harvard Business School case study (Esty et al., 2021) demonstrates how Eaton's commitment to rigorous ethical standards has fostered trust among stakeholders and improved its brand reputation. In an era in which ethical conduct is increasingly valued by consumers and investors, this reputation for integrity is a critical competitive advantage (Fombrun et al., 2003).

## 7. Commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### 7.1 Eaton's SDG Initiatives

A key part of Eaton's Corporate Strategy is its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The company currently has full operational alignment with a number of the core 17 Sustainable Development Goals, namely; SDG 7 on 'Affordable and Clean Energy' and SDG 13 on 'Climate Action.' Eaton also reports its efforts to reduce carbon emissions, invest in renewable energy technologies and improve sustainable practices along the value chain in sustainability reports (Eaton 2024). These efforts are further proof of Eaton's position as an industry leader in corporate sustainability and a contributor to global initiatives that address environmental challenges.

### 7.2 Sustainability Practices

Eaton has sustainability practices built in at every facet of its operations. The company's focus on innovation has brought about the development of energy-efficient products and solutions that help customers reach their sustainability targets. (Eaton, 2024). Eaton's commitment to sustainable practices is also reflected in the fact that it is going green by reducing the environmental impact of its operations and implementing programs for water conservation and waste reduction. These practices are consistent with the **Brundtland Report** (1987), which underscores the necessity of sustainable development that satisfactorily meets the needs of present time without compromising future generations.

### 7.3 Impact on Global and Local Communities

Eaton's sustainability efforts have positively impacted both their local and global communities. The company's investment in renewable energy projects is helping to cut greenhouse gases. Their push for energy efficiency is allowing even more consumers to shrink their environmental footprints (Eaton, 2024). Eaton also engages in community development initiatives, supporting the health and education of the people in the communities where

they operate. This too is part of its sustainable business model (Eaton, 2024) and demonstrates not only its commitment to social responsibility but also its role in fostering sustainable development at both the global and local levels.

## 8. Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

### 8.1 Key Lessons for Other Companies

Eaton's success in leadership, inclusiveness, compliance, and sustainability provides a valuable point of reference for other companies. Ethical leadership, a commitment to diversity, and a robust compliance framework are so critical to the growth and impact of a company that their mention cannot be overemphasised, as they are all keys to building a robust business capable of being at the cutting-edge of today's global market. The Harvard Business School case study on Eaton (Esty et al., 2021) provides a pathway for companies seeking to replicate the practices that have made Eaton successful — highlighting strategic vision, ethical behaviour and continuous improvement as essential elements.

### 8.2 Recommendations for Implementation

In order to effectively implement similar practices, companies should commence by establishing a transparent ethical framework, bolstered by a robust leadership that is dedicated to diversity. It is imperative to establish robust compliance mechanisms, invest in sustainability initiatives, and develop comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategies. In addition to contributing positively to global challenges, aligning operations with the SDGs can also provide a competitive advantage. Businesses can establish a sustainable model that guarantees long-term success and cultivates trust among stakeholders by prioritising these practices (Elkington, 1997; Porter & Kramer, 2006).

## 9. Conclusion

### 9.1 Summary of Key Points

Eaton Corporation's leadership, inclusiveness, sustainability, and compliance practices serve as a valuable lesson for other companies. The company has not only achieved success, but it has also established itself as a pioneer in corporate responsibility due to its dedication to ethical leadership, diversity, and the SDGs.

### 9.2 Future Implications

Against the backdrop of an ever-changing global business landscape, companies that give top priority to ethical practices, inclusiveness, and sustainability stand a better chance at navigating challenges and taking advantage of opportunities. The strategy adopted and practiced by Eaton serves as a blueprint for the establishment of a resilient and responsible business that is capable of thriving in the 21st century.

### 9.3 Final Thoughts

The leadership lessons learned from Eaton Corporation on ethics and business conduct, diversity and inclusion will serve companies globally with great benefits. Businesses that follow similar policies will be able to enhance their competitive standing while making the global economy more sustainable and equitable.

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# Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) to Reduce the Externalizing Behaviors of Adolescents Exposed to Interparental Conflict in India

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## Abstract

Adolescents frequently experience stress from interparental conflict, and their perception of it has a significant role in the problem behaviors that they exhibit. The study aimed to develop and examine the efficacy of the Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) with nine modules in reducing the externalizing behaviors of adolescents exposed to interparental conflict. Conklin's three-phase program development model planning, design and implementation, and assessment and program validation were used in this study. Adolescents (N=385, 11–18 years old) from Assam, India, comprised the participants. They were randomly split into the experimental group (n = 21) and the control group (n = 21), using a randomization process to ensure unbiased group assignment. Focus group discussions, interviews, and the Youth Self-Report Scale evaluated the severity of the issue. The post-test results between the experimental and control groups made a noteworthy distinction. This distinction was seen for example, in the experimental group: Externalizing Behavior:  $M=26.61$ ,  $SD=2.65$ , Social Problem:  $M=5.95$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ; Rule breaking,  $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=.864$ ; Aggressive behavior,  $M=6.57$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ; and in the control group, Externalizing behavior:  $M=25.23$ ,  $SD=2.64$ , Social Problem= $8.42$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ; Rule breaking:  $M=6.76$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ; Aggressive behavior:  $M=10.04$ ,  $SD=1.71$ . The Pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group (Pre-test: Experimental group:  $M=26.61$ ,  $SD=2.65$ , Social Problem:  $M=8.76$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ; Rule breaking:  $M=7.0$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ; Aggressive behavior:  $M=10.8$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ; Post-test: Externalizing behavior:  $M=15.90$ ,  $SD=2.27$ , Social Problem:  $M=5.95$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ; Rule breaking:  $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=.864$ ; Aggressive behavior= $6.57$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ) indicated that the nine modular program of SEP has proved and helped to reduce the externalizing behaviors in adolescents exposed to IPC.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Coping, Externalizing Behaviors, Interparental Conflict, Self-Efficacy, Self-Empowerment

## 1. Introduction

Family plays exceptional and lifelong importance in the all-round well-being of adolescents (Herke et al., 2020). The family environment is crucial during adolescence when physical, social, and intellectual capacities rapidly develop (Park & Lee, 2020). The relationship between parents and adolescents is among the most critical aspects of their lives (Branje, 2018). Adolescents' social and emotional development is significantly shaped by their



relationship with their parents, which profoundly impacts several developmental outcomes (Frosch et al., 2019). Consequently, the family environment can be a potent source of support for growing adolescents by offering intimate interactions and serving as an example of positive behavior (Krauss et al., 2020).

Family life involves arguments and conflicts, and one of the most common parent-driven factors that hurt adolescents' home environment is inter-parental conflict (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017). Interparental conflicts are important risk factors for adolescents' mental health, emotional and behavioral issues, and social conduct (Auersperg et al., 2019). Various processes are put out in the literature to explain this link, which can be classified into direct and indirect effects (O'Hara et al., 2019). It has been demonstrated that parent-child attachment and adolescents' sense of security within the family structure is directly impacted by inter-parental conflict (Brock & Kochanska, 2016).

Even though the importance of inter-parental conflict is highlighted in early and middle childhood, it still significantly influences adolescents' externalizing behavior (Masten & Palmer, 2019). Interparental conflict (IPC) is the term for physical or verbal hostility between parents resulting from dissension or other causes (Ye et al., 2023). A study reports that 20% to 40% of parents who cohabit manifest clinically significant levels of relationship distress. Each year, between 3.3 and 10 million adolescents experience inter-parental conflict (Liu, 2020). Some of the leading causes of IPC are predominantly financial strain, intimate relations, selfishness, adultery, miscommunication, domestic duties, expectations for children and stepchildren, and interference from in-laws (Marenco et al., 2019).

Further studies have revealed the critical effects of both positive and negative interparental conflict on adolescents. Constructive conflict, which takes the form of support and problem-solving, is consistently associated with lower psychological problems in adolescents (Zemp et al., 2014; Zhou & Buehler, 2019). Conversely, adolescents who experience destructive conflict, which is marked by coercion, aggression, and growing rage, are more likely to develop psychopathology (Brock & Kochanska, 2016; Davies et al., 2016). A study conducted by Delvecchio suggests that as IPC increases, parents become less affectionate, and their interactions become more acrimonious (Delvecchio, 2020).

### *1.1. Effects of IPC on Adolescents*

Harold and Sellers noted in a literature review that poorly handled IPC impairs adolescents' cognitive and emotional functioning and surfaces it through externalizing behavior (Harold & Sellers, 2018). If not addressed before maturity, adolescents manifest externalizing behavior, frequently involving social problems, aggressive behavior, attention problems, rule-breaking, and affective problems (Picinich, 2022). According to Snodgrass, those adolescents experiencing IPC may also have weakened immune systems and are more prone to sickness, low mood, hopelessness, and motivation (Croom, 2015). Adolescents who exhibit externalizing behavior are also more likely to commit crimes, abuse drugs, and be involved in aggressive behaviors, which include picking fights and bullying. (Gonzales et al., 2017). Adolescents who exhibit these behaviors are more likely than their peers to be teased, rejected, use drugs, and have trouble in school and society (Picinich, 2022).

Some adolescents are most referred to mental health treatment for externalizing behavior, which is characterized as violence, noncompliance, hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity (Ogundele, 2018). The majority of them exhibit some of these behaviors, which are seen as being a normal part of development (Aksoy, 2020). Adolescent behavior problems can take many forms, but some common expressions are poor interpersonal interactions, poor learning attitudes, and unhealthy lifestyle choices (Kremer et al., 2016). According to pertinent research, adolescent problem behavior is enduring and can have a significant impact on adult drinking, violence, and even criminal activity (Pol et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2020). A study was conducted by Mushtaque and colleagues (2021) to determine how inter-parental conflicts affected adolescents and their externalizing behaviors. The results were noteworthy because 22% of the adolescents had suicidal tendencies, 9% had attempted suicide once, 4.6% had done so twice, and 11% claimed they were likely to do so again (Mushtaque et al., 2021).

### *1.2. Interparental Conflict and Externalizing Behavior*

Many researchers have looked at the adverse effects of IPC on adolescents (Brock & Kochanska, 2016; Martin, 2018). It has been confirmed in previous research that there is a strong connection between inter-parental conflict and the externalizing behavior of adolescents (Picinich, 2022). Externalizing behavior refers to disruptive, damaging, troublesome, or delinquent actions aimed at people or objects. Delinquent actions can result in low academic performance and absenteeism from school. Stealing, damaging property, being physically hostile, selling drugs, breaking, robbery, vandalism, and skipping school are a few examples of these actions (Lopez et al., 2017). IPC can debilitatingly impact their externalizing behavior and future life (Bernet et al., 2016; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017). In their study, Loureiro and colleagues (2019) found that frequent, severe, and unresolved IPC predicts adolescent externalizing behavior. Additionally, it has been discovered that as a result of IPC, negative parenting actions, such as psychological control and disrespectful conversations with adolescents, have affected their externalizing behavior negatively (Hess, 2021).

In a study by Van Eldik and his colleagues, the focus was on adolescents' externalizing behavior, and the externalizing behavior was found to have a significant effect size of .27 (Van Eldik et al., 2020). Adolescents who engage in externalizing behavior cannot express their unpleasant experiences constructively. Instead of misbehaving against oneself, they vent their negative emotions by acting out against other people or things (Mouton et al., 2018). The manifestations of these externalizing behaviors include physical and verbal aggressiveness, rule-breaking habits, social problems, vandalism, lying, cheating, and theft (Kristalin, 2024). Aggression, defiance, as well as a lack of self-control and emotional regulation can also be the key traits of externalizing behavior (Hess, 2021).

### *1.3. Theoretical Framework of Self-Empowerment Program (SEP)*

Due to adolescents' externalizing behaviors caused by IPC, the author has developed a Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) to reduce its effects. The development of SEP is based on (1) Self-efficacy Theory and (2) Coping Theory. In encountering stressful situations and combating negative situations such as IPC, self-efficacy, and coping play a protective role among adolescents involved in externalizing behaviors (Mete, 2021). Adolescents with self-efficacy and coping have high motivation (Zhou & Kam, 2017).

Self-efficacy makes reference to an individual's belief in successfully performing a specific task or behavior to achieve a desired outcome (Andrews, 2019). According to Snodgrass et al. (2019), it significantly influences behavior shaping and can help reduce externalizing tendencies. Interventions and strategies that enhance self-efficacy and coping can be valuable in addressing externalizing behaviors (Tyler, 2022). Adolescents with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals for themselves. Believing in their ability to achieve these goals motivates them to engage in positive and constructive behaviors. Adolescents with high self-efficacy tend to approach problems as challenges rather than insurmountable obstacles that destroy their lives (Ackerman, 2018). This positive mindset encourages them to seek solutions and engage in effective problem-solving and self-empowerment rather than resorting to externalizing behaviors (Wood et al., 2018). Self-efficacy can act as a protective factor against externalizing behavior through a self-empowerment program, influencing motivation, problem-solving, resilience, coping mechanisms, social skills, modeling behavior, self-regulation, and creating positive feedback loops that promote adaptive behavior (Snodgrass et al., 2019).

The coping model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested for an adult sample has become the standard in the research on coping strategies for children and adolescents. According to this paradigm, coping is a goal-oriented process where people focus on controlling their thoughts and behaviors to address the source of their stress and manage their responses to it (Jackson et al., 2017). Coping strategies often involve techniques for managing and regulating emotions (Algorani & Gupta, 2023). Individuals who can effectively regulate their emotions are less likely to act impulsively or engage in externalizing behaviors to express frustration or anger (Brinke et al., 2018). Coping mechanisms aim to reduce the impact of stressors on an individual's well-being. By employing stress

reduction techniques, individuals can minimize the likelihood of resorting to externalizing behaviors as a maladaptive response to stress (Leonard et al., 2015).

Knowing about the effects of interparental conflict on adolescents and their externalizing behaviors, this research endeavors to develop a program known as the "Self-empowerment Program" (SEP) to reduce their externalizing behaviors. We hypothesized that (1) "the intervention program" we developed is reliable and valid in reducing the externalizing behaviors of IPC-exposed adolescents; (2) the intervention program is valuable in promoting self-empowerment by equipping them to be self-efficacious and learning the art of coping with difficult situations of their lives.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Design

This study employed the Program Development Model of Conklin (1997), which consisted of three phases: planning, design and implementation, evaluation, and program validation. Employing a model for program development enhances the program's relevance and enables targeted resources to address the pressing needs of numerous individuals (Franz et al., 2015). Planning comprised the following: determining program goals, carrying out a need assessment, establishing program priorities, determining target audiences, formulating program objectives based on a thorough review of relevant literature, and evaluating data from focus groups, interviews, and surveys involving the various target populations constituted the first phase of research. In the second phase, the Self-empowerment Program (SEP) was designed by creating an implementation schedule and curating and building resource materials, content, and delivery strategies. Assessment and program validation of the effectiveness of the Self-empowerment Program (SEP) in lowering the externalizing behaviors of the chosen adolescents exposed to IPC constituted the third research phase.

### 2.2. Participants

Assam, a northeastern state of India, served as the study's location. Adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 who had experienced IPC were explicitly chosen to participate in the current study because of their propensity to exhibit externalizing behaviors. Adolescents who had either directly or indirectly experienced IPC; (2) having both parents; (3) being from the Indian state of Assam; (4) being boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18; and (5) exhibiting externalizing behaviors as measured by the Youth Self-Report Scale were the inclusion criteria that the participants fulfilled.

### 2.3. Demographic Information Measures (DIF)

This datasheet included details on age, gender, income, educational attainment, and personal and professional information. Moreover, would they ever witness, hear about, or observe instances of interparental conflicts or if they were exposed to them? To make the purposive sampling process easier, information on how they were exposed to it was also gathered. The demographic questionnaire and personal data sheet included assent and informed consent forms. The guardians of the minors gave their assent, while the other eighteen-year-old participants gave their informed consent.

### 2.4. Youth Self-Report Scale

Under the guidance of Achenbach, Saber (2013) modified the Youth Self-Report scale (1991). Each adolescent fills out the form independently, and it is intended for use with adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18. The Youth Self-Report (YSR) is comprised of two sub-areas: (a) 20 competence items that evaluate the adolescent's participation in extracurricular activities, games, sports, jobs, chores, friendships, and other activities; and (b) 112 items that evaluate eight sub-scale symptoms, such as physical complaints, withdrawal, anxiety, and depression, social problems, issues with aggression, aggression, and cognition, and delinquent behavior (Achenbach, 1991). The first three subscales are called 'internalizing,' whereas the others are called 'externalizing.' The answers

receive a score of zero for untrue, one for occasionally true, and two for frequently true. The scoring is done by counting T scores, raw scores, and percentiles using the computations found in the instruction manual (Achenbach, 1991). The internal consistency of the surveys was determined by utilizing Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The internal consistency of the symptom scales varied among social difficulties (alpha.68), externalizing problems (alpha.89), and internalizing problems (alpha.91). This current study exclusively looks at adolescents' externalizing behaviors in order to ensure clarity.

### 2.5. Procedure

Pre-experimental and experimental phases provided the data for this study. Following approval from relevant authorities, 385 adolescents aged 11 to 18 were purposefully chosen from eight Assamese schools. Participants included both boys and girls. I first met with the principals of eight English medium schools in Assam, India, to conduct the research in their respective schools. With their permission, I distributed the Assent forms for minors and Informed consent for those 18. Once all the filled-out informed consent/assent forms were collected, the questionnaire pack was distributed with the help of the counselors of the particular schools. Following the 385 study participants' informed consent and assent, I chose 372 adolescents who satisfied the inclusion criteria using the screening questions. It is included in the personal data sheet and with the assistance of social workers and counselors. The questionnaire pack contained the following items: 1. Personal data sheet/Demographic profile, and 2. Youth Self-Report/11-18.

Both focus group discussions and interviews took place in the schools. The schedule and location were chosen to suit the needs of the participants best. I assured the participants of the confidentiality and security of both FGD and interviews. Forty adolescents were randomly drawn from the participant pool (N=117) to form experimental and control groups were chosen based on their borderline Youth Self-Report/11-18 externalizing behavior score. These forty adolescents were selected based on their borderline Youth Self-Report/11-18 externalizing behavior score to ensure homogeneity.

The Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) was administered to the experimental group's participants after establishing the necessary baseline conditions. Instructions and exercises to preserve the experimental group's heterogeneity were given to each participant in an intervention program. In order to guarantee the same results for every participant, I ensured that every participant gave the program their full attention. Thus, the program now included testing (quizzes based on the session) and qualitative reports (What knowledge did this session impart to you?). The control group did not receive the program. After completing the Intervention program (SEP), we tested the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing the externalizing behaviors of adolescents exposed to IPC in both the experimental and control groups.

The pre-and post-intervention scores were statistically examined to determine if there was a significant difference. In accordance with research ethical guidelines, the Control Group has also been given access to the Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) so that they can benefit from this effective intervention program. A schematic diagram of the current study's data-gathering procedure, guided by the program development model technique, is presented in Figure 1.

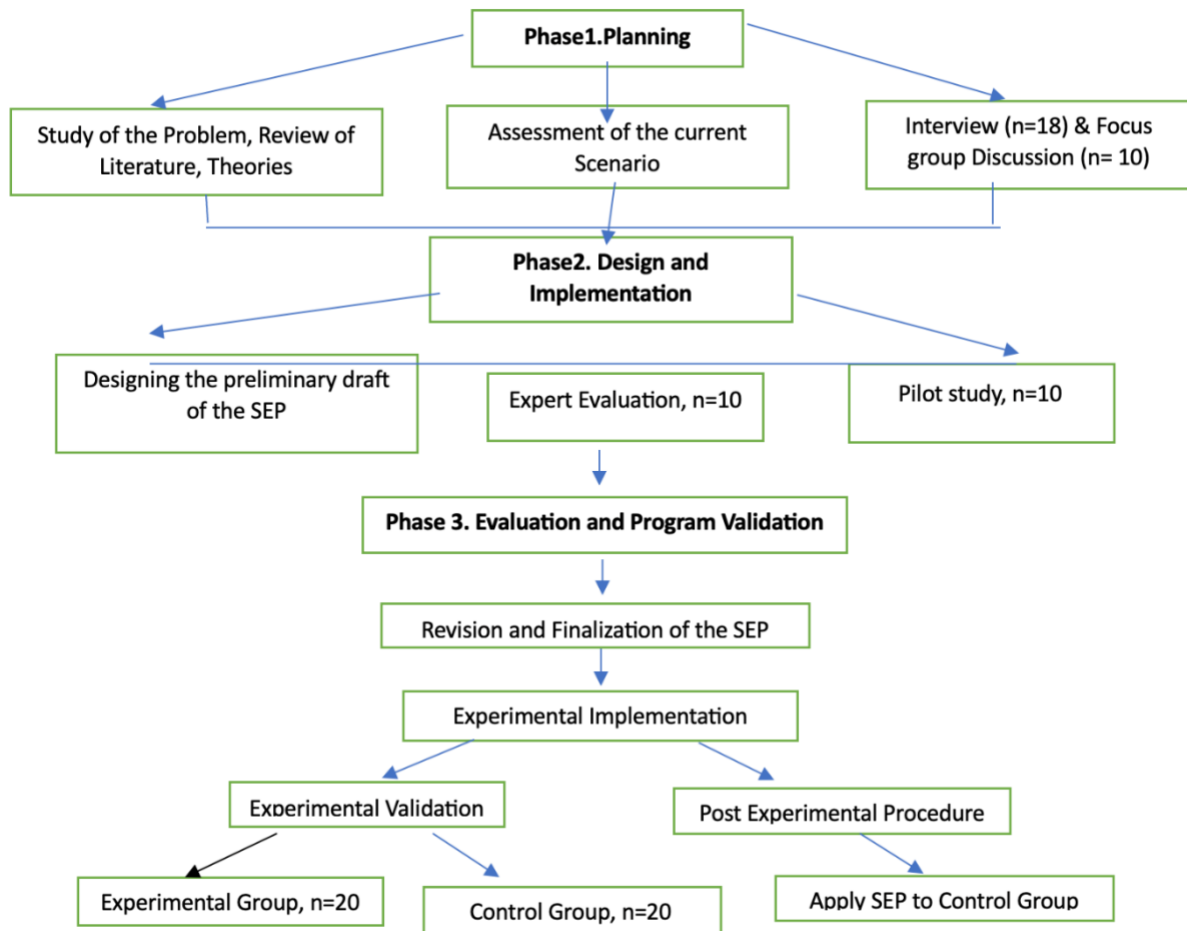


Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the process for acquiring data

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Participants' demographic details

Of the 40 participants, 40% were between the ages of 15 and 18, and 60% were between the ages of 11 and 14. 67.5% were female, and 65% came from low-income homes. Regarding schooling, 37% and 62% of respondents were in classes of 6–12 students, respectively. The demographic data of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic data

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>		
11-14	24	60
15-18	16	40
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	13	32.5
Female	27	67.5
<b>Income</b>		
Middle	16	35
Low	26	65
<b>Education</b>		
6-9	25	62

10-12

15

37

### 3.2. Program Development

Table 2: The Self-Empowerment Program (SEP)

<b>MODULE</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
1. Overview in broad terms and objectives	To create a friendly environment where people may learn from one another, establish SEP expectations, discuss the goals of the SEP intervention program, and decide on a training ground
2. Understanding Triggers and Emotions	To develop emotional vocabulary, to recognize personal triggers, to understand the connection between thoughts and emotions, and to practice mindfulness for emotional awareness
3. Building Self-Efficacy through One's Strengths	To recognize and appreciate individual strengths, to foster a positive self-image, to set personal 'Strength-Based' goals
4. Building Confidence Through Skill Development	To identify skills for personal growth, to engage in skill-building activities, to promote peer support and encouragement
5. Effective Communication Skills	To identify different communication styles, to practice active listening, and to develop assertiveness through role-playing techniques.
6. Building Your Coping Strategies Toolbox	To introduce various coping strategies, to personalize coping tools, and to practice mindfulness for stress reduction
7. Applying Coping Strategies in Real-Life Situations	To discuss real-life stressors, role-play coping strategies, develop a personal coping plan
8. Problem-solving, Anger Management, and Decision-Making.	To understand the problem-solving process, apply critical thinking skills, foster collaboration in problem-solving, and develop decision-making skills.
9. Building Supportive Networks and Future Planning	Identify personal support networks, strengthen peer support, reflect on achievements, set future goals, and reinforce learned skills.

Experts, including three counseling psychologists, two psychiatrists, two clinical psychologists, and three psychiatric social workers, evaluated the newly developed Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) presented in Table 2. Based on the total assessment score and the intervention program's grading, 10 experts awarded the program an "A-grade," signifying its efficacy. The experts who assessed the SEP found that the assessment of its numerous elements was dependable, as evidenced by the inter-rater reliability coefficient alpha value of .819. The program included expert evaluations for improvements and changes in various aspects and modalities.

### 3.3. Program Testing

To determine whether the program was ready for experimental validation, a pilot study was carried out following the development of SEP. In the pilot study, the mean and standard deviation of externalizing behaviors, pre-test, and post-score (From Social Problem,  $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=.788$ ; Rule breaking,  $M=5.6$ ,  $SD=.516$ ; Aggressive behavior,  $M=6.4$ ,  $SD=.516$ ; to Social Problem,  $M=2.0$ ,  $SD=.666$ ; Rule breaking,  $M=3.6$ ,  $SD=.699$ ; Aggressive behavior,  $M=3.5$ ,  $SD=.527$ ) showed the reduction of externalizing behaviors in adolescents exposed to IPC. The "Wilcoxon signed-rank test" was employed to evaluate the pre-and post-test results of the externalizing behaviors. The scores differed significantly ( $Z=-2.814$ ,  $p=.005$ ). The findings of the pilot study suggested that the SEP may be experimentally validated.

Table 3: The externalizing behaviors of adolescents exposed to IPC Measured by YSR

	Normal		Borderline		Clinical	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Externalizing Behavior	253	68.0	117	31.5	2	.5
Social Problem	264	71.0	108	29.0	0	0
Rule Breaking	279	75.0	92	24.7	1	.3
Aggressive Behavior	261	70.2	110	29.6	1	.3

Legend: N=385, Normal= 0-59, Borderline= 60-63, Clinical = 63 above

Table 3 shows the prevalence of externalizing behaviors measured by the YSR scale. The findings show that among adolescents impacted by IPC, social issues, aggressive behaviors, and rule-breaking are more prevalent. A total of 119 adolescents have externalizing behaviour. 117 are borderline and two are clinical range. Suggesting a 31.5% prevalence rate of externalizing behaviors among adolescents exposed to IPC. The subscale shows that a total of 108 (social), 92 (rule-breaking), and 110 (aggressive) adolescents scored borderline on YSR. The current scenario points out that they need immediate care and attention to empower them to be self-efficacious and cope with the situations in which they are.

Table 4: Paired t-test results from the experimental group's pre- and post-test (N=20)

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Externalizing Behavior	26.61	2.65	15.90	2.27	21.10*
Social Problem	8.76	1.22	5.95	1.49	11.46**
Rule Breaking	7.0	1.26	3.38	.864	18.60**
Aggressive Behavior	10.8	1.71	6.57	1.32	12.20**

Note. \*\* $p < .01$

Using a paired t-test, Table 4 compares the experimental group's externalizing behavior (YSR) pre-and post-test scores. The result demonstrates a significant difference in externalizing behavior (Pre-test:  $M=26.61$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ; Post test:  $M=15.90$ ,  $SD=2.27$ ) in adolescents. The subscales show a significant difference in social problem (Pre-test:  $M=8.76$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ; Posttest:  $M=5.95$ ,  $SD=1.49$ ) Rule breaking (Pre-test:  $M=7.0$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ; Posttest:  $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=.864$ ) and aggressive behavior (Pre-test:  $M=10.8$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ; Posttest:  $M=6.57$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ) between pre-and post-scores when tested at the .05 levels of significance. Thus, the post-test results validate the efficacy and impact of the SEP as an intervention program.

Table 5: Paired t-test results from the Control group's pre- and post-test

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Externalizing Behavior	25.42	2.50	25.23	2.64	1.706
Social Problem	8.42	1.07	8.42	1.07	.186
Rule Breaking	6.80	1.20	6.76	1.22	.329
Aggressive Behavior	10.19	1.60	10.04	1.71	.104

Note.  $p > .01$

Table 5 shows that because the control group received no intervention, there was no significant difference in their pre-and post-test mean scores. The mean scores for externalizing behaviors before and after the exam were nearly the same (Pre-test:  $M=25.42$ ,  $SD=2.50$ ; Posttest:  $M=25.23$ ,  $SD=2.64$ ). Similarly, the subscales revealed almost identical scores: (Social problem in Pre-test:  $M=8.42$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ; Posttest:  $M=8.42$ ,  $SD=1.07$ , Rule breaking= Pre-test:  $M=6.80$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ; Posttest:  $M=6.76$ ,  $SD=1.22$ , Aggressive behavior= Pre-test:  $M=10.19$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ; Posttest:  $M=10.04$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ).



Table 6: Results of the MANOVA analysis of the post-test results for Externalizing Behaviors in the Experimental and Control groups

Variable	Experimental Group		Control Group		F-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Externalizing Behavior	15.90	2.64	25.23	2.65	150.18
Social problem	5.95	1.49	8.42	1.07	37.81*
Rule breaking	3.38	.864	6.76	1.22	107.25*
Aggressive behavior	6.57	1.32	10.04	1.71	53.93*

Note. \*  $p < .001$

Table 6 shows how SEP affected the participants based on MANOVA variance analysis. The intervention program successfully reduces externalizing behaviors in adolescent participants, as evidenced by the significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups ( $p = .001$ ;  $F = 150.18, 37.81, 107.25, 53.93$ ). Cohen's *d*-test was used to determine how well the SEP reduced adolescents' social, rule-breaking, and aggressive behaviors in the experimental and control groups. Cohen's *d* value of 3.5 corroborates the SEP's strong impact.

#### 4. Discussion

The Self-Empowerment Program (SEP) has been shown to be successful in reducing externalizing behaviors of adolescents exposed to IPC when it is applied to a small sample of an experimental group of adolescents ( $n = 20$ ). The pre-and post-test results for the experimental group marked a significant minimization in the externalizing behaviors identified using the YSR scale. It revealed notable variations, making SEP an effective intervention program. Based on statistical evidence demonstrating its effectiveness and noteworthy impact, the nine-module intervention program has been validated as a reliable tool for reducing adolescents' externalizing behaviors.

The SEP intervention program adapted Self-efficacy and coping theories to develop it. Thus, the study's results adequately supported the findings and results of numerous previous studies. Adolescents who feel they can cope with IPC well may have more self-efficacy, resulting in more favorable primary and secondary assessments (Davies et al., 2016). As a result, they could be more inclined to adopt problem-focused coping mechanisms and keep their emotional and physical well-being despite difficulties.

Self-efficacy is associated with coping mechanisms adolescents employ when confronted with challenging situations. When it comes to stress management, intense feelings of self-efficacy are generally accepted to be negatively correlated with maladaptive coping strategies (like wishful thinking, self-criticism, and social withdrawal) and positively correlated with adaptive coping strategies (like problem-solving and cognitive restructuring) (Salas et al., 2017; Woodman & Hauser-Cram, 2012). Adolescents encounter numerous issues in their homes and particularly at school. Self-efficacy is believed to correlate directly with their capacity to address these issues successfully and effectively (Kozcu Cakir, 2020). Adolescents' ability to cope with issues is a talent that must be encouraged throughout all stages of life, and its effects last a lifetime. According to Folkman and Lazarus (1984), the ability to cope is the sum of all cognitive and behavioral techniques used to either solve a problem or lessen its impact on adolescents. According to Bandura's (1982) research, self-efficacy plays a role in a person's capacity for coping. There are logical reasons why self-efficacy should be considered when coping with situations arising from IPC (Mete, P. (2021).

Adolescents with high self-efficacy are more likely to think they can cope or find a way to deal by getting assistance, information, etc., and using resources despite the IPC they witness. According to some research, people who are confident in their ability to perform under IPC are more likely to use effective coping mechanisms, and their beliefs increase the likelihood that stressors will have a less detrimental or crippling effect on the adolescent (Liu et al., 2018). Adolescents' self-efficacy is growing due to their coping skills in dealing with IPC (O'Hara et al., 2018). Therefore, the Self-Empowerment Program helps adolescents be self-empowered and reduces the externalizing behaviors of those exposed to IPC.

## 5. Implications, Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusion

This developed intervention program (SEP) benefits adolescents exposed to IPC. It raises their self-efficacy and coping skills, which supports people in adopting constructive and compassionate attitudes toward themselves in the face of setbacks and personal failings. This research may assist psychologists, school administrators, families, and other caregivers in helping adolescents exposed to interparental conflict reduce externalizing behaviors and ultimately achieve self-empowerment.

The population used in this study was relatively tiny. As a result, it is suggested that a comparable program be employed in subsequent studies that include a larger population. The SEP participants were placed in schools. The participants voiced throughout the conversations and in their feedback how uncomfortable they were to be talking about some subjects in public. As a result, several of the attendees' questions went unaddressed. Furthermore, other relevant elements, like genetics, personality, health, academic success, etc., should be considered while establishing a program. These problems are the study's limitations and require more studies.

The SEP's positive and statistically significant impacts on the experimental group of adolescents confirmed its effectiveness and potential long-term benefits. Additionally, self-empowerment has significantly benefited from applying self-efficacy and coping in intervention. The SEP intervention program was created and implemented as a group exercise. Nevertheless, it can be put into practice on an individual basis. Without question, the SEP was a significant factor in helping adolescents become more responsible persons and reduce their externalizing behaviors. By assisting adolescents in reflecting, quitting self-defeating thoughts, and accepting and navigating the reality of their living situations, SEP helps reduce externalizing behaviors and improves the prospects of adolescent self-empowerment.

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# Mapping the Trump-Harris First Presidential Debate: Narratives of Trumpism Propagation Rattle Voters' Ontological Security

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## Abstract

Following the first-ever face-to-face Trump-Harris presidential debate in Philadelphia, broadcast by ABC News from the National Constitution Center and attracting an audience exceeding 67 million viewers, this analysis delves into the backdrop of the emergence of Trumpian rhetoric, the crystallized existential concerns and insecurities of American voters. In particular, the design of this research, based on a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of Donald Trump's political discourse, revealed that his language communication is characterized by a series of crisis narratives and a distinct "Us vs. Them" mentality, suggesting a nuanced perspective on the relationship between political narratives, threat, and fear. This article also delineates different modes of ontological security theory and demonstrates how Trump perpetuates and radicalizes a populist-nationalist electoral environment. In contrast, Kamala Harris's narrative approach seeks to foster unity and mutual respect and bring to the spotlight the real issues that torment the US. Accordingly, by focusing on how Donald Trump discursively promotes a strong conflictual ideological identity, a crucial question arises: How do his narratives influence the fearfulness and perceptions of American voters? The initial findings reveal that voters who make a significant effort to uphold established political narratives often feel a high level of insecurity, which Trumpism imperatives skillfully manipulate. Particularly, it appears that "Trump-speak" (Homolar & Scholz, 2019) effectively stoked broad hostility towards Kamala Harris by depicting her as both vulnerable and perilous. Simultaneously, the story-discussion between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris unfolds in the paradoxical context of an evolving hero-Trumpian narrative, which tends to incite an ontological "insurrection" among Trump's supporters.

**Keywords:** Ontological Security, Trumpism, American Voters, Crisis Narratives, Populism

## 1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the American political landscape has undergone rigorous challenges. One of the main reasons is the rise of Trumpism and its rejection of traditional US democratic ideals and paths. The Trump-Harris

presidential debate constitutes a compact representation of the contradictory ideologies of both candidates and provides a steppingstone through which one can assess the dynamics of the tools used to sway the public votes. In other words, this debate highlighted the stark contrasts among the candidates and illuminated the most dividing topics for the American people, who are juggling between the pursuit of a liberal mindset and the lack of trust in institutions. A key observation in Donald Trump's dialectic construction during the debate is his adept use of an emotionally charged, schismatic crisis narratives through strong information manipulation (Rosenblum, 2008; Abromeit, 2016).

From a socio-linguistic perspective, "Trump-speak" (Homolar & Scholz, 2019) reveals that his claims of legitimacy as a leader primarily originate from "crisis discourse." He presents his audience with a negative context and instills a sense of invincibility. The Trumpism "mischievous" narratives in tandem induce ontological insecurity among the American people and convert their fear into the assurance that the narrator's policy initiatives are the pathway to "normality." It appears that the Trump campaign employs rhetorical strategies to distort voters' social consciousness identities, aiming to provide social reassurance in the political arena. As American citizens struggle to discover or preserve their self-identities in the face of this polarized political environment, the narratives constructed during the debate come into play to further deepen the uncertainty and fear that these individuals are experiencing (Urbati, 2019; Moynihan & Roberts, 2020).

Looking back at the past pre-election period between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, it appears that Donald Trump consistently makes destructive communication choices. Both then and now, Trump's campaign speeches primarily associate the current state of America's distress with the "others," the second category of humans, the foreigners vs. the domestics. Much of the former president's apocalyptic rhetoric portrays "aliens" as either "formidable" leaders of countries contributing to America's economic decline or as malicious enemies of the country, posing a threat to American employment and physical security. Undoubtedly, Donald Trump aims to secure an unexpectedly large portion of the popular vote based on the perception that voters, particularly white, working-class men, hold (Cinnirella, 1998). A significant proportion of Donald Trump's followers demonstrated hostility towards immigrants and Muslims. The ex-president's depiction of immigrants classified foreigners into various, fear-provoking categories—a hallmark of populist messages (Wodak, 2015). Alongside his continual repetition of divisive speech, harsh language, and confrontational images, Donald Trump depicted immigrants in the United States as "criminals," "killers," and "terrorists" who take pleasure in "chopping off heads." Trump's campaign's radicalized speeches depicted migrants as the primary culprits behind America's economic decline, deterioration of personal safety, and fragmentation of social cohesion, thereby intensifying his audience's anxieties around diversity. In fact, the Dangers to Democracy report indicates that Trump's communication stereotypes influence the sentiments of voters. A growing number of Americans—18 million people—support the use of political violence as the 2024 presidential campaign heats up (The Guardian, 2023).

Next to that, during his pre-electoral campaign, he strategically employed sexist language against his female opponents. Donald Trump's brutal and derogatory rhetorical assaults on female candidates throughout the campaign, along with his efforts to incite masculine anxieties, exemplify his propensity to exploit gender conventions for political gain. The above suggests that the former President organized his campaign messages along a firm line between "Us and Them" (Arfi, 1998). These verbal and puzzling games between two opposing narrative poles have a decisive effect on voters' feelings of security, potentially fueling a vicious cycle of addictive behavior rooted in a sense of loss of home and faith in institutions. Consequently, Trump's crisis narratives serve as core parameters of escalating voters' need for cognitive closure, surpassing their psychological discomfort as they grapple with ambiguity and a desire for predictability (Rosenblum, 2008).

## 2. Method and Data

This research article performs a qualitative content analysis of the predominant Trumpism crisis narratives as they stem from the transcript of the September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Trump-Harris debate ([READ: Harris-Trump presidential debate transcript - ABC News \(go.com\)](#); The Guardian, 2024), employing in parallel a quantitative examination

of the most frequently used negative terms and phrases. Qualitative analysis helps us to focus on measuring and providing scientific evidence by examining data derived from recorded communication, written, oral, or visual (Wagenmakers et al., 2023; Merkouraki, 2024). The qualitative method also serves as a tool for understanding and interpreting the data and finding the real meaning of words. The aim of this research is to better understand the crucial topics of insecurity, as well as the threat of others associated with partisan discourse. Ultimately, this research underscores the vital role that narratives play in shaping politics in an era marked by profound division and uncertainty.

In this regard, we explicitly explore selected themes by coding the debate utilizing the three conventional indicators of ontological security: (a) the loss of "home", (b) the loss of faith in institutions, and (c) the threat of others. Through a meticulous thematic categorization procedure, we discovered the subsequent themes:

Table 1: The 10 Main Themes of the Trump-Harris Debate.

<b>The 10 Main Themes of the Trump-Harris Debate</b>	
1.	Economy: Taxes, plans, and policies
2.	Abortion rights
3.	Immigration and border security—deportation
4.	Weaponization of the Justice Department
5.	Policy position changes
6.	January 6 <sup>th</sup> marked the peaceful transfer of power—the results of the 2020 election
7.	The Israel-Hamas War and hostages, War in Ukraine, Afghanistan
8.	Race and politics
9.	Healthcare
10.	Climate change

In summary, the scope of our work resulted in the profound identification of some selected topics mentioned above: (a) Economy—Taxes, plans, and policies; (b) Immigration and border security—Deportation; (c) January 6<sup>th</sup> and the peaceful transfer of power—2020 election results; and (d) Race and politics. The selection of these motifs is not accidental, as they facilitate the investigation of internal aspects of ontological security.

The following research question encapsulates the previously mentioned points that we plan to further analyze:

RQ1: In what manner did the crisis narratives of Trumpism impact the ontological security of American voters?

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Crisis Narratives bolstering Ontological Security

Narratives are intentional stories that attract "attention to one aspect of an event" while obscuring another (Franzosi, 1998). People use them as tools to shape politics, policies, and identities. A well-constructed narrative has the capacity to invoke values and transmit the emancipation of cognitive politics, thus creating a shared identity, common objective, and sense of belonging (Patterson & Monroe, 1998). Politicians frequently deploy narratives to frame issues in a way that aligns with their agendas. The intended effect is to deliver an interpretation of an event in a way that emphasizes the actor's assets and elevates him in the eyes of the public. Such narratives frequently center on concepts such as the nation, freedom, and the rule of law (Somers, 1994).

R.D. Laing and Anthony Giddens laid the groundwork for a comprehensive definition of ontological security from a psychoanalytic and sociological perspective (Rich, 2021). Liang argued that ontological security means "feeling real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person" (Liang, 1990, p. 39; Gustafsson, 2020). Giddens,

on the other hand, states that "feelings of ontological security are a characteristic of large segments of human activity in all cultures" (Giddens, 1991, p. 36) and that a person feels ontologically secure when he has an uninterrupted routine (Gustafsson, 2020). Some of the characteristics of ontological security are "continuity," "sense of control and belonging," and "certainty about the future" (Bell et al., 2019; Skey, 2010). According to Rich (2021), the "community" a person lives in shapes their sense of ontological security and identity.

Fear, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future create insecurity (Kinnvall, 2004). The loss of stability and predictability of an individual's routine can be factors that lead to insecurity (Skey, 2010). Identity also holds an important role since it provides a narrative for the person and their place in the community. More specifically, national identities seem to gain ground in times of crisis or transformation when one is seeking to re-establish their sense of security. All aspects of crisis narratives closely link to ontological insecurity. Crisis narratives are vital cues for politicians who want to create a deep, organic dichotomy in public opinion by promoting dramaturgy in political communication. Martin (2024) observes that those seeking to assert (or retain) power and resources, particularly in an urgent or exceptional manner, often use constructed crisis narratives as a means of concealment. Notably, narratives of crisis improve, in one word, our understanding of how consensus forms in the aftermath of a disaster and becomes the barometer of creating an unstable sociocultural identity.

Nowadays, a fundamental challenge in democratic politics is the collective action problem, which often shapes political identity due to prevailing crisis narratives. When democratic regimes are in a state of flux, it is frequently difficult to inspire citizens to transcend their underlying emotional responses and engage. How can the core of ontological unease be dismantled? That is the central issue here. The conventional responses are to reward them, monitor them attentively, or provide them with moral justification. Another response is the use of force. Coercion compels individuals to participate in democratic actions. A threat will suffice. Fear diminishes rationality and stimulates primal instincts, replacing the cognitive evaluation of objectives with non-cognitive urges for survival and social affiliation. Force is unique in that it targets a specific target for dread, including the state, which is the only entity with the authority to use force under the guise of the rule of law. Narratives of fear and menace disrupt decision-making processes, engender unease, and maximize the dilemmas of ontological (in)security among voters. The main trends contributing to ontological insecurity are:

#### 3.1.1. The loss of "home"

The essence of home can vary for every individual. Browning (2018) posits that home can serve as a place of origin, a place of unconditional acceptance, and, in a broader sense, a place or space that instills a sense of security. "Home" can also refer to a nation, a community, or something local (Kinnvall, 2004; Skey, 2010; Castells, 2000). When an individual experiences an unexpected transformation that causes them to lose their sense of home, leading to ontological insecurity, it is only natural for them to seek to re-establish their sense of security and belonging (Kinnvall, 2004). Since "home" is typically associated with the nation, we can conclude that nationalism is intrinsically linked to the concept of "home."

#### 3.1.2. The loss of faith in institutions

Ontological security and the identity of individuals are factors that actively shape democratic politics and policies (Rich, 2021). Sentiment that the political system represents the elites can lead to a loss of faith in institutions, creating a divide and insecurity (Browning, 2018). This is where identity is relevant, since people, when feeling insecure, adopt radical or even extremist views, which jeopardize the operation of institutions and democratic ideals (Rich, 2021).

#### 3.1.3. The threat of others

Once again, the identity of the individuals holds an important role in how they perceive the notions of self and others. Skey (2010) posits that a person's sense of self can be associated with the nation's identity. He also notes that the presence of other cultures and values can threaten most homogenous nations, underscoring the need for their protection. In addition, individuals typically choose to remain within and surround themselves with their own



group and community, also known as their ingroup. Individuals tend to establish groups even when it is not necessary to feel included and secure, which leads back to the theory of social identity (Kinnvall, 2004).

### *3.2 Understanding the "storytelling" of Trumpism*

Trumpism, a term stemming from Donald Trump's advent in American politics, denotes a unique blend of extreme individualistic rhetoric, robust nationalism, economic protectionism, pragmatic industrialism, nativism, and unorthodox political strategies that outlined not only his previous campaign and following government, as well as his current electoral campaign (Moynihan & Roberts, 2020; Canovan, 2002; D'Erano, 2013). Unequivocally, Trumpism transcends the actions of an individual leader; it is a movement that has profoundly influenced American politics, altering the dynamics of party politics, public debate, and the electorate.

More than reflecting the views of a single man, Trumpism exploits some voters' dissatisfaction by presenting a clear alternative to the existing order. However, his anti-establishment political discourse not only impacts American voters but also profoundly influences the future of democratic government and liberal order (Mollar & Geesin, 2019). We can attribute this phenomenon to Donald Trump's use of egalitarian storytelling, which fosters nonlinear demagoguery among his supporters. Through this narrative technique, former President Trump aims to establish an iconic dominance and forge a distinct voter identity by creating a war-like relationship between "Us and Them", which often results in the dehumanization of others through derogatory words and disparaging microaggressions (Abromeit, 2016; Berstein, 2017).

Commonly, Donald Trump's unconventional and carping political language style hatches a subversive disregard for political norms and his direct and often inflammatory rhetoric. For instance, the way he weaponizes social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), as a primary communication tool serves as proof. He often dismisses traditional media outlets as "fake news," opting instead to communicate directly with his supporters through rallies, interviews, and tweets (Juma'h & Alnsour, 2018, Merkouraki, 2024).

Considering the present pre-election battle between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, it is worth mentioning that Trump's confrontational political style, frequently attacking opponents, both within his party and across the political spectrum, denotes his goal to overwhelmingly influence public opinion. His combative approach resonates with many voters who appreciate his bluntness and rejection of "political correctness" (Urbinati, 2019). Meanwhile, it also deepened partisan divisions and contributed to an increasingly polarized political environment in the US by influencing the level of ideological "discursive" consciousness of the American people. As an outcome, the message's recipient experiences genuine perplexity that threatens the foundational trust mechanism, established through routine, thereby standardizing social life and enhancing self-knowledge. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Trumpism represents a collection of simplified versions of intricate linguistic phenomena, coined under the triumphalist slogan "Make America Great Again" (Rosenblum, 2008).

In general, populist leaders, such as Trump, insist on the existential threats that plague the country, which is on the verge of utter collapse. He competes with other political actors over the representation of the people, using electoral periods to prove that "the people" they represent are the "right people" and deserve to rule for their own benefit. Crisis narratives carefully construct these notions to exemplify the stakes and evoke intense emotions like rage and fear. As mentioned above, his political pursuits can be framed by the imperative to "restore America's greatness," a narrative implying the loss of national identity and an imminent threat that necessitates intervention while concurrently positioning himself as the remedy (Homolar & Steel, 2019).

## **4. Results and Discussion**

RQ1: In what manner did the crisis narratives of Trumpism impact the ontological security of American voters?

Upon observing Donald Trump's statements during the first presidential debate with Kamala Harris, it is evident that the words he uses and often repeats intentionally evoke conflicting and morally inflamed impulses. By

carrying out this venture, he hamstrings participation in electoral processes under the mantle of a narrative about the "hero." This, in turn, has led to the emergence of numerous antagonistic camps among voters who strongly disagree with one another. This situation prompts numerous inquiries about ontological (insecurity) issues. Similarly, Trumpism, a traditional tool of his, links American voters' compartmentalizing insecurities to narratives that prolong the emergence of conspiracy theories, exploiting "identity fusion" and signaling a "crisis of legitimacy" (Homolar & Steel, 2019).

While analyzing the debate, the most frequently used terms with negative connotations that had an impact on all three indicators of ontological security, which were presented previously, are: (a) crime/criminals (27 times), (b) bad/worse/worst (22 times), (c) destroy (14 times), (d) threat (7 times), and (e) execute/execution (3 times). These words play a pivotal role in shaping the narratives surrounding Trumpism. To be precise, they encourage the spread of successive discursive crises; they function as a form of "common knowledge" for American public opinion, potentially distorting the truth.

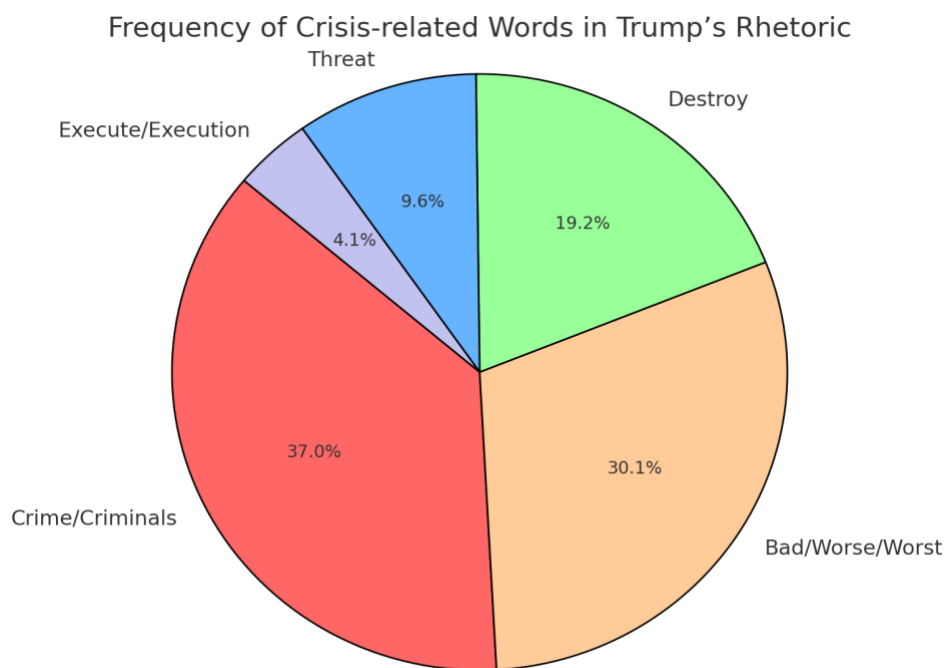


Figure 1: This visual illustrates the percentage prominence of various negative crisis-related terms in Trump's political language.

Furthermore, such psychologically laden utterances can have a considerable impact on voters' mentality, heightening the feeling of threat and uncertainty. Essentially, Donald Trump uses repetition as a rhetorical technique to convey a sense of urgency and impending threat. He seeks to construct a vibrant image by combining elements of reality alongside his narrative. As an illustration, during the debate, he mentioned that we "have millions of people pouring into our country from prisons and jails, from mental institutions, and from insane asylums." Despite the dramatic statement, immigration flows in the US have indeed surged. However, there is no concrete proof that these individuals have completed their sentences in correctional centers or mental facilities. A critical examination of the debate confirms that Trump conjured a picture of "Crisis America," relying upon a language of division. While further reflecting on his pre-election campaign speeches, it appears that he crafted vivid depictions of who belongs and who does not—of the strong and the weak, the winner and the loser. Donald Trump consistently portrayed "the others" as both responsible for America's current crisis and as diametrically opposed to him and his supporters (Somers, 1994; Peterson & Runyan, 2010).

The loss of home is a prominent theme in Trumpian narratives. Given this context, it is reasonable to assume that the nation serves as "home." Immigration and foreign influence are the two main components in constructing these narratives. The concepts of "the self" and "other" also play a significant role in this. During the debate, Trump

often stresses the threat that immigrants pose. He attempts to portray them as criminals, gang members, violent, and a security concern to the nation. He continually cites how they are "pouring into" the country and have "torn apart" the nation. In addition, he perceives them as a potential threat to the nation's economy. Herein, Donald Trump attempts to spread an urgent and self-ruling "terror-based" narrative (Martin, 2024). He wants to convey the message that the nation is under attack, and he is the most suitable person to clean up. Another dominant narrative during the debate was that "China and all the other countries have been ripping us off for years." Trump's crisis narratives suggests that foreign powers, particularly China, have exploited the country for many years, and only he has been able to confront them and demand compliance and compensation for past agreements. He positions himself as a dynamic leader who is unaffected by other global actors and possesses the ability to prevail. This demonstrates an inchoate communication that exacerbates the fear of not belonging (Arfi, 1998; Cinnirella, 1998).

During the recent presidential debate, Donald Trump also expressed his lack of faith in institutions. He criticized the electoral process, alleging that it was untrustworthy, and he declared that "we are a failing nation—a nation in decline, a nation that is dying," referring to the Biden administration and the preceding 3.5 years. Likewise, Donald Trump refuses to acknowledge his defeat in the 2020 elections and denies any accountability for the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> "I had nothing to do with that. I showed up for a speech," he underlined.

Another aspect of his lack of faith can be found in how he approaches the public via comprehensive political psychology, which results in an absolutist language. People want to reclaim their country. "Our country is being lost. [...] This event took place three and a half years ago. And what's going on here? You're going to end up in World War 3, just to go into another subject." This statement evokes a sense of menace, confirming the absolutist and populist-nationalist ideas he is promoting. Here, "Trump-speak" apparently wanted to squeeze some extra juice from the word "lost" and make his branding stand out (Abromeit, 2016; Homolar & Steel, 2019).

Overall, Trump is attempting to weave a narrative of a pure, wise, and powerful leader capable of overcoming threats both across and beyond the United States. He aims to portray himself as a modern-day hero, capable of overcoming all challenges and instilling a sense of security in the American people. Evan Vucci's photo from the attempted assassination of Donald Trump on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, played a significant role in shaping that image (Reuters, 2024). The snapshot shows Trump bleeding, his fist up in the air, and an American flag waving overhead. In those moments, Donald Trump was shouting what came to be one of the main slogans for his 2024 campaign: "Fight, fight, fight." Trump's speech traditionally was absolutist, emphasizing non-negotiable boundaries and moral outrage at their violation. Previous research indicates that perceived threats might stimulate political involvement, whereas absolutist rhetoric amplifies the impression of positive character traits (Gustafsson et al., 2020).

According to foreign policy experts at this juncture, Donald Trump's repetitive crisis narratives polarize the electorate and amplify perceptions of warning, instability, and loss of control. Indeed, as they point out, Trumpian populist speech, sometimes referencing a nationalist "America First" agenda, appeals to many who feel wronged by the political elite. By positioning Trump as the advocate for this group, he cultivates a sense of ontological security—a consistent comprehension of one's role in the world—among his adherents. The perception of "other" members of the upper class, immigrants, or globalists as a threat to the American way of life underpins this sense of security (Castells, 2000; Urbinati, 2019).

Therefore, Donald Trump uses a communication technique that appeals to his audience's passions, often capitalizing on war anger. Throughout the years, we anticipate significant changes in party loyalties and voter behavior due to the lasting effects of Trump's communication strategies. People grow weary of Trump's unpredictable and unusual behavior. His divergence in political approaches could potentially trigger further political realignment, as individuals disillusioned by Trump's populism gravitate towards more traditional political figures, while those captivated by his disruptive tactics deepen their resentment towards the political system (Franzosi, 1998; McSweeney, 1999; Rosenblum, 2008; Browning, 2018).

On an utterly different note, Kamala Harris decided to frame her campaign and debate with a positive narrative. During the debate, she attempted to emphasize the similarities between the American people, stressing the issues of marginalized communities, and inspiring hope. A notable distinction between the two candidates' statements is that Kamala Harris does not repeat herself. Despite that, she also employs strategic wording to convey her message, such as "hope," "ambition," and "aspiration"; she only repeats them a limited number of times, approximately 3 to 5. One of her most frequently encountered terms is "support," which she uses 10 times in total. This is where she differs significantly from Donald Trump, leading to a conflict of narratives that shatters shared identities and widens societal divisions (D'Erano, 2013; Gustafsson et al., 2020).

## 5. Conclusions

Seen from another point of view, Trumpism, as a political movement, represents a narrative reaction to the ontological insecurity felt by several Americans amid economic, cultural, and political transformations. Trump's communication strategies leveraged a rhetoric of toughness, security, and identity, exploiting the concerns and anxieties of individuals who perceived their way of life as endangered (Patterson, 1998; Peterson et al., 2010). This process not only altered the political landscape but also exacerbated societal divisions as conflicting ideas of America's future clashed, resulting in ontological unease for the opposing factions of American voters. The long-term implications of Trump's political communication are likely to manifest in significant changes in political alignments and storytelling. The "efficacy" of Trumpism is in its capacity to address the profound psychological demands for certainty, belonging, and control in an increasingly unpredictable world. Comprehending this dynamic is essential for evaluating the emergence of Trumpism and the persistent difficulties it poses for democratic governance and societal unity. The sentiment of threat and loss begins to arise among the American people, who tend to understand their self-security as a balance between "being" and "surviving." In conclusion, we ought to remember that the quest for ontological security, akin to its physical characteristic, remains constant. Hence, uncertainty engenders the tragedy of global politics.

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# Birdcage Creative Economic Branding in Facing Business Competition Using SWOT Analysis: Study of Birdcage Craftsmen in Argosari Village, Sedayu, Bantul, Yogyakarta

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## Abstract

This research aims to determine birdcage creative economic branding in facing business competition using SWOT Analysis, study of birdcage craftsman in Argosari Village, Sedayu, Bantul, Yogyakarta. This research uses SWOT analysis to find out what strategies are appropriate for Argosari Village bird craftsmen to overcome the problems they face. Development strategy using SWOT analysis is hoped that this can increase the added value of bird cage crafts in Argosari Village and can open up opportunities for the results of these bird cage crafts to be more widely known by the community so that it is hoped that they can support economic growth and improve the welfare of craftsmen and the surrounding community. The data source used is a primary data source, namely bird cage craftsmen in Argosari Village, which was taken using techniques of cluster random sampling, namely determining samples based on regional groups from members of the research population.

**Keywords:** Economic Creative, Branding, SWOT Analysis

## 1. Introduction

The birdcage industry is a form of creative economic business developing in Indonesia. By utilizing local potential, the birdcage craft business also hones the abilities and skills of the local community. Good management in this industry is expected to improve the community's economy. The creative economy is a part of the economic sector that uses ideas and knowledge with the concept of human creativity acting as the main production factor. In its development, the creative economy plays a role in advancing the country's economy by generating income, creating jobs, increasing export revenues, improving technology, increasing intellectual property, and other social roles. The creative economy also supports the creation of added value to domestic products and the development of innovative services that can support the country's economic growth.

Argosari Village, Sedayu, Bantul, Yogyakarta is one of the villages that contributes to the creativity of their residents by making birdcage crafts. The majority of residents in this village have a profession as bird cage makers,

although some are farmers. In Argosari, making bird cages has been passed down from generation to generation from parents and even ancestors. The production results are in the form of bird cages ranging from raw cages to ready-to-use cages. Birdcage products have characteristics that are different from bird cage craftsmen in other places. There are various types of bird cages and are supported by very good quality.

The problems faced by Argosari's craftsmen are increasingly fierce competition and efforts to expand existing markets. The craftsmen need the right strategy so that it can survive in facing competition in the business environment and maintain its market share. The main problem faced by birdcage craftsmen is related to marketing and capital. Lack of industry knowledge in business development where craftsmen do not yet know the opportunities, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses in the industry is also an obstacle to product marketing. Currently, the majority of craftsmen only sell their products in the surrounding area, where with the quality of the products they have, Argosari Village birdcage craft products can be sold to other areas and perhaps even penetrate the export market. This is quite hampering business development which will ultimately impact the welfare of craftsmen who depend on their income from these crafts.

This research uses SWOT analysis to find out what strategies are appropriate for Argosari Village bird craftsmen to overcome the problems they face. Development strategy using SWOT analysis is hoped that this can increase the added value of bird cage crafts in Argosari Village and can open up opportunities for the results of these bird cage crafts to be more widely known by the community so that it is hoped that they can support economic growth and improve the welfare of craftsmen and the surrounding community.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Creative Economy*

The creative economy is a process of creation, production, and distribution of goods and services which in the process requires creativity and intellectual abilities (Siagian, et al., 2020). According to Rakib, Yunus, and Amin (2018), the main elements of industry in the creative economy are creativity, expertise, and talent which have the potential to improve welfare by offering intellectual creations.

According to Akhmad and Hidayat (2015), there are 14 sub-sectors of the creative economy, namely: (1) Advertising; (2) Architecture; (3) Art Goods Market; (4) Crafts; (5) Design; (6) Fashion (Fashion); (7) Video, Film, and Photography; (8) Interactive Games (Games); (9) Performing Arts (Showbiz); (10) Publishing and Printing; (11) Computer Services and Software (Software); (12) Television and Radio (Broadcasting); (13) Research and Development (R&D); and (14) Culinary. In its development, supporting resources, industry, financing, marketing, as well as technology and information are needed as pillars that will support the growth and development of the creative industry.

### *2.2. Development Strategy*

Strategy is a basic pattern of planned current goals, shows the mobilization of resources, and shows the organization's interaction with the market, competitors, and other environmental factors (Boyd, Walker, and Larreche, 2000). According to Chandler (1962) Strategy is the determination of the long-term goals and objectives of a company as well as determining the direction of action and allocation of resources needed to achieve certain goals and targets (Craig and Grant, 2002). From this definition, it can be concluded that strategy is a way to achieve planned goals where it explains what will be achieved, what to focus on, and how to allocate resources and activities to face opportunities, challenges, and competitive advantages.

According to Fred R. David (2020), strategies can be grouped into four groups, namely:

1) Integration Strategy

This strategy requires companies to exercise more control over distributors, suppliers, and competitors, for example through mergers, acquisitions, or creating their own company.

2) Intensive Strategy

This strategy requires intensive efforts to improve the company's competitive position through existing products.

3) Diversification Strategy

This strategy is intended for new products. Diversification is an effort to search for and create new products or markets, or both, to pursue growth, increased sales, profitability, and flexibility (Tjiptono, 1997).

4) Defensive Strategy

This strategy intends for the company to take action to save it from greater losses. Companies with a survival strategy usually prioritize the stability of their target market.

Development can be interpreted as a process or effort to make changes either slowly or gradually by deepening and expanding knowledge through planning, implementation, and evaluation processes (Setyosari, 2012). Developing a business is the responsibility of every entrepreneur or entrepreneur which requires foresight, motivation, and creativity. If this can be done by every entrepreneur, then there is great hope for being able to turn small businesses into medium businesses and even into large businesses (Fadhillah, N, 2019).

Development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is an effort made by the government, business world, and society to empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises through providing facilities, guidance, mentoring, strengthening assistance to grow and improve the capabilities and competitiveness of MSMEs (Anggraeni, F.D, Hardjanto, I., and Hayat, A., 2013). Human resources are the most important thing in developing MSMEs. Therefore, society needs to be empowered to improve its quality so that it can improve the quality of the production produced. It is hoped that increasing the quality of production will encourage an increase in the economic welfare of the community concerned. According to Article 19 of Law no. 20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs, development in the field of human resources as intended in Article 16 paragraph (1) letter c is carried out by: a. promote and empower entrepreneurship; b. improve technical and managerial skills; and c. establish and develop educational and training institutions to provide education, training, counseling, motivation and business activity, and the creation of new entrepreneurs.

## 2.2. SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is an analysis used to determine the appropriate strategy to be implemented by a company based on public and market conditions, where opportunities and threats are used to identify the company's external environment and compare it with the strengths and weaknesses obtained through internal environmental analysis (Rusdiana, 2018).

In the internal scope, it is explained in detail the aspects that constitute Strengths (*Strengths*) and weaknesses (*Weaknesses*) by identifying several factors such as finance, and marketing. Products and operations, human resources, general management and organization (Umar, 2003), as well as research and development (David, 2004). Meanwhile, in the external scope, this analysis will explain in detail the Opportunity aspect (*Opportunity*) and Threat (*Threat*) businesses will face by identifying several factors such as economic, political, socio-cultural, and demographic (David, 2004), bargaining power of suppliers, threat of new entrants, and threat of substitute products (Umar, 2003).

SWOT analysis is carried out using the SWOT Matrix. The SWOT matrix can be used to clearly describe the external opportunities and threats facing a company, and adjust to its strengths and weaknesses. The SWOT Matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is an important tool to help managers develop four types of strategies: namely SO (*Strengths-Opportunity*), and WT (*Weakness-Threat*). According to David (2004), the steps needed to compile a SWOT Matrix are 1. Determine the company's external opportunities, 2. Determine the company's external threats, 3. Determine the company's internal strengths, 4. Determine the company's internal weaknesses, 5. Match internal strengths with external opportunities and record the results in the SO strategy cell, 6. Match internal weaknesses with external opportunities and record the results in the WO strategy cell, 7. Match internal strengths with external threats and record the results in the ST strategy cell, 8. Match internal weaknesses with external threats and record the resultant WT strategy.



### 3. Research Methods

The type of research carried out is *field research* with a quantitative approach, namely conducting an in-depth study of the problems found in the field. The research was carried out through observations, interviews, document review, and questionnaires. The data source used is a primary data source, namely bird cage craftsmen in Argosari Village, which was taken using techniques of *cluster random sampling*, namely determining samples based on regional groups from members of the research population. Sampling was carried out by grouping craftsmen based on their hamlets, so samples would be taken from each hamlet based on existing data. The sample was taken randomly because the average answers from all sources were the same. The analysis technique is carried out using three activity flows that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification.

### 4. Results And Discussion

#### 4.1. Internal and External Factors of Argosari Village Bird Cage Business

As a result of distributing questionnaires and interviews regarding internal and external factors to bird cage craftsmen in Argosari village, the following results were obtained:

##### a) Internal Factors

The internal factors in this research are related to the strengths and weaknesses faced by the bird cage business in Argosari Village. The factors studied include business management, production and operations, finance, product development, and human resources.

##### 1) Strength

- i. Able to meet consumer demand
- ii. The infrastructure is quite adequate
- iii. Raw materials are of good quality
- iv. The products are of good quality, quite varied, and have distinctive characteristics.

##### 2) Weakness

- i. Production output is limited
- ii. The financial situation is not yet stable enough
- iii. Capital is not enough for business
- iv. Craftsmen have never participated in training and business development

##### b) External Factors

External factors in this research are related to opportunities (*opportunity*) and threats (*threat*) faced by the birdcage business in Argosari Village. The factors studied include economic, social, technological, government, marketing, and industrial environment.

##### 1) Opportunities

- i. Raw materials are easy to get
- ii. Buyer and distributor
- iii. Good cooperation between craftsmen
- iv. There is a community of craftsmen
- v. The marketing area is quite wide
- vi. Get entrepreneurship training from the Ministry of MSMEs
- vii. Developing his business through the world of Internet social media
- viii. Utilize financial institutions that are ready to help with capital

##### 2) Threats

- i. Sales balance is difficult to achieve
- ii. Availability of raw materials depends on the season
- iii. Transportation costs are quite expensive
- iv. Not yet using promotional media
- v. There has been no special attention from the government
- vi. Production depends on the weather

- vii. Craftsmen do not yet have a good marketing network
- viii. There are still many customers who have not been served
- ix. Bargaining power is quite large
- x. Competitors' prices are lower

#### 4.2. SWOT Diagram of Arogasari Village Bird Cage Craft Business

The SWOT diagram was created to further analyze the results of the SWOT matrix from the conditions of the internal and external business factors described previously. From the results of the matrix analysis, the position of the bird cage craft business will be known. The results of calculating the internal factor score (IFAS) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary)

	Internal Strategy Factors (IFAS)	Weight	Rating	Score
<b>Strength</b>				
1	Able to meet consumer demand	0,142857	3,1	0,442857
2	The infrastructure is quite adequate	0,118541	2,6	0,308207
3	Raw materials are of good quality	0,147416	3,2	0,471733
4	The products are of good quality, quite varied, and have distinctive characteristics	0,12614	2,8	0,353191
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0,534954</b>		<b>1,575988</b>
<b>Weaknesses</b>				
1	Production output is limited	0,115502	2,5	0,288754
2	The financial situation is not yet stable enough	0,113982	2,5	0,284954
3	Capital is not enough for business	0,110942	2,4	0,266261
4	Craftsmen have never participated in training and business development	0,12462	2,7	0,336474
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0,465046</b>		<b>1,176444</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,00</b>		<b>2,752432</b>

The results of calculating the external factor score (EFAS) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary)

	External Strategy Factors (EFAS)	Weight	Rating	Score
<b>Opportunity</b>				
1	Raw materials are easy to get	0,061259	2,9	0,177652
2	Buyer and distributor	0,061621	3,06	0,18856
3	Good cooperation between craftsmen	0,066246	3,1	0,205361
4	There is a community of craftsmen	0,063396	3	0,190189
5	The marketing area is quite wide	0,051287	2,4	0,123089
6	Get entrepreneurship training from the Ministry of MSMEs	0,05841	2,73	0,15946
7	Developing his business through the world of Internet social media	0,062684	3	0,188052
8	Utilize financial institutions that are ready to help with capital	0,055561	2,6	0,144458
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0,534954</b>		<b>1,305881</b>
<b>Threat</b>				
1	Sales balance is difficult to achieve	0,056985	2,7	0,153861
2	Availability of raw materials depends on the season	0,057698	2,7	0,155784
3	Transportation costs are quite expensive	0,061259	2,9	0,177652
4	Not yet using promotional media	0,056985	2,7	0,153861

5	There has been no special attention from the government	0,055561	2,6	0,144458
6	Production depends on the weather	0,057698	2,7	0,155784
7	Craftsmen do not yet have a good marketing network	0,051287	2,4	0,123089
8	There are still many customers who have not been served	0,056985	2,7	0,153861
9	Bargaining power is quite large	0,060547	2,8	0,169532
10	Competitors' prices are lower	0,064109	3	0,192326
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0,579115</b>		<b>1,580207</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,00</b>		<b>2,768672</b>

From the IFAS (Internal Factory Analysis Summary) table and the EFAS (External Factory Analysis Summary) table, the values for each factor can be obtained, including:

- 1) Strength factor: 1,576
- 2) Weakness factor: 1,176
- 3) Opportunity factor (opportunities): 1,306
- 4) Threat factor (threats): 1,580

Based on the calculation results above, the strength value is higher than the weakness value, namely (+) 0,399 and the opportunity value is lower than the threat value, namely (-) 0,178. So it can be seen in the following SWOT diagram:

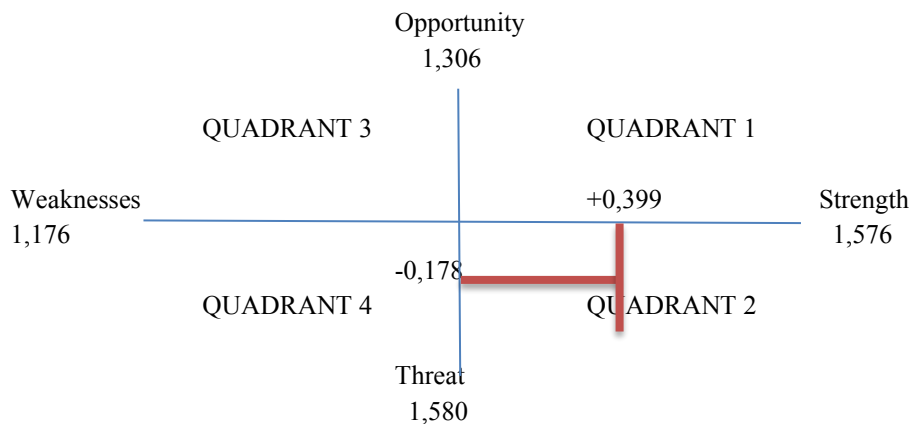


Figure 1: SWOT diagram

The results of the SWOT diagram analysis show that the bird cage craft business in Argosari village is in quadrant 2 because the coordinates are in the Strengths and Threats area, which means it is suitable for using the S-T strategy.

The S-T strategy is a strategy derived from Strengths and Threats which is carried out by using the strengths possessed by the internal environment to avoid or reduce threats originating from the external environment. The strategies that can be taken in developing the creative economy of the bird cage craft business in Argosari Village are as follows:

- 1) Utilizing quality and easily obtainable raw materials as well as adequate infrastructure to achieve sales balance
- 2) Utilizing buyers who also act as distributors to reduce expensive transportation costs, so that product selling prices can be competitive
- 3) Implement the right pricing strategy by paying attention to raw material prices and transportation costs.

## 5. Conclusion

- a) From the results of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Treatment), namely:
  - a. The results of the SWOT analysis using the IFAS (Internal Strategic Factor Analysis Summary) table obtained a score of 2.752 and the EFAS (Internal Strategic Factor Analysis Summary) table obtained a score of 2.768.
- b) Based on the results using the SWOT diagram, it is found that the bird cage craft business is in quadrant II, where the strategy that can be used to increase the business is the ST strategy, namely utilizing the strengths it has to face the threats it faces.
- c) Strategies that can be taken in developing the creative economy of the bird cage craft business in Argosari Village using the S-T strategy include:
  - 1) Utilizing quality and easily obtainable raw materials as well as adequate infrastructure to achieve sales balance
  - 2) Utilizing buyers who also act as distributors to reduce expensive transportation costs, so that product selling prices can be competitive
  - 3) Implement the right pricing strategy by paying attention to raw material prices and transportation costs.

## 6. Suggestion

- a) Craftsmen must be able to maintain their advantages by maintaining product characteristics and good-quality raw materials
- b) Craftsmen take part in exhibitions that have been prepared by the government, namely those under the supervision of the industry department, to increase marketing and introduce their work.
- c) Craftsmen must prioritize quality and highlight uniqueness.
- d) Craftsmen and the government must coordinate with each other so that craftsmen can be supported by the government and receive guidance

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# Co-Creation in Teaching and Learning at University of Hai Duong, Vietnam

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## Abstract

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on co-creation in higher education. However, the number of studies specifically examining the co-creation process in the context of higher education in Vietnam remains limited. Consequently, research is needed to investigate co-creation in education, particularly in higher education. This article aims to (1) explore people's understanding of co-creation and (2) identify the values that lecturers and students at University of Hai Duong can gain from co-creation activities. The study applies the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice (KAP) theory to better understand the co-creation process, drawing on interviews with 15 lecturers and 35 students. Through these interviews, the study examines how participants perceive, engage in, and experience the outcomes of co-creation. To validate the preliminary theoretical framework, the study is grounded in the principles of Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) theory, providing a solid foundation for the research. The results indicate that most interviewees actively participate in co-creation activities, even though the concept has not gained much attention in the community. Moreover, co-creation activities yield both positive and negative outcomes, with negative experiences being relatively rare. This study advances previous research by exploring the challenges that affect lecturers and students when collaborating to create value.

**Keywords:** Co-Creation, Higher Education, S-D Logic, Vietnam

## 1. Introduction

In the context of modern higher education, improving the quality of teaching and learning has become an urgent priority to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive labor market. In this process, co-creation has been recognized as a key factor, not only in the development of effective teaching methods but also in fostering a learning environment that actively engages students, encouraging them to be proactive and think critically. Co-creation refers to the collaborative process between lecturers and students to generate new ideas, solve problems, or find solutions in the teaching and learning process. It moves beyond the traditional role of lecturers as mere transmitters of knowledge, establishing creative partnerships where all participants are actively involved in the learning process. In higher education, co-creation offers faculty the opportunity to innovate and modernize instructional content. By applying active learning methods such as group discussions, research projects, and experiential learning, lecturers can create a dynamic, engaging learning environment where students feel motivated

to explore knowledge. This approach not only helps students absorb content more effectively but also develops essential soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and creative thinking—skills that are highly valued by employers in today's workforce. However, to achieve this, educational institutions must address several challenges, including improving infrastructure, teaching equipment, and management systems to facilitate co-creation. Additionally, enhancing the capacity of lecturers to design lessons and manage classes is a critical component.

Recognizing the importance of co-creation in teaching and learning, many universities worldwide have begun implementing programs and conducting research to apply innovative teaching methods. Examples include the integration of information technology to support teaching, encouraging student involvement in research, and establishing community projects to provide practical learning opportunities. Given the current context and challenges facing higher education, developing a co-creation model for teaching and learning not only benefits lecturers and students but also contributes to improving the overall quality of education. This article delves into the concepts of co-creation and value creation, with a focus on the values that lecturers and students can achieve through co-creation activities at University of Hai Duong. It is hoped that the research findings will offer new perspectives and contribute to the ongoing reform of higher education at the institution.

Over the past decade, collaborative efforts between students and lecturers in higher education have grown significantly (Børte et al., 2023). This trend is supported by a growing body of evidence demonstrating that co-creation and teamwork in teaching and learning yield a range of positive outcomes, including increased engagement, motivation, enhanced cognitive process understanding, and identity development. However, navigating the existing literature can be challenging due to the varied terminology used to describe these collaborative efforts, including terms such as "students as partners," "co-creation," "students as collaborators," "agents of change," and "students as producers."

In this article, we adopt the term "co-creation in learning and teaching" as it reflects a deeper level of student engagement compared to "student engagement," which sometimes implies mere participation without active involvement. "Co-creation of learning and teaching" occurs when educators and students work together to shape various aspects of courses and instructional methods. To better understand the diversity in co-creation theory and practice, this study introduces the concept of co-creation in teaching and learning activities. We established a taxonomy to engage diverse groups of students and lecturers in discussions about co-creation. Our approach involved collecting perspectives from both lecturers and students at University of Hai Duong regarding their understanding of co-creation and how value is generated through this process.

The study also explores the initial feedback from students and lecturers involved in co-creation initiatives. Finally, we offer insights into the practical applications of co-creation in different contexts. To achieve these goals, the study addresses the following three research questions:

1. What factors promote or initiate co-creation in teaching and learning at University of Hai Duong?
2. How is co-creation practiced in higher education within the context of University of Hai Duong?
3. What are the outcomes and effects of co-creative teaching and learning at University of Hai Duong?

## **2. Literature review**

Co-creation initially emerged in the business literature, largely credited to the work of Prahalad and Ramaswamy between 2000 and 2005. Their work built on the concept of the core competency model developed by Prahalad & Hamel (1990). This model encourages organizations to recognize their strengths and resources across organizational boundaries, tapping into the untapped potential of users' perspectives and knowledge as a transformative resource (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Co-creation emphasizes the importance of social interaction and relationships between organizations and users. It has long-term applications across various business and industrial sectors. Even organizations operating in relatively closed systems, with limited external input, must recognize the significance of user feedback due to users' purchasing power. However, contemporary expectations of user participation extend far beyond those of the past, with users increasingly seeking an active role in the creation of products and services. Co-creation allows users to collaboratively shape products and services

alongside organizations, minimizing the reliance on organizational assumptions. Despite its popularity, co-creation has been defined in various ways. Sanders & Stappers (2008) describe it as collective creativity shared among many individuals, while McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) identify 27 distinct definitions. A comprehensive definition by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) describes co-creation as the benefit derived from integrating resources through collaborative activities and interactions. This definition highlights the integration of resources and continuous contributions of value, framing co-creation as an open process that involves diverse members. Co-creation differs from other user-centered approaches in several key ways. It redefines user participation and ownership, allowing consumers to feel a greater sense of ownership over the final product or contribute to its meaning and value by integrating their interests and preferences (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014). Co-creation also has the potential to influence the feelings of co-creators toward the organization or each other, fostering the development of teams or alliances. Moreover, co-creation moves beyond traditional producer-consumer exchanges, which are typically one-time interactions. Instead, co-creation views these exchanges as continuous interactions where both parties consistently contribute value. This ongoing interaction is a critical component of the co-creation process. In summary, co-creation is a dynamic and collaborative process that transforms the traditional roles of consumers and producers. It emphasizes ongoing interaction and shared value creation within organizations. This study defines co-creation as a collaborative interaction between two or more stakeholders, where resources are integrated to create mutual benefits for both the organization and its users.

### *2.1. SD Logic approach*

"Value co-creation" is a central concept in the Service-Dominant (S-D) logic of marketing literature. Research on S-D logic has intensified discussions around the concept of value co-creation. S-D logic represents a mindset that addresses the fragmentation within the marketing field by focusing on service rather than goods as the primary unit of exchange. Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) argue that products merely serve as delivery mechanisms for services, which enable customers to derive value from a company's capabilities. In this framework, the realization of value extends beyond the transaction itself and continues through the processes of marketing, consumption, and ongoing value creation. Since resources are heterogeneous and uniquely applied, the skills and knowledge of consumers play a critical role in shaping how value is co-created. As a result, value is always co-created through the interactions between suppliers and consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

### *2.2. Co-creation in higher education*

Higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide are facing numerous challenges, including budget constraints (Wong, 2004), increased competition among domestic institutions (Allen & Shen, 1999), a shrinking college-age population (Alves et al., 2010), rapid technological advancements (Sultan & Yin Wong, 2012), and evolving student expectations (Ledden et al., 2007; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001). In Europe, the higher education landscape has shifted, with a greater emphasis on student mobility and teaching quality (Díaz-Méndez & Gummesson, 2012). This shift reflects the modern student's focus on external values, such as reputation, financial outcomes, and image, over intrinsic academic values (Judson & Taylor, 2014; Stein, 2013). Universities have responded to these challenges with strategies aimed at enhancing competitiveness, student attraction, retention, and satisfaction (Díaz-Méndez & Gummesson, 2012). There is also an increasing trend toward the standardization of HEI services, with an emphasis on consumer satisfaction and the promise of employability (Judson & Taylor, 2014). Judson and Taylor (2014) differentiate between the marketization of higher education and aggressive marketing strategies, noting that marketization shifts the academic focus toward short-term gains and views students as consumers (Molesworth et al., 2009; Stearns et al., 1995). To navigate these challenges, Service-Dominant (SD) logic has been proposed as a framework for understanding HEI activities and co-creation processes (Díaz-Méndez & Gummesson, 2012; Judson & Taylor, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016). Four principles of SD logic are particularly relevant: value is defined by the beneficiary, co-creation occurs within a network of stakeholders—particularly between students and lecturers, universities provide resources, and value is a subjective and complex concept shaped by customers (Díaz-Méndez & Gummesson, 2012; Ledden & Kalafatis, 2010; Lusch & Wu, 2012).



Although research on co-creation in higher education is still limited, it is gaining significance (Díaz-Méndez & Gummesson, 2012). There are two main research approaches: one explores the broader service ecosystem, focusing on collaboration between HEIs and external stakeholders, while the other examines students' roles and attitudes toward value co-creation.

### 3. Research methodology

This study aims to explore the co-creation experiences of both lecturers and students within the academic context of the University of Hai Duong. We employed semi-structured individual interviews as our primary research method. The focus of the study is to examine the Knowledge (K), Attitude (A), and Practice (P) of both lecturers and students to understand their perceptions, emotional responses, and levels of participation in co-creation experiences.

#### 3.1. Variables

(K) - Knowledge: Knowledge involves the acquisition, retention, and application of information or skills (Badran, 1995). It includes an understanding of Co-Creation, the value creation process, and its benefits.

(A) - Attitude: Attitude represents a psychological tendency expressed by liking or disliking something (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Positive attitudes in education lead to greater engagement, goal-setting, and persistence (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

(P) - Practice: Practice reflects the synergy between knowledge and behavior (Qiquan, 2021). It involves acquiring knowledge, changing attitudes, and improving problem-solving abilities, illustrating the interaction between knowledge and dispositions.

#### 3.2. Collect data

The study follows a social constructivist approach (Yin, 2003), aiming to understand co-creation in higher education from multiple perspectives, thereby informing an interpretive model. Data were gathered from interviews conducted directly on campus with both lecturers and students, fostering better engagement (Bryman, 2016) and ensuring authenticity (Holbrook et al., 2003). Participants were provided with a clear statement outlining the research's purpose and were introduced to the process by the research team to facilitate their involvement. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to share their experiences at their own pace. The research team acted as 'active listeners,' focusing on participants' narratives while using follow-up questions to explore deeper insights. In case study research, interviews are a crucial data collection method (Yin, 2009), and semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited for exploratory studies, allowing themes to emerge naturally. Open-ended questions enabled participants to share their views on co-creation, with interviews taking place over 30 days at the University of Hai Duong, from July 10, 2024, to August 9, 2024.

#### 3.3. Data analysis

This study employed a systematic text condensation method (Malterud, 2012). First, the results were reviewed to identify emerging themes. Next, coding was applied within these themes, guided by existing literature on co-creation in higher education. These codes were then organized into broader categories using Excel, with interview content grouped into themes such as "personal perspectives on co-creation," "determinants of co-creation," and "barriers to co-creation." To ensure reliability, the data analysis was cross-verified by the researcher who conducted the interviews. The authors worked collaboratively to refine and consolidate findings into overarching themes through consensus. During the qualitative phase, the interview results were reviewed and categorized to reach agreement among the researchers. The diverse responses provided insight into the concepts, motivations, and challenges that affect collaboration between lecturers and students in enhancing the educational system.

#### 4. Analysis and Results

Co-creation in learning and teaching is a concept that can be defined more clearly and precisely. As a relatively new phenomenon in higher education, co-creation is best examined through multiple case studies, which reveal the diverse ways in which it can manifest in this field (Dollinger et al., 2018). The interviews began with a question designed to gauge participants' perceptions of co-creation in education: "When I talk about co-creation between students and lecturers, what do you think?" Interestingly, 75% of the interviewees, primarily students, reported that they had never encountered this concept before. In contrast, 20% of the instructors demonstrated a clear understanding, while the remaining 5% requested further clarification.

Feedback from instructors highlighted that:

"Co-creation in higher education refers to a collaborative approach to learning and teaching in which students and educators work together to create educational experiences that meet the needs and interests of all members." (Lecturer A)

Interestingly, one student had never heard of the term "co-creation" in an educational context. However, when asked about it, he described it as:

"I think about the connection between lecturers and students in solving a problem or studying or researching a certain issue." (Student A)

In summary, while some lecturers and students may have deep insights into co-creation in education, others may not have actively considered the concept. Nonetheless, they may have engaged in co-creation experiences without labeling them as such.

##### 4.1. Role of students and lecturers

Students play four distinct roles in co-creation: representative (elected), consultant (paid for feedback), co-researcher (conducting research with lecturers), and pedagogical co-designer (co-creating the curriculum) (Bovill et al., 2016). Chemi & Krogh (2017) highlight that lecturers act as guides, mentors, and participants, fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment that empowers students to engage actively. Additionally, one instructor underscored the vital role of lecturers in resource integration, arguing that their involvement is essential, as students may lack the necessary knowledge to effectively integrate resources independently.

##### 4.2. The premise of Co-creation

Antecedents, defined as elements that precede or are reasonably before an event, are crucial for understanding co-creation. Given the voluntary nature of most projects, these antecedents significantly influence outcomes. The characteristics of participants and their attitudes toward co-creation are particularly important. In various case studies, participants were often described as high achievers actively engaged in extracurricular activities. Professors leading co-creation programs value student input, underscoring its significance in higher education. This study identified second-order themes within the antecedent category, including student motivation and perceptions, lecturers' goals and motivations, and the promotion of a positive environment. In summary, these antecedents play a pivotal role in the co-creation process, challenging traditional notions of their importance.

##### 4.3. Students' initial awareness and motivation

This study explores the participation of students in co-creation activities and their motivations for engaging in such initiatives. Participants expressed strong support for the integration of student resources into higher education, underscoring the increasing significance of student perspectives. While some students are driven by incentives like bonus points, others are motivated by a desire to assist peers and foster personal growth. Additionally, students view their roles as teaching assistants as crucial for facilitating knowledge transfer and enhancing relationships among lecturers, students, and fellow peers. These varied motivations emphasize the importance of effectively communicating the benefits of co-creation to encourage wider student engagement in the future.

#### 4.4. *Instructor's goals and motivation*

Lecturers' motivations for initiating or managing student co-creation activities differ significantly from those of students. Faculty members prioritize benefits for the university and its services over personal gain. Their goals encompass improving the academic community, fostering alumni connections, enhancing marketing efforts, and assisting students in developing their CVs. Additionally, lecturers view co-creation as a means to improve research outcomes, encourage collaboration, and generate innovative solutions. A recurring theme in faculty objectives is the enhancement of student employability. They believe that participation in co-creation activities equips students with essential skills such as communication, leadership, and teamwork, thereby fostering creativity, innovation, and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, lecturers strive to create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment that contributes to student well-being and academic success (Lecturer H).

#### 4.5. *Good working environment*

As several authors have emphasized, a favorable atmosphere is essential for successful co-creation in higher education. Virtanen et al. (2022) highlight the significance of “positive social interactions and a supportive atmosphere” for effective co-creation. Similarly, Woratschek et al. (2020) argue that a positive environment fosters community and commitment among co-creators, leading to meaningful outcomes. Other students have noted that such an atmosphere can “foster a growth mindset among co-creators, emphasizing the value of learning from mistakes and viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and development.”

#### 4.6. *Co-creation resources*

##### 4.6.1. Educational equipment

Educational devices, including digital tools, interactive whiteboards, and mobile devices, significantly influence educational co-creation, as proposed by Kirschner et al. (2018). These tools facilitate real-time collaboration, communication, and knowledge sharing between learners and instructors, thereby promoting active participation and co-creation of knowledge. However, inadequate facilities, such as the absence of air conditioning, can hinder the quality of teaching. Effective educational devices enhance communication, collaboration, and active learning, ultimately fostering knowledge co-creation and improving learner achievement.

##### 4.6.2. Share knowledge

Co-creation entails knowledge sharing, where students and lecturers exchange information and perspectives. This study emphasizes the importance of mutual learning, challenging traditional roles within the educational framework. Lecturers learn from students by applying new tools and approaches (Lecturer C), while collaboration between students and lecturers exemplifies a balanced and reciprocal relationship (Lecturer F). Instructors assist students in deepening their understanding, while students offer fresh and innovative perspectives (Lecturer B). These shared experiences strengthen relationships between students and lecturers, fostering a more collaborative co-creation environment.

##### 4.6.3. Interaction between Lecturers and Students

This study analyzes interactions characterized by continuous communication, engagement, and honest conversations between students and lecturers, which support co-production elements such as equity and knowledge sharing. Lecturers emphasize the importance of these interactions for understanding students' perspectives, encouraging constructive criticism, and expressing personal and academic interests. “Because they are close together, students are better able to share their thoughts, debate ways to improve the learning environment, and provide constructive criticism. Based on students' qualities, faculty can demonstrate personal and academic interests through individual and group interactions” (Lecturer G).

Students also benefit from these interactions, gaining insights and networking opportunities. They appreciated the chance to engage with professors outside of class (Student K). However, while interactions do occur, they can sometimes be infrequent or superficial. Some students prefer to seek help from friends and find their interactions with instructors limited to discussions about homework (Student L).

#### 4.6.4. Experience

This study examines participants' perceptions of co-creation activities, emphasizing their role in creating meaningful and transformative experiences. Previous research has highlighted the intrinsic value of co-creation experiences beyond mere outcomes (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Students appreciate their involvement in co-creation activities. For instance, one student expressed that the Project Management course was highly valuable due to its focus on teamwork and the extensive responsibilities involved (Student J). Lecturers also derive intrinsic value from co-creation. One lecturer, who collaborates with students on publications, noted that this engagement adds greater meaning to their work. "I find it more meaningful to interact with students and help them realize their greatness. This space makes my work more significant," remarked Lecturer B. Additionally, another lecturer overseeing the peer mentoring program described the entire process—from project initiation to video production—as a comprehensive and fulfilling experience (Lecturer H).

#### 4.6.5. Value co-creation activities

Value co-creation activities involve collaboration between businesses and customers to develop products and services (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Wu & Tsai, 2022). In the educational context, this collaboration extends to students and institutions working together to generate ideas and services that align with the organization's mission, benefiting all stakeholders involved. One student emphasized that scientific research significantly contributes to value co-creation by fostering interaction with lecturers, enhancing knowledge, and developing essential skills such as data analysis and presentation. "I feel that in an educational environment, scientific research is the activity that brings me the most value. Because I had a lot of contact with lecturers, I also learned many skills such as data analysis on SPSS, report writing, and presentation skills," shared Student I. Another student highlighted the various valuable opportunities present in educational settings that help develop skills, increase confidence, and improve work readiness (Student E). Lecturers echoed this sentiment, noting that scientific research and classroom interactions play a crucial role in facilitating value co-creation (Lecturer A). Interview results indicate that scientific research activities, such as writing theses and graduation projects, are considered the most valuable co-creation initiatives at the University of Hai Duong, underscoring the importance of interaction between lecturers and students (Table 1).

Table 1: Activities that often take place in higher education

Question	Low (percent)	Average (percent)	high percentage)
STUDENT/LEARNER-CENTERED: In this flipped classroom model, students actively explore lesson materials and present topics before attending class. During class time, discussions are encouraged, with the instructor facilitating and guiding the conversation to a conclusion.	10	75	15
INSTRUCTOR-CENTERED: Students participate in a large lecture, in which the instructor often lectures in front of the class.	25	50	25
FORUMS/WORKSHOPS: Students engage as audience participants in on-campus forums or seminars organized by the school or student clubs. These events provide opportunities for students to listen to speakers, engage in discussions, and gain insights on various topics, promoting a collaborative learning environment.	35	55	10
STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM: Students participate in a student exchange program, allowing them to study abroad and immerse themselves in different cultures and academic environments. This experience promotes cross-cultural understanding, broadens educational perspectives, and enhances personal and professional development.	15	50	35

QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPATION: Students participate in a university student satisfaction questionnaire for activities such as evaluation after each course, including curriculum content and faculty.	5	50	45
WORK INTEGRATED COURSE: With coaching and support from the university, students are placed with a company to complete an industry-related project	15	70	15
THESIS: Students participate in a thesis or project as part of their diploma. Students with excellent theses or good academic results can continue to study for a master's degree or a doctorate or can be retained at the University as teaching assistants.	0	40	60
CO-RESEARCH WITH INSTRUCTOR: Students participate in a research project or scientific inquiry as partners with a lecturer.	0	25	75
STUDENT ASSOCIATION: Students participate in the student association to represent and propose student issues in university policy improvement projects	35	45	20
TEACHING SUPPORT/TUTORING: Students can voluntarily and actively become teaching assistants or tutors in class, thereby actively absorbing and imparting knowledge.	25	50	25

Source: Authors

#### 4.7. Results from co-creation activities

##### 4.7.1. Benefits of co-creation

###### *Students Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura and colleagues (1999), refers to the belief in one's ability to solve problems and achieve goals. Co-creation activities significantly enhance students' self-awareness and confidence. For instance, one student remarked, "I feel more confident sharing my ideas and knowledge about certain topics" (Student, N). Another student expressed, "I feel empowered to see myself in what I create more than in other topics" (Student, B).

Instructors also noted the positive impact on students' self-efficacy, stating, "Students realize their perspectives are meaningful and their ideas have value" (Lecturer, H). This feedback underscores the transformative nature of co-creation in fostering a sense of agency among students.

##### 4.7.2. Building Positive Relationships

Co-creation between students and lecturers fosters service innovation by integrating diverse perspectives. One student noted that merging the insights of both lecturers and students leads to innovative ideas, highlighting the value of collaboration in generating creative solutions (Student, C). Additionally, students recognize their unique position as current learners, asserting that they often understand student challenges better than previous generations of lecturers (Student, D). Faculty members also gain valuable knowledge and skills through this collaborative process. Co-creation enables lecturers to remain current with digital teaching trends and methodologies. As one lecturer explained, "Co-creation allows faculty to gather knowledge from their students and share that knowledge. By collaborating, they can gain new skills and knowledge, such as keeping up with new trends or how to implement digital in teaching and learning" (Lecturer, C). While co-creation is a catalyst for innovation, longitudinal research is needed to explore how students' integrative perspectives may shape future practices, teaching methods, and policies.

##### 4.7.3 University Brand Image

Co-creation activities significantly enhance the university's brand image and reputation, which are crucial in today's competitive higher education landscape (Foroudi et al., 2014; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Establishing a lasting brand image fosters positive attitudes among stakeholders, while effective marketing is essential for attracting students, faculty, and resources (Wilkins & Huisman, 2015). Both students and lecturers recognized the role of

co-creation in enhancing the university's appeal. Collaborative efforts create an engaging learning environment, making the institution more attractive to prospective students (Lecturer, E). Students noted that co-creation contributes to their happiness and success, ultimately elevating the university's status: "Students are happier and more successful, and programs and pass rates improve. This enhances the university's reputation through initiatives that genuinely care for students" (Student, G). These insights underscore the profound impact of co-creation on university marketing, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in shaping a positive institutional identity.

#### 4.7.4. Limitations of Co-Creation

While the qualitative research yielded predominantly favorable results, several observations indicate that the co-creation process has its limitations.

##### *Limited Impact*

Co-creation activities may exert limited influence if perceived merely as supplementary to the curriculum rather than integral to the learning experience (Nyström et al., 2019). One instructor noted that the co-creation process had only a minimal effect on the relationship between the instructor and certain students, failing to significantly enhance knowledge or innovation (Lecturer, C). Additionally, some students, particularly introverts, expressed hesitation to participate, feeling that their lack of expertise hindered their involvement (Student, M). Uneven workload distribution within groups was also a concern, leading to dissatisfaction among some students (Student, D).

##### *Conflict of Interest*

Co-creation activities can give rise to conflicts of interest, as differing perspectives and expectations may create tension among participants (Lowman, 2010). Students sometimes find themselves at odds with lecturers, resulting in conflicts that may lead to some students dropping out of the course (Student, G). Managing co-creation effectively becomes challenging when conflicting expectations are present, particularly in larger classrooms (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2019). Misunderstandings and disagreements among students, lecturers, and other stakeholders can also arise. As one lecturer remarked, "In larger classes, the co-creation process is not sufficiently facilitated, which can lead to misunderstandings and disagreements between students, instructors, and other stakeholders" (Lecturer F).

Table 2 summarizes the findings from the co-creation efforts in learning and teaching, indicating that the University of Hai Duong achieved results comparable to global case studies on the value of co-creation in higher education.

Table 2: Results of co-creation through interviews

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Face</b>	<b>Who experiences the effects?</b>
The interaction between lecturers and students is engaging.	Build positive relationships	Student
I appreciate being asked to speak up	Build positive relationships	Student
Develop and experience an equal relationship	Build positive relationships	Student
The roles of students and lecturers change.	Build positive relationships	Students and lecturers
Even the worsening relationships happened before I joined the activities.	Conflict of interest	Students and Lecturers
Expand the learning process for more transparency	Innovation	Student
Increase confidence, enthusiasm, excitement, and motivation	Innovation	Student
Appreciate students' experiential learning and collaborative learning activities	Innovation	Student

Enhance identity, metacognitive awareness of learning and teaching, inspire and transform.	Innovation	Students and lecturers
Build a learning community	Innovation	Students and lecturers
The curriculum becomes more relevant.	Innovation	Students and lecturers
Challenge and provide opportunities to pace teaching appropriately	Innovation	Lecturer
Value co-creation has little impact on the technical skills I already possess.	Limited impact	Lecturer
Students ' scores or quality of work will improve	Students ' self-study capacity	Student
Improve skills for future career development, such as teamwork, critical thinking, and conversation	Students ' self-study capacity	Student
You are studying beyond the course and using what you have learned in new situations or to achieve further learning goals.	Students ' self-study capacity	Student
Make the transition from grading to learning	Students ' self-study capacity	Student
Improve student satisfaction, program quality, and outcomes	University brand image	Organization
Creating value together can improve learning. This shows potential students that the university is dedicated to providing a high-quality, student-centered education.	University brand image	Organization

Source: Authors

#### 4.7.5. Barriers to co-creation

This study investigates co-creation in higher education while exploring related barriers and issues. The identified obstacles include time constraints, large class sizes, inexperienced participants, power imbalances between instructors and students, and student initiative.

##### *Time Constraints*

Time constraints in higher education pose significant challenges for co-created teaching and learning. Students and lecturers often struggle with busy schedules, necessitating adjustments to their routines to accommodate co-creation activities. Some educators prioritize co-creation due to its positive outcomes or a desire for a more democratic and engaging educational experience. However, co-creation often requires more time than traditional methods, leading to concerns about balancing class time (Lecturer, A). Additionally, participants expressed a need for more time to foster connections and engagement before or after co-creation activities. Students often report feeling overwhelmed by extended study hours without breaks, which adversely affects their academic performance (Student, H).

##### *Large Class Sizes*

Large class sizes in higher education negatively impact learning, student engagement, and interaction between educators and students. This situation often forces educators to rely on lectures, reducing opportunities for active participation and in-depth discussions among students. The popularity of faster-graded assessments also stems from the challenges associated with large classes. Lecturers emphasized the need to reduce class sizes to improve the quality of education, as larger classes hinder individual attention (Lecturer, A). Smaller classes facilitate more meaningful interactions, dialogue, and exploration of ideas, while larger classes often lead to increased self-study and less facilitation of group discussions (Student, J). The feasibility of implementing whole-class co-creation in learning and teaching largely depends on class size, with smaller classes proving to be more conducive to effective co-creation.

#### 4.7.6. Power Imbalance Between Students and Lecturers

Power imbalances can hinder effective co-creation in educational settings. Issues may arise in various contexts, including decision-making processes, organizational structures, and educators' perceptions of themselves as intimidating figures (Dollinger et al., 2018). Cam and Oruc (2014) highlight the power dynamics in which students may feel threatened by the authority of the instructor, making them uncomfortable expressing their ideas. Some students may feel discouraged when asking questions or sharing their thoughts (Student, L). In contrast, open and approachable educators inspire greater student engagement (Student, N). One student remarked, "I feel more inspired by professors who are open with students, always encouraging them to ask questions and engage in meaningful discussions. I will study harder for such professors, regardless of the subject" (Student, N).

#### 4.7.7. Student Initiative

According to Ramaswamy (2009), value co-creation can promote student innovation and creativity, but this requires active participation and initiative. However, time constraints and a lack of awareness can prevent students from taking the lead. Some students believe that co-creation is unnecessary (Student, G). Educators have also noted a lack of student initiative in the classroom (Lecturer, F), stating, "Although students appreciate the importance of participating in their learning, many professors find that a significant number of students lack the initiative to take responsibility for their learning" (Lecturer, F). Student initiative is critical for developing essential skills, fostering creativity, and creating a collaborative learning environment.

In summary, co-creation in higher education faces barriers related to time constraints, class size, participant experiences, power dynamics, and student autonomy. Addressing these challenges is essential to fully realize the potential of co-created teaching and learning experiences.

## 5. Conclusion and implications

This section connects the literature-based co-creation model with the model developed from the data gathered in this study. Utilizing the Gioia method (Corley & Gioia, 2004), findings are summarized by linking participant quotes to second-order themes and aggregate dimensions. Figure 1 illustrates the composite themes and subthemes identified in this research. The primary aim of this study is to investigate the nature of co-creation in higher education through its inputs, processes, and outputs, leading to a model developed from empirical data. Several themes emerged from the analysis, including personal antecedents such as Student Initial Perceptions and Motivations and Instructor Goals and Motivations, as well as environmental factors like Student Attitudes and Motivations and the overall Learning Environment. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of university resources, individual expertise, and activities that foster collaboration between instructors and students, encapsulated in the concept of Value Co-Creation. This process is contingent upon a variety of factors, including strong interpersonal connections. Significantly, the research highlights scientific research activities and graduation theses/projects as major contributors to Value Co-Creation at the University of Hai Duong. The study also examines the benefits of co-creation from the perspectives of students, lecturers, and institutions, alongside the concomitant barriers that may arise. While the benefits of co-creation tend to be consistent, the obstacles can vary between individuals or groups. Commonly cited barriers include time constraints, large class sizes, and a lack of student initiative.



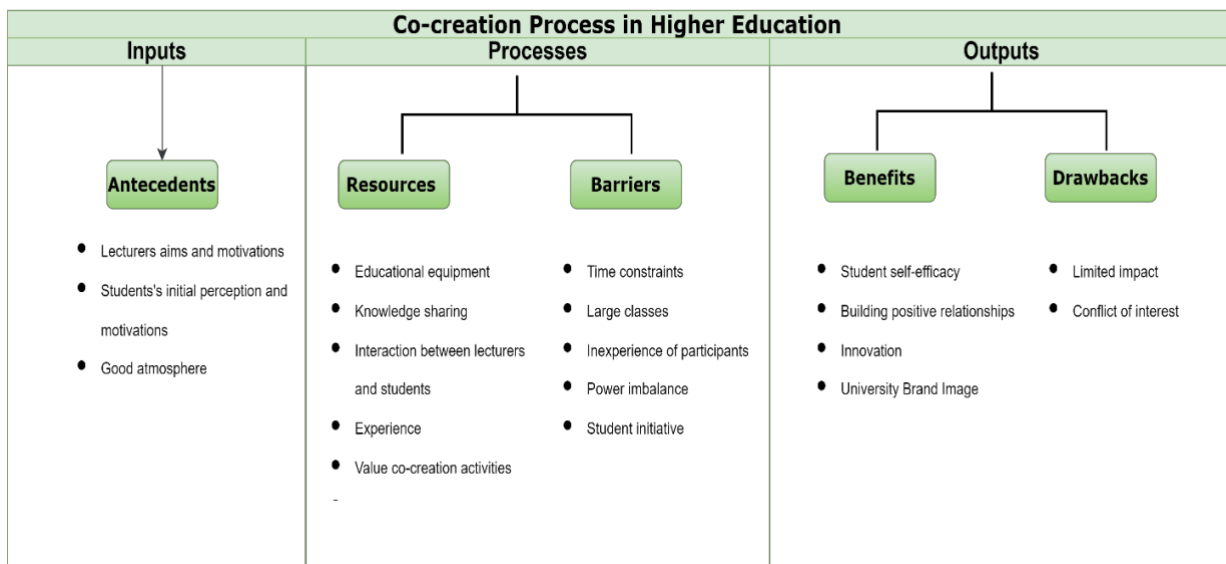


Figure 1: Co-creation model for higher education based on qualitative methods

Source: Authors

The most significant contribution of this study lies in its findings related to the barriers to co-creation within the context of the University of Hai Duong. Research has identified various transparent and diverse obstacles that hinder the co-creation process, encompassing five key factors: Time Constraints, Large Classes, Inexperienced Participants, Power Imbalance Between Lecturers and Students, and Student Initiative.

A study by Andriessen and colleagues (2019) highlights that implementing co-creation activities in larger classrooms presents challenges due to the varying time each student can devote to participation. This can lead to inequities in engagement, where some students have more opportunities to contribute than others. Consequently, power dynamics between students and lecturers can further complicate effective co-creation. Students may feel that their voices are not heard or their opinions undervalued, while lecturers might perceive themselves as being in control of the process.

To address these issues, several considerations must be made before initiating co-creation activities. These include assessing the time and effort required, determining how to support any necessary exam requirements, and finding ways to minimize power dynamics not only between lecturers and students but also among students themselves. Additionally, the duration of activities may impact motivation and interest; therefore, strategies to re-engage participants should be considered. One of the primary recommendations from this research is to start co-creation initiatives on a smaller scale and gradually expand them over time. This approach can help attract newcomers to the process, prepare them for more extensive co-creation activities, and reduce imbalances by allowing lecturers to engage more directly with students.

In interviews conducted by the research team, some perceptions emerged indicating that co-creation activities are not always beneficial. In certain cases, the co-creation process can even generate negative value. This finding is significant within the qualitative research context. Some lecturers expressed concerns that co-creation activities still predominantly reflect the role of the instructor. According to Järvi et al. (2018), negative outcomes associated with co-creation can include **Limited Impact** and **Tension and Conflict**. These issues suggest that co-creation activities may not significantly enhance the student learning experience or improve curriculum quality, and they can lead to conflicts among lecturers, students, and other stakeholders, particularly when there are differing expectations regarding the outcomes of these activities.

Some students feel that pressuring their closest friends to participate in activities that do not align with their personalities may result in shyness and lower self-esteem. This response can vary based on each student's unique

nature and circumstances; thus, lecturers must adopt teaching methods tailored to the diverse needs of each student group to ensure maximum effectiveness. Such misalignment can limit the efficacy of the co-creation process and create tension among students, lecturers, and other stakeholders. To mitigate these challenges, Mahr et al. (2014) suggest that practical co-creation activities in higher education should establish clear ground rules to minimize the potential for conflicts of interest. Additionally, inclusive processes, adequate resources, intentional integration, and recognition of achievements and contributions are vital components for successful co-creation. This study employs qualitative methods to explore co-creation in educational settings and addresses three key questions: (1) Most participants engage in co-creation activities, although they receive limited attention; (2) Co-creation encompasses four important components: resources, outcomes (including both positive and negative impacts), and barriers; (3) Co-creation yields both advantages and disadvantages, producing varied outcomes in educational contexts. The obstacles to co-creation are diverse and widespread.

In summary, this study benefits students, lecturers, and administrators at the University of Hai Duong by illuminating co-creation, its influencing factors, and its outcomes. Co-creation offers tangible benefits, including enhanced student confidence, employability, and service quality. However, challenges persist within Vietnam's education system. Co-creation represents a practical solution, and universities can leverage research to develop more co-creation-related activities, gaining valuable insights to enhance the teaching and learning process.

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# Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Tourism

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## Abstract

This research aims to determine the influence of sustainable tourism on cultural heritage in the last seven years, namely 2018 to 2024. This research uses qualitative methods with a literature study approach. Research data was obtained from the Scopus database of 335 articles, proceedings, and book chapters. Data analysis in this research used VOSviewer and NVivo 14 tools. The results of the 335 article documents showed that Italy had the most considerable contribution to the document, and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki had the most enormous contribution. Sustainable development of industrial heritage tourism A case study of the Industrial Monuments Route in Poland by Szromek et al. (2021) became the most popular article with 41 citations. This research shows that the tourism industry's impact on cultural heritage is only sometimes positive. Excessive tourism can damage cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism aims to balance economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental management. Community participation is essential to achieving this goal, and research on this is relatively new. This research is limited by secondary data, which continues to increase and change. Therefore, it is essential to maintain research and create better data filtering.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Bibliometric, Community Participation

## 1. Introduction

Referring to the ForwardKey Report, the most visited cities throughout 2022 are Antalya, San Jose Calbo, Puerto Vallarta, Punta Cana, and San Salvador (ForwardKeys, 2022). These cities are cities with beach tourism and other natural resources. Although cities like Antalya also offer cultural heritage tourism, this type of tourism must be more attractive to tourists than beaches and natural resources. Pleasure, relaxation, fun experiences (X. Sun, Wang, Zhou, Wang, & Li, 2024), and enjoying nature (Humagain & Singleton, 2021) are the primary motivations for tourists to travel. This motivation differs significantly from heritage tourists, who are more driven by education and emotion (Prayag, Alrawadieh, & Alrawadieh, 2021). Hosseini Stefanec, & Hosseini (2021) noted that tourists are not interested in cultural heritage for several reasons, including lack of awareness and interest, accessibility issues and limited tourism infrastructure, and overcrowding and over-tourism, which could be a negative experience.

However, on the contrary, developing cultural heritage to increase tourist visits often faces negative impacts. Several negative impacts of the development of cultural tourism often occur; first, the destruction of the socio-cultural order due to changes in lifestyle (Alamineh, Hussein, Endaweke, & Tadesse, 2023; Liu, Wang, Dupre, & McIlwaine, 2022), causing loss of identity and even social disruption (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023; Hosseini et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022) Apart from that, the commodification of culture for the sake of interests. Commercial and loss of cultural authenticity due to market demand (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Tamakloe, 2011) is another severe problem. Paiva's (2023) research says that the tourism atmosphere influences the creation of tourists' feelings and experiences. The atmosphere results from social and environmental practices that develop over time in a place, providing unity in the perception of different spaces and influencing how people feel and connect with that place. It helps shape the unique identity of a place, culture, and community, creating a distinctive sense of uniqueness (Pink & Leder Mackley, 2016). Interest in the atmosphere of tourist attractions often impacts the authenticity of the place itself (Paiva, 2023). Tourists consider the atmosphere in remote places to be the most authentic. Imaginations of exotic 'others' are deeply ingrained in the minds of many tourists, often shaped by Western education, Orientalist novels, and contemporary media (Salazar & Graburn, 2016). The artificial atmosphere often leads to the view that tourism is intrusive among destination communities (Bell, 2015).

When indigenous culture is made into a commodity object in the tourism industry, significant challenges to its authenticity arise. This commodification process can damage or even change the true essence of the culture for commercial gain (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023; Ye, Xiao, & Zhou, 2018). Cultural artifacts may be standardized to fit a specific mold to meet the expectations of tourists seeking familiar experiences, potentially diluting their uniqueness and traditional value. This standardization can erode the authenticity of the artifacts (Tamakloe, 2011). Traditions that were once meaningful and sacred can be commercialized in the tourism industry, diminishing their spiritual and cultural significance. As a result, cultural and historical narratives can be distorted (Fan, Chang, & Ng, 2020).

Cultural heritage refers to the legacy of physical artifacts, intangible attributes, traditions, and values inherited from past generations and preserved for future generations. Tangible Cultural Heritage includes physical artifacts such as buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, works of art, and objects with cultural, historical, architectural, or artistic significance. Intangible Cultural Heritage includes traditions, rituals, performing arts, oral traditions, social practices, knowledge systems, and craftsmanship skills that are passed down from generation to generation and contribute to a community's cultural identity. Cultural heritage can also intersect with natural heritage, which includes natural landscapes, biodiversity, and ecosystems that have cultural significance or are related to human activities and traditions (Caust & Vecco, 2017; Wang, Zhang, & Qiu, 2022) Thus, cultural heritage tourism involves the use of historical resources and is the backbone of the tourism economy in many destinations. Cultural heritage tourism is a form of tourism that is deeply rooted in cultural heritage and aims to provide visitors with experiences that connect them with the past and foster a sense of identity, stewardship, and empowerment (Timothy, 2018).

Cultural heritage sites offer immersive experiences that connect visitors with the past through historical meaning through storytelling, architectural beauty, and cultural diversity through sensory experiences. Song, Moon, & Choe (2024) also explained that cultural heritage tourism offers sensory and physical experiences through cultural immersion. Cultural heritage destinations allow visitors to immerse themselves in local culture, traditions, and ways of life. These immersive experiences allow visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the heritage and values of a particular community. Authentic experiences at this site create a sense of identity and invaluable educational value while awakening a spiritual and emotional connection between tourists and local culture (Liu et al., 2022; Song et al., 2024; S. Zhang et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2024). Involving local communities, cultural heritage sites also provide platforms for meaningful cultural exchange, making them attractive destinations for tourists seeking a deep connection with a place (S. Zhang et al., 2023).

The presence of cultural heritage as part of a tour package often gives rise to debates regarding cultural authentication and identity. Some academics believe that cultural heritage tourism can strengthen cultural identity internationally. Heritage tourism can strengthen local identity by showcasing and celebrating a community's cultural traditions, history, and unique values. By promoting and preserving local heritage sites, traditions, and practices, cultural tourism can help residents feel a sense of pride and connection to their heritage (Koufodontis & Gaki, 2022; Park, 2010; Yanan, Ismail, & Aminuddin, 2024). Cultural heritage tourism experiences can also encourage social solidarity and influence how individuals view their cultural heritage and identity (Canale, De Simone, Di Maio, & Parenti, 2019; Timothy, 2018; Zou, Yang, Li, Liao, & Xiao, 2023). Tourism facilitates cultural exchange and dialogue between visitors and local communities, fostering mutual

understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures ((Yanan et al., 2024; S. Zhang et al., 2023). UNESCO's recognition of cultural heritage is not only an appreciation for cultural heritage but also promoting preservation efforts, raising awareness about the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage, engaging local communities in tourism activities, and increasing visibility among tourists interested in visiting renowned heritage locations (Canale et al., 2019; Hosseini et al., 2021; S. Zhang et al., 2023).

However, the presence of tourists who want to enjoy the original culture of local communities can threaten the authenticity of local culture and identity. Tourists' desire to enjoy the authenticity of local culture by seeking authentic experiences encourages the development of artificial atmospheres by countries or companies for the benefit of tourism (Paiva, 2023). Liu et al. (2022) and Park (2010) indicate that commercial commodification is very dangerous for local identity. To meet tourist expectations, cultural performances, and displays may be staged or altered to fit stereotypes or misconceptions about culture, presenting an inauthentic or sanitized version of local traditions. This situation can distort visitors' perceptions of the true cultural heritage of a destination (S. Zhang et al., 2023). In contrast to Canale et al. (2019), Caust & Vecco (2017) and Vu et al. (2024) they raised concerns about the impact of uncontrolled tourism on UNESCO-recognized sites. He stressed the need for a balance between conservation, sustainability, and development.

The negative impact of tourism development on several aspects of human life has encouraged many countries to practice sustainable tourism. As an ideal concept to encourage tourism while avoiding some negative impacts, sustainable tourism develops through several strategies. The main criticism of tourism development is its impact on the environment. Therefore, sustainable tourism mainly aims to reduce environmental impacts by implementing practices that reduce carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, protect biodiversity, and minimize pollution to preserve the environment for future generations (Han et al., 2023; Hu, Tang, Chen, & Li, 2024; Swarbooke, 2023). Sustainable tourism requires the use of eco-friendly transportation options and energy-efficient accommodations. It also promotes waste reduction, recycling, and proper waste disposal practices to minimize pollution and environmental degradation. It includes educational components that raise awareness about environmental issues, conservation practices, and protecting natural ecosystems among tourists and local communities (Liu et al., 2022). Zhao et al. (2024) added that sustainable tourism practices ensure the long-term viability of cultural heritage sites by balancing economic benefits with environmental and social considerations.

Sustainable tourism also ensures that tourism activities contribute to local economic development, create job opportunities for residents, support small businesses, and distribute economic benefits equitably among stakeholders (Li et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024). However, the presence of tourists who want to enjoy the original culture of local communities can threaten the authenticity of local culture and identity. Tourists' desire to enjoy the authenticity of local culture by seeking authentic experiences encourages the development of artificial atmospheres by countries or companies for the benefit of tourism (Paiva, 2023). To ensure that sustainable tourism does not harm the interests of the local people, community engagement becomes a significant factor. Sustainable tourism empowers local communities by providing opportunities to participate in tourism activities, showcase their cultural heritage, and gain economic benefits. This empowerment can create a sense of ownership and pride in local resources and traditions. Community-based tourism initiatives empower local communities to develop and manage tourism activities according to their wishes. By promoting homestays, local tours, cultural performances, and artisan workshops, communities can benefit from tourism while preserving their way of life and traditions (Han et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). Community-based tourism also emphasizes local control and participation in tourism enterprises. Ensure that the community members are actively involved in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation of tourism activities (Esteban), including involving local communities in conservation efforts to protect the natural environment because communities become managers of their land and resources (Liu et al., 2022).

Sustainable tourism also ensures community empowerment in tourism management and raises education and awareness. Encouraging local entrepreneurship by providing access to resources, funding, and market opportunities for small businesses and cooperatives aims to create diverse economic opportunities and diversify community incomes (Ruiz-Ballesteros & González-Portillo, 2024). In addition, training and skills development for residents in the tourism sector, such as hospitality, tour guides, handicrafts, and sustainable resource management, can help residents develop the skills and knowledge necessary to build and manage their tourism-related businesses effectively (Aquino, Schänzel, & Lück, 2018). Efforts are also being made to increase public awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism practices, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage, hoping that education will empower them to play an active role in sustainable tourism initiatives (Zhao et al., 2024). Community empowerment also develops knowledge and awareness of responsibility in

preserving tourist attractions. Not only for the community but responsibility is also borne by tourists and stakeholders involved in the tourism business (Han et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022; Swarbooke, 2023).

Hu et al. (2024) underlined efforts to establish a regulatory framework for sustainable tourism. However, effective local, national, and international policies, regulations, and standards are essential in encouraging sustainable tourism practices and holding stakeholders accountable for their actions. Inadequate planning and regulations and ineffective law enforcement mechanisms can contribute to the success of sustainable tourism initiatives (Vu et al., 2024). Weak regulations and enforcement will not guarantee that sustainable tourism can protect the environment well enough from pollution, waste, and other environmental damage (Sarah). Weak regulations and enforcement will also not be able to guarantee access to policy-making to guarantee the welfare of their rights as owners of land and culture (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024).

Overtourism due to interest in tourist destinations also often harms nature reserves and the environment (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023; Caust & Vecco, 2017; Liu et al., 2022). Overcrowding of tourists can cause damage to structures, erosion of fine features, and a reduction in the site's overall authenticity and historical value. It is not uncommon for tourists to also vandalize and damage cultural artifacts (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023). Environmental degradation also occurs when tourists are not well controlled, and pollution and piles of rubbish become unavoidable (Caust & Vecco, 2017). Overtourism can even result in habitat destruction and pressure on natural resources, impacting the ecological balance in that location (Hosseini et al., 2021). Additionally, pressure on infrastructure due to the influx of tourists can strain local infrastructure and facilities, leading to increased demand for resources such as air, waste management, transport, and accommodation (Al shawabkeh et al., 2023) as well as widespread environmental impacts (Liu et al., 2022).

Sustainable tourism is a concept that aims to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the environment, society, and economy while maximizing benefits for local communities and preserving cultural heritage and natural resources for future generations. Sustainable tourism seeks to balance meeting the needs of tourists and host communities, protecting the environment, and ensuring long-term economic viability (Han, Ramkissoon, You, & Kim, 2023; Li, Liu, & Solangi, 2024; Schönherr, Peters, & Kuščer, 2023; Zhao, Elahi, Wang, Xing, & Khalid, 2024). How can sustainable development encourage cultural heritage to become an attractive tourist destination that can provide economic benefits while protecting it from the negative impacts of tourism, especially from the erosion of cultural authenticity and commodification?

In practice, sustainable tourism must face several challenges. Hall (2011) notes that several governments must still integrate biodiversity values into economic policy. As a result, biodiversity continues to be threatened, with tourism's contribution to environmental change exceeding existing sustainability standards. Additionally, the gap between sustainable tourism goals and their actual impacts, known as the implementation gap, continues to hinder efforts for necessary changes in the sustainable development paradigm (Hall, 2011; Jeong, Karimov, Sobirov, Saidmamatov, & Marty, 2023; Vu, Vo-Thanh, Nguyen, Bui, & Pham, 2024). Apart from the gap between planning and implementation and neglect of environmental impacts, (Swarbooke, 2023; Vu et al., 2024) also noted that sustainable tourism failed to change tourist behavior due to a top-down approach and minimal involvement of stakeholders. Sustainable tourism is also unaware of the impact of seasonal labor challenges, the need for rewards in the form of investment in sustainable tourism businesses, and the need for education for tourism business actors.

When discussing the challenges of tourism development and its potential negative impacts on society, tourist attractions, and the environment, it is crucial to rely on factual sources. This article demonstrates how sustainable tourism can play a pivotal role in developing cultural heritage without compromising social order and cultural values. Our research, conducted using qualitative methods with a library research approach, draws on factual sources from books, journal articles, and existing proceedings, ensuring the reliability of our information.

Bibliometric analysis is used to obtain various scientific outputs from examining publications in specific fields or academic journals with the help of numerical and statistical analysis of several bibliometric indicators. Bibliometric analysis allows a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the de facto structure of any field, the nuances of the field's evolution, identifying the research groups that make up the field, capturing emerging trends, and gaining a broad perspective on the concepts that form the basis of the research (Öztürk, Kocaman, & Kanbach, 2024).



## 2. Method

This research has explored several data sources through the Scopus database regarding cultural heritage tourism in sustainable tourism. This research uses a qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) with a literature study by collecting and observing data from library sources in journal articles, books, proceedings, etc. (Mardalis, 1999; Sugiyono, 2017). Data mining was carried out via Scopus. Over the years, Scopus has earned its equal place as a comprehensive bibliographic data source, and it has proven itself to be reliable and, in some respects, even better than WoS (Pranckutė, 2021). This research examines and reconstructs previous research by analyzing keywords to identify the most searched or interested subjects. The following keywords are used in searching data on the Scopus database engine, including "Cultural Heritage" and "Sustainable Tourism." Documents are selected based on the categories of research articles, book chapters, and proceedings, and then articles with vulnerabilities in the last seven years, namely 2018 to 2024, are determined. The data search results will indicate that the article is multidisciplinary and has achieved the highest number of citations by the first author (Chen, Qiu, Arsenault, & Larivière, 2021), as shown in Table 1. The following is a flowchart scheme for data collection from the Scopus database. Data analysis was conducted using the VOSviewer and NVivo 14 plus analysis tools. VOSviewer helps display bibliometric trends in studies on sustainable tourism in managing cultural heritage, increasing transparency in the research process (Waltman, van Eck, & Noyons, 2010). On the other hand, NVivo 14 utilizes the automatic coding feature to identify clusters and relationships and map themes related to sustainable tourism in managing cultural heritage. The search feature in NVivo empowers researchers to investigate their data at a specific level, potentially increasing the rigor of analysis by confirming or challenging researchers' initial perceptions. However, the usefulness of this software is reduced when assessing the validity and reliability of the thematic concepts that emerge during analysis, mainly due to the dynamic and inventive nature of the themes that emerge (Welsh, 2002).



Figure 1: Data Collection and Analysis Flowchart

Source: Processed by Author

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Cultural Heritage Management in Sustainable Tourism

This research has several variations in presenting data from 335 journal articles obtained by the author through a literature review of the Scopus database, including data representation based on keywords, affiliation, and presentation of research topic clusters with the last seven vulnerabilities—years from 2018 to 2024 and other data visualizations based on VOSviewer and NVivo 14 tools analysis. Table 1 depicts the ten authors with the most document citations. Szromek, Herman, & Naramski (2021) have the highest number of citations, namely 41 of all documents with an article entitled Sustainable Development of Industrial Heritage Tourism – A Case Study Development of the Industrial Monuments Route in Poland. Second is the article by Álvarez-García, Durán-Sánchez, & del Río-Rama (2018) entitled Scientific Coverage in Community-Based Tourism: Sustainable Tourism and Strategy for Social Development 39 citations. The third place is Trišić, Štetić, Privitera, & Nedelcu (2020) with the title Wine Routes in Vojvodina Province, Northern Serbia: A Tool for Sustainable Tourism Development with 34 citations. Moreover, next, there is Y. Sun, Timothy, Wang, Min, & Su (2019), with an article entitled Reflections on Agricultural Heritage Systems and Tourism in China, with 21 citations. Sangchumngong (2019) is in fifth place with an article entitled Development of a Sustainable Tourist Destination Based on the Creative Economy: A Case Study of Klong Kone Mangrove Community, Thailand. The article has 19 citations. In sixth place is Štetić, Trišić, & Nedelcu (2019), with an article entitled Natural Potentials of Significance for The Sustainable Tourism Development - The Focus on The Special Nature Reserve, which has 15 citations. The details can be seen in the visual Table 1.

Table 1: Authors with the Highest Citations

No.	Author	Title	Cited
1	Szromek et al. (2021)	Sustainable development of industrial heritage tourism – A case study of the Industrial Monuments Route in Poland	41
2	Álvarez-García et al. (2018)	Scientific Coverage in Community-Based Tourism: Sustainable Tourism and Strategy for Social Development	39
3	Trišić et al. (2020)	Wine Routes in Vojvodina Province, Northern Serbia: A Tool for Sustainable Tourism Development	34
4	Y. Sun et al. (2019)	Reflections on Agricultural Heritage Systems and Tourism in China	21
5	Sangchumnong (2019)	Development of a sustainable tourist destination based on the creative economy: A case study of Klong Kone mangrove community, Thailand	19
6	Štetić et al. (2019)	Natural Potentials of Significance for The Sustainable Tourism Development - The Focus on The Special Nature Reserve	15
7	Nechita, Demeter, Briciu, Varelas, & Kavoura (2019)	Projected Destination Images Versus Visitor-Generated Visual Content in Brasov, Transylvania	15
8	Kostopoulou, Sofianou, & Tsiokanos (2021)	Silk Road Heritage Branding and Polycentric Tourism Development	11
9	Vojnović (2018)	Tourist intensity in Croatia's leading tourist towns and municipalities	7
10	Žibert, Rozman, Škraba, & Prevorsek (2020)	A system dynamics approach to decision making tools in farm tourism development	6

Source: Scopus Data Analysis

Figure 2 shows the author affiliation where readers can find which institutions publish articles related to cultural heritage and sustainable tourism. The tabulation diagram in Figure 2 shows that from 2018 to 2024, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Universidad de Extremadura had the highest number of published documents compared to other affiliates, as evidenced by eight published papers. The second most published publications, with six papers each, are the University of Belgrade and the Faculty of Belgrade, University of Belgrade. The third positions with five papers from 2018-2014 are Universita degli Studi di Firenze, Politecnico di Milano, and Universidade de Aveiro. The last position has four documents: the University of Ferrara, the University of Johannesburg, and the Balkan Network of Tourism Experts.

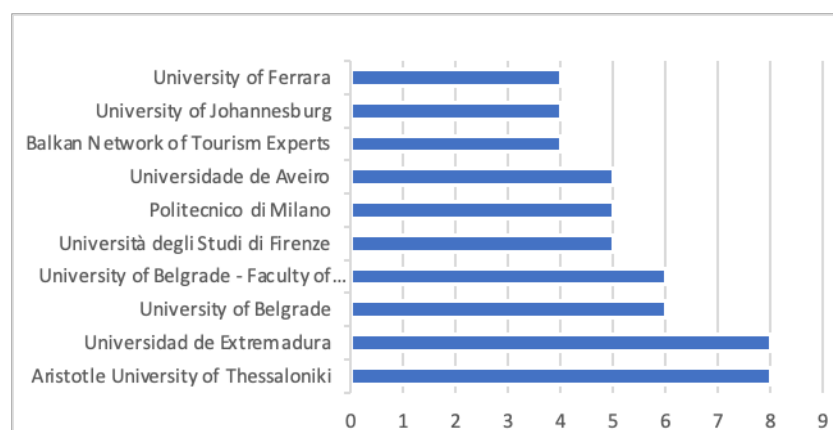


Figure 2: Document by Affiliation

Source: Scopus Data Analysis

Visually, Figure 3 shows that ten countries have contributed to developing the topic of cultural heritage in sustainable tourism. Italy dominates nine other countries with 49 documents from 2018 to 2024. Meanwhile, Greece is second with 25 documents regarding sustainable tourism and cultural heritage. Figure 3 also shows that Spain made quite an enormous

contribution in the last seven years with 24 documents. China has contributed 22 papers in 7 years. The next position is Portugal with 21 documents, Turkey with 16 documents, and Poland and India with 15 documents. In ninth place is Indonesia, which also contributed ideas on the issue of cultural heritage in sustainable tourism with 12 documents in 7 years. The last position is in England, which has ten documents. It can be seen from the table that southern European countries have the most considerable contribution to related topics, considering that they are the most prominent tourism destination countries in Europe (Eurostat Statistic Explained, 2022) – Europe itself is the largest source of tourists (UNWTO processed by Our World in Data, 2023).

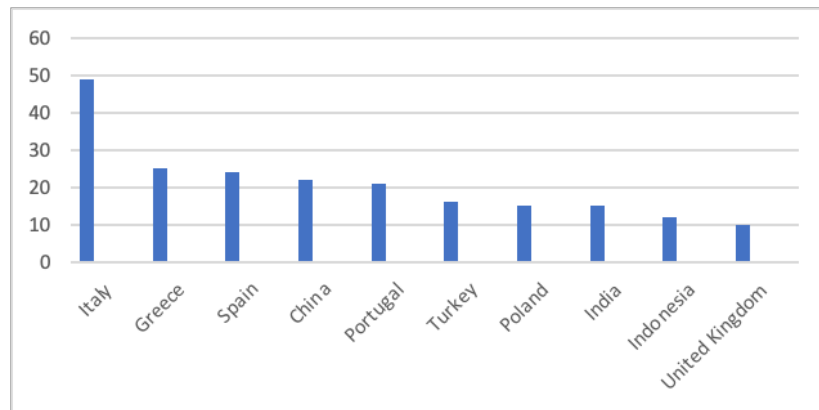


Figure 3: Document by Country

Source: Scopus Data Analysis

### 3.2. The Network between the Keyword “Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Tourism”

The inter-topic network is visualized as a network of keywords between issues that are relevant to each other and a network between topics. Keywords in inter-topic networks also have strength values in each network. Figure 4, with 335 articles from the Scopus database from 2018-2024, shows the analysis results via the VOSviewer network, which produces relationships between key terms. In the VOSviewer view below, lines connect different terms, and link strength indicates the number of publications in which two terms appear together; thicker lines indicate more robust relationships. VOSviewer determines that items are closely related when the software calculates the strength of association between similar items (Kirby, 2023). Figure 4 also explains each circle, representing keywords or words frequently appearing in the visual topic network. Nodes, typically depicted as circles, stand for significant publications, journals, researchers, or keywords, while edges, or connections, illustrate the associations between pairs of nodes. The proximity between the two nodes indicates the intensity of their relationship. Within network frameworks, distance is a gauge of the proximity and significance of the elements they signify (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Bibliometric analysis helps researchers and institutions assess scientific work's productivity, impact, and influence, identify emerging trends, and make informed decisions in research evaluation and strategic planning. Topic network visualizations use diverse visual elements to depict different aspects of data. VOSviewer is used for data exploration, mapping, and grouping retrieved articles. Keywords and countries are marked with colored circles. Circle size is positively correlated with the appearance of keywords or countries in the title and abstract. Therefore, the weight of a topic determines the size of its mark and circle. The greater the weight of a topic, the larger its label and circle (Wibowo & Adriani Salim, n.d.).

For comparison, each node in the cluster shows insights about bibliometric clustering. However, the size of the nodes in the bibliometric visualization of cultural heritage is slightly different. Sustainable Tourism Practices are in the same cluster as Cultural Heritage Preservation, Community Participation, Government, and Heritage Conservation. The small node of community participation shows that this issue has not received a place in international discussions about sustainable tourism. However, the role of government in heritage conservation and cultural heritage preservation is in the spotlight. Unfortunately, the tourism industry and economic growth are not in the same cluster. The visual network means that cultural heritage is still outside the scope of the tourism industry

(Ahmed, 2023; Alamineh et al., 2023; Groizard & Santana-Gallego, 2018). Moreover, the UNESCO node is in the same cluster as the tourism industry and economic growth. Meanwhile, Cultural Heritage Sites, Heritage Tourism, and Cultural Heritage Tourism must have close enough links with UNESCO and Cultural Heritage Preservation.

VOSviewer analytics involves analyzing keywords in the same thematic group through co-occurrence analysis. In VOSviewer, co-occurrence analysis focuses on identifying relationships based on the frequency of appearance of items within the same context. This analysis helps identify prominent relationships between keywords and visualize the interconnectedness among items through network maps. By clustering keywords that co-occur frequently, VOSviewer can create thematic groups or communities of terms within a text network. These thematic groups represent clusters of keywords closely related to the text data, providing insights into the underlying themes or topics present in the dataset (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021).

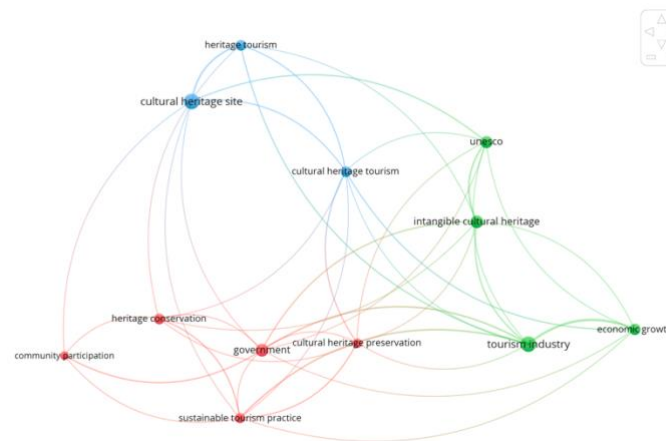


Figure 4: Bibliometric Analysis of the Keywords in Publication of Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Heritage. Co-occurrence of Keywords.

Source: Processed by Author using VOSviewer

Table 2: Cluster Topic “Cultural Heritage” AND “Sustainable Tourism”

Cluster 1	Red	Cultural Heritage Preservation, Community Participation, Government, Heritage Conservation, Sustainable Tourism Practices.
Cluster 2	Green	Economic Growth, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tourism Industry, UNESCO
Cluster 3	Blue	Cultural Heritage Site, Heritage Tourism, Cultural Heritage Tourism

Source: Processed by Author using VOSviewer

Furthermore, VOSviewer's co-occurrence maps serve as a valuable starting point to identify relationships between items, such as keywords, and offer a high-level overview of the interconnectedness among items. By visualizing the co-occurrence of keywords in network maps, researchers can better understand the relationships and thematic connections present in the text data. This approach allows for the identification of key themes, topics, or clusters of related keywords, enabling researchers to explore and analyze the textual data more effectively (Bukar et al., 2023).

The visual network displayed in Figure 4 reveals three clusters, represented as red (Cluster 1), green (Cluster 2), and blue (Cluster 3) as outlined in Table 2. In the first cluster, there are no pretty dominant nodes. Cluster 1, marked by red nodes, includes cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism practices, and government and heritage conservation. Community participation issues - part of this cluster - are represented by smaller nodes. The cluster shows that community participation has yet to become widely discussed in government policies regarding cultural heritage preservation and sustainable tourism practices. The government's attention regarding cultural heritage preservation is still limited to policy and governance instruments.

Meanwhile, the biggest challenge comes from local governments, which prioritize economic growth and tourism revenue over the conservation of cultural heritage sites (Nurhadi, Sumarti, Hadi Dharmawan, & S Damanhuri, 2022; X. Zhang, Edelenbos, & Gianoli, 2024) or commercialization (Alexandrakis, Manasakis, & Kampanis,

2019; Melis, Wise, & Badurina, 2022). Štetić et al. (2019), Szromek et al. (2021) and I Trišić, Štetić, Maksin, & Blešić (2021) researchs show that sustainable tourism plays an essential role in preserving and promoting tourism. Cultural preservation is carried out by integrating ethno-social motifs and cultural traditions into tourism planning and development by creating unique experiences for visitors.

Even though the community participation node is small in the first cluster (even Trišić et al., 2020) and Štetić et al. (2019) do not mention it explicitly in the issue of sustainable tourism), several academics mention the critical role of community participation in sustainable tourism because community participation is essential for successful revitalization and preservation of industrial heritage, as it helps to prioritize projects based on the needs and interests of the local population (Alexandrakis et al., 2019; Szromek et al., 2021).

Community-based tourism (CBT) empowers underdeveloped regions by allowing local communities to develop tourism destinations, generating wealth and complementing their primary activities. CBT relies on local participation, equitable benefit distribution, resource preservation, successful support networks, local ownership, effective management, stakeholder communication, quality of life improvements, appropriate development scale, and tourist satisfaction (Ruiz-Ballesteros & González-Portillo, 2024; Sangchumnong, 2019)). More than that, sustainable tourism involving local communities in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation is crucial for ensuring that tourism benefits are distributed equitably and that negative impacts are minimized (Han et al., 2023; Swarbooke, 2023; Vu et al., 2024).

The second cluster includes Economic Growth, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tourism Industry, and UNESCO themes. This cluster is quite interesting because UNESCO's recognition of heritage culture is a goal of many countries. UNESCO has recognized 933 cultures from all over the world (Unesco, 2024). UNESCO recognition is believed to make a positive contribution to tourism development and provide economic benefits because The UNESCO designation attracts attention from the media, tourists, donors, and decision-makers, enhancing the visibility of the cultural heritage site (Bertacchini, Revelli, & Zotti, 2024; Koufodontis & Gaki, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022; Su & Lin, 2014). Apart from being a source of pride, this recognition also contributes as a medium for education on traditional values, historical values, and cultural practices, as well as being an encouragement for preservation and conservation efforts (Koufodontis & Gaki, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022; Su & Lin, 2014).

However, Canale et al. (2019) and Caust & Vecco (2017) underscore the nuanced nature of UNESCO's recognition of intangible or tangible cultural heritage, cautioning that it does not always provide a straightforward positive contribution to cultural heritage itself. Cellini's econometric evaluation findings, for instance, reveal a surprising lack of positive correlation between UNESCO recognition and tourist arrivals. Spatial Analysis, as argued by Cuccia, Guccio, & Rizzo (2017), further supports this view, suggesting that UNESCO inscriptions themselves may not be as effective in encouraging cultural tourism or addressing seasonal tourists as previously thought. The research also uncovers a potential downside, indicating that cultural riches listed on the World Heritage List may harm the efficiency of tourism destinations. This multifaceted debate is crucial in understanding the intricate relationship between tourism, sustainable planning, and heritage conservation.

Setting aside the debate about UNESCO's influence on cultural tourism, it's important to note that the tourism industry demonstrates a statistically significant positive correlation with economic growth (Cannonier & Burke, 2019; Scarlett, 2021). The impact of this industry is far-reaching, manifesting in the form of expanding employment opportunities in various sectors such as hotels, accommodations, transportation, finance, insurance, and entertainment (Kadriu, 2016). It also generates income in the form of foreign exchange and taxes for the government, attracts investment (Lohana, Imran, Harouache, Sadia, & Ur Rehman, 2023; Singh & Alam, 2024), and stimulates infrastructure and small-scale business development. These findings paint a promising picture of the tourism industry's potential to drive economic prosperity.

The third cluster refers to cultural heritage sites, heritage tourism, and cultural heritage tourism. These nodes are closely related because heritage sites and cultural heritage tourism are part of heritage tourism objects. This cluster is close to specific nodes from other clusters, such as UNESCO nodes, cultural heritage preservation, tourism industry, and community participation. As discussed, UNESCO's recognition has contributed to cultural heritage



The words 'sustainable' and 'conservation' are words that often appear because, in discussions about sustainable tourism, conservation is a keyword for maintaining and protecting cultural heritage from the onslaught of the tourism industry, which is more concerned with economic profits alone (Aquino et al., 2018; Ghasemi, González-García, Charrahy, & Serrao-Neumann, 2024; Schönherr et al., 2023). The main idea of the concept of sustainable tourism refers to how to increase economic benefits from tourism without causing negative impacts on the environment, cultural values, and cultural artifacts. The most important thing is not to displace local communities.

In line with the findings in the VOSviewer visualization, the word 'community' also emerged as an important issue in discussions about cultural heritage in sustainable development. The word 'community' is often related to the word 'participant,' meaning that community participants are crucial to sustainable tourism. Apart from being guardians of cultural identity and their environment (Liu et al., 2022; Mmeko, Molosi-France, & Dipholo, 2023; Yanan et al., 2024), communities must also be included in decision-making so that they are not marginalized in tourism industry practices (Beal, Séraphin, Modica, Pilato, & Platania, 2019; Mmeko et al., 2023). Empowering local communities is very important so that they have sufficient capability and knowledge to make policies (Mmeko et al., 2023; Moayerian, McGehee, & Stephenson, 2022; Rachmawati, 2020; Žibert et al., 2020).

#### 4. Conclusion

Research on cultural heritage in sustainable tourism has been undertaken over the last seven years. From 2018 to 2024, 335 journal articles were obtained from the Scopus database. Through analysis of the VOSviewer tool, it was found that the institutions that contributed the most to research on cultural heritage and sustainable tourism were the University of Thessaloniki and Universidad de Extremadura. Thus, the countries that made the most significant contribution were Italy and Greece. Meanwhile, the first three authors with the most quotations are Álvarez-García et al. (2018), Szromek et al. (2021) and Igor Trišić et al. (2020).

UNESCO's recognition of cultural heritage is one of the recognitions sought by countries because this recognition not only encourages the tourism industry but also increases economic growth due to tourist arrivals. However, the negative impact of commercialization and cultural commodification due to over-tourism is a deep concern. Sustainable tourism is the middle ground for developing an economically oriented tourism industry. However, it also reduces negative impacts on the environment, cultural and traditional values, artistic artifacts, and caring for local communities.

Cultural heritage is not just a tourism commodity. It is the cultural identity of local people and the identity of a nation. Therefore, cultural heritage tourism must include cultural preservation and conservation to maintain cultural values and avoid damage to cultural artifacts. Thus, Sustainable tourism places cultural heritage not only to utilize the potential of cultural heritage as a cultural heritage tourism product but also as an effort to protect cultural identity and maintain cultural heritage.

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# Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh's Garment Industry: Analyzing the Causes and Impact Resulting in Victimizing Female Workers

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## Abstract

The paper analyses the causes and consequences of GBV in Bangladesh's garment industry, focusing on how such violence disproportionately affects female workers. The study will investigate the system's ills within the sector, societal attitudes, and workplace environments that foster victimization. Data analysis on workplace harassment, exploitation, and unsafe working conditions will provide insights in this paper on the broader socio-political and economic impacts of GBV in this sector. It also discusses recommendations for policy reforms and legal protections that could be put in place to safeguard female workers.

**Keywords:** Gender-Based Violence, Garment Industry, Bangladesh, Female Workers, Workplace Harassment, Labor Rights, Socio-Political Impact

## 1. Introduction

Workplace violence against women is a widespread issue that significantly threatens the health and safety of victims and witnesses globally. In Bangladesh, government bodies and employers have become increasingly concerned about the rise in workplace violence (Gibbs et al., 2019). Over the past decade, this issue has grown across various sectors, leading to increased emotional and mental distress among workers (Mayhew & Chappel, 2007; Ferdous, 2024). Understanding the full extent of workplace violence, including how it impacts comfort and the range of support options available to employees, remains a challenge (Ngum, 2022). Violence in the workplace negatively affects multiple dimensions of a person's well-being, including psychological, physiological, sex-related, and financial aspects (Islam & Ferdous, 2023). Victims of workplace violence, or even those who are merely exposed to it indirectly, often experience significant mental and emotional distress. In Bangladesh, workplace violence has long been a concern, and there is a strong correlation between poor working conditions and such violence (Phillips, 2016).

In modern times, workplace violence has been extensively documented in numerous publications. Although certain professions, such as law enforcement, have historically been associated with a higher risk of violence, there is growing awareness that any job can pose dangers, and violent incidents in workplaces are on the rise across various industries (Sun et al., 2017; Martinez, 2016). As this understanding broadens, the need for preventive measures and effective interventions to protect workers from such violence becomes increasingly urgent.

One in three women worldwide experience some form of violence, making it a significant global issue (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002; Shahriar & Ferdous, 2023). Over the past 20 years, the concept of violence has evolved across different cultures and industries, leading to the absence of a universally accepted definition of workplace violence (Ritchie et al., 2003). Workplace violence encompasses a variety of behaviors, including bullying, mobbing, harassment, psychological stress, verbal abuse, physical attacks, and even murder. It can occur internally, between employees and management, or externally, between employees and outsiders such as customers, patients, students, or the public (ILO, 2003). Over time, employer-driven pressures have modified the initial definitions of workplace violence (Mayhew & McCarthy, 2004).

More recent definitions define workplace violence to include incidents where people are attacked, threatened, or otherwise injured in conjunction with their work duties (Chappell & Di Martino, 2006). The International Labour Organization describes psychological violence definition as "emotional abuse, including bullying, verbal and non-verbal harassment, social isolation, and imposition of unrealistic expectations or deadlines"(ILO, 2016). These developments point to the multifactorial nature of workplace violence and that both physical and psychological harm need to be considered within the context of work.

Ullah and Ali (2019) argue that addressing workplace violence is vital, as it hinders global equity, progress, and stability. This is supported by the alarming statistics from the UNODC, indicating an estimated 450,000 women worldwide were killed by intimate partners or family members in 2022, while the recorded number of deaths in the Asia continent was 17,800 deaths in 2021 (Antara, 2023). A 2015 study by Action Aid, focusing on seven major cities in Bangladesh, found that 84% of women had been verbally abused, with 84% enduring gender-based insults, 57% facing sexual harassment, and 22% living in fear of sexual assault in the previous year (Antara, 2023). Workplace violence has become an increasingly pressing issue in Bangladesh, threatening the advancement of gender equality—a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for economic development and social justice (Hughes & Vorobyeva, 2021). Xu et al. (2019) highlight that workplace violence affects hundreds of thousands of women and children globally, making it one of the most widespread human rights violations. The United Nations Agenda 2030 includes gender parity and women's empowerment as one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), precisely Goal 5 (Xu et al., 2019).

This research, therefore, is set to understand the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of workplace violence against women in Bangladesh, seeking to unravel causes and manifestations that describe female victimization in the employment sector. Although it is assumed that more women than men are affected by violence at workplaces, this study design recognizes that interaction effects limitation, such as the gender of both perpetrators and victims, may not explain the frequencies of the violent incidents (Polas et al., 2022). The critical question this research seeks to answer involves an exploration of the problem: "Why are women becoming victims of violence in the workplace in Bangladesh?" by shedding light on the conditions that perpetuate such victimization.

## **2. Methodology**

The current research uses a wide range of secondary data regarding the prevalence, causes, and impacts of workplace violence against women in Bangladesh. The literature, reports, and statistics have been collected from various reputable national and international organizations, such as government agencies, NGOs, and academic research.

### 2.1. Data Collection

Secondary data used in the study are published peer-reviewed journal articles and reports from organizations like the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Action Aid, and other relevant NGOs operating in Bangladesh. Quantitative information on the number of cases of workplace violence incidents, GBV, and victimization trends in Bangladesh was also collected by reviewing reports from the Bureau of Statistics in Bangladesh and other governmental bodies. Reports published in local media outlets were also reviewed with the intent of extracting contextual details surrounding specific cases of workplace violence against women. These diverse data sources empowered the research to pinpoint historical and contemporary perspectives.

## 3. Gender-based Violence and Harassment in the World of Work

The pervasiveness of workplace harassment and assault, in particular GBVH, exacerbates gender inequality in that it disproportionately affects women and girls. Workforce participation is undermined, and full engagement in education, public life, and other societal sectors is hindered. Whereas the scale of these issues has been well known, until recently, there have never been legally binding international treaties directly addressing workplace violence and harassment.

In June 2019, the International Labour Organization achieved landmark progress by adopting the Violence and Harassment Convention (Convention No. 190). This convention marked a global pivot in recognizing violence and harassment as severe and debilitating to the world of work. It favors a broad interpretation of "the world of work" and guides a comprehensive, gender-responsive approach to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment in all employment spaces. Additionally, Convention No. 190 spells out the intolerance of violence and harassment and its illegality, calling for ratifying countries to realize mechanisms of prevention, punishment, and redress of such offenses. It also provides that victims should be provided with resources to deal with the trauma caused by workplace violence (Karmojibi Nari, 2021).

Over the last ten years, there has been a development of more sophisticated and victim-centered points of view in discussing sexual harassment in academia. For instance, Liang (2024) points out that sexual harassment is not confined to a traditional workplace but even spills over into virtual spaces and online communities. This broader understanding already signals that harassment is no longer perceived as merely a legal issue but also with profound human repercussions. The emphasis on victim experiences has deepened the analysis, signaling how such crimes relate to the emotional, psychological, and professional consequences. This shift in focus opened up possibilities for more variegated strategies in the field of prevention of sexual harassment and the rehabilitation of its victims.

From the point of view of Convention No. 190 and the new scholarship position, it increasingly appears that workplace violence, in particular, GBVH-cannot be tackled in a merely legal framework but also in its wide-ranging impact on victims' lives about gender equality and, more generally social participation.

GBVH is one of the most common forms of violence at work and has yet to be acknowledged as such worldwide. An estimated 818 million women, 35% of all women worldwide, experienced sexual or physical violence in homes, communities, or workplaces. Even the gravest of these issues does not have comprehensive global legislation to fight the epidemic of workplace violence and harassment, especially for those that are explicitly targeting women. To fill this lacuna, a "standard-setting" procedure is underway within the ILO to create a legal framework that protects all workers from GBVH (Yasmin, 2020).

The ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190), covers all workers, regardless of occupation or sector. It hence includes workers in rural areas, migrant laborers, factory workers, public sector employees, sex workers, and those providing unpaid care or domestic services. The convention recognizes that GBVH is an occupational hazard in all workplaces, formal or informal. This makes the situation all the more severe in countries like Bangladesh, where violence in the workplace is already a serious issue. While there is plenty of anecdotal evidence indicating that women are often victims of workplace violence, concrete data on the prevalence of GBVH

in workplaces remains scanty. However, according to an official survey in 2015 alone, intimate partner violence was reported by as many as 72.6% of married or ever-married women in Bangladesh (Karmojibi Nari, 2021).

Governmental policies to prevent workplace violence have received mixed success. Akter et al. (2024), in their study of the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector, discussed how some factory managers have made efforts toward ensuring a safer and more supportive environment for their women workers. Some improvement was recorded, but the study showed there are still no severe protections put in place for workers who have fallen victim to gender-based violence. The high court directives aimed at preventing workplace harassment have been poorly implemented, thus making women victims of continued abuse at work. This growing exodus of female workers from the RMG industry reflects a general impunity at workplace levels of negligence related to women's health, safety, and well-being, underlining the acute need for more excellent protection and enforcement mechanisms.

#### **4. Faces of Violence at the Workplace in Bangladesh**

A study that researched women in several countries finds that women are more prone to new forms of violence, such as workplace violence (Tijdens et al., 2015). It hence risks physical and mental health and is a barrier to the personal growth of women (Ellsberg et al., 2015). Domestic and societal forms of violence are understudied in Bangladesh. Workplace violence against women needs a detailed analysis of the various variables which, more often than not, interact with each other to form this issue. These include deep-rooted gender stereotyping, unethical behavior on the part of professionals, inherent risks associated with the job, and hostile work environments (Ganguly, 2015). For example, in Bangladesh, for women, entering the workforce is quite cumbersome, particularly in areas considered the domain of males only.

Men comprise 80% of Bangladesh's workforce, while women account for only 40%. Women in the workforce also face wage inequality; in fact, women in metropolitan areas earn more than thirty percent less than men. The gender gap in the workforce is a contributing factor, as women are more likely to work in agricultural and industrial production roles. At the same time, men are more likely to work in service industries (Buchmann et al., 2024).

Eighty percent of Bangladeshi garment workers have been victims of sexual harassment or assault in the workplace, and ninety percent worry that their occupation harms their condition (Action Aid, 2019). Eight times as many women as men engage in unpaid care work; 42% of women of working age work, and they typically earn less than males; 13% of women own land; these statistics are cited from the UNDP (2023). Our survey found that 66.7% of people were employed in the apparel industry (Plan International, 2021). The results showed that 55.7% of harassed employees were sexually harassed, and 77.2% were verbally abused on the job. Half of those who took the survey reported that experiencing such aggression and harassment had led to a collapse in mental health, depression, and antisocial and withdrawn conduct.

Nonetheless, 54 percent sought solace by informing their parents or guardians, and 41.7 percent protested workplace violence. Even though the High Court ruling protects women in the workplace, only 27.4% of girls and young women know this fact. While 16.8% of harassment claims were filed, almost none were investigated or addressed.

These days, more and more machinery is being used in factories. To maximize output through the use of technology, trained laborers are required. Upskilling training opportunities are not provided to female workers at the same rate as to male workers. According to a joint study by the International Labor Organization and the International Finance Corporation, most factory managers do not have a strategy to improve the abilities of their female employees. Even in their training programs, they prefer men over women in the garment industry (Fariha et al., 2023). It would suggest that developing nations are especially vulnerable to gender discrimination. Research conducted by Karmojibi Nari and CARE Bangladesh found that out of all the forms of harassment that female employees can face, the most common ones are verbal (84.7%), mental (71.3%), physical (20%), sexual (12.7%), and supervisor-related (52%) (Dewan, 2022). Several factors, including workplace social and gender hierarchies, the degree to which the workplace is formal or informal, the age of the harassed women, and their socioeconomic status, make young women more susceptible to sexual harassment on the job. Because of their solitary nature,

domestic workers who live in the home are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Workers in a factory are less likely to be injured on the job since coworkers always surround them. Floors at many agro-processing factories are segregated according to gender. Supervisors vested in maintaining the factory's good name closely monitor all employees' conduct. No official organization defends domestic workers' rights, and their working conditions are informal. There is no safety net for them because of the power imbalance that exists due to poverty, hierarchy, and informality.

On the other hand, semi-formal settings are used by manufacturing employees and supervisors. While most employees do not have contracts, those who do may be able to seek redress through established channels for grievances. Factory workers are more courageous because they are many, despite the power imbalance (Sultan, 2023).

#### *4.1. Verbal Harassment & Physical Abuse*

While the tolerance for and understanding of sexual harassment may vary from one nation to another due to cultural and religious differences, no generally accepted definition of the term exists. Sexual harassment, on the other hand, is widely acknowledged as behavior that the target does not want or expect. Harassment can take the form of physical contact or any form of verbal abuse. This contentious topic has been a significant deterrent to working outside the home for women. Although sexual assault is more likely to happen in public locations, such as how you commute to work, it does happen on occasion in the office (Mahmood & Rezina, 2016). Assaults, derogatory remarks, and other forms of hostile language used in a hostile work environment constitute verbal violence (Bhusal et al., 2023). Sexually suggestive verbal harassment degrades and humiliates employees. It is common and can take many forms, including compliments, sympathy, help, or even obscene comments. Most of the time, it comes from the male relatives of the woman who employs them as a domestic servant. Although bosses or managers verbally harassed agro-firm employees rarely, it was commonplace in public places (Sultan, 2023). In Bangladesh's RMG sector, Akhter et al. (2019) investigated both the personal experiences of women victims of workplace violence and the perspectives of other stakeholders on this issue. According to our data, workplace violence against women is prevalent at this particular organization. Participants in this study reported instances of verbal and physical abuse, including yelling and slapping, as well as other types of bullying, such as the withholding of payments and the continual threat of job loss. The female employees feared retaliation from their bosses and possibly losing their jobs if they voiced their grievances. They felt unable to make changes to the culture and atmosphere at work.

Social conventions that discourage women from participating and gender gaps in the workforce contribute to and sustain this disparity (Ferdous, 2019). Perceptions restricting women's engagement in the public arena hinder their economic opportunities, even as education availability has expanded (Ferdous & Uddin, 2021). Achieving financial autonomy is impeded by the difficulty of juggling family and job responsibilities. Bangladesh severely lacks female representation in political and business positions (UNDP, 2023; Ferdous et al., 2021; Ferdous et al., 2020). Pervasive discrimination and harassment, low-skilled occupations with restricted career progression opportunities, gender-based violence, uneven remuneration, and the effort to reconcile personal and professional lives are some of the challenges that female professionals confront, according to Saha & Ong (2023). People who took part in the study said they were under a lot of stress and anxiety and that their bosses did not help them out.

#### *4.2. The Threat of Job Loss & Discrimination*

The majority of Bangladeshi society views gender discrimination as inevitable and does not actively work to eradicate it. Even in highly educated societies, women nevertheless face the dangerous reality of repulsive gender bias. Employers' hostility towards women stemmed from ingrained discriminatory attitudes, which permeated the company. From the first day on the job to the last, female employees encounter a wide range of discriminatory behaviors. In most companies, intellectual and physical labor is seen as better suited to men (Mahmood & Rezina, 2016). Among the many workplace abuses described in greater depth in this chapter, job uncertainty is a significant problem for women in Bangladesh's RMG industry. This prevents them from speaking out against these and other injustices. It is common practice to unlawfully terminate or lay off workers in the RMG sector without cause or



prior notice because of a lack of strong trade unions, inadequate legal protections, poorly enforced existing legal protections, and the absence of legally binding documents like work contracts. The following factors have contributed to the steady increase in worker protests over the years: low salaries; nonpayment or late payment of wages and benefits (including overtime and festival bonuses); departure, termination, or termination of employees; and the sudden and unexpected closure of factories. Because there are no trade unions, employers can retaliate against workers who participate in public protests by violently repressing them, including by dismissal or termination of employment (Odhikar, 2020).

Nowadays, women in our country are just as active as males in areas considered constructive or productive. Women still do not earn as much as men, no matter how hard they work. There are instances where women's contributions outweigh those of men. However, society fails to recognize their contributions adequately. Women are less likely to receive encouragement and advancement opportunities than men (Mia & Ali, 2023). The fear of losing one's job is something that all women report experiencing daily. They continually try to find a middle ground with their managers because losing their jobs would put them in a precarious financial position. When asked what they can do if they are victims of verbal or physical assault, the women said there is a report box. Nonetheless, they fear voicing their problems, fearing their managers may retaliate. When asked what they do when their bosses get furious with them, women said they attempt to keep quiet and not dispute (Akhter et al., 2019).

#### *4.3. Lack of access to needed medicine and its Impact on Health*

In addition to exhaustion, the ladies reported experiencing headaches, body aches, eye pain, and stomach issues. Stitching punctures and ironing burns are the most common types of sewing-related injuries. Several women have complained that the first aid kits meant to be stationed on each manufacturing floor are, in fact, frequently missing essential medications (Akhter et al., 2019). Because cotton dust can irritate the respiratory and pulmonary systems, it poses a health concern to those who work in the textile sector. When employees breathe in the lint from cotton, it can trigger various respiratory issues, such as asthma, coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Diseases such as dermatitis, back pain, eye strain, pruritus, malnutrition, respiratory problems, hepatitis (jaundice), gastric pain, exhaustion, fever, abdomen pain, common cold, and problems with bones are pretty joint among women who work in the garment industry, according to the study (Mia & Ali, 2023). Because their bosses verbally and physically harassed them, all of the ladies said they felt depressed and sobbed when they got home from work. They also mentioned that they were having trouble sleeping and eating properly. They were expected to remain silent while they were abused. Therefore, they did not speak out even when they were "agitated," "angry," or "upset." (Akhter et al., 2019).

A significant worry is the quality of healthcare for RMG employees. Medical attendants often need more training or expertise to handle workplace injuries and illnesses. Most factories' healthcare facilities are cosmetic, with no access to regular physicians and limited first aid supplies. The proprietors of any factory do not give healthcare providers, and no reimbursement for expenses is offered either. Staff members have expressed a desire for easier access to healthcare. A single nurse in many factories often provides regular nursing services. The problem is that only large factories can access primary healthcare and a handful of life-saving medications. All of the RMG factories where we spoke with employees had problems obtaining clean water, which exacerbated the already severe shortage of healthcare services. Employees have voiced concerns that the water supplied for consumption is frequently unsafe. Most firms only have health and hygiene facilities set up right before customers visit; however, a few factories do. The Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) is violated due to a lack of clean water for drinking, inadequate ventilation and sanitation, and poorly maintained firefighting gear and escape routes (Odhikar, 2020).

### **5. Reasons behind Gender-based Violence at Workplace in Bangladesh**

Through its gender-sensitive laws and allocations of funds, Bangladesh has proven its unwavering dedication to promoting gender equality and empowering women. Gender equality is written right into Bangladesh's constitution. Nevertheless, differences remain (UNDP, 2023). According to this study, the patriarchal mindset that

permeates Bangladeshi culture and perpetuates the subordination of women in the workplace persists even now (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004). As a result of historical biases and power imbalances, gender-based violence happens when men and women interact violently against each other. Workplace violence, sexual harassment, mental distress, and financial losses are just some of how women experience violence in today's culture. This is often a result of entrenched gender stereotypes and other social and cultural factors (Cruz & Klinger, 2016).

Patriarchal systems place women in subordinate roles within families and communities, making them easy targets for sexual harassment and exploitation on the job (Kabeer et al., 2018). masculine coworkers, supervisors, managers, and anybody else of a masculine gender in the workplace is responsible for this assault. Because of their lower levels of education compared to men, female workers in labor-intensive textile manufacturing jobs are more vulnerable to exploitation because they are more unlikely to know about workplace regulations and their rights. This problem is even worse and impacts the workplace since management has not implemented rules and practices to address these challenges (Akter et al., 2023).

Young women in the workforce are sexually vulnerable due to societal gender standards. In most contexts, girls are expected to endure sexual harassment; in other words, males will likely attempt to exploit women and view them as potential sexual objects. Girls are expected to take charge of their safety and reputation. They should keep their heads down, not make a fuss, and never initiate a conversation with a guy. Inside the house and out in public, men are seen as "guardians" by their female relatives. The male bosses at the plant step in as "guardians" and punish the male employees who mistreat the girls (Sultan, 2023). From a religious perspective, there is much debate and criticism over women's earning potential and for good cause. Many corporate job sectors have clothing codes that contradict religious values. Women are not obligated to work for financial gain according to Islamic law. Many Islamic women are discouraged from entering the workforce due to the strict Islamic belief that only men should work to support their families (Mia & Ali, 2023). Workers' lack of cooperation was used as an excuse by employers to rationalize abusive behavior. Factory managers, for instance, saw it as appropriate for supervisors to use loud voices and physical force to control the female employees. Workers' lack of agency stems in part from the fact that their superiors view them as "uneducated" and "poor," two social categories that contribute to the prevalence of workplace violence (Akhter et al., 2019). Managers should prioritize workplace wellness by addressing physical and emotional health concerns (Akter et al., 2024). Both subjective and objective factors contribute to a healthy workplace. Workplace behaviours, employee-employer interactions, working conditions, pay, and benefits are examples of objective workplace factors; workers' attitudes and levels of job satisfaction are examples of subjective workplace factors (Campbell, 2012).

## **6. Enabling and Limiting Factors for Voice and Action**

Our shared resolve and hard work may pave the way for women's emancipation in Bangladesh, even if it will be a complex and lengthy journey. Gender is irrelevant; all of us must do our part to advance women's rights and gender equality (Dihan, 2024). The pervasive and long-standing practice of discrimination against women characterizes patriarchal societies. However, because of brave feminist activity, women have brought about a noticeable and dramatic shift in society's treatment of women in the modern era. Complete redress in the struggle against prejudice, especially that which affects women, is still elusive, notwithstanding the many strides taken toward gender equality. It is common knowledge that people from all walks of life face prejudice and xenophobia in many settings, including the workplace, schools, and even in high-ranking positions in politics, academia, and business (Dewan, 2022). True advancement necessitates questioning long-held assumptions and enabling women to flourish as equal collaborators in Bangladesh's path to development and advancement. A concerted effort involving the entire community is necessary to challenge these long-established conventions. We need to take the initiative to modify society's views and cultivate critical thinking skills in the next generation's minds through gender-sensitive education if we want our efforts to persist. Engaging with neighborhood groups and grassroots organizations, especially religious ones, is essential to foster more progressive views on women's rights. Online platforms can effectively combat prejudice and sexism, empower women, and demand equal rights (UNDP, 2023).

- Workers of both sexes should benefit from an employment policy framework that prioritizes equity above equality since women may occasionally require extra support from a societal and familial standpoint. Policies that

aim to meet people's needs in their working lives—including opportunities, wages, rights, voices, and recognition—and are appropriately monitored will bring about the changes people desire.

- Factory employees in the agro-processing and domestic industries depend on preventative measures and self-defense mechanisms to counteract sexual harassment on the job and in the workplace. Such actions constitute an agency, whether alone, in a group, or in combination. Domestic workers highlighted individual tactics, while factory workers focused on collective strategies.
- Workers, especially women workers, have modern requirements that the existing labor legislation must adequately meet. As things are, the law does not specify how to deal with infringement of workers' rights. Sometimes, the law says nothing, and other times, the punishment is not enough. There is no international system in which foreign firms operating in Bangladesh may be held accountable for circumstances in their supply chains, and there needs to be more domestic law enforcement. Workers still confront terrible working conditions and frequent rights violations since the labor legislation is not effectively enforced (Odhikar, 2020).
- Homemakers do not have a system in place to formally file complaints. Factory workers have yet to utilize the management or human resources departments. It was thought that going to the local elected officials, the court, or the police would be too difficult, expensive, and impractical. They assumed that turning to a formal institution like a court or the police would necessitate financial resources, given that the wealthy had the authority and resources to influence the system. If they went to court, their social standing would also be on the line.
- Equal compensation and the advancement of women into leadership positions are critical. Legislative changes and parental leave incentives can reduce women's unpaid caregiving load and increase men's willingness to pitch in. Well-funded, creative policy solutions must be created to address the unique needs of women from all walks of life.

## 7. Conclusion

While Bangladesh has made significant progress in addressing fundamental human needs such as education, healthcare, and nutrition, gender equality remains an uphill battle, particularly in the workplace. Women in Bangladesh have seen advancements in opportunities and protections aimed at improving their socioeconomic standing, thanks to various government initiatives. These programs target poverty alleviation and hunger reduction while also striving to narrow the gender gap in both income and opportunity (Shahen, 2021). However, despite these efforts, pervasive societal norms limit women's full participation in economic and public life. Women in Bangladesh, especially those in the workforce, still face considerable challenges, such as transportation harassment, barriers to entrepreneurship, domestic violence, and unsafe working and living conditions (Mahmood & Rezina, 2016).

The government's initiatives, while well-intentioned, often encounter resistance from conservative factions of society who maintain deep-rooted traditional views of gender roles. These efforts also face skepticism due to the widespread nature of poverty and inequality, which often perpetuates male-dominated structures. As much as policies and programs are necessary, societal attitudes toward gender must evolve. Gender equality cannot be achieved by governmental efforts alone; it requires a collective societal shift. Family, community, and broader societal mindsets play critical roles in upholding or dismantling the systems that sustain gender inequality (Mahmood & Rezina, 2016).

For real change to occur, men must be engaged as allies in the fight for gender equality. Traditional views of masculinity often harm not only women but men as well. Therefore, challenging discriminatory norms and promoting positive masculinity benefit society. By fostering an environment where men actively support women's empowerment, society can break free from the damaging gender roles that have persisted for generations (UNDP, 2023). This includes raising awareness about the advantages of gender equality for everyone, as it ultimately leads to more just, peaceful, and prosperous societies.

Unions, non-governmental organisations, and civil society also have critical roles in this transformation. By empowering women to engage in political and civic life, helping them build self-esteem, and encouraging them to report incidents of harassment or discrimination, these organizations provide essential support in the fight for workplace equality (Sultan, 2023). Workplace policies need to be similarly robust and responsive, affording clear, accessible procedures for reporting sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination. Then, access to redress will be ensured for any employee in the formal or informal sector when their rights are violated.

Society has to reject harmful cultural norms that perpetuate the vicious circle of violence and discrimination in the workplace. Standing in support of legislative reforms and championing organisations committed to the cause of gender equality will help build more equitable workplaces. Yet, Bangladesh has strived to increase women's participation across sectors, and hope abounds that this stride shall continue. And with the same effort from everyone concerned, a gender-balanced workplace will soon become a fact and make a more just and fair society for all human beings.

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# The Intersection of Political Power and Data Exploitation: Implications for Privacy and Security in Ghana's Digital Age

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## Abstract

Digital technologies are rapidly being integrated into the political process and this massive transformation is bringing both opportunities and significant challenges. The research is focused on how the merging of political power and data exploitation has led to a new challenge known as surveillance capitalism – where personal data is gathered, commodified and used without the data owners' consent—in the privacy and security field. With the guidance of four key research questions, the study makes use of the mixed-methods approach, combining literature review with empirical data collected through surveys. Academic databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and PubMed, build the arsenal of the literature review, examining the theoretical frameworks of surveillance capitalism and how effective current legal frameworks, such as Ghana's Data Protection Act, 2012. The survey component captures public perceptions of political vigilantism and its exacerbation through data exploitation. The findings highlight the need for stronger enforcement of data protection laws, increased public awareness, and the development of strategies that balance innovation with privacy protection. This study provides critical insights for policymakers, emphasising the urgency of addressing the dual challenges of data exploitation and political violence to safeguard democratic processes in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Data Privacy, Ghana, National Security, Political Vigilantism, Surveillance Capitalism

## 1. Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technologies into political processes has transformed the landscape of governance and power. Ghana, like many countries, has been exposed to a number of challenges and opportunities as a result of this transformation. On one hand, digital platforms provide new platforms for political engagement and mobilisation. On the other hand, the rise of surveillance capitalism—the practice of collecting, analysing, and monetising personal data—has led to many introduced concerns about privacy, autonomy, and the integrity of democratic processes.

Surveillance capitalism, a term coined by Shoshana Zuboff, refers to the economic system where companies extract and commodify personal data, often without seeking users' explicit concerns. (Zuboff, 2019). This

phenomenon is particularly concerning in the world of politics where the improper use of data is used to skew electoral outcomes, foster political violence and undermine the trust that the public has for democratic processes and institutions. In Ghana, political vigilantism—a form of organised group violence often linked to political parties—has already posed serious threats to national security and democratic stability (Papa Bentil et al., 2024). Ghana’s Data Protection Act, 2012, represents a significant step towards safeguarding personal data in this age of massive digitalisation. However, the emergence of surveillance capitalism poses new challenges which may be best addressed with further legal and regulatory adjustments. The existing framework requires some modifications that will allow for it to remain robust in the face of the modern complexities introduced by the digitalisation of political processes and the potential for data exploitation by political actors.

This article aims to explore the intersection of political power and data exploitation in Ghana, focusing on the implications for privacy and security. By examining the mechanisms through which surveillance capitalism operates, the role of digital data in political processes, and the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the risks involved. Additionally, the article proposes strategies for balancing innovation with privacy protection, offering insights into how Ghana can navigate these challenges while strengthening its democratic foundations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Surveillance capitalism is core to understanding the modern problems associated with data privacy. Zuboff (2019) describes it as a novel manifestation of economic activity that converts human experience into free raw materials for commercial practices. This transition from commodities to the commercialisation of behavioural data reflects a grand leap away from the traditional capitalism (Fuchs, 2012). Datafication, converting different parts of social life into data, is a process that gives companies the power to predict and manipulate behaviour, a lot of times, in ways that users are unable to grasp (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013).

As far as politics is concerned, surveillance capitalism intersects with the brittleness of the state and social construct theories. Arif and Dutta (2024) mentioned that the legitimacy of a state is present in its ability to transact security and order for the people’s loyalty. Nevertheless, when the state fails to meet its end of the bargain by fulfilling its duties, non-state actors like the political vigilante groups may arise to fill in the void. In Ghana, these groups have historically functions outside existing legal frameworks, challenging state authority and fuelling political violence (Papa Bentil et al., 2024).

Table 1: Summary of Key Theoretical Frameworks

Theory	Key Concepts	Relevance to the Study
<b>Surveillance Capitalism</b>	Commodification of personal data, behavioural data	Explains the economic incentives behind data exploitation
<b>State Fragility Theory</b>	Weak state institutions, non-state actors filling gaps	Contextualises the rise of political vigilantism in Ghana
<b>Social Contract Theory</b>	State’s legitimacy based on providing security	Illustrates the breakdown of state-citizen relationships due to vigilante groups

### 2.2. Empirical Studies

The Empirical studies on Privacy of Data underscore the distinct effects of surveillance capitalism on individual rights and societal well-being. Findings suggest that companies like Facebook and Google extensively collect data; a practice that has profound consequences for privacy, autonomy, and democracy (Anderejevic, 2014; Van Dijk, 2014). The scandal involving Facebook and Cambridge for example illustrates how personal data could be exploited for political manipulation, begging questions surrounding serious ethical and legal considerations (Isaak & Hanna, 2018).



Ghanaian political vigilantism persists as a serious issue, with groups like the Delta Force and Azorka Boys engaging heavily in electoral violence (Gyampo et al., 2017; Debrah et al., 2024). These groups, backed by political parties that benefit from their activities, often operate with impunity. Utilising digital data in these contexts can further solidify their power, since it has become easier in this digital age to conduct targeted misinformation campaigns and voter manipulation (Papa Bentil et al., 2024).

### 2.3. Comparative Analysis

Surveillance capitalism and political vigilantism are global phenomena. Similar dynamics have are very much present in countries like Nigeria and Kenya, that have weak state institutions and intense political competition which have accommodated organised group violence and the exploitation of personal data (Agbibo, 2018; Mwangi, 2012). These examples highlight the immense relevance of having legal frameworks that are properly set-up and implemented. It also shows the need for international cooperation to make contributions toward addressing these challenges.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Surveillance Capitalism and Political Vigilantism

Aspect	Surveillance Capitalism	Political Vigilantism
<b>Definition</b>	Economic system that commodifies personal data	Organised group violence linked to political parties
<b>Key Actors</b>	Corporations (e.g., Facebook, Google)	Vigilante groups (e.g., Delta Force, Azorka Boys)
<b>Main Activities</b>	Data collection, analysis, monetisation	Intimidation, violence, protection of political interests
<b>Impact on Society</b>	Privacy violations, behavioural manipulation	Undermining democratic processes, national security threats
<b>Legal and Ethical Concerns</b>	Lack of transparency, consent, and data protection	Erosion of state authority, impunity for violence

## 3. Methodology

This study makes use of the mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of existing literature with quantitative data collection through surveys. The mixed-methods approach is best suited to addressing the research questions that extend to both the theoretical and empirical aspects of the union between political power and the exploitation of power in Ghana.

### 3.1. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the primary mechanisms through which surveillance capitalism operates in the digital age, particularly in the context of political processes in Ghana?
2. How effective are existing legal and regulatory frameworks, including Ghana's Data Protection Act, 2012, in protecting privacy and mitigating the risks associated with data exploitation?
3. What are the public perceptions of political vigilantism in Ghana, and how does data exploitation exacerbate this issue?
4. What strategies can be implemented to balance technological innovation with privacy protection and enhance national security in Ghana?

### 3.2. Justification for the Mixed-Methods Approach

The mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive deep-dive of these research questions, enabling the integration of both qualitative insights and quantitative data, exploration of complex phenomena, and offering nuanced understandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

### 3.3. Qualitative Component: Literature Review

Extensive literature review was essential in the qualitative component of the study as it shed light on the theoretical foundations that backed surveillance capitalism and its implications for data privacy and political processes. This review was conducted using several academic databases, including **Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and PubMed**; chosen for their wide-ranging coverage of scholarly articles, books, and reports relevant to the study's focus.

Search terms included "surveillance capitalism," "data privacy," "political vigilantism," "Ghana," "GDPR," and "Data Protection Act, 2012." The search was refined using Boolean operators (AND, OR) ensuring that the papers included were only the ones that were recent and most relevant to the study.

### 3.4. Quantitative Component: Survey Design and Implementation

Capturing public perceptions of political vigilantism and data exploitation in Ghana through surveys was the approach used to complement the qualitative analysis. Surveys are renowned in the space of social research as a method for gathering empirical data from a large population, enabling the identification of trends and patterns (Fowler, 2014).

The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, making room for the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data. Closed-ended questions facilitated statistical analysis, while open-ended questions provided rich qualitative insights into participants' experiences and perceptions.

### 3.5. Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that the survey reached individuals that had the relevant experiences or knowledge of political vigilantism in Ghana. This approach is particularly effective in mixed-methods research where it is required that the answers to the research questions are specific, and conclusions, recommendations and arguments are built on the basis of informed perspectives (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

### 3.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey were analysed by summarising key findings using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was applied to address the open-ended questions from the qualitative data. The combination of these methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, grounded in both empirical data and theoretical analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 3: Survey Responses on Political Vigilantism

Survey Question	Response Options	Percentage (%)
Awareness of political vigilante groups	Very aware	65%
	Somewhat aware	25%
	Not aware	10%
Affected by vigilante group activities Perception of the impact on the electoral process	Yes	40%
	No	60%
	Very negative	55%
	Negative	30%
	Neutral	10%
	Positive	3%
	Very positive	2%
Effectiveness of government action	Very effective	5%
	Effective	10%

Survey Question	Response Options	Percentage (%)
	Neutral	25%
	Ineffective	30%
	Very ineffective	30%

### 3.7. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards, such as providing all participants with the free-will of engagement (informed consent), and treating their data with confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards, in line with the guidelines set by the British Psychological Society (2018).

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Surveillance Capitalism in Ghana

In Ghana, the digital revolution has opened the doors for political engagement but at the same time, exposed new risks as far as surveillance capitalism is concerned. Digital platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, which can be used to influence voter behaviour, spread misinformation, and exacerbate political tensions. Significant privacy concerns are raised in the absence of collection without explicit consent (Zuboff, 2019).

Targeted advertising, personalised recommendations, and predictive algorithms, are some of the various ways through which surveillance capitalism operates. These tools are used not only by corporations to maximise profits but also by political actors intended on swaying public opinion and manipulating the outcomes of the electoral process. The opacity of these practices, coupled with the asymmetry of power between users and data collectors, weakens public trust in digital platforms and democratic processes (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

### 4.2. Political Vigilantism and Data Exploitation

The rise of political vigilantism in Ghana is closely linked to the country's political history, characterised by intense competition between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Papa Bentil et al., 2024). These groups often use violence as a means to protecting their interests, especially during election seasons. The exploitation of digital data can further entrench the power of these groups, as it allows them to target opponents, spread fear, and manipulate public perception.

For instance, in the 2020 general elections, vigilante groups used social media to organise, recruit, and execute violent actions. The ability to target specific individuals or communities with misinformation or threats has made digital platforms a powerful tool for political violence (Gyampo et al., 2017; Debrah et al., 2024). This convergence of surveillance capitalism and political vigilantism gravely threatens national security, eroding public trust presents a serious threat to national security, as it erodes public trust in both the state and digital platforms.

### 4.3. Impact on National Security

The effects of surveillance capitalism on Ghanaian national security are so significant to be parted with. The ability of political actors to utilise personal data, merely for the electoral gain of it greatly erodes the legitimacy of the democratic process and adds to the staining of the cultural fabric. Again, the withering of privacy and the exploitation of digital surveillance tools can teardown social cohesion since citizens begin to lose trust in both their state and their fellow citizens (Zuboff, 2019).

Facilitating the political process with digital technologies has opened the door further for foreign interference in domestic affairs. The global nature of platforms means that it is accessible all around the world, despite the location of their collection, potentially exacerbating political tensions and undermining national security, as far as Ghana is concerned (Schwartz & Peifer, 2020).

#### 4.4. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for Data Protection

To combat the issues surrounding data privacy and the risks posed by surveillance capitalism as expressed by the masses, a number of jurisdictions have put in place comprehensive legal frameworks. Included in the list of most notable are the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States. These frameworks present full-bodies rights for individuals with regard to their personal data whether it is the right to access, rectify or delete their information.

Ghana's Data Protection Act, 2012 (Act 843) stands as the fundamental legal determiner for protecting personal data. The aim of this Act's establishment was to regulate how data collectors and processors acquire, analyse/process, and use the personal data of individuals in the country, avoiding an infringement on their rights. The Data Protection Act is there to put in place measures that makes it compulsory for personal data to be processed fairly and lawfully, especially mandating organisations to first receive consent before acquiring or using personal data. Data controllers are obliged to ensure data security and give individuals the right to access their data and seek compensation if their rights are infringed upon.

Irrespective of these provisions, it is still difficult to enforce and spread the awareness of the Data Protection Act, especially in the conversation of political data exploitation. The Act, although comprehensive, requires robust mechanisms that aid in better enforcement and broadens public awareness, in a bid to address the challenges that arise from the convergence of political power and data exploitation in Ghana.

To provide a comparative analysis, *Table 3* summarises the key features of the GDPR, CCPA, and Ghana's Data Protection Act, 2012, highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement in Ghana's existing framework.

Table 4: Legal Frameworks for Data Protection

Feature	GDPR	CCPA	Ghana's Data Protection Act, 2012
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	European Union	California, United States	Ghana
<b>Scope</b>	Applies to all entities processing EU data	Applies to businesses meeting certain criteria	Applies to all data controllers and processors operating within Ghana
<b>Consent Requirements</b>	Explicit consent required	Opt-out model for data sales	Explicit consent required for data collection and processing
<b>Enforcement</b>	Fines up to €20 million or 4% of turnover	Civil penalties up to \$7,500 per violation	Enforcement by the Data Protection Commission; penalties for non-compliance
<b>Rights of Individuals</b>	Right to access, rectify, erase data	Right to know, delete, and opt-out of data sales	Right to access, correct, and request deletion of personal data
<b>Challenges</b>	Cross-border enforcement, compliance costs	State-level enforcement, varying compliance	Limited public awareness, need for stronger enforcement mechanisms

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1. Enhancing Legal Frameworks

It is important to build upon the existing Data Protection Act, 2012 in order to improve and strengthen Ghana's data protection regime. As mentioned earlier, it is important to enhance enforcement mechanisms, increase public awareness and ensuring that the Act is better equipped to face the challenges of the time. Nevertheless, in addition to this, feeding of the brains of legal frameworks such as the GDPR and the CCPA, could be beneficial in providing valuable insights into renovating the Ghanaian legal framework. Modified provisions could include those for explicit consent, data minimisation, and transparency in data processing activities (Voigt et al., 2017).

### 5.2. Increasing Law Enforcement Capacity

Empowering law enforcement agencies with the capacity to address digital threats is equally vital. This could manifest in several ways, including better-funded training programmes, enhanced resources, and deeper cooperation between security agencies and technology companies. It is crucial that law enforcement is properly equipped to handle the complexities of digital data and its potential misuse in political contexts (Agbiboa, 2018)

### 5.3. Promoting Political Accountability

Parties and their leaders must be brought to the accountability alter for their part in fostering political vigilantism. This could be done through the introduction of stricter regulations on political campaigning, especially those that make use of digital data. Openness in political funding and campaign practices (transparency) could also water down the influence of vigilante groups (Papa Benti et al., 2024).

### 5.4. Encouraging International Cooperation

Considering how global digital data is, cooperation on an international scale is essential in solving the problems of surveillance capitalism. Ghana should partner with international bodies to share best practices, enhance cross-border data protection measures, and develop joint strategies for dealing with political violence in the digital age (Schwartz & Peifer, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

This article has explored the intersection of political power and data exploitation in Ghana, focusing on the implications for privacy and national security. The findings imply that the union between surveillance capitalism and political vigilantism birth serious challenges to the democratic process and the respect of human rights. To see to the addressing of these challenges, a multifaceted approach is required, involving stronger legal frameworks, enhanced law enforcement capacities, political accountability, and international cooperation. Taking these steps will put Ghana in a position where it can safeguard both privacy and national security, especially in this digital age. The aim however is not to demonise technology, but to realise it without compromising democratic values.

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# Corporate Crime: Result of Spontaneous or Constructed Order?

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## Abstract

The article explores the origin of corporate crime through the lens of spontaneous and constructed orders. From a macro perspective, corporate crime can be understood as an emergent phenomenon within a self-regulating market, driven by the interactions of self-interested individuals. From a micro perspective, it is often the result of deliberate actions by individuals within organizations, reflecting a constructed order. Recognizing this dual nature is essential for developing effective strategies to address corporate crime.

**Keywords:** Spontaneous Order, Constructed Order, Corporate Crime

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Dual nature of corporate crime*

The idea of spontaneous order, famously associated with Adam Ferguson (1767), Michael Polanyi (1941), and Friedrich August von Hayek (1948), has rarely been applied to the criminal behaviour of businesses. This article seeks to extend the scope of spontaneous order by examining how corporate crime can be understood as a contemporary manifestation of this phenomenon. Corporate crime violates legal rules and ethical standards developed over time, akin to kleptoparasitic behaviour in the natural world, where animals opportunistically exploit resources. Despite efforts by states to curtail corporate crime through laws and penalties, it persists, reflecting elements of both spontaneous and constructed orders.

Corporate crime can be viewed as a specialization in an economy driven by specialization and trade, requiring specific skills for successful execution, which aligns with the concept of spontaneous order. At the same time, corporate crime is the result of constructed order as it is often orchestrated by employees in senior management position and facilitated by complicit followers. Consequently, corporate crime appears to bear the signature of both spontaneous and constructed order. This dual nature is critical for understanding the phenomenon and developing effective mitigation strategies

### *1.2 Characteristics of Spontaneous Order*

The nature and forces of spontaneous order are widely discussed in both natural and social sciences. The discussion applies to diverse topics such as the evolution of species, the development of language, cities, a free-market economy, the division of labour, culture, traditions, and common law (Johnson, 2001; Hunt, 2007). These topics emerge as the outcome of spontaneous order and are unintended consequences of myriad individual actions and interactions that are subject to changing surroundings and human needs (Zywicki, 2008). A fascinating phenomenon that can be observed is that complex systems and organizations arise from the collaboration of basic elements if those elements follow rules of conduct and coordinate their actions without central control (Hunt, 2007). In this way, spontaneous order emerges "through the independent and competitive efforts of many" (Hayek, 1960). On this basis, spontaneous orders are understood as "unplanned," "undesigned," or "emergent" orders (Horwitz, 2008), which are prevalent but not easily recognizable (Potts, 2013). Without any involvement of human invention or design, forces of spontaneous order can create complex systems, where the whole is greater and smarter than the sum of its parts (Ross, 1928). In scholar discussions, the concept of spontaneous order and self-organization have been applied to explain a range of events: from the development of life and the behaviour of flocks of birds and schools of fish to the formation of snowflakes (Zywicki, 2008).

Key characteristics of spontaneous order include free interaction by self-interested individuals, decentralized decision-making, and the evolution of norms and behaviours based on effectiveness. A distinct force in spontaneous order is a complex many-to-many network, advancing through cooperation and behavioural adaptation of network participants (Potts, 2013). The crux of spontaneous order is that actions of participants lead to a coordinated activity without any central authority (Zywicki, 2008). Even though spontaneous order is common, its dynamics and characteristics may not be obvious. The idea of "order without design" is difficult to grasp as it is challenging to imagine design without a designer and order without an ordering hand or mind (Potts, 2013).

While spontaneous order can produce beneficial outcomes, it can also lead to negative consequences, such as corporate crime, which echoes the morally neutral nature of spontaneous processes

## **2. Transition from the Organic to Business World**

### *2.1 Natural Selection and Survival of the Fittest*

The evolution of spontaneous order is influenced by elements such as competition, cooperation, and other interactions of self-interested agents, pursuing their own goals (Hunt, 2007). This is also reinforced by natural selection and the survival of the fittest, which are based on the evolutionary ability to learn and adjust to changing surroundings (Desmond and Moore, 1991; Sugden, 1989). In these settings, self-interest often overrides virtues related to justice, ethics, or morality. Self-centred agents aim to secure their existence, even at the expense of others, driven by effectiveness rather than ethical considerations (Ogus, 1989). The natural selection in the organic world reinforces fitness, but not necessarily generate justice (Sandefur, 2009; Spencer, 1864).

Therefore, the principles of competition play significant roles in both the natural and business worlds. Natural selection favours traits that enhance survival and reproduction, not necessarily those aligned with ethical or moral values. Similarly, in the business world, self-interested actions can lead to corporate crime if they provide competitive advantages, even at the expense of ethical standards.

### *2.2 Injustice in Spontaneous Order*

The result of spontaneous order and the processes associated with this order are per se morally and ethically neutral. As such, the success of spontaneous order does not rest on fairness and justice (Sandefur, 2009) since spontaneous order evolves free from any moral and ethical values or virtues. The organic world and the concept of the survival of the fittest suggest that spontaneous order is not necessarily fair and just (Desmond and Moore, 1991).



The understanding of “just” or “unjust” is being constructed by humans and their subjective perception about these terms. The definition and interpretation of these terms are the products of time and societies. Different societies developed different theories of justice and fairness at different times. Moral, ethical values and beliefs undergo the evolution process and itself are the product of spontaneous order (Sugden, 1989). The standpoint for judgment of behaviours is in group of people, who adhere to convention, norms and rules introduced and reinforced by this group (Sugden, 1989).

In the process of spontaneous order, rules are likely to evolve and persist, which support the survival effort and increase the survival chances (Sugden, 1989). Those rules are based on rationality rather than on morality, fairness, or justice. Therefore, patterns of behaviour can evolve, which are enforced by humans that maintain them as they are benefitting to the achieving of their self-interested goals (Sugden, 1989).

One of the ignored aspects of spontaneous order is that it can produce unwelcome outcomes and generate injustice, for example in a form of corporate crime. Clinard and Yeager (1980) described corporate crime as any offence committed by businesses, which is subject to punishment under administrative, civil, or criminal law. This definition covers variety of illegal practices and activities committed either by business entity or by single employee or a group of employees of the company acting on behalf of and in the interest of an employer. Any institutional and legislative efforts to reduce and combat corporate crime are endeavours to redesign the undesirable result of spontaneous order.

Behaviour, norms, and systems evolving through spontaneous order follow and reflect the principle of effectiveness and less of justice. Any outcomes of spontaneous order have high chance to persist if they are effective and useful for the members of spontaneous order, increasing the opportunities for them to survive and prosper. Over time, less effective rules and norms of behaviour will disappear and will not be followed since they do not benefit to the members of spontaneous order.

It a nutshell, spontaneous order, by its nature, is indifferent to concepts of fairness or justice. It evolves through the actions of individuals seeking to maximize their interests, often leading to outcomes that are efficient but not necessarily just. Corporate crime exemplifies this dynamic, as businesses may engage in illegal activities to gain advantages, mirroring kleptoparasitic behaviour in the natural world. Such behaviour is not inherently criminal in the context of spontaneous order but is judged as such by human societies based on constructed norms and laws.

### *2.3 Kleptoparasitic Conduct and Corporate Crime*

In the natural world, one of the evolutionarily stable strategies applied by animals to secure their survival is kleptoparasitism, i.e. parasitism by theft. The kleptoparasitic behaviour is widespread throughout the animal kingdom and can often be observed in the nature, if animals steal nourishment from another (Crespi and Abbot, 1999). This represents a form of contest competition for resources, resulting in the loss for one party and the gain for another. The successful kleptoparasites prove to be the fittest to survive, if they victoriously go through the natural selection process as a result of their parasitic skills (Cordasco and Bavetta, 2015).

Kleptoparasitism is a form of resource acquisition, where one is harmed by the interaction while another benefits from it. Such behaviour disregards any moral, ethical values and virtues, and only pursues the objective to benefit, even at the expense of others. Arguably, kleptoparasitism is part of the natural evolution and rooted in the struggle for the survival of fittest and the most adoptable. Kleptoparasites acquire resources and food without expending their time and energy for searching and hunting. Why to hunt investing a large amount of energy if you can steal with less effort?

The number of animals engaged in kleptoparasitism is abundant. For instance, kleptoparasitic behaviour is displayed by cuckoo bees and wasps, dung beetles, bugs (the water cricket), dewdrop spiders, seabirds (e.g., gulls, skuas, oystercatchers), cuckoos' birds, the chinstrap penguins, sperm whales and Orcas, hyenas, and lions. Many other species have evolved similar habits and patterns of hunting behaviour.

Such a type of parasitic conduct is not alien to humans. They are the master of piracy and kleptoparasites, deliberately taking food, money and resources from other people. One of the shameful examples of human atrocity is slavery that was based on a long persisting unjust social system constructed by humans.

The kleptoparasitic behaviour is also observed in the business world, especially in the variety of modus operandi of corporate crime (i.e., embezzlement, money laundering, tax violation, bribery, environmental pollution). It does not necessarily mean that corporations directly steal from their competitors. It rather refers to the means applied (i.e., deception, concealment, coercion, an application of force and violence) to gain money, resources, services, and competitive advantage at the expense of others. The modern society perceives such attitude and behaviour as immoral, unethical, or illegal, but spontaneous order is not judgemental, so that the outcome of spontaneous order is detached from any virtues.

The survival of the fittest does not denote the survival of the most ethical and moral individuals, but rather refers to ability to thrive in the given environment. In this context, the criminal behaviour of businesses is not criminal in the sense of spontaneous order but in the judgment of human societies.

It is useful to look at the parasitic conduct in the animal world in order to grasp the behaviour of human agents and consequently of businesses, as the human individuals make the decision in the interest of business organisations. Before taking any actions, kleptoparasites are assessing the risk of retaliation from the intended victim versus the reward in case the theft will succeed. So, do criminals evaluate the odds of getting caught and the chances of reward, before committing the offence.

Similar to kleptoparasitic behaviour in animals, there are rational reasons for criminal businesses to break rules. The primary motivations are securing competitive advantages and increasing profits. For example, bribing officials can reduce bureaucracy and expedite decision-making, benefitting both the corporation and the corrupt officials. Corruption helps officials prioritize and cater to the demands of the briber, especially when the benefits of crime outweigh the penalties.

Criminal behaviour epitomised in departing from legal norms developed by human societies represents a variation - a form of deviant behaviour - in which businesses engage to gain competitive advantage and other benefits, if they cannot obtain them in the legitimate ways. The deviant behaviour, if this is beneficial, can become a regular pattern of conduct through behavioural repetition and imitations by others (Glebovskiy, 2019). In the view of spontaneous order, a deviant conduct is not an error, but rather a test or experiment undertaken by the agents to find out the outcome (Sugden, 1989). As long as deviant behaviour is profitable for criminal businesses, and they are not caught and punished for breaking the rules, this behaviour will propagate further offences.

#### *2.4 Human Nature, Ethic and Morality*

Humans are the core of any business. They directly shape and reinforce organisational culture, internal rules, and norms. Business organisations gather together people working towards common goals. To achieve those goals, employees make decisions on behalf of the company. Consequently, any corporate failings are also attributed to the people within those organizations. In this sense, the human nature is part of the phenomena of corporate crime (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2003).

Emotions are regarded as the basis for perceiving as to what is good or bad, right, or wrong. Treating others as one wishes to be treated is a guiding compass through universal perception of ethical and moral norms. But do humans have intrinsic ethical and moral values? Lampe (1978) examines this question by discussing as to whether the criminal is born or rather made. In case an offender has been exposed, it is often puzzled as to why and how the wrongdoer becomes a criminal. This assumes that an individual was a good and law-abiding person from the start of his life and then it changes in the course of the time. This logic rests on the presumption that people from the birth are decent, honest, virtuous and have a moral compass to navigate through malicious pitfalls the life presents to test them. Instead, humans are born neither good nor bad but must learn to be upright citizens. Learning requires

discipline, self-control, effort, and endurance. Hence, violating ethical, moral, or legal rules may be easier than adhering to them (Lampe, 1978).

Several biologists and social scientists suggested that the human being is inherently competitive, which is rooted in the biological evolutionary process (Ardrey, 1966; Montagu, 1968; Weidman, 2021). It is observed that at least newborns' behaviour shows some selfish and egocentric inclinations (Lampe, 1978). Capabilities that people learn throughout their life are how to control the egoistic, antisocial, and aggressive tendencies, human beings might have a predisposition to. As such, ethics, morals, fairness and justice are not inborn and have to be learned and internalized by humans to be ingrained in their behaviour. Consequently, moral, and ethical virtues are part of the evolving conduct, which is subject to the rule of spontaneous order: any behaviour is reinforced by the agents if this conduct is beneficial for achievement of their goals.

It can be said that humans are inherently competitive and self-interested, traits that have been shaped by evolutionary processes. Ethical and moral values are not innate but are learned and reinforced through socialization. In the context of business, these values can be overridden by the pursuit of profit and competitive advantage, leading to corporate crime.

A broad agreement on what is considered illegal, immoral, and unethical is essential to set the social rules for prevention and regulation of disputes. Mutual understanding of virtues is a cognitive tool for cooperation and coordination of human activities. Departure from accepted norms often leads to social disapproval and pressure to conform. The desire for approval and avoidance of resentment is a powerful force for compliant behaviour. This appears to be less surprising since humans are, after all, social beings, biologically fitted to live in groups (Sugden, 1989). In other words, cooperation is one of the survival strategies evolving through spontaneous order. General following the established conventions, norms and rules is in the interest of people as it benefits to the overall well-being of society. Accordingly, the followers of rules might regard the deviant behaviour of non-followers as an indirect threat to them. However, it should not be forgotten that the combination of a desire for acceptance and social sanctions can be toxic, especially if the norms do not meet ethical and moral standards (Glebovskiy, 2019).

The processes and mechanism of spontaneous order are however indifferent to the nature of compliant behaviour and the nature of the underlying rules and norms. In the discussion on the forces of spontaneous order, cooperation, compliance, and conformity should not be naturally associated with positive behaviour epitomised in legal, moral, and ethical conduct. It could be opposite of it, but still represent compliant behaviour evolving through spontaneous order.

### **3. Corporate Crime by (Un)Conscious Design**

#### *3.1 Corporate Crime: Coordination with Command*

As previously outlined, the actions of business organizations are essentially the actions of human agents, who are not inherently law-abiding and must learn ethical and moral values and behaviour. According to Hayek (1967), spontaneous order is a product of human action, and not human design. This raises the question: in case corporate crime results from deliberate decisions made by management, can corporate crime be considered an outcome of spontaneous order? If executives of criminal businesses intentionally pursue illegal strategies, it is less about spontaneity and more about conscious human design. This undermines the concept of an "invisible hand" creating spontaneous order (Smith 2009, p. 305). Leaders and top management who foster a culture that permits law violations are actively designing criminal activities. Therefore, it can be suggested that corporation crime is the outcome of constructed rather than spontaneous order. With this in mind, Sandefur (2009) highlights some issues with spontaneous order by pointing out that the distinction between spontaneous order and constructed order is blurry and even collapses under scrutiny. This might be also the case for the assumption that corporate crime only evolves through spontaneous order. The reality shows that many illegal activities are the result of conscious decisions by individuals within organizations. Top management may intentionally foster a culture that encourages or condones illegal behaviour, pointing to a constructed order.

### 3.2 Macro- and Micro-Views

Business organisations adjust to the changing business environment they operate in. On one hand, this emphasises the fundamentals of the spontaneous order. There is no “invisible hand” or “invisible mind” planning and designing that some businesses will be ethical and other criminal as the outcome of the adjustment process. On the other hand, business organisations are hierarchical groups and networks of employees including top management, who are empowered to plan the actions of the business. This brings into question whether corporate crime is a result of human actions (i.e., spontaneous order) or rather of human design (i.e., constructed order). This can be discussed from two different standpoints: macro – and micro level views. Macro-level perspective examines corporations as participants of the free market, which is subject to self-regulation; whereas micro-level analyses corporations as organisations that are designed, managed, and controlled by individuals.

At a macro level, corporate crime can be seen as an unintended consequence of market dynamics, where self-regulation and competition drive businesses to seek advantages, sometimes through illegal means. This perspective aligns with the concept of spontaneous order, where the market operates without central control, and outcomes are shaped by the interactions of numerous participants. At a micro level, corporate crime is often the result of deliberate actions by individuals, suggesting a constructed order. The dual nature of corporate crime, encompassing both spontaneous and constructed elements, highlights the complexity of the phenomenon and the need for nuanced approaches to regulation and enforcement.

#### 3.2.1 Macro View

Despite being illegal, corporate crime fits into the self-regulating nature of the market due to several reasons. From a macro-view, corporate crime can be seen as a form of industry in market economy functioning on the grounds of demand and supply principles. For example, bribery meets the demands of officials, fulfilling the expectations of corrupt corporations. Such actions, while illegal, operate similarly to other legal business activities, coordinated by the market without central control. This market coordination is “...the result of the interaction of self-interested individuals pursuing their own gain without any necessary concern for the good of the whole (Hunt 2007, p. 44)”. The market system evolving through spontaneous order allows businesses to find their roles, regardless any limitations whether this is an illicit role in the market or not. Without any external support, the outcome of spontaneous order echoes the variety of needs of market participants, including illegal demands. (Sugden, 1989). Further, corporate crime exemplifies the outcome of spontaneous order economy that is based on specialization and trade, which were created but never designed by humans (Boettke, 2011). Crime execution with a minimal risk of punishment requires specific skills and knowledge of legal loopholes, similar to specialization in other market sectors. Therefore, corporate crime is a form of trade with unlawful nature, but still emerging through rational behaviour of market participants, which supports the self-regulation of market.

Lastly, cooperation drives spontaneous order. In this context, corporate crime can be seen as collective crime requiring cooperation among many actors: active criminals and passive followers. The former might be represented through the executive management, who has power and authority to lead and control the business. The later are employees, who are reports to the executive management in the chain of command and follow the directive. Illegal behaviour displayed by corporations is therefore possible due to active offenders being assisted by passive bystanders in form of collaboration. In other words, there are bad leaders and bad followers, who freely follow those leaders. Therefore, corporate crime, as an outcome of spontaneous order, involves free interactions and individual choices, including the decision to engage in illegal activities.

#### 3.2.2 Micro View

From a micro-level perspective, corporate crime is always planned by individuals, pointing out to a consciously designed activity rather than spontaneous order. Any illegal activities result from individual intends and fit into the notion of "purposely constructed" order (Zywicki, 2008). Businesses' engagement in criminal activities are by

default orchestrated by individuals. Consequently, corporate crime is the result of conscious human design and of human actions, which utterly contradicts the concept of spontaneous order.

Further argument to support the idea that the corporate crime is the consequences of a made or order is a lack of free will and free interaction. Individual decisions in a business organisation are heavily influenced by management instructions, organisational culture, and collective behaviour. Thus, free will in the organisational context seems to be a myth as will is constantly subject to the variety of stimulus: coercion, persuasion, inducement, enticement, and other means of influence. At the same time, organisational rules and culture facilitating corporate crime and coercing staff into engaging in illegalities are toxic and undermine the existence of free will. Culture and expectations of others have an ordering character impacting individual choice and the way of interactions. People tend to conform to established norms in order to 'fit in' with the group and be accepted by the majority. Behaving in accordance with opinions of the majority is rewarded with social approval of others and building rewarding relationships. In this context, an idea of a free will decision appears to be unrealistic. It is important to stress that to own a decision does not necessarily mean that the decision was made based on a free choice.

A decision made under the fear of social disapproval, criticism and isolation can unlikely based on free will. Any behaviours shaped by the forces imposed by individuals on other individuals are a result of a human-caused order.

### *3.2 Convolution of Spontaneous and Constructed Orders*

Potts (2013) points out a cognitive blind spot, outlining that emergent unintentional order is often overshadowed by human intention and design. That is why it is difficult to recognise the spontaneously in corporate crime.

From macro-level perspective corporate crime appears to tick all boxes to substantiate the claim that criminal conduct of corporation evolves through spontaneous order. From micro-level view, corporate crime can be regarded as the outcome of constructed order, where the activities are deliberately arranged according to a preconceived plan with a conscious aim in mind. Accordingly, corporate crime has the signature of both constructed and spontaneous order.

Corporate crime represents the instance where the outcome of spontaneous and constructed orders greatly intertwined. Even though behaviour of individuals and businesses could have been driven by deliberately imposed rules according to a predetermined plan, the emerging conduct can still be regarded as part of a spontaneous order (Hayek, 1964). Activities of business organisations, regardless of whether they are legal or not, which are instructed and intentionally enforced lead to the unplanned and spontaneous order, as the businesses are the participants of a larger market with many other players (Sandefur, 2009). The overall market, where any corporations operate in, is not the result of any human invention (Zywicki 2008). Moreover, Hayek (1964) considers the reaction and responsive behaviour of individuals to coercive rules and norms as part of spontaneous order. This would imply that forces imposed on employees to engage in corporate crime also generates activities, which are part of spontaneous order. Therefore, the illegal behaviour of corporation evolving through constructed order would be part of spontaneous order, even though the employees' conduct might have sprung from the coercive forces.

## **4. Conclusion**

It is difficult to grasp the concept of design without a designer and order without an ordering hand or mind. Even though spontaneous order is common, its structure may not be obvious, making it hard to recognize (Potts, 2013). It is even more challenging to see spontaneous order in corporate crime. Yet, beneath the surface, several forces and dynamics unfold, supporting the idea that corporate crime is also an expression of spontaneous and constructed order.

From a macro-view, corporate crime can be viewed as an industry functioning on demand and supply principles within a self-regulating market. It represents a form of specialization and trade, ignoring ethical and legal

constraints while fitting into the mechanics of a market economy. From a micro-level perspective, corporate crime appears as a constructed order, initiated, and designed by individuals or groups within an organization. This perspective emphasizes the role of deliberate human actions and plans in orchestrating illegal activities.

In conclusion, corporate crime embodies both the characteristics of spontaneous and constructed order. Depending on the perspective, it can be seen as either an organizational crime evolving through spontaneous interactions, or a crime meticulously planned and executed by individuals.

This dual nature underscores the complexity of corporate crime, highlighting that it is driven by both human actions and human design. Ultimately, understanding corporate crime requires acknowledging its multifaceted origins and the interplay between spontaneous and constructed elements within the business environment.

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# The Eastern Bengal Ballads, and the English and the Scottish Popular Ballads: Comparison and Contrast

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## Abstract

Ballad is one of the main genres of folk literature. If we look at the ballads of any nation, we can see the similar views of the folk poets. *The Eastern Bengal Ballads*, and *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, which have different origins, have some similarities and dissimilarities. Both the oriental and the occidental ballads share the same characteristics in some respects and differ in others. The Eastern Bengal ballads have the atmosphere of their own. Similarly, the English and Scottish popular ballads exhibit an atmosphere which is their own. The Eastern Bengal ballads have some special qualities for which they are unique from other ballads of the world. Likewise, The English and Scottish Popular ballads are a separate genre of literature for their individualistic characteristics. This paper attempts to make a comparative study on *The Eastern Bengal Ballads*, and *The English and The Scottish Popular Ballads*.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Ballad, Genre, Comparison, Contrast

## 1. Introduction

Folklore is the pulse of the people (Islam 1998:308). So, we can assert that folklore is close to the heart of the people. The purpose of folklore is to illustrate the problems of the folk life from different angles. Actually, it reflects the world view of various folk groups and strengthens the identity of these groups. The knowledge in folklore can determine the identity of the people, their likings and disliking, their weal and woe, their customs and traditions, their love and affections, emotion and passions, their actions and reactions, their mode of life and the like. No humanities like ethnography, history, the history of literature, linguistics or anthropology can go without folklore. It plays a vital role in solving many diverse phenomena of spirited culture. Ballad is a rich component of folklore. Albeit the ballads from both the Eastern and the Western world focus on the real global issues of mankind, they share some common and uncommon on different perspectives. Let us now find out the similarities and dissimilarities between the two types of ballads from the perspectives of facts, action, character, language, geographical condition and dramatic action of the facts and the like.

## 2. Results and Findings

### 2.1. Traits and Traditions



Firstly, the action of the English and Scottish Popular ballads revolves around a single situation which may be either the culminating point in a large series of events or an isolated happening of sensational value. There is no subplot related to the main plot to make the story advance. So, the plot of the English ballads is a unified one. We can exemplify from some of the ballads. Treachery is a common human trait which is nicely presented in “The Queen of Scotland” (301). Here we find that the queen treacherously sends Troy Mair to lift a stone under which is 'a serpent that lang wanted meat' and she is baulked of her revenge only by the casual appearance of a maid who cuts off one of her breasts to heal the young man. We can take another instance of a single incident through which the reunion of lover and beloved has been narrated. In “The Suffolk Miracle” (272) the devotion of the separated lovers is emphasized by the young man's return as a ghost and the girl's unquestioning acceptance of his invitation to ride with him. As the story in English ballads is short and compact, they do possess the qualities of short stories.

On the other hand, the Eastern Bengal ballads are long and prolix. There is hardly any ballad which centres round a single action. Each and every ballad is a combination of more than one story. Here the main plot is supported and reinforced by the subplots. For example, “Dewana Madina” pala is the combination of three stories. The main story is the nuptial love between Madina and Dulal and the subordinate stories are the evil mechanism of the cruel stepmother and the victory of Alal and Dulal over Baniachong. Similarly, in “Mahua” we observe that the principal episode Mahua-Nadar Chand episode is supported by some episodes such as gipsy episode, Sadhur Dinga episode, forest couple episode etc. But it is to note that the subplots are relevant to the main plot. The main plot and main characters are surrounded by the subplots and sub-characters just as the moon is surrounded by the clusters of stars. So the plot of *The Eastern Bengal ballads* is episodic and is loosely connected whereas the plot of *the English and Scottish Popular ballads* is well-knit. As they are very long, they contain the characteristics of a novel. The Eastern Bengal ballads are descriptive whereas The English ballads are full of action. Though descriptive our ballads are not 'extensive description or mere decoration'.

Objectivity is one of the principal traits of the English and Scottish Popular ballads. They are more and more impersonal. There are no comments or reflections by the narrator. He merely tells what happened. The story is told for the story's own sake, while prepossessions and judgments of the authors or authors are kept for the most part in the background. For the western ballads, writers are less emotional and they are lost in their own community. They have the power to negate themselves from their own creation. In *The English and Scottish ballads*, to be sure, there is the occasional use of first person 'I'; but this is nothing more than an attempt to bring the events of the tale closer to audience and performer. The impersonal quality is not destroyed, as a matter of fact, in “The Wee-Wee Man” (38), though the first person is used throughout:

As I was walking all alone,  
Between a water and a wa,  
And there I spy' d a wee wee man,  
And he was the least ere I saw (Child ed. 1882:330).

We must note that objectivity is also the significant quality of modern poetry. Hence, we can profess that the ballad composers are the precursors of modern poetry.

The Eastern Bengal ballads, on the other hand, are quite subjective. In many cases, the ballads begin with invocation which is the direct speech of the composers themselves. In most of Bangla ballads, the narrator or the singer is present. Sometimes they tell their tale on their own and sometimes they make comments on joy and sorrow, submission to deity or woof and warp of life. We can mention the writer's comments on the life of Nadar Chand and Mahua after the formers recovery in the wood:

They two live on forest fruits  
and sleep on smooth stones,  
They pass their days and nights happily  
But the thunder roared on their heads suddenly (Siddiqui ed.2000:83).

Our Bangla ballads are subjective because the ballad composers were very much emotional. The moderate climate of the tropical country can be attributed to their intense emotion.

Invocation, as we find, is the significant part of some of the Eastern Bengal ballads. In this respect the Eastern Bengal ballads follow the tradition of medieval *Mongal Kabbaya*. The invocation functions as the preparatory song to the ballad song. It can be compared to the prologue to *Charjapada*, ancient Bengali literature or *Baisnab Padabali Kirton*, the medieval Bengali literature. Invocation is not affected by any religious bias, rather it is secular. Every invocation reflects the communal harmony because the ballad composers or the singers were much aware of their audiences- both Hindus and Muslims:

I invoke to the Kailas mountain on the North  
where lies the soft stone of Ali,  
I invoke to the holy place of Mecca  
whereto I bid my salam for the Muslims (Siddiqui ed. 2000:51).

In The English and Scottish Popular ballads invocation is absent. This is because of their objective quality.

## 2.2. Treatment of Nature

Nature is the integral part of human life. So, the folk bards, like the sophisticated poets, tend to present nature in ballads. In *The Eastern Bengal ballads* nature is presented as such as (i) Diversity of nature (ii) Background to an incident and (iii) Guiding force on human characters. The folk poets present diverse natures as they have seen with their simple observation. Nature appears as it really is without any meaning underneath. Six seasons of a year, which are prominent in a tropical country like Bangladesh come with their special forms and varieties. Human mind is ever changeable like nature. Nature which influences man in various ways is manifested in 'Baromasi'. 'Baromasi' literally means (a song) of twelve months. From the artistic viewpoint, it is a description of the twelve months of the year and composed with a special purpose. In the 'Baromasi', we view the rich panorama of nature. In most cases, though not always, it connects the changes of nature during the course of the year with human sentiments and emotions. The folk writers have used 'Baromasi' in the Bangla ballads. The rich description of nature in 'Baromasi', in fact, reflects the mental makeup of the separated lady. In this regard, Dusan Zbavitel observes:

The majority of the Bengali folk 'Baromasis' describe the sorrows of a woman separated for a full year from her husbands or her beloved and they usually devote the first of each month's portion to short description of a natural scene, characteristic of the month in question (Zbavitel 1963:144).

In "Dewan Bhabna" the 'Baromasi' is the effective externalization of mental state of Sunai, a parting woman. Every month highly corresponds to her internal turmoil, and her emotional turmoil becomes poignant in the month of Falgun (Spring). The poet says:

How can you realize the agony of spring  
How can you realize the turmoil of a forlorn damsel (Siddiqui 2000:222).

There is a complete Baromasi in "Bogular Baromasi" where the chastity of a forsaken woman has been tested through ordeal. We must mention that in some ballads 'Sunmasiki' or 'Dosmasi' have been used in lieu of 'Baromasi'. In "Mahua" the 'Dosmasi' is not related to Mahua, the heroine, but to Nadarchand himself. This 'Dosmasi' expresses how passionate Nadar Thakur is to Mahua. The 'Dosmasi' in "Malua" is somewhat different from others because, though it narrates the grief of separated woman, Malua, it ends with reconciliation between the hero and the heroine. A critic comments:

The very principle is the same to connect some natural phenomenon with either an element of action or, even more frequently with a certain mood or emotional state. (Zbavitel 1963:144).

Nature in the Eastern Bengal ballads functions as the background to the incidents in the course of a narrative of human action. While describing nature the poets become restrained and frugal in words. They just present nature as needed for their purpose. The poet presents a love-adventure (Ovisar) of Nadar Chand and Mahua after their prolonged separation through fine description of nature. It is dead of night Mahua and Nadar Chand get reconciled on the lap of nature. The poet describes:

It goes away at *Falgun* but comes in *Chaitra*,  
The cuckoo coos on the tree;  
The rice *Sail* has become purple  
Nadar Chand wakes up at midnight.  
The *Chaiter Bow* sings songs in the sky (Siddiqui ed. 2000:61).

When Mahua proceeds to kill her lover, Nadar Chand, at the command of Homra, the poet narrates:

The stars disappeared, the moon was not visible  
The moon-lit night became dark (Siddiqui ed. 2000:70).

In this connection we must quote a scholar's comment. 'In "Mahuya" before going on to describe the despair of the heroine who has been commanded to kill her lover, the poet inserts a single verse. Stars disappeared from the sky, the moon is not to be seen' (Zbavitel 1963:142).

"Moisal Bandhu" is a ballad where nature plays a part not only as a background of narration but the whole story is based on the nature. Dingadhor's emotional attachment to his beloved, Sajuti has been better expressed through nature description:

The eyes of the damzel are  
like the twinkling stars in the sky  
seen through the strips of clouds.  
The damzel goes to the ghat wearing blue shari  
like the black clouds hovering in the sky (Sen ed. 2000:303-304).

The folk poets are somewhat Wordsworthian so far as their presentation of nature in the Eastern Bengal ballads is concerned. Nature is mother, nurse, savior and antidote to the troubled soul. Nature, as though the safe abode of the distressed people. Mahua and Nadarchand build their humble paradise on the riverside in wilderness:

There is the nice brook where water plays  
hide and seek with waves,  
We will spend our day and night on the river side,  
where colorful flowers and the ripe fruits are available.  
where you will get, my dear lady, the sweet fountain water (Siddiqui ed. 2000:83).

The exiled convicts take their shelter in the wood. For example, "Bogular Baromasi", "Kanchon Mala", "Kazolrekha", "Raja Tilak Bosonta" bear the reference to exile in the forest. Again Joyananda in "Chandravati," Malua in "Malua" Ayana in "Ayana Bibi" and Ziralni in "Ziralni" all choose river as their eternal sleeping place. We must not forget to note that when the heroines surrender their body and soul to the heroes, they select natural objects as true witnesses:

Let the sun, the moon, the sky and you also  
be witness of mine  
Nadar Thakur is my dearest husband (Siddiqui ed. 2000:60).

So the winter breeze, the autumnal cornfield and the vernal flora, the rainy flood, the stars, the sun, the moon, the beels and ponds with emotional undercurrent- all appear vivified through the hands of the folk poets. In fact, the

Bengali folk poets did not prefer the wild aspects of nature like Byron, or the shifting aspects of nature like Shelley, or the purely sensuous in nature like Keats. Nor did they recognise the ugly aspect of nature "red in tooth and claw" as did Alfred Tennyson. The folk poets put stress on the psychological influence of nature on human being.

In *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* also natural beauty resembles the beauty of heroes and heroines. The natural objects like flowers, plants, trees, the sun, the moon, the hills, the rivers, the mountains, the birds are presented in *English and Scottish ballads* as either the gift of God or as the comparison elements for the heroes and the heroines. Here everything sparkles, the lawn is green, the sky is blue and fair, the birds chatter, the rivers murmur, the lady's hand is milk white, her dress is green as grass, her cheek is rosy. Flowers have been presented in the following way:

The flower of my affected heart,  
Whose sweetness doth excel (Demsmoreodell 1892: 286).

The poets present natural objects such as trees, plants and flowers to elucidate the ancient belief of metamorphosis. In "The Lass of Roch Royal" (76) the lover and beloved are reconciled after their death with the happy touch of bounteous nature:

The one was buried in Mary kirk,  
The other in Mary quire;  
Out of the one there sprung a birk  
Out of the other a bryar; (Child ed. 1886 :217).

In a number of English and Scottish variants recovered since Child, the plants are usually a rose and a briar; a 'green, green rose', and a 'briar' a 'golden briar' and a 'thorn' a 'damask rose' and a 'sweet briar' and a 'diamond rose' and a 'sweet briar', a 'cherry tree' and a 'willow'.

The folk poets, indeed, depict aspects of nature accurately. We often get the actual tone of the country in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. However, the bards are not interested in Nature for itself. The simple-minded bards find no sustaining power or source of joy and moral health in nature. Hence, they are realist in their accurate descriptions of England countryside and its people. But their realism does not imply the cataloguing of minute details whether pleasant or brutal. They, as we see, believe in stripping life to form in their art. Their method of nature description is to suggest rather than explain all. The folk bards were the illiterate working class people and so they never romanticised nature. They simply were alive to the external beauty of nature. Here natural objects are always concerned with them not as foci for mystical meditation or starting points for fantasy, but as comparable elements with the beauty and attributes of the heroes and the heroines.

### 2.3. Myth and Supernaturalism

Occultism and supernaturalism are more prominent in the *English and Scottish Popular ballads*. Fairy land, witchcraft, magic, underworld charm and enchantment, transmigration of soul- all these unexpected features make the ballads rich and unique. The ballads deal with the ancient philosophy which held that the soul might at death pass into anyone of a number of forms, that of a tree, a bird of serpent, a fish or inanimate objects such as a stone, or it may reside in certain parts of the body- the blood, the bones or the hair. In ballads it is said that the metamorphosis of man into a plant or animal or other forms does not, as a rule, carry the idea of retribution. In other words, metamorphosis does not seem punitive, for it is generally the good man or woman, the hero or heroine who is changed into a flower or bird or an animal. From the numerous examples of metamorphosis we can cite here a single one. The universal and primitive idea of tree or flower metamorphosis is illustrated by the familiar ballad commonplace of love animated plants that spring from the graves of lovers (Wimberly 1965:33-38). It is especially well preserved in "Earl Brand" (7). Here the lovers are expressly said to grow up as plants:

The one was buried in Mary's kirk,

The other in Mary's quire'  
The one sprung up a bonnie bush  
And the other a bonnie brier (Child ed.1882 :102).

Supernatural presentation is almost absent in Bangla ballads with some exceptions. Only one ballad, "Horin Kumar Ziralni" exemplifies the transmigration of soul where the dear is transformed into a prince. There is a touch of supernatural in "Kazalrekha" which illustrates Kazalrekha's seven days long starvation watching her dead husband. Hence it is found that our Bangla ballads are more lively and realistic than the English and Scottish ballads.

Both Bangla and English ballads illustrate the use of myth. In the *Eastern Bengal ballads* Bangla myth has been used in the right context. *Ramayana* with its mythical characters Rabon, Ram Lakhoon and Sita has been alluded several times. In "Chandravati" there is a reference to *Ramayana*. Chandravati being frustrated in love affair is suggested by Diz Bongosi Das to realize the value of life. His advice:

Worship Shiva and compose the *Ramyana*  
And thus beguile the time. (Siddiqui ed. 2000:158).

In *English and Scottish Ballads* the poets have used myth in order to serve their purpose. We find the myth of pagan other world, the beings and circumstance of that place. The myth of apple tree is a well-known myth of all ages and countries. The apple tree, as we have already observed, plays a part in the enchantment of Tam Lin, according to two texts of the ballad of this name (39 G, K). Tam is asleep beneath an apple tree when he falls into the hands of the elf queen:

I went out to my father's garden,  
Fell asleep at yon aple tree:  
The queen of Elphan [she] came by,  
And laid on her hands on me (Child ed. 1890:456)..

The English and Scottish Popular ballads stress on the next world. The idea of heaven and hell has been best expressed in English ballads. The dualism of Christian thought as reflected in the ballads finds expression in antithetical description of other-world – the highness of heaven, the lowness of hell; the path to the realm of the blest, the road to the regions of the damned; the pleasure of the former place, the pains of the latter. To match the thorn-beset "narrow road" to heaven, the Elf Queen shows True Thomas (37 A 13) the lovely 'braid braid road' to hell (Wimberly 1965:413).

And see not ye that braid braid road,  
That lies across you lillie leven?  
That is the path of wickedness,  
Tho some call it the road to heaven (Child ed. 1882:324)

#### 2.4. Philosophy of Love

Love, as we notice, is the main theme of most of the Bangla ballads. The folk poets have presented love in Bangla ballads as ethereal, celestial and immortal. Love is not here a mere physical contact of two persons but the unification of two souls. Almost all the Bangla ballads centre round love between man and woman. The folk poets have praised the triumphs of free love over social barriers, religious obligation and aristocratic influence. Here 'Monarch of heart' defies and defeats all the wealthy and powerful kings of the world. Love does not flourish in the fairy land, it does not bloom in the smash soil on earth. So the poets tend to unfold the deep mystery of love germinated in human heart. 'Why love cannot find its own path' is the motto of ballads so far as love is concerned. And this love has existed for ages.

In the ballads love is not akin to love of Shri-Forhad or Lily-Maznu. In the Eastern Bengal ballads love has been shown as an instance of true love. This love advances along the path of caste and creed, religion and society,

customs and traditions towards the unknown destination. Characteristically, love found in the *Eastern Bengal Ballads, and The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* can be compared and contrasted from different points of view.

Firstly, we can compare love in “Mahua” with that in English ballads. For instance, the story of “Lady Maisry” (65) is similar to that of “Mahua”. The Lady Maisry is wooed by so many lords of the Northern country. They tried to convince her with beautiful things such as ‘brothches’ and ‘rings’. But Maisry, mad for Lord William rejects the suit of all the lords decided by her parents and brothers, and finally sacrifices herself for Lord William. We can quote:

O pardon me, my brother dear,  
An the truth I’ll tell to thee;  
My bairn it is to Lord William,  
And he is betrothed to me. (Child ed. 1888 :114).

“Mahua” is also a romantic tragedy like “Lady Maisry”. Mahua is a girl from a gipsy family. At the time of her snake charming, Nadar Chand, a son of a Zamimder falls in love with Mahua at the first sight because of her bewitching beauty. They would like to be united into wedlock. But their love cannot attain perfection, because it was an unequal love. Besides, Mahua’s selfish foster father Homra stands barrier to their marriage. He wishes to marry off Mahua with his fellow player, Sujon. But Nadar Chand is the sole possessor of Mahua’s heart. They cannot bear a single moment of separation. Mahua expresses:

When he goes a moment beyond my sight  
I become mad.  
I am caught in a cage like a mad bird (Siddiqui ed. 2000:62).

So they flee to a distant wood where the new couple makes a bed of happiness. But the irony of fate is that Homra, who has been in quest of both Nadar and Mahua, happens to meet them. So he orders Mahua to stab Nadar Chand. Mahua, in lieu of stabbing her sweet heart, stabs herself to death. Then the gypsies killed Nadar Chand at the command of Homra. At their deaths, Homra, highly sorrow-stricken, is seen to bewail their deaths. Upon a close interpretation we can see that the lovers do not care about religious obligation or social bindings. The lovers sacrifice their lives on the altar of love. The intensity of love is best expressed in the following lines of “Mahua”:

Where I will get the pitcher  
where I will get the rope,  
Let you be a deep river  
where I will be drowned (Siddiqui ed. 2000:59).

Perhaps this is the most sublime expression of love in world literature. The moral of Mahua is that the splendour of love in life is not obliterated, even when life and love are blotted out together. We cannot but feel pity and fear at the sad demise of the ‘Star crossed lovers’ of Cupid’s world. A renowned European critic named Dr. Stella Kramrische throws more light on the romantic tales of medieval Europe, Aucassin and Nicolett, and Tristan and Iseult in relation to the Bengali ballad “Mahua”. Aucassin, the only son of Count Beaucare, like Nadar Chand, falls in love with Nicolett, a comely girl of unknown, descent, bought of the Saracens whom his father does not permit him to marry. The story runs towards the adventure of lovers and ultimately they are rewarded. But the story of Mahua and Nadar Chand ends in tragedy. So we can profess that in the western ballads love tinged with Western idealism reaches the level of Christian ideal of self-dedication. They illustrate Milton’s Maxim that ‘Man is born to rule and women to yield to his sway’ (Siddiqui 1976:51). On the contrary love in Bangla ballads like “Mahua”, “Konka and Lila” are absolutely free from any religious /obligation. They have no sentiment other than that of human heart in all its purity and strength.

Similarly, the story of “Feroz Khan Dewan” can be compared with the Romantic tragedy of “Earl Brand” or “Douglas Tragedy” of the Scottish ballads. So far as love is concerned, “Dewana Medina” is similar to “Fair Annie” or “The Butcher Boy”. And also the ballad “Hati Khedar Gan” can be compared with “Songs of the Forecastle and Lumber Shanti” of the English Popular ballads. Therefore, keeping even the question of historical truth regarding time and circumstances under which the characters are introduced in the ballads one can easily observe that the heroes and heroines were not bound by the Shackles of scripture or social bindings. Their main concern was love and love alone as expressed in the following lines:

Love is my treasure,  
Love is my care  
Love is my necklace,  
He who dies for love  
is immortal (Siddiqui 1976:52).

### 2.5. Power of Resistance

Practice of protests is remarkable in Bangla ballads. If we analyse the social history we find that this is a history of oppression of the powerful over the weaker, the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. The conscious people dream of an exploitation-free, happy and prosperous society; but they have to cross the bar set by the tyrants. As a result, the peace loving persons voice protests against the tyranny to establish their legal rights. We can find out the high sounding protests in the Bangla ballads. In “Mahua” we notice the protest of Mahua from two perspectives. First, we notice this at the time of her husband selection. A daughter of Brahmin family, Mahua is brought up in gipsy family by Homra. He wants Mahua to be married to Sujon. But Mahua is determined to be united with Nadar Chand. She wants Nadar Chand as her life partner because blue blood flows in the bodies of both Mahua and Nadar Chand. Besides, to Mahua, Nadar is as glittering as the sun or moon whereas Sujon is just like a glow-worm. Her protest is there:

How can I go to other land deserting my friend,  
who glitters like the sun or the moon  
I'll never marry Sujon, a gipsy  
As Sujon, your boy, flickers like a fire-fly (Siddiqui ed. 2000:87).

Again on the eve of her suicide she expresses her protest:

O dear parents, listen to me,  
Who are my real parents  
From whose lap you stole me, their sweet child  
I have never seen my own parents in my life  
Now I am to die at the will of fate (Siddiqui ed. 2000:87).

In *English and Scottish Popular ballads* such kind of protest is quite absent. We believe that some heroines are selfish, arrogant and revengeful. Here we can also refer to Robin Hood ballads where Robin Hood, an outlaw, is seen to loot the wealth of the rich so as to help the poor. Here socialistic philosophy of life has been presented in Robin Hood ballads.

### 2.6. Representation of Women

Women characters in *The Eastern Bengal ballads* are delineated as stereotyped ideal characters. They have been shown as love seekers and husband devotees. They appear before us with some special characteristics. Love and devotion to husband, patience and restriction, shyness and tolerance, brevity and creative power, womanly zeal and chastity, self-sacrifice and self-confidence, personality and simplicity are the prominent traits of women characters. In these ballads the dark aspects of the women have been projected indicating the contemporary social values. The characters are unique for their having instinctive qualities and freedom in love affairs.

Notwithstanding so many social predicaments and obstacles, they have been enlightened in glorious love. The poet points out:

The melody from your flute thrills my heart  
My heart bleeds to forget that sweet note (Sen ed.2000 :193)

The queen, enchanted by the sweet melody of the blind piper, leaves the palace and sets out with romantic heart to the unknown path. Malua, Chandravati, Kamala, Lila, Sunai, Rupavati, Sakhina, Dewana Madina become the symbol of eternal love and self-sacrifice. Similarly, Mahua, Bhelua, Kamala exhibits their presence of mind. Preservation of chastity and ordeal of chastity become the ingredient of ballads which influence in blooming the women characters.

On the other hand, women characters in English ballads are portrayed as realistic, aggressive, extrovert and revengeful. Although they do possess love in their heart, they can do anything destructive if love is not reciprocated. An instance should be cited from the ballads of English language. In "Sir Peter's Leman" it is mentioned that the beloved of Sir Peter is serving wine at the wedding party of Sir Peter. When the new bride of Sir Peter comes to know from a maid servant that Kirsteen is Peter's former beloved, Kirsteen's fire of revenge kindles to a large extent. She makes a rosy bed in bride's chamber for the new couple but alas she puts the bed on fire. This is a notable example of how love may be turned into revenge. We can compare Kirsteen with Mahua or Dewana Madina or Kazalrekha. Kirsteen is vindictive whereas others are self-sacrificing and devoted lovers in the realm of love. So, women characters in the English and Scottish Popular ballads are seen to challenge the all-pervasive patriarchal ideologies.

### *2.7. Musical Quality*

As regards the English ballads, we must evaluate the artistic worth of the musical accompaniment of folk ballads. A ballad's life depends not only on theme and attitude, but on tune. Melody and rhythm, acting as a background for the tale, control its simplicity, colour, its emotion and aid the work of memory (Well 1950:6). The melody in ballads is as inevitable as the words. We may surmise that they would therefore be inseparable, a given tune forever mated with a given poem, and that the music must come first in the estimation of the singer. They are stories narrated in rhythmic pattern but, we do believe, moulded to a very marked degree by the musical accompaniment to which they have been set. It is not strange that the same ballad should be sung to more than one tune. Certain ballads may well be sung to different melodies because the tune originally attached to them has varied itself out of existence. So we can say that ballad airs like all folksong, are ever shifting, ever renewing themselves. A ballad singer may habitually vary every phase of his tune in the course of a ballad. As for the tune used in the English ballad, Sharp's explanation is quotable:

A pentatonic variant of a ballad melody may be quite as delightful an accompaniment as one in which all the tones of the octave appear. The same tune, we must remember, may be sung in different versions according to different modes; and it may sometimes be hexatonic, sometimes pentatonic, and sometimes heptatonic. This is quite at the option of the singer, who, without being aware of musical terms or musical technicalities, knows by his inherited art how to transpose from key to key from scale to scale (Gerould 1957:82).

The English and Scottish Popular ballads are written in stanzas. In each stanza the lines rhyme. As the poem is divided into stanzas, there is a pause between the stanzas. So the English ballads were sung in slow motion. On the contrary, our Bangla ballads are written line by line with the first line rhyming the second. The Eastern Bengal ballads are divided into cantos, each canto containing a special subtitle. The causes attributed to this division are to relieve the monotony of the ballad singers. But this division of the ballad never hampers the continuity of the ballad story.

### **3. Conclusion**



From the above discussion we may conclude that The Eastern Bengal ballads, and The English and Scottish Popular ballads have some parallelism and contrast. They might be different in various points such as structure, presentation, subject matter, geographical position, style, language and art and artifice. The English and Scottish Popular ballads are objective with no comment by the narrator. These ballads are pivotal around a single event and there are no subplots or side plots. So, the ballads pertain to the quality of a short story. These ballads are short, compact, well-knit and rich with fine rhetoric skills. The foremost characteristic of the English and Scottish Popular ballads is the dramatic action which moves the story towards tragic end. The language of this kind of ballad is homely and colloquial. These ballads written in stanzaic form maintain the conversational tone. One the other hand, the Eastern Bengal ballads are subjective and in most of the ballads the writer's comment is present. These ballads are long and irregular. So, the Eastern Bengal ballads contain the elements of a novel. The plots of this type of ballads are loosely connected where the main plot is supported by the subplots. These ballads are written in simple dialect of Eastern Bengal. The most obvious quality of these ballads is simplicity of thoughts and clarity of expression. But one thing that is common in both the Eastern Bengal ballads and the English and Scottish ballads is the development of humanity. Man is the nicest art of God. Every wonder on earth is created not by any deity or superpower but by man himself. The helpless cave residing man has raised his position to the space exploring man. Whatever good has been done by man is done for the welfare of human being. Notwithstanding the geographical distance, the way of thinking of the folk bards of the East and the West is the same. Not only the great men but also the folk bards of all nations think alike. The balladists could see and understand so much of folk life and could pierce the heart of so many passions and emotions. They have been able to touch upon different points of morals, of philosophy, and of the conduct of life. Life and death, wealth and poverty, love and prize of life have been nicely presented by the ballad writers. In all ballads we find pure mirth, bright and tender fancy, ardent passion, questioning into the deep and terrible mysteries of folk life. In almost every ballad we have the most diverse elements, the high and the low, the great and the small, the noble and the base, the merry and the sad, brought under the dominance of one dramatic purpose. Man may vary in race, religion, nationality, caste, colour and culture etc. But inner flow of every man in the world is the same. So astonishingly widespread is the glory of ballads that it might be said that 'they are not of a land, but of all lands'; 'They are not of an age, but of all times'. So, we can contend that the literary excellence of our Eastern Bengal Ballads is not less significant than that of the English and the Scottish Popular Ballads. Thus, we may conclude with universal theme of Gazi's song with which our ballads deal:

Cows are of various color  
but their milk is white  
I traveled the whole world  
And saw all men the sons of a single mother.

Note: The original Bangla quotations from The Eastern Bengal Ballads have been translated into English by the researcher himself for the convenience of the readers.

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# English Humor in the Canterbury Tales in a 14th-Century Setting in England

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## Abstract

British humor comes from the long history of evolving linguistic habits in England, with strong themes of irony and self-deprecation running through British humor. The Canterbury Tales contains rich British language humor, which has extremely important historical value and is one of the original carriers of British humor. In this paper, we will adopt the case study method as the research method, through the deconstruction of the prioress and her story in the collection of Canterbury tales, analyze the specific embodiment of English humor in the collection of Canterbury tales, and combine it with the social and historical background of the 14th century. It is found that English humor is strongly reflected in the Canterbury tales, and its satirical language habit is inseparably related to the historical background on which the literary works are based. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the research and development of modern English humor and the protection of its inheritance, and provide certain research ideas for literature.

**Keywords:** English Humor, Canterbury Tales, Literary Studies

## 1. Introduction

The charm of language cannot be separated from humor. As one of the symbols of national culture and human character, humor plays an indispensable role in every language in the world. As a global language, English has integrated the social situation and humanistic factors of different periods in the long history of its development. The emergence and development of British humor are accompanied by the gradual formation of the English language system and rooted in the development of British history and national character, and it is constantly updated with the advancement of time, but its strong irony and cold humor always run through the process of change of British humor. The Canterbury Tales, as a milestone of English literature in the 14th century, is not only a good model for social reaction, but also contains a wealth of English language humor and examples. As an important carrier of language development, literary and artistic works are key tools for studying the characteristics of a certain language. Nowadays, many theoretical researches and excavations on British humor are based on the rich literary and artistic works in the long history.

Today's existing researches are mainly based on actual materials (daily communication phrases, advertisements, etc.) or movie works as research materials, and analyze more in terms of the in-depth influence and meaning behind British humor, such as advertising, sociology, management, etc. In 1993, Associate Professor Lynette S.

McCullough took samples of advertisements from the U.S., U.K., and Germany respectively, and rated and classified the humor by combining the different types of business models and the language and cultural habits of each country to rate and classify humor. The study analyzed the specific samples of humor from the aspects of marketing and management, which is forward-looking in the field. After that, Lucy Delap took the 20th century British domestic service as the research blueprint, analyzed the phenomenon of linguistic humor in it from the foothold of the use of this daily language, and analyzed the social situation behind this phenomenon in the context of the 20th-century era, which to a large extent bridged the blank part of the research on linguistic humor. In the paper published by Zhang Yun in 2017, the film work British black comedy film and the historical development of Britain are organically combined, analyzing the British humor displayed in this kind of film from the perspective of subject matter strategy and narrative strategy respectively, and analyzing the connection between the film development and the social situation in the light of the history of the development of the British comedy film, which is more grounded in the social impact brought by the British humor. In 2018, the research published by Jia Hongli in which director Edgar Wright's film works are used as materials to analyze the British humor embedded in his works, which is comprehensively analyzed in terms of storyline, camera language, etc. In addition to the analysis of the work's humor, it probes more deeply into the mutual achievements of Edgar Wright and British humor, and does not explore the connection between this linguistic feature itself and the social situation. In 2019 Eugenia Zuroski, on the other hand, outlines a number of scholarly studies on humor, satire, comedy, and laughter in eighteenth-century England, focusing on the political purposes and functions behind humor and laughter, as well as focusing primarily on the social factors that shaped the development of English humor and the cultural significance it brought to the table, which focuses on the social relevance of humor and does not overly relate it to works of literature and art. The study focuses on the social reality of humor and does not associate it too much with literary and artistic works.

It can be seen that the research perspectives of the existing papers seldom focus on the connection between English humor and literary works, especially the lack of studies using 14th-century literary works as materials. It is almost impossible to see the figures of 14th-century English literary works and the historical background of the 14th century in the existing studies, and the studies that analyze the language against the background of the social landscape of this historical period are also scarce. There is also a dearth of research on the humor embedded in literary works and the connection between this linguistic feature and the social situation.

Therefore, this paper aims to solve the lack of research on the connection between English humor and literary works, to increase the research angle with the background of the social pattern and current situation of the 14th century England, to take the Canterbury Tales as the basis and the research blueprint, and to analyze the English humor contained therein from the perspective of historicity and literature. We also analyze the correlation between linguistic development and social progress by combining it with the socio-historical background of the 14th century in England. This study will fill in some of the gaps in the study of British humor in literature, provide reference and help for later research, and contribute to the research and development of modern British humor and its inheritance and protection.

The first part of this paper will provide a brief introduction to the concept of English humor and the Canterbury Tales, and a preliminary explanation of the overview and connection between the two. The second part of the paper is an analysis of the existing literature on the characteristics of English humor, irony, metaphor, and pun are its very prominent features, but also from the long history of the development of Britain's characteristics and unique expression. 14th-century England's historical background of the overview of the paper constitutes the third part of this part, the analysis of the part of the systematic analysis can help to understand the background of the formation of the Canterbury Tales and the overview of the story. The fourth part of the paper takes the prioress and her story as a case study to analyze the connotation and expression of English humor. The fifth part is the conclusion of this study, which highly summarizes the association and connection between English humor and the Canterbury Tales as well as the historical background of 14 actual England.

## 2. Characteristic of British Humor

From the existing literature, the main features of British cold humor are irony, metaphor and pun. In the following, these three points will be defined and summarized based on the analysis of the existing literature, and their association with British cold humor in the Canterbury Tales will be briefly explained.

### 2.1 Irony

In British humor, irony is a more common approach because British culture is concerned with indirection and ambiguity. Direct accusations and criticisms are considered ungentlemanly in British culture. And out-of-control language can lead to a loss of harmony so that many British aristocrats are good at using irony to express their dissatisfaction. And out-of-control language can lead to a loss of harmony so that many British aristocrats are good at using irony to express their dissatisfaction. Therefore, British irony is more indirect and produces the effect of contrast.

Satire is very evitable in the Canterbury Tales. For example, in the story told by the miller that the priest's ill will towards the carpenter. For example, in the story told by the miller that the priest's ill will towards the carpenter's pretty wife, the hypocrisy of Christianity and the dark ugliness of human nature is very vividly and significantly satirized.

### 2.2 Metaphor

The language expressed by the metaphorical approach in English is not plain, but makes the things expressed more vivid, graphic and concise. This phenomenon enhances the freshness, specificity and pertinence of the language. phenomenon enhances the freshness, specificity and pertinence of the language. The British are very good at using metaphors. The elegance rooted in their cultural habits and gentlemanly demeanor has made them adept at using this method in their language.

The use of metaphor is quite notable in the story of the Nun's Priest Tale. The use of the rooster and the fox as the main characters of the story actually satirizes the truth that trouble comes out of the mouth. The use of the rooster and the fox as the main characters of the story actually satirizes the truth that trouble comes out of the mouth. The story is a fable that demonstrates the metaphorical techniques that British humor makes good use of.

### 2.3 Pun

Pun refers to the use of words with multiple meanings and homophones in a certain language environment to intentionally make statements having double meanings. Pun refers to the use of words with multiple meanings and homophones in a certain language environment to intentionally make statements having double meanings. It can be divided into harmonic pun and semantic pun. It is concerned about the surface of the two layers of meaning, of which the inner layer of meaning is where the expression, both implicit, but not revealed, but also to make people realize, to find out. In the same cultural context appears to be a double meaning, but also funny and implicit. In the same cultural context appears to be a double meaning, but also funny and implicit. The use of puns can make the language more humorous and playful.

Puns are not very directly represented in the Canterbury story collection. But it will always have an important place in the development and use of British. But it will always have an important place in the development and use of British humor.

## 3. Overview of the historical background in the fourteenth century

### 3.1 Political situation

The author Chaucer lived and composed the Canterbury Tales in the late 14th century. At this time the Hundred Years' War between England and France had begun. The war, which was fought intermittently between England and France for more than a hundred years from 1337 to 1453, was a disaster for the people of England or France. The war, which was fought intermittently between England and France for more than a hundred years from 1337 to 1453, was a disaster for the people of England or France. And at that time, it was the era of the Black Death. Under the double blows of the war and epidemics, the economies of England and France were greatly traumatized, and the people did not have enough to live on.

At the same time, the religious situation in late 14th-century England was complex and dark. The corruption of the Papacy and the Pope and their monopolization of religion contrasted sharply with the poverty of the lower classes. The corruption of the Papacy and the Pope and their monopolization of religion contrasted sharply with the poverty of the lower classes. Besides, the Christian Church became an obstacle to the formation of the English nation-state and a negative factor in the strengthening of royal power.

Timed to this political environment and religious context, Chaucer's attack on the dark Middle Ages and religion in the Canterbury Tales makes perfect sense.

### 3.1.1. Social Situation

In the 14th century, England was suffering from the bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death. This plague pandemic originated in the 14th century A.D. and continued for more than 300 years, spreading throughout Eurasia and the north coast of Africa, especially in Europe. This plague pandemic originated in the 14th century A.D. and continued for more than 300 years, spreading throughout Eurasia and the north coast of Africa, especially in Europe. Similarly, the entire population of England, no matter what class they were in, struggled with the Black Death.

The Black Death had a dramatic impact on the economy, politics, culture, religion, science and technology of the European society in the Middle Ages, which had a great influence. The Black Death is seen by many scholars as an opportunity for the transformation and development of European society. The Black Death not only pushed forward the development of science and technology, but also prompted the Catholic Church's authoritarian status to be broken, which had an important impact on the development of European society. The Black Death not only pushed forward the development of science and technology, but also prompted the Catholic Church's authoritarian status to be broken, which had an important impact on the Renaissance, the Reformation and even the Enlightenment, thus changing the direction of the development of European civilization. The Canterbury Tales were also influenced by such a background.

### 3.2 Textual Developments

The 14th century coincided with the period when Middle English was in use. The Canterbury Tales are also an important representation of the Middle English period. The English language of this period was much changed from Old English in pronunciation and spelling, vocabulary and grammar. A large portion of Old English vocabulary was eliminated in favor of many French and Latin words. The English language of this period was much changed from Old English in pronunciation and spelling, vocabulary and grammar. A large portion of Old English vocabulary was eliminated in favor of many French and Latin words.

The Middle English period saw significant changes in the vocabulary, grammar, phonology and writing of English. In terms of vocabulary, the introduction of a large number of French words made English characterized by both Germanic and Romance languages. In terms of vocabulary, the introduction of a large number of French words made English characterized by both Germanic and Romance languages. Grammatically, Middle English inherited the grammatical structure of Old English. In terms of vocabulary, the introduction of a large number of French words made English characterized by both Germanic and Romance languages. The grammatical gender of adjectives and nouns disappeared, and the verb endings changes began to become blurred. In terms of phonology and writing, the influence of Upper French phonology on the English language was also recognized. In terms of

phonology and writing, the influence of Upper French phonology on English phonology and the change in political centers have led to changes in English phonology and writing.

#### **4. Humor embodied in the Canterbury Tales**

##### *4.1 Synopsis of the Prioress and Her Story*

The Jews killed Christian children who sang songs of praise to the Blessed Virgin. The children had their throats cut, but the Virgin Mary put a grain of in his throats and still sang. When the elders took the grain from the child's mouth, the Virgin Mary came down and the child died peacefully.

##### *4.2 British humor in the episode*

The narrative of the nuns unfolds the religious themes of "horror" and "redemption" through the abuse and murder of innocent children. It combines magical and grotesque plots with realistic narratives, with strong colors of magical realism. It combines magical and grotesque plots with realistic narratives, with strong colors of magical realism. The child, dead with his throat cut through to the collarbone, continues to sing in order to lead people to his body. This is an exaggerated and distorted form of absurdist writing, which does not correspond to the logic of reality. It is a subtle irony of the mainstream religious ideology's attitude of outward obedience and inward protest, a paradoxical situation of seeming cooperation but actually non-cooperation. It is a subtle irony of the mainstream religious ideology's attitude of outward obedience and inward protest, a paradoxical situation of seeming cooperation but actually non-cooperation.

Chaucer's description of the prioress in the General Introduction is full of humor and hilarious. One of the most important things about the prioress who appears in the General Introduction is her name. One of the most important things about the prioress who appears in the General Introduction is her name. She is called Lady Eglentyne. Eglentine (wild rose) was a title commonly used at the time to symbolize the Virgin Mary. It is highly ironic that Chaucer named the prioress after a flower that symbolizes the Virgin Mary, as Mary is a symbol of love and mercy - It is highly ironic that Chaucer named the prioress after a flower that symbolizes the Virgin Mary, as Mary is a symbol of love and mercy two things for which the prioress is shown to be disdainful in her tales.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Based on the above analysis of the characteristics of English humor, the historical context of England in the 14th century and the examples in the Canterbury Tales, the following conclusions can be drawn. Canterbury Tales, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The conception of the Canterbury Tales is inextricably linked to the historical situation of England in the 14th century. The Hundred Years' War between England and France and the corruption of the Christian Church provided the Canterbury Tales with real and vivid examples of stories. England and France and the corruption of the Christian Church provided the Canterbury Tales with real and vivid examples of stories. The Black Death was also the source of these dystopian tales. The Black Death was also the source of these dystopian tales. These social realities are satirized through funny and meaningful stories that draw on the rich perspectives of multi-professional people to express their own views. These social realities are satirized through funny and meaningful stories that draw on the rich perspectives of multi-professional people to express strong and deep condemnation. Such sharp satire and absurd metaphors laid an inaccessible foundation for the development of British humor and Middle English as a whole. Such sharp satire and absurd metaphors laid an inaccessible foundation for the development of British humor and Middle English as well. Its many years of circulation and importance as a classic early English poetic work remain influential today. Its many years of circulation and importance as a classic early English poetic work remain influential today.

In short, many of the stories in the Canterbury Tales contain the characteristics and colors of early British humor. The origin of British humor is thickly rooted in the soil and development process of British history and culture.

The origin of British humor is thickly rooted in the soil and development process of British history and culture. And under its influence, it has formed the language symbols that are uniquely British, which still have far-reaching influence in today's society. British, which still has far-reaching influence in today's society. From the Canterbury Tales' long-lasting circulation in the world, it is not difficult to see that British humor and British culture are not the same. From the Canterbury Tales' long-lasting circulation in the world, it is not difficult to see that British humor and British culture carry the train of books, which has a significant and far-reaching influence in today's world as well as in cross-cultural communication and many other aspects.

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# Towards Sustainable E-Commerce: Consumer Preferences for Reducing Packaging Waste in Indonesia—A PLS-SEM Analysis

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## Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian e-commerce platforms, particularly Tokopedia, can mitigate the environmental impact of overpackaging waste by exploring the effects of sustainable packaging materials, recycling systems, and environmental awareness campaigns on consumer preferences. The research hypothesizes that consumer support for eco-friendly packaging is positively influenced by advancements in packaging design, recycling infrastructure, and environmental education, and highlights the role of government interventions in shaping business and consumer behaviors. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), the study provides insights into sustainable practices within Indonesia's e-commerce sector, emphasizing value co-creation among consumers, businesses, and policymakers. Findings reveal that consumers highly value optimized packaging, recycling systems with incentives, and eco-conscious brand practices, though incentives and taxes alone are insufficient for driving change. This research offers actionable recommendations for reducing the environmental impact of e-commerce packaging waste and aligns with consumer expectations for sustainability in online shopping.

**Keywords:** E-Commerce Packaging, Overpackaging, Plastic Waste, Environmental Sustainability, PLS-SEM

## 1. Introduction

The rapid growth of e-commerce in Indonesia has led to significant environmental challenges, particularly due to the excessive use of plastic packaging materials like bubble wrap and tape. E-commerce platforms, such as Tokopedia (Andariesta & Wasesa, 2023), have facilitated convenient access to goods, but this convenience has resulted in increased packaging waste. This issue was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a surge in online shopping and, consequently, packaging waste (Yuniar, 2020; Lestari et al., 2021; Ricky et al.,

2022). Indonesia's limited waste management infrastructure has struggled to cope with the rising volume of waste, which poses threats to both local ecosystems and broader global sustainability efforts (Wasesa et al. 2022).

Research has shown that packaging materials significantly contribute to the carbon footprint of the logistics sector, with studies in China and Germany demonstrating the substantial environmental impact of packaging in e-commerce (Su et al., 2020; Zimmermann & Bliklen, 2020). However, there is a gap in understanding how consumers in emerging markets like Indonesia perceive sustainable packaging solutions and how these preferences could drive more environmentally friendly practices in the e-commerce sector. This study seeks to explore how digital marketplace platforms like Tokopedia can reduce the environmental impact of packaging waste by examining the influence of improvements in packaging materials, recycling systems, and environmental awareness campaigns on consumer preferences.

The study centers on the hypothesis that consumer preferences for sustainable packaging solutions are positively influenced by advancements in packaging design, waste recycling systems, and environmental education. The study also proposes that government interventions, such as regulatory frameworks and financial incentives, play a crucial role in shaping both business practices and consumer behavior. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable practices can be integrated into Indonesia's e-commerce sector. Furthermore, by emphasizing value co-creation among consumers, businesses, and policymakers, the study offers practical insights for promoting sustainability and provides actionable recommendations for reducing the environmental impact of packaging waste. Through this research, two key questions are addressed: first, what are the globally discussed solutions to addressing the issue of overpackaging in e-commerce; and second, which solutions to the issue of e-commerce overpackaging are preferred by Indonesian consumers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Digital Transformation and Environmental Sustainability

Digital transformation refers to the strategic shift in organizations driven by emerging technologies that fundamentally alter how value is delivered to customers (Gebayew et al., 2018; Tang, 2021). Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, cloud computing, social media, and the Internet of Things (IoT) have been increasingly adopted since Industry 4.0. These technologies enable businesses to create new operational models, streamline processes, and enhance customer experiences. At the same time, environmental sustainability emphasizes the responsible use of resources to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (Elleuch et al., 2018; Gaughran et al., 2007). This concept encompasses reducing waste, pollution, and resource conservation.

As digitalization accelerates, its intersection with sustainability becomes apparent. Feroz et al. (2021) categorize the impact of digital transformation on environmental sustainability into four areas: pollution control, waste management, sustainable production, and urban sustainability. These areas illustrate how digital technologies can support pollution measurement, waste reduction, and sustainable production practices across industries. However, achieving environmental sustainability through digital transformation is not without challenges. Organizations face internal and external barriers such as unclear environmental regulations, bureaucratic obstacles, and limited access to sustainable materials (Murillo-Luna et al., 2011). Overcoming these barriers requires strong support from top management and strategic planning to integrate both digital transformation and sustainability goals effectively.

### 2.2. The Overpackaging Issue in E-Commerce

In the context of e-commerce, overpackaging has become a significant environmental concern. E-commerce transactions, especially in business-to-consumer (B2C) models, involve multiple layers of packaging—primary, secondary, and tertiary—to ensure product safety and branding. These layers, while necessary for logistical reasons, contribute heavily to environmental degradation (Hellström & Saghir, 2007). The challenge lies in

balancing the need for protective packaging with environmental responsibility. The concept of cleaner production has been proposed as a solution, emphasizing waste reduction at every stage of the production process, including packaging (Chueamuangphan et al., 2020).

Cleaner production methods aim to minimize environmental impact by optimizing packaging design and using sustainable materials. These methods address the overuse of plastic and cardboard, which are commonly used in e-commerce packaging, by promoting recyclable materials and innovative designs that reduce the amount of packaging required while maintaining product protection. Countries with large e-commerce sectors, such as China and India, are particularly affected by the waste generated from daily online deliveries, highlighting the need for supply chain optimization and more sustainable packaging solutions (Zimmermann & Bliklen, 2020). Involving consumers in this process is also essential, as their preferences for recyclable and sustainable packaging drive demand for eco-friendly products.

### *2.3. Solutions to E-Commerce Overpackaging*

There are three key actors involved in addressing the overpackaging issue: government, enterprises, and individual consumers. Each plays a vital role in mitigating the environmental impact of packaging waste (Lu et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2021).

#### *2.3.1. Government*

Governmental interventions are crucial in regulating and shaping sustainable packaging practices. Policies such as product taxes, eco-design standards, and extended-producer-responsibility (EPR) incentivize businesses to adopt environmentally friendly packaging solutions (Foschi & Bonoli, 2019; Watkins et al., 2019). Governments can also set packaging standards, enforce recycling systems, and provide subsidies to support sustainable packaging practices (Tencati et al., 2016). In China, for instance, the Environmental Protection Tax (EPT) was introduced in 2016, requiring businesses to reduce their environmental impact or face financial penalties (M. Zhang et al., 2016). Through such governance systems, countries can promote a shift towards more sustainable consumption and production practices.

#### *2.3.2. Enterprises*

Enterprises play a critical role in reducing packaging waste by adopting sustainable materials and optimizing packaging strategies. Innovations in biodegradable and reusable materials, such as cellulose-based packaging, reduce the environmental impact of e-commerce (Escursell et al., 2021). Companies like IKEA and JD.com have implemented recycling systems and utilized algorithms to optimize packaging designs, minimizing the use of unnecessary materials (Carlin, 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Enterprises are also adopting circular economy principles, where packaging waste is reintegrated as secondary raw material. Training and management of logistics personnel to use packaging more efficiently and prevent product damage during transportation are additional measures that companies can take to enhance their environmental impact (Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016).

#### *2.3.3. Individual Consumers*

Individual consumers also play an essential role in addressing the overpackaging issue. Consumer preferences drive demand for sustainable packaging, with an increasing number of consumers prioritizing recyclability and environmental impact when making purchasing decisions (Prakash & Pathak, 2017). Educating consumers about the consequences of overpackaging and encouraging them to choose eco-friendly options can significantly influence the packaging strategies of businesses. Additionally, behavioral changes, such as consolidating multiple purchases into single transactions, can help reduce the environmental impact of e-commerce deliveries (Grębosz-

Krawczyk & Siuda, 2019). Raising public awareness about the importance of sustainable practices is key to fostering a societal shift towards environmentally responsible consumption.

#### *2.4. Theory of Value Co-Creations*

Value co-creation (VCC) refers to a collaborative approach in which businesses and consumers work together to create value, moving away from traditional, product-centric business models (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In the context of e-commerce overpackaging, VCC can foster innovative solutions that meet both consumer and environmental needs. By engaging consumers through collaborative platforms, businesses can gather feedback on packaging preferences and develop sustainable packaging solutions that align with consumer expectations (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014). For instance, customers can contribute ideas for reusable packaging or participate in recycling programs, helping businesses implement eco-friendly practices.

Moreover, VCC extends beyond packaging materials to include logistics and recycling processes. By involving consumers in decisions related to delivery routes and recycling participation, businesses can reduce carbon footprints and improve the efficiency of recycling systems (Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016). This collaborative effort not only addresses the immediate issue of overpackaging but also supports broader environmental sustainability goals, creating a competitive advantage for companies that focus on consumer-driven, co-created value (de Almeida Oroski & da Silva, 2023).

#### *2.5. Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework highlights that addressing the issue of e-commerce overpackaging requires an integrated approach involving digital transformation, sustainability, and collaboration among key stakeholders—governments, enterprises, and consumers, as shown in Figure 1. While digital technologies enhance operational efficiency, the environmental impact of packaging waste remains significant. Cleaner production methods and innovative packaging designs are crucial, but their success depends on supportive government regulations, business strategies that adopt eco-friendly materials, and consumer participation in sustainable practices. Through value co-creation, these stakeholders must collaborate to develop and implement solutions that align environmental sustainability with shared value creation. The framework emphasizes the interconnected roles of these elements in mitigating the environmental impact of e-commerce packaging.

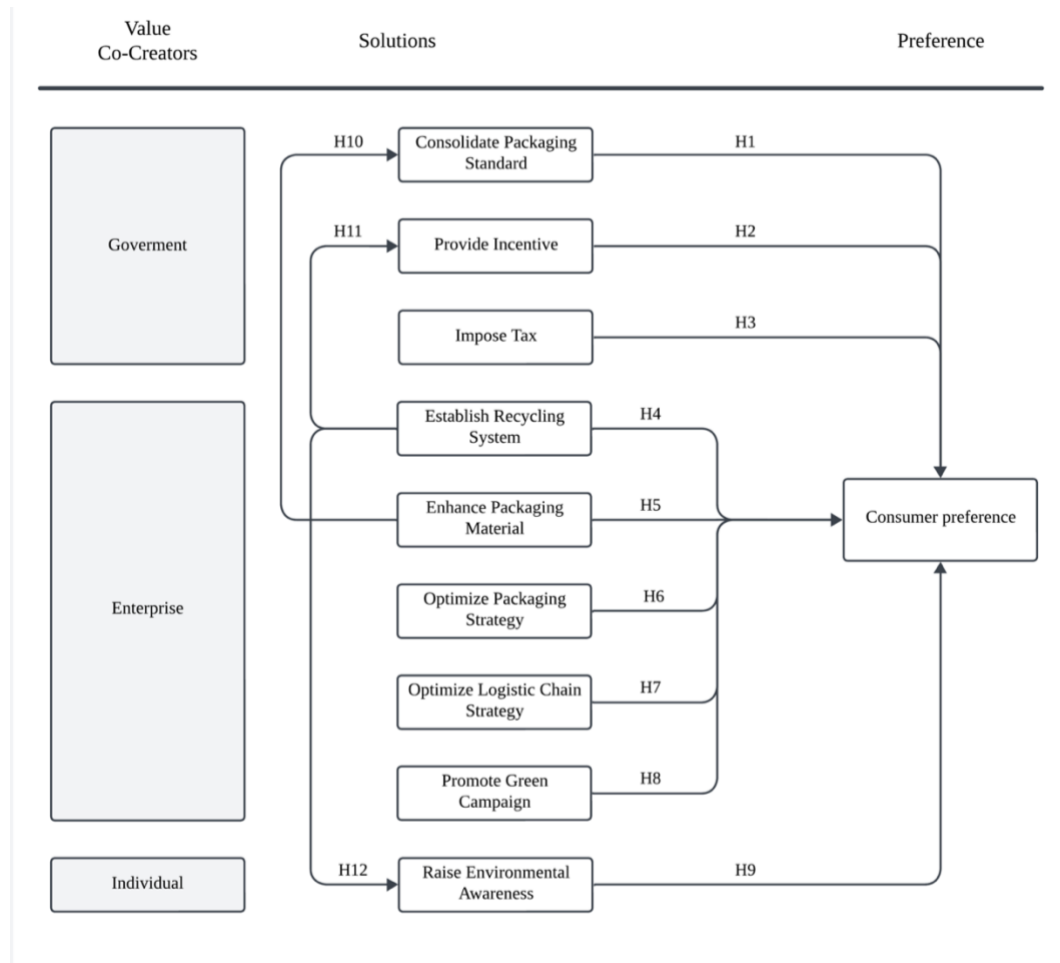


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Aligned with the conceptual framework, we present the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Consolidate packaging standard is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Provide incentive is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Impose tax is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Establish recycling system is positively correlated with consumer preferences
- **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Enhance packaging material is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Optimize packaging strategy is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 7 (H7):** Improve logistic service excellency is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 8 (H8):** Promote green campaign is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 9 (H9):** Raise environmental awareness is positively correlated with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 10 (H10):** Consolidated packaging standard is positively mediating between enhance packaging material with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 11 (H11):** Provide incentive is positively mediating between establish recycling system with consumer preferences.
- **Hypothesis 12 (H12):** Raise environmental awareness is positively mediating between establish recycling system with consumer preferences.

### 3. Method

This research employs a quantitative approach to address the issue of overpackaging in Indonesian e-commerce, using a carefully structured methodology. The study begins with the development of a comprehensive research design, which includes identifying business problems, reviewing relevant literature, and constructing a

questionnaire for data collection. The quantitative data collection process involves a survey distributed in the larger Jakarta (Jabodetabek) area, focusing on consumer preferences for sustainable packaging solutions. The survey captures respondents' demographics and opinions using a five-level Likert scale to assess various variables, such as government policies, recycling systems, and packaging innovations. A sample size of 100 respondents, chosen through convenience sampling, is deemed appropriate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. Data analysis is performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a method suitable for small sample sizes and non-normal data distribution, ensuring a thorough evaluation of relationships between variables. The analysis process includes validating factor loadings, assessing reliability and validity, and testing the hypotheses through bootstrapping to ensure statistically significant results.

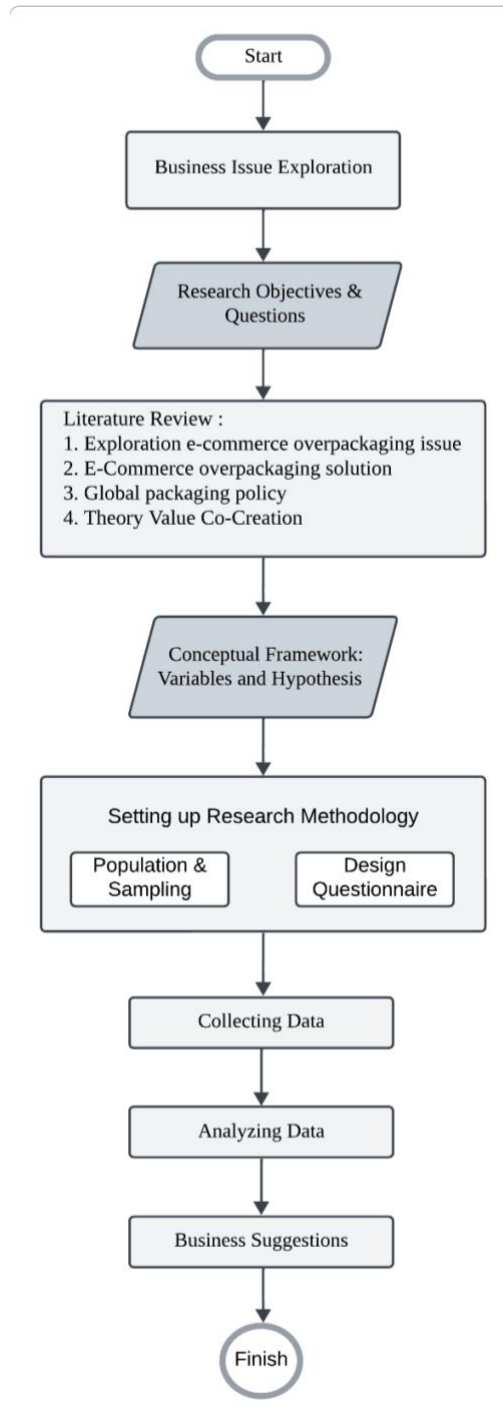


Figure 2: Research Design

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Respondents' Profile

Table 2: Respondents' Profile (n= 105 respondents)

Variable	Item	Result
Gender	Male	43%
	Female	57%
Age	<25	14%
	25-34	60%
	35-44	22%
	45-54	4%
	>54	0%
Education	Undergraduate	6%
	Graduate	79%
	Postgraduate	15%
Occupation	Student	12%
	Entrepreneur	10%
	Professional	63%
	Civil servant	3%
	Other	11%
Cities	DKI Jakarta	39%
	Bogor	9%
	Depok	15%
	Tangerang	31%
	Bekasi	6%
Have you ever been doing e-commerce transaction?		100%
Years e-commerce transaction experience	1 year	4%
	1-3 year(s)	9%
	3-5 years	21%
	>5 years	70%
Number of transactions in 1 Month	1 transaction	5%
	2-3 transactions	37%
	4-5 transactions	20%
	More 5 transactions	38%
Awareness to e-commerce overpacking issue	Yes	66%
	No	34%

Table 2 shows that most respondents possess significant expertise and experience in e-commerce. Notably, 70% have more than five years of experience with online shopping platforms, and 58% conduct over three transactions per month. This high level of engagement underscores their familiarity with online purchasing behavior, adding practical insight to their responses. Additionally, the educational and professional backgrounds of the participants enhance the credibility of the findings, with 79% holding graduate degrees, 15% possessing postgraduate degrees, and 63% working as professionals. These qualifications suggest that respondents are discerning consumers who value efficiency, convenience, and informed decision-making in their online shopping experiences. Moreover, 66% of respondents expressed concerns about e-commerce overpackaging, signaling a growing awareness of environmental sustainability as a factor in their purchasing choices. This study, leveraging SmartPLS PLS-SEM analysis, seeks to reveal how sustainability considerations shape consumer behavior and preferences, highlighting the importance of these issues in modern e-commerce strategies.

### 4.2. Statistics and Data Analysis

PLS-SEM analysis involves assessing the correlation between each variable and its indicators. According to Hair et al. (2014), factor loadings above 0.70 are considered significant, indicating a strong relationship between the indicator and the corresponding variable. Loadings between 0.55 and 0.70 suggest a moderate association, while those below 0.55 are generally regarded as measurement error and may be excluded from the model. Following

the removal of unrelated factor loadings and calculation of relevant values, the results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Indicator Reliability and Validity

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading
Consolidated Packaging Standard (CPS)	CPS2	0,858	Enhance Packaging Material (EPM)	EPM1	0,747	Promote Green Campaign (PGC)	PGC2	0,818
	CPS3	0,894		EPM2	0,825		PGC3	0,868
	CPS4	0,916		EPM3	0,800		PGC4	0,850
Provide Incentive (PI)	PI2	0,913	Optimize Packaging Strategy (OPS)	EPM4	0,731	Raise Environmental Awareness (REA)	REA1	0,681
	PI3	0,957		OPS1	0,632		REA2	0,657
	PI4	0,909		OPS2	0,670		REA3	0,701
	PI5	0,876		OPS3	0,816		REA4	0,621
	ITAX2	0,936		OPS4	0,664		REA5	0,690
Impose Tax (ITAX)	ITAX3	0,970	Improve Logistic Service Excellency (ILSE)	OPS5	0,665	Consumer Preference (CP)	CP1	0,843
	ITAX4	0,949		ILSE2	0,570		CP2	0,849
Establish Recycling System (ERS)	ERS2	0,833		ILSE4	0,659		CP3	0,692
	ERS3	0,914		ILSE5	0,815			

After the evaluating the factor loading process, analysis continues with break down the reliability and convergent validity of the collected questionnaire data by addressing the value of Composite Reliability or CR ( $\rho_A$ ) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) respectively. Criterion for acceptable value of CR should around 0,7 and 0,9, while acceptable AVE should more than 0,5. Therefore, unacceptable number in the Table 4 marked in a red ink.

Table 4: Variable Reliability and Validity

	CA	CR ( $\rho_A$ )	CR ( $\rho_C$ )	AVE
CPS	0,871	0,927	0,919	0,792
PI	0,935	0,961	0,953	0,836
ITAX	0,948	0,97	0,966	0,906
ERS	0,698	0,744	0,866	0,764
EPM	0,784	0,794	0,859	0,603
OPS	0,73	0,734	0,82	0,480
ILSE	0,451	0,476	0,726	0,474
PGC	0,802	0,815	0,883	0,715
REA	0,696	0,698	0,803	0,450



CP	0,711	0,726	0,839	0,637
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While to read the acceptance criterion of discriminant validity in Table 5, it has to understand the table structurally which consists of diagonal elements and off-diagonal elements. The diagonal elements are the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The diagonal elements become the reference for the off-diagonal elements that it must not exceed the diagonal elements.

Table 5: Fornell-Lorcker's Discriminant Validity

	CPS	PI	ITAX	ERS	EPM	OPS	ILSE	PGC	REA	CP
<b>CPS</b>	0,890									
<b>PI</b>	0,510	0,914								
<b>ITAX</b>	0,187	0,211	0,952							
<b>ERS</b>	0,234	0,351	0,104	0,874						
<b>EPM</b>	0,357	0,297	0,250	0,596	0,777					
<b>OPS</b>	0,068	0,047	0,123	0,262	0,532	0,693				
<b>ILSE</b>	0,209	0,107	0,021	0,285	0,430	0,514	0,689			
<b>PGC</b>	0,369	0,290	0,169	0,392	0,474	0,403	0,336	0,845		
<b>REA</b>	0,279	0,323	0,339	0,206	0,418	0,411	0,390	0,589	0,671	
<b>CP</b>	0,022	0,095	0,216	0,146	0,364	0,528	0,424	0,372	0,497	0,798

The next step involves assessing multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which is reflected in Table 7. The VIF values range from 1,000 to 2,382. Since none of these values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 3, it can be concluded that there is no significant multicollinearity among the constructs in the data set. This suggests that the predictor variables do not have a high degree of correlation with each other, which guarantees the stability and dependability of the regression coefficients. A VIF score below 3 indicates that each construct contributes distinct and autonomous information, hence strengthening the model's validity and confirming the reliability of the findings.

Table 6: Collinearity or Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	CPS	PI	ITAX	ERS	EPM	OPS	ILSE	PGC	REA
<b>CP</b>	1,589	1,574	1,209	1,781	2,382	1,820	1,557	1,906	1,976
<b>CPS</b>					1,000				
<b>PI</b>				1,000					
<b>REA</b>				1,000					

Table 8 presents the results of the structural equation modeling, evaluating the significance of various hypothesized paths between variables. A hypothesis is considered supported if the p-value is less than 0.05. Out of the twelve hypotheses, four are supported: H6 (OPS → CP), H9 (REA → CP), H10 (EPM → CPS), and H11 (ERS → PI),

with p-values of 0.030, 0.023, 0.004, and 0.000, respectively. The remaining hypotheses are not supported, as indicated by their p-values exceeding the 0.05 threshold, which suggests that the relationships in those paths are not statistically significant.

Table 7: Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-values	p-values	Hypothesis Supported?
H1	CPS → CP	-0,180	1,595	0,111	N
H2	PI → CP	0,036	0,347	0,728	N
H3	ITAX → CP	0,093	1,057	0,291	N
H4	ERS → CP	-0,090	0,937	0,349	N
H5	EPM → CP	0,075	0,588	0,556	N
H6	OPS → CP	0,279	2,177	0,030	Y
H7	ILSE → CP	0,176	1,654	0,098	N
H8	PGC → CP	0,090	0,836	0,403	N
H9	REA → CP	0,255	2,273	0,023	Y
H10	EPM → CPS	0,357	2,911	0,004	Y
H11	ERS → PI	0,351	3,614	0,000	Y
H12	ERS → REA	0,206	1,718	0,086	N

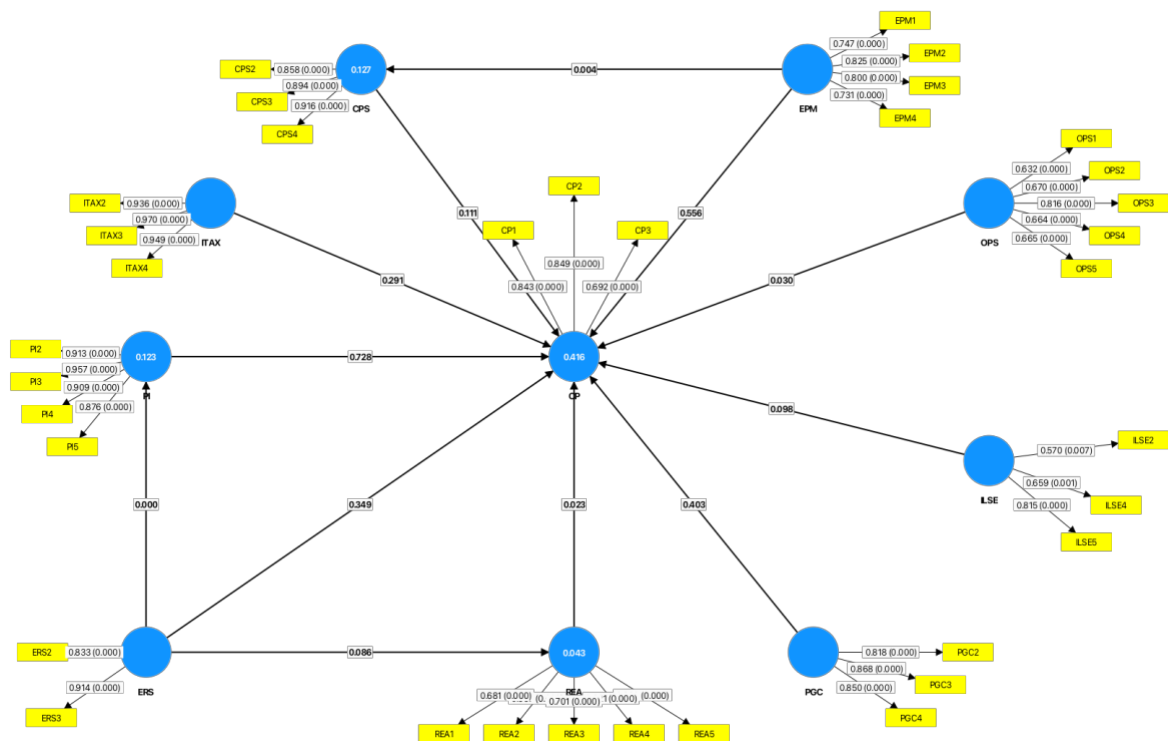


Figure 3: The Model Result

## 5. Discussion

The study's results provide key insights into consumer behavior and preferences related to e-commerce overpackaging, offering a foundation for both immediate and long-term business strategies. The majority of respondents have significant experience in online shopping, with 70% having more than five years of experience, and 58% conducting over three transactions per month. This experience strengthens the credibility of their insights, while the 66% awareness rate of overpackaging highlights growing consumer concern for sustainability. Research highlights that environmental awareness and sustainability are increasingly important factors influencing consumer behavior, with many preferring companies that address overpackaging and promote sustainable practices (Soedibyo & Kusumawati, 2023), and other studies emphasize that consumers are sensitive to packaging practices that align with eco-friendliness and recyclability (Magnier & Schoormans, 2015). This also aligns with findings that excessive packaging leads to negative brand perceptions and lower purchase intentions, further motivating businesses to adopt more sustainable practices (Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016). The PLS-SEM analysis revealed that optimizing packaging strategies, raising environmental awareness, enhancing packaging materials, and establishing recycling systems with incentives are areas where businesses can effectively align with consumer preferences. Conversely, factors like incentives and taxes alone were insufficient to drive substantial change, indicating that a more comprehensive, integrated approach is needed to address consumer demands and environmental concerns effectively.

In light of these findings, the study suggests both short- and long-term strategies that businesses can adopt to meet consumer preferences and environmental goals. In the short term, businesses must prioritize strategies that respond to immediate consumer concerns, focusing on optimizing packaging strategies and promoting environmental awareness. These measures not only reduce waste but also foster sustainability by minimizing unnecessary packaging materials while maintaining product integrity. By addressing the increasing demand for eco-friendly practices, companies can quickly build consumer trust and satisfaction. Prior studies confirm that consumers show strong preference for optimized packaging strategies and sustainable packaging innovations, which significantly boost consumer trust and loyalty (Rita & Ramos, 2022), and consumer behavior studies also reveal that effective eco-design and recycling systems can strongly influence consumer purchase intentions (Martinho et al., 2015). This also aligns with research showing that transparent communication through eco-labeling significantly enhances consumer confidence in a brand's commitment to sustainability (Wozniak et al., 2022). Additionally, educational campaigns and sustainability initiatives will help position the company as environmentally responsible, positively shaping consumer perceptions in the near future.

For long-term sustainability, more complex strategies are necessary, requiring collaboration with government bodies and industry stakeholders. Improving packaging materials and establishing efficient recycling systems depend on external factors such as regulatory frameworks and government incentives. Collaboration with governments and regulatory bodies has been shown to be crucial for long-term sustainability, especially in areas like recycling systems and green packaging innovations (Hollaus & Schantl, 2022; Lu et al., 2020; Wozniak et al., 2022). This aligns with the understanding that businesses that collaborate with regulators can better navigate evolving environmental standards and lead industry-wide sustainability initiatives (Soedibyo & Kusumawati, 2023). These efforts will help create a sustainable business model that not only complies with environmental regulations but also influences industry standards. By working closely with governments to set clear packaging standards and investing in recycling infrastructure, companies can establish themselves as leaders in sustainability. Integrating both short- and long-term strategies will ensure businesses meet current market demands while laying the groundwork for long-term success in sustainable practices.

## 6. Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into consumer preferences regarding solutions for e-commerce overpackaging in Indonesia. Findings reveal that 'Optimize Packaging' and 'Raise Awareness' strategies are the most favored solutions among Indonesian e-commerce users. Although 'Enhance Packaging Materials' and 'Consolidate Packaging Standards' are not directly preferred as standalone solutions, the results show that packaging standards positively mediate the relationship between enhanced materials and consumer preferences. Similarly, while

'Establish Recycling Systems' and 'Provide Incentives' are not directly preferred, incentives effectively mediate the impact of recycling systems on consumer preferences. These findings suggest that government support through incentives could significantly enhance the adoption of sustainable practices in e-commerce.

Looking forward, future research should broaden the scope to include perspectives from e-commerce platform owners and management, focusing on the decision-making processes that influence packaging choices and the integration of sustainable practices within business models. Additionally, exploring methods to enhance the economic value of e-commerce waste, particularly excess plastic, could offer valuable insights for creating a more sustainable e-commerce ecosystem. This may involve examining advanced recycling technologies, fostering partnerships with recycling companies, and implementing market-based incentives for the use of recovered materials. These proposed research directions, together with the current findings, can support the development of solutions that are both environmentally and economically sustainable within the e-commerce sector.

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# Improving Students' Academic Journal Writing Competence through a Collaboration Approach

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## Abstract

This research examines students' capacity to compose academic journal articles. This research seeks to (1) assess students' accomplishments in writing academic articles for accredited national journals and (2) enhance students' competencies in academic writing for scientific journals, utilizing final assignment data that possesses novelty for potential publication in accredited national journals. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing observation and focus group discussions (FGD) as its research design. The data analysis process had three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The research findings propose two options for the UPNVY Public Relations Study Program: firstly, developing a curriculum that mandates students to provide outputs in the form of scientific publications published in approved national journals. Secondly, the Final Project option for students encompasses not only a thesis but also a scientific paper published in a recognized national journal or a respectable international publication.

**Keywords:** Academic Writing Skills, Accredited National Journals

## 1. Introductions

Academic writing is conducted to aid students in composing scientific research papers using a certain rhetorical structure, manifested in a sequence of phrases inside each motion. The objective is for students to compose scientific articles aligned with their studies, according to the conventional framework of rhetoric, while employing a diverse range of permissible language. The primary rationale for this practice is that students frequently encounter challenges in composing scientific articles. Additionally, pupils struggle to convey their intended meanings across many languages that conform to the established genre framework.

Writing is typically regarded as the most challenging and intricate language talent due to its need for comprehensive understanding and the necessity of rigorous cognitive processes. This challenge arises from the fact that writing is not yet a prevalent activity, particularly in Indonesia. A primary factor for students' writing deficiencies is their insufficient understanding of the writing processes necessary for effective composition. Numerous research indicates that writing instruction has predominantly concentrated on grammatical theory and writing methods, lacking engagement and participation with writing instructors. The introduction to writing models is frequently constrained. This plays a crucial role, as frequent exposure to the genre being studied enables students to develop a conceptual understanding of it, ultimately aiding their writing skills.

The academic writing abilities of students in the Public Relations Study Program require enhancement. A key indicator is the inadequate quality and number of scientific articles published in recognized National Journals as a result of student's final projects, particularly regarding grammatical use and rhetorical growth and structure. The primary problem is that pupils lack comprehension of rhetorical growth. One option presented in this research is the practice of composing collaborative scientific papers (Collaborative Writing). Students must collaborate in groups on specific thesis topics with their supervisor based on their interests and will collectively deliberate on the writing they will create following their rhetorical progression. Subsequently, in small groups, they must review each other's work and offer feedback on the writing. Following several revisions, conversations, and collaborative efforts, each composition can be deemed satisfactory, and all will submit their work as the final result. This constitutes the essence of collaborative writing.

The implementation of collaborative writing techniques in the instruction of writing skills through Academic Writing training and mentorship is imperative, as this approach enables students to enhance one another's writing through mutual reading (proofreading) and peer correction. This is significant due to the inherent difficulty in identifying errors we commit ourselves. This collaborative writing approach is readily applicable in teaching writing skills since it does not need complex learning materials. Conversely, students are just obligated to contribute to their writing and condition, as well as to help the conversation process. The assessment of students' writing outcomes occurs at the concluding phase of the collaborative process, following mutual revisions of their compositions.

## 2. Literature Review

There are several concepts and definitions regarding collaborative writing put forward by several experts, including Saunders, who makes a distinction between co-writing and other forms of collaborative activities such as co-publishing and co-responding (Saunders, 1989). Other experts call the term group writing rather than collaborative writing and define it as all writing activities carried out in collaboration with other people (Ede, 1991). Another definition defines it as several group members interacting together during the process of creating a piece of writing, and the group is responsible for the final result of the activity (Louth, 2004). Bosley defines collaborative writing as two or more people working together to produce writing in a situation where all group members directly involved must own and assume responsibility for whatever results they have attempted and obtained (Bosley, 2002). A somewhat new opinion was put forward by Storch, who defined collaborative writing as joint production or the creation of a text jointly by two or more writers. What makes his definition different from previous definitions is the emphasis placed on joint ownership and collaboration with the partner in the entire writing process (Storch, 2011).

Next, Harris differentiates the meaning between collaborative writing and collaborative learning about writing. According to him, collaborative writing is writing that involves two or more writers working together to create a joint product, while collaborative learning about writing involves interaction between the writer and the reader to help the writer improve the writer's abilities and produce a manuscript by the author (Harris, 2012). From the definitions above, it can be concluded that collaborative writing will culminate in a joint product of cooperation by two or more writers, whereas in collaborative learning about writing, interaction occurs between writers and readers whose main target is to help improve the writer's ability and produce text.

Student writing collaboratively has been the subject of scientific research as well as research in the business field for the last few decades. Several authors have conducted studies in this area, and each has slightly different views regarding strategies for collaborating.

According to Lowry et al. (Lowry, 2003). There are five strategies for writing collaboratively, namely:

- a. Single-author writing occurs when a team member writes as a representative of the entire team. This strategy is usually used to complete simple writing assignments.



- b. Sequential-single writing is a collaborative writing strategy that gives each group member the task of writing one portion of a document according to the division that has been previously determined, then continued by other group members, and so on.
- c. Parallel writing is a form of collaborative writing that divides the writing work equally among all group members, and at the same time, they write according to their respective parts. There are two forms of division in parallel writing, namely; 1). Horizontal division of parallel writing is the distribution of tasks to each group member into sections, and each is responsible for their section. 2). Stratified division of parallel writing is the distribution of tasks to all group members with different levels or roles, such as some being writers, others being editors, facilitators, or team leaders.
- d. Reactive writing is a form of collaboration in writing where all team members work together synchronously to develop their product. Each team member checks, revises, or improves the writing that has been written
- e. created by other group members.
- f. Mixed mode is a form of collaborative writing that combines two or more collaborative writing strategies, as described previously.

Onrubia and Engel (2009) also proposed five main strategies for collaborating in writing as follows:

- a. Parallel construction 'cut and paste.' Each member of the group contributes to a different part completely of the completed assignment, and the final document is constructed through juxtaposition of the different parts without the contribution of other authors.
- b. Parallel construction 'puzzle.' Each group member contributed to the initial document with a complete or partially complete assignment, and the final document was constructed by juxtaposing small core parts of the initial contributions of other co-authors.
- c. Sequential summative construction. One group member presents an initial, partial, or complete (perfect) piece of writing in the form of a proposal for discussion, and other participants successively provide input on the initial document without changing what was previously written, ultimately agreeing to accept the writing systematically.
- d. Sequential integrating construction. One group member presents an initial document that is half finished or one hundred percent complete, and other group members successively contribute to the initial document or writing, propose improvements or modifications, and then decide whether the writing is accepted or not.
- e. Integrating construction. Document writing is based on regular discussions through very friendly conversations with revisions several times where all group members provided responses, comments, and changes and additions to previous comments.

Ritchie and Rigano (Ritchie, 2002) describe three collaborative writing strategies used in academic settings.

1. Turn writing. This form of writing is cooperative rather than collaborative, with the authors contributing different parts of the text, which are then combined and refined by the lead author.
2. Lead writing. This strategy directs one student to create a draft on a certain topic, which is then revised by other group members.
3. Writing together side-by-side. A text is prepared by two or more people who think seriously together, then negotiate, and then improve the entire content or part of the writing. One of the writers plays the role of copying the document and, if possible, also supervises the process of writing the text until it is finished.

Posner and Baecker (Posner, 1992) describe four types of collaborative writing strategies as follows:

1. Single writer: One person writes, while others play other roles in the group, such as editing, revising, duplicating, and so on.
2. Separate writers: In implementing a collaborative writing strategy like this, each group member works on a different part. This is in line with the strategy of Sharples et al. (1993), which he calls parallel partitioning.
3. Joint writing: Writers work together synchronously in a form of collaboration, and they sit side by side to complete one text.

4. Scribe: Based on the results of the group discussion and based on mutual agreement between all members of the group, one of them is entrusted to write the document in its entirety

This research aims to find out the process of improving students' skills in writing scientific papers through a collaborative learning approach and how to improve student's skills in writing scientific papers in English after implementing a collaborative learning approach among students together with lecturers in the Public Relations Study Program.

### **3. Research Method**

This research utilizes a descriptive-qualitative strategy, used to gain a comprehensive comprehension of the capacity to create scientific articles. This method is especially effective for examining the intricacies and subtleties of writing proficiency in higher education, particularly regarding content development, idea organization, vocabulary usage, language structure application, and adherence to spelling conventions (Bashir, 2018). Descriptive research facilitates an extensive examination of these domains without modification or intervention, offering a lucid depiction of existing abilities and obstacles in academic writing (Creswell, 2014).

This study comprised 8th-semester students in the Public Relations department and their academic supervisors. The sample comprised ten students engaged in thesis writing and nine lecturers from the same academic program, chosen to offer perspectives on the students' writing progression and the instructional methods employed in the program (Patton, 2015). The study aims to triangulate viewpoints on the writing process by including both students and supervisors, analyzing students' practical writing skills alongside the educational tactics utilized by their supervisors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The data for this research was obtained from the Siyanma Fisip UPN VY site, which serves as a platform for student publications and academic accomplishments. The quantity of journal articles by students in approved national journals functioned as a major measure of writing skill. A focus group discussion (FGD) was undertaken, convening lecturers and students in a study program meeting style. The FGD discussions concentrated on measures to enhance student proficiency in writing scientific articles, highlighting the necessity for targeted interventions and professional development (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Engaging professionals to conduct training sessions focused on improving the quality and quantity of student writing in authorized journals was a significant component of the research design (Elbow, 1998).

This study utilizes cross-site analysis, a technique that compares data from many instances or locations to discern similar patterns and trends (Yin, 2018). Each instance in the study, whether about a student's thesis composition or a supervisor's pedagogical strategy, will be examined independently to ascertain how various factors, such as writing methodologies or supervisory practices, affect academic writing results. The cross-site study facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of the elements that influence effective academic writing within the realm of public relations (Stake, 1995).

In conclusion, descriptive-qualitative approaches are adept at elucidating the intricacies of academic writing skills development, offering significant insights into how students might be more effectively helped in creating high-quality scientific publications (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010). Moreover, the emphasis on collaborative initiatives among students, instructors, and specialists underscores the need for a community-oriented strategy for enhancing writing skills in higher education (Weissberg & Buker, 1990).

### **4. Results and Discussion**

A collaborative methodology for composing scientific publications entails the participation of several writers or researchers to attain a shared objective. In this setting, collaboration may involve task division, idea discussion, and skill integration. Collaboration enables authors to leverage a variety of viewpoints and experiences, resulting in more thorough work.

Students encounter challenges in composing scientific articles, including difficulty in articulating concepts and a deficiency in self-confidence. Revansha, a student of the Public Relations Study Program, stated, "The internal factors I encountered originated from within myself." I have difficulties in the interpretation of concepts. Occasionally, the failures that manifest in my thoughts are hard to articulate on paper. Often, certain compositions that the speaker evaluates during class remain perplexing. I lack confidence in the outcomes of the scientific publications I compose.

Additionally, challenges in identifying pertinent subjects frequently hinder students from advancing their conversations. It is anticipated that this issue may be handled by a collaborative approach, emphasizing that thorough discussion will provide improved outcomes. Engaging in discussions with peers or instructors can yield more inventive and complete thoughts. A variety of viewpoints facilitates the discovery of more effective solutions. Additionally, pupils might exhibit greater innovation and comprehensiveness. A variety of viewpoints facilitates the discovery of more effective solutions.

Students have another challenge in composing scientific essays due to their inability to locate authentic and pertinent scientific references, in addition to issues with grammar. As articulated by Priscilla in the subsequent interview. Pricilia, a student in a Public Relations study program, stated, "I encounter challenges in locating valid and pertinent sources for specific topics, as well as in composing formal and standardized academic language without appearing overly rigid." In addition, the challenge of articulating concepts, although possessing a comprehensive overview, is in deconstructing the concept into smaller, coherent, and organized components, which presents a problem for me.

Students typically encounter several challenges in producing scientific papers, including a lack of confidence in selecting relevant topics and identifying suitable sources for their study. Collaborating with peers is essential for enhancing their confidence in articulating thoughts and ideas through discussions, thereby fostering the mutual development of concepts. This collective engagement prevents stagnation in transforming an idea into a viable research topic.

The establishment of groups and task division, initiated by basic talks, appears to create environments where pupils may overcome self-doubt. Students exhibit more boldness in articulating their thoughts within peer groups, prompting feedback from others and fostering a more open-minded discourse. The convenience of technology enables individuals to acquire information more readily while collaborating with others, as opposed to searching independently.

Collaborative learning enables students to learn from one another, enhancing comprehension and retention of information. Once students were organized into small groups, they appeared to become more open, exchanging experiences, discussing references, generating ideas, and establishing a framework for thought. This fosters more self-confidence in kids, enabling them to articulate phrases derived from their thoughts.

Students engaged in the FGD articulated that cooperation may enhance their interpersonal abilities, including communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. On a separate occasion, Adam Firdaus, a student in the Public Relations Study Program, stated, "Through conversations with peers, I became more open and was able to articulate my thoughts and ideas without hesitation, which enhanced my confidence and eliminated my reluctance to write articles based on my ideas."

Group conversations reveal a challenge for each member to demonstrate their capabilities, fostering a sense of duty to contribute according to their skills. Members proficient in the flow of thought will elucidate the background, while those adept in the application of scientific references will identify pertinent scientific sources related to the themes discussed by their peers. This enables pupils to enhance their writing skills, and the challenges they encounter may be addressed. It can motivate pupils to avoid being entangled in the intricacies of identifying pertinent issues.

A cooperative methodology has several advantages in corporate, educational, and research settings. Notwithstanding its hurdles, excellent communication, trust, and well-defined shared objectives may yield more

imaginative and efficient solutions through cooperation. Effective cooperation management may enhance performance and foster mutually advantageous relationships among the participating parties.

Nonetheless, hurdles inevitably emerge in collaborative tasks since the cultural and value differences among group members can occasionally lead to conflict or communication issues. Additionally, various architectures may induce intricate coordination, resulting in challenges regarding coordination and decision-making. The presence of uneven membership in organizations, such as those including professors and students, frequently results in an imbalance of roles and resources, hence posing a danger of disproportionate contributions among the collaborating parties, which may lead to friction or unhappiness. Nevertheless, this can be mitigated by enhancing the understanding of each participant concerning the objective of augmenting the number of publishable pieces, therefore enabling mutual restraint.

## 5. Conclusion

A collaborative approach to writing scientific papers offers many advantages that can improve the quality and effectiveness of research. By implementing the right strategy, authors can create a productive and innovative work environment, which will ultimately produce better scientific work. Collaboration is not just about sharing the workload but also about enriching the creative and intellectual process.

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# Evaluating the Impact of Internal Training on the Performance: The Case of Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank, Vietnam

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## Abstract

Internal training is an indispensable strategic tool for enhancing employee performance, particularly in the banking sector. Commercial joint-stock banks, such as Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank (ACB), continue to increase their annual training budgets with the expectation that this investment will provide a sustainable competitive advantage. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of internal training programs on the performance of ACB. A survey was conducted with 225 valid questionnaires collected from ACB employees, using a simple random sampling technique. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine the relationship between internal training and operational performance. The research results indicate a strong correlation between investment in internal training, employee performance, and improvements in the bank's operational efficiency. This contributes to the bank's competitive advantage and supports the organization's sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Internal Training, Vietnam, Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank, Performance

## 1. Introduction

In today's increasingly competitive environment, the race for human resources has become a pressing issue for businesses. Many companies have come to recognize that human resources are their most valuable asset—the lifeblood of the organization. No matter how advanced the technology, the quality of service, or how robust the infrastructure of an economic organization, without an efficient workforce, it will be difficult to sustain development and gain a competitive advantage. Thus, effectively utilizing human resources to serve organizational growth and contribute to society is an urgent task for managers, especially human resource managers. To manage human resources effectively, it is crucial to understand people and place them at the center of development. At the same time, it is important to create conditions that allow individuals to fully realize their potential, avoiding resource waste while promoting both individual and organizational development.

Internal staff training is a strategic requirement aimed at equipping employees with new skills, knowledge, and opportunities for professional and career development. The workforce in the banking sector plays a crucial role in ensuring the capacity to perform tasks that meet the organization's goals. This capacity not only involves formal

education but also requires relevant skill training and practical experience (Maton, J, 1969). The knowledge, capabilities, and skills of employees are the factors that allow banks to achieve a competitive advantage over their industry rivals. An effective training system helps employees develop the skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary to achieve the organization's desired outcomes. Internal training programs should encompass a variety of areas to help employees maximize their potential (Salas, Eduardo, et al., 2012). Other commercial banks are also implementing long-term plans focusing on investing in employees to equip them with the capacity to handle tasks under different conditions. Such long-term programs are important factors in improving employee performance, as they not only boost morale but also enhance employee commitment to their work. A good training program ensures that employees discover their talents and feel the organization's care, aligning their personal goals with the bank's objectives and contributing to higher job performance. Employees play a key role in increasing the bank's profitability, and as such, they are the most valuable assets of the organization.

The workforce at a bank is responsible for customer satisfaction and the quality of the products and services that the bank provides. Ineffective training schedules may prevent employees from realizing their full potential due to a lack of necessary skills and knowledge. Research has also shown that investing in internal employee training helps banks retain most of their staff for a longer period by improving their performance and commitment to the organization (Ocen, E., Francis, K., & Angundaru, G, 2017). Training programs not only enhance employee capabilities but also provide competitive advantages for banks, while improving the return on investment. This also contributes to high employee retention rates, a key factor in organizational stability. The need to implement effective internal staff training programs in commercial banks is a fundamental factor in improving operational efficiency. Training is defined as an orderly system aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies of employees so that they can perform their assigned tasks well. The areas influenced by training programs include competitiveness, job performance, and organizational profitability. Some banks may fail to realize the importance of long-term and diverse training programs, leading to lower profit margins and an increased rate of employee turnover when they cut back on training budgets (Cascio, 1989). This creates a downward cycle in the bank's efficiency and profitability.

For Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank (ACB), the implementation of training policies to motivate employees, improve the working environment, salary and benefit policies, job placement, and focus on employee development prospects is essential. However, the extent to which these policies impact organizational performance needs further analysis to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of internal training for the bank. This will not only help ACB increase its competitive advantage but also ensure the bank's sustainable development in the fiercely competitive banking sector. Therefore, conducting research to assess the outcomes of internal training programs is critical, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, thereby enhancing ACB's operational efficiency and service quality.

## **2. Literature Review**

Several recent studies have indicated that businesses are facing new challenges and uncertainties in the business environment, including managing cultural diversity. This provides a basis for banks to make significant investments in internal staff training to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their jobs effectively (Black & Lynch, 1996). Through these programs, employees are better able to handle uncertain situations and make effective decisions, helping banks maintain competitiveness in the industry. Effective training programs bring numerous benefits to banks, including developing and retaining employee competencies, talent retention, and increasing workforce flexibility (Dikshit, A., & Jain, T. K, 2017). Banks with well-structured training systems demonstrate a commitment to their workforce, improving employee morale and providing a competitive advantage by enhancing organizational performance and productivity.

Employee training at banks helps bridge the gap between current performance and management's expectations (De Cenzo & Robbins, 1996). Training includes activities such as participation, mentorship, and collaboration with colleagues to build teamwork and improve both individual and organizational performance. Superior job performance is the result of confidence in one's abilities, and training is a systematic intervention aimed at improving each employee's capabilities at work. This focuses on the skills necessary to achieve the bank's goals.

Banks with strong employee training policies tend to achieve higher organizational effectiveness and retain most of their talented staff (Kurdi, B., & Alshurideh, M, 2020). Conversely, dissatisfied employees are more likely to become disengaged and seek opportunities elsewhere. Therefore, bank management should recognize the importance of internal training and create a conducive working environment to enhance employee performance (Olagunju, M. M, 2014). Training plays a central role in maintaining and enhancing a bank's competitive advantage (Evans & Lindsay, 1999). An effective internal training system benefits both employees and the bank, leading to growth, sustained profitability, improved performance, and increased employee satisfaction. There is a close relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance (Mehmood, Moazzma, et al., 2017). Employee training is a core factor in enhancing work quality and efficiency.

Recent studies have further emphasized the critical role of internal training in the banking sector. Smith et al. (2020) conducted a study at several commercial banks in the UK, using multivariate regression analysis to evaluate the impact of training programs on employee performance. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between participation in training programs and improved employee performance, particularly in communication and problem-solving skills. Similarly, the study by Al-Mahmoud et al. (2021) in Middle Eastern banks, applying an empirical research approach with survey questionnaires, found that investment in continuous training programs helps retain talented employees and increases their commitment to the organization. Moreover, Johnson's (2019) study in US banks, utilizing big data analysis, showed that banks with comprehensive training programs have higher employee retention rates and significantly increased productivity.

In Vietnam, several studies on this topic have also been conducted. For example, Thuy et al. (2019) carried out a study on commercial banks in Da Nang, surveying 200 employees from various branches. The findings revealed that internal training significantly improved employees' adaptability and teamwork spirit. Notably, training programs focusing on soft skills, such as communication and conflict management, enhanced employee performance, contributing to organizational efficiency. Additionally, a study by Tran Anh Tuan and Nguyen Huu Nam (2022) examined the effectiveness of technology training in banks in Ho Chi Minh City. With a sample of 180 employees, the study showed that technology training not only helped employees work more efficiently but also improved their ability to use modern technology in operations, thus optimizing the bank's work processes.

To maintain market competitiveness, building capacity through systematic training is a core factor. Banks need to implement training and development programs to fully leverage the intellectual assets of their workforce (McGhee & Thayer, 1961). According to this theory, training not only enhances individual performance but also helps organizations achieve or maintain competitive advantages. Such a training system includes designing structured programs, measuring and evaluating effectiveness, which optimizes employees' potential while aligning with the strategic goals of the organization. The theory also emphasizes developing core competencies, such as professional skills, critical thinking, and teamwork abilities, ensuring that employees are equipped to meet the rapidly changing demands of the business environment. Several studies have applied this theory in practice and yielded positive results. For instance, Smith et al. (2020) applied the theory of systematic training in their study of banks in the UK, finding that employees who participated in training programs significantly improved their communication and problem-solving skills, leading to enhanced job performance. Similarly, Al-Mahmoud et al. (2021) in the Middle East demonstrated that continuous investment in training not only helps retain employees but also strengthens their commitment to the organization. Johnson (2019) further showed that banks in the United States with well-structured training programs achieved higher employee retention rates and significant productivity gains, proving the effectiveness of applying a strategic training system in the banking sector.

Training techniques are divided into two main groups: behavioral techniques or on-the-job training (including job orientation, instructional training, apprenticeships, internships and assistantships, job rotation, and coaching) and cognitive techniques or off-the-job training (such as courses, technology training, practice, and simulations). These techniques have a significant impact on employee performance and organizational competitiveness. From this, we propose two hypotheses:

*H1: Behavioral training techniques positively impact employee performance and organizational effectiveness.*

*H2: Cognitive training techniques positively influence optimal employee performance organizational effectiveness.*



### 3. Methodology

This study will focus on the effectiveness of internal training on employee performance specifically and the overall enhancement of organizational performance. As gathered from the reviewed literature above, we propose the following model described in Figure 1.

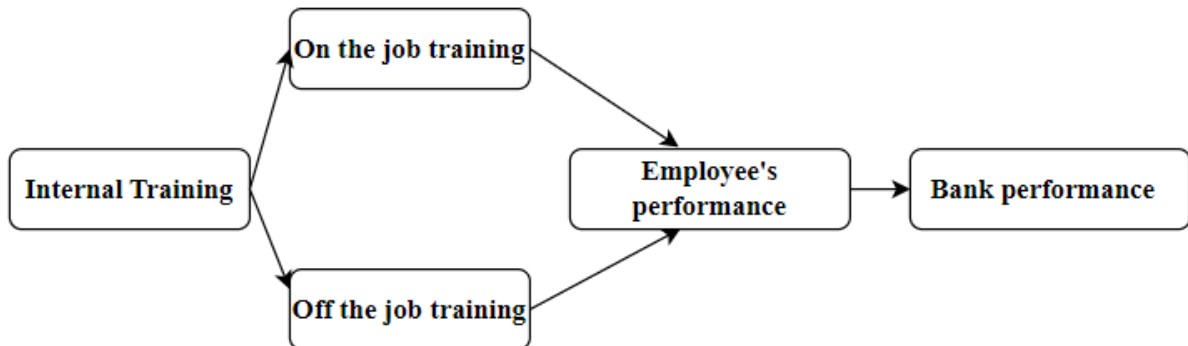


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

The data for this study was collected through a clearly structured questionnaire, prepared and distributed to employees at Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank (ACB) branches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. These locations were selected as they house a large workforce, ensuring high representativeness for the bank. The effectiveness of the internal training program was measured using a tool consisting of 16 items, divided into two sections: A and B. Section A included 6 items collecting basic participant information such as age, gender, marital status, educational level, job position, and work experience. Section B comprised 10 items related to factors evaluating the effectiveness of the training program. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly disagree) to assess the participants' level of agreement with the given statements. Descriptive analysis methods were employed to analyze the collected data. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to selected ACB branches, and after verification, 225 questionnaires (90%) were valid for use, while 25 questionnaires (10%) were discarded due to incomplete responses or failure to return. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of research on the effectiveness of internal employee training in enhancing organizational performance and the bank's competitive advantage.

### 4. Result and discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents show that 117 (52.5%) of the sample were male, while 108 (47.5%) were female, implying that there were more male respondents than female. Meanwhile, 177 (79.4%) of the respondents belonged to the economically active population group. Furthermore, 103 (46.3%) of the respondents were married, while 117 (52.5%) were single, and 5 (2%) were either divorced or separated, although the reasons for their current marital status could not be conclusively determined at the time. Regarding years of work experience, 99 (43.5%) of the respondents had worked for 1 to 9 years, while 88 (39.5%) had been employed for 10 to 19 years, and 38 (17%) had been in service for 20 years or more.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of respondents on the effectiveness of behavioral training techniques

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std.Error	Statistic	Std.Error
Introduction and Orientation	225	4.2167	.81161	-1.515	.165	3.721	.325
Mentoring	225	4.1056	.92748	-.917	.165	.344	.325
Coaching	225	3.9298	.92848	-.725	.165	.082	.325

Apprenticeship	225	4.1838	.82770	-.8454	.165	.428	.325
Job Rotation	225	3.9796	1.06285	-1.015	.165	.397	.325
Valid N	225						

Skewness and kurtosis are important as they indicate the extent to which variables deviate from a normal distribution. Kline (1998) suggested that skewness above 3.0 and kurtosis above 10 indicate severe deviations from normality. Based on this criterion, no variables pose issues regarding normality. However, from Table 1, it can be concluded that several factors influence the effectiveness of employee training programs at the bank, with varying levels of impact. Firstly, *introduction and orientation* are considered one of the key factors in the effectiveness of the training program. This is the stage where new employees are introduced to the bank's core values, organizational culture, and expectations. The survey results show an mean of 4.2167, indicating that proper introduction and orientation help employees quickly understand their roles, responsibilities, and job requirements, thereby improving their work performance. Next, *mentoring* is another significant factor affecting training effectiveness. With an mean of 4.1056, mentoring plays a crucial role in transferring experience, guiding, and developing employee skills, helping them quickly adapt to the work environment and achieve improvements in individual performance.

Additionally, *coaching* is considered a strategic training method, with an mean of 3.9298, showing that it helps the bank achieve the best results from employees. Coaching often focuses on developing specific skills and monitoring employees' progress in a personalized manner, allowing them to achieve advancement in their work. *Apprenticeship and job rotation* are also two training methods that positively impact employee performance. Apprenticeship, with an mean of 4.1838, allows employees to learn directly from experienced individuals, while job rotation, with an mean of 3.9796, helps employees acquire multiple skills and knowledge from different departments, enhancing their adaptability and diversifying their capabilities. From the above analysis, it is evident that factors such as introduction and orientation, mentoring, coaching, apprenticeship, and job rotation all play vital roles in improving training effectiveness, thereby contributing to better employee performance and enhancing the bank's overall operational efficiency.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of respondents on the effectiveness of cognitive training techniques

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std.Error	Statistic	Std.Error
Professional Courses/Training	225	4.3139	.83835	-1.248	.165	1.107	.325
Lectures	225	3.7399	1.17197	-.548	.165	-.967	.325
Role Playing	225	3.8206	1.07908	-.742	.165	-.235	.325
Technology Training	225	4.5785	.61250	-1.641	.165	3.624	.325
Games and Simulations	225	3.9552	1.13412	-.884	.165	-.311	.325
Valid N (listwise)	225						

According to Table 2, the majority of survey participants indicated that *Professional Courses/Training* positively impact the improvement of employees' skills and capabilities, with an mean of 4.3139. This suggests that in-depth courses or structured training programs help employees enhance their professional knowledge and perform their jobs more effectively. Additionally, *Technology Training* was rated as the most effective off-the-job training technique, with the highest mean of 4.5785, indicating that the application of technology in training equips employees with essential technical skills to gain a competitive advantage in a technologically evolving work environment. However, other techniques such as *Lectures*, *Role Playing*, and *Games and Simulations* were also found to expand employees' reasoning abilities and foster their creativity, with mean scores of 3.7399, 3.8206, and 3.9552, respectively. While these techniques may not have as strong an impact as technology training, they still contribute significantly to the development of employees' soft skills and creative thinking. Therefore, it can be

concluded that cognitive training techniques have a substantial influence on optimal performance and employee creativity.

The results in Table 3 show that both behavioral and cognitive training techniques have a positive impact on several aspects of employees. Specifically, they help *Enhance Employee Capabilities*, with an mean of 4.4270, indicating that these training programs not only improve professional competence but also develop the general skills necessary for the job. Additionally, training also *Increases Employee Job Performance*, with an mean of 4.4519, demonstrating that trained employees work more effectively and meet job requirements more efficiently. Furthermore, these techniques *Promote Innovation and Creativity to Achieve Competitive Advantage* (Mean = 4.3856), showing that when equipped with new skills, employees not only perform well but also contribute to innovation, creating new value for the organization. Finally, these training programs play a crucial role in *Developing Employee Skills and Knowledge*, with an mean of 4.4351, ensuring that employees continue to learn and grow through effective training programs.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of participants on the impact of behavioral and cognitive training techniques on performance

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std.Error	Statistic	Std.Error
Enhancing Employee Capabilities	225	4.4270	.78331	-1.906	.165	5.249	.325
Increasing Employee Job Performance	225	4.4519	.72107	-1.684	.165	4.316	.325
Promoting Innovation and Creativity to Achieve Competitive Advantage	225	4.3856	.77933	-1.486	.165	2.900	.325
Developing Employee Skills and Knowledge	225	4.4351	.67386	-.964	.165	.494	.325
Improving Organizational Effectiveness	225	4.1211	1.06908	-1.248	.165	.959	.325
Valid N (listwise)	225						

Thus, it can be seen that, in the modern and complex business environment, internal employee training is one of the most reliable resources for creating a competitive advantage to cope with the rapidly changing and highly competitive business world. Internal training benefits not only employees but also the organization as a whole. This study will help organizations understand the importance of internal training. It will also assist organizations in identifying the key factors to consider during the training process and how to implement an effective training program for employees. This helps organizations recognize that employee training is essential for them to perform their assigned tasks more effectively. Above all, it must be emphasized that without training, there is no development. Therefore, for an organization to survive, training must be seen by management as “a means to achieve goals.”

## 5. Conclusion

Internal employee training is an essential factor for the sustainable growth and survival of ACB. In the context of the banking sector, which is facing rapid technological changes and increasing customer demands, investment in internal training forms the foundation for ACB to maintain flexibility and growth. Training not only helps

employees perform their tasks more effectively but also enhances their adaptability to the constant changes in the business and technological environment. This enables the bank to sustain its competitive edge, improve job performance, and foster creativity and problem-solving skills, thereby contributing to the overall growth of the organization.

The research results have examined and confirmed the relationship between training and performance, showing that investment in internal training has a positive impact on employee job performance and the bank's operational efficiency. Designing and implementing training programs in a timely and appropriate manner is crucial to maximizing the potential of the workforce. Specifically, well-trained employees will be better equipped to solve problems efficiently, demonstrate creativity, and take on greater responsibility in their work. This not only enhances individual productivity but also contributes to improved organizational effectiveness and increased customer satisfaction with the bank's service quality.

ACB's leadership needs to develop a long-term training strategy, creating a favorable learning environment and implementing policies that encourage employees to engage in continuous learning and development. Focusing on training both technical skills and soft skills, such as communication, time management, and especially creativity, will ensure that employees not only excel in their current roles but also adapt and innovate when faced with new challenges. To achieve optimal results, the bank must ensure that training programs are tailored to the needs of different employee groups and that specific outcomes are measured. Additionally, understanding and addressing the individual training needs of each employee is crucial to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to grow and contribute to the bank's shared goals. When employees feel that the bank values their personal development, they will be more motivated to contribute and remain loyal to the organization. Leadership should also provide opportunities for employees to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to real work situations, allowing them to see the value and impact of their learning efforts.

In conclusion, internal training is not only a strategy to enhance employee capacity but also a critical tool for ACB to maintain and develop its competitive advantage in the banking industry. Employees should also proactively seek ways to improve their personal skills, foster creativity and innovation to add more value to the organization, and together build a stronger and more sustainable ACB. An organization with a well-trained, passionate, and creative workforce is the key to achieving long-term growth and maintaining its leadership position in the market.

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# Analysis of the Relationship between China's "One Country, Two Systems" and the Chinese National Community

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## Abstract

As a great initiative of socialism with Chinese characteristics, "One Country, Two Systems" not only successfully solved the governance problems after the return of Hong Kong and Macao but also profoundly influenced the national process of the Chinese nation. This paper explores the profound impact of "One Country, Two Systems" on the Chinese nation in terms of institutional arrangements, political integration, economic integration, and social and cultural exchanges. It analyzes its promoting role in the political identity, economic process, and social and cultural identity of the Chinese nation and advocates the establishment of the "Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Fujian Taiwan Zhang Honghua National Community Construction Pilot Zone" to promote the construction of the "One China" for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Through in-depth analysis of the practical effectiveness of "One Country, Two Systems," this article aims to stimulate further thinking and discussion among experts and scholars on the relationship between "One Country, Two Systems" and the Chinese national community.

**Keywords:** "One Country, Two Systems," Chinese Nation, Ethnic Process, Political Identification, Economic Integration, Social and Cultural Identity, Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Fujian Taiwan Zhang Honghua Ethnic Community Construction Pilot Zone

## 1. Introduction

In the late 1990s, the sovereignty of Hong Kong and Macao successively returned to China, demonstrating the success of the "one country, two systems" (i.e., "one country, two systems") solution to international historical legacy issues.

Since the return of Hong Kong and Macao to China more than 20 years ago, their overall political, economic, and social development has been good, indicating that the "One Country, Two Systems" plan is not only feasible but also in line with China's national conditions and the public opinion of Hong Kong and Macao society. For a long time, scholars from China and countries such as the UK and the US have paid considerable attention to the study of Hong Kong and Macao. However, research on linking "One Country, Two Systems" with the community of the

Chinese nation is rare. China is a civilization with a long history, and the Chinese nation is a wise Eastern nation. Through the study of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong and Macao, we can better understand the Chinese wisdom, solutions, and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Why is this problem important?

## 2. A brief literature review

In recent years, there has been a high level of research and fruitful results in the domestic academic community on patriotism, the Chinese nation, the Chinese national community, and the awareness of the Chinese national community. However, from the perspective of ethnic processes, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database searches for words such as "Hong Kong and Macao ethnic groups" and "ethnic processes" simultaneously, and there are currently no relevant research results on the ethnic processes of Hong Kong and Macao.

The research of Chinese Mainland scholars on the theory of national process is mainly seen in some articles of the former Soviet Union scholars' national process theory translated and introduced in the National Translation Series (now World Nationalities) in the 1980s. In the 1990s, WANG Xi-en (1998) from the Institute of Ethnic Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published his doctoral thesis "Ethnic Processes and States," which is regarded as an important representative work in the theoretical research of ethnic processes in China.

LIAO Yang (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2021) analyzed issues related to ethnic groups and identity in Hong Kong and Macao, while PAN Guohua (2004) analyzed the relationship between the Hong Kong model and the future of Taiwan. ZHOU Da-ming (1996, 1997, 2000), SUN Jiu-xia (2000), and SHAO Zong-hai (2011) discussed the social structure and ethnic relations in Macao. HAO Shinan (2019) discussed the national identity of Hong Kong people.

In recent years, experts and scholars such as HAO Shiyuan (2021, 2022), SONG Caifa (2021), GAO Yongjiu (2019, 2021, 202, 320, 2024), HH Ming et al. (2020, 2023), Naribiligo et al. (2020, 2021, 2023), QING Jue et al. (2018, 2024), WU Xiao-hua (2018, 2023), LIU Yonggang (2021), LIU Baoming et al. (2021) have conducted relevant research on the sense of community of the Chinese nation.

It is worth noting that in recent years, journals such as Guangxi Ethnic Studies, Ethnic Studies Journal, Journal of Central University for Nationalities, and Journal of Central South University for Nationalities have increased their publication efforts on topics related to the Chinese national community, publishing special issues or columns on strengthening the awareness of the Chinese national community.

Scholars from other countries have rarely conducted direct research on the relationship between the "One Country, Two Systems" policy in Hong Kong and Macao and the community of the Chinese nation, but there are also a few scholars who have conducted research in certain areas. For example, Amy L. Freedman (2000) conducted empirical research to examine the political participation and ethnic identity issues of Chinese overseas communities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States.

Ane Bislev (2014) bridges the cognitive gap between China and the West by analyzing the conceptualization of "Chinese nationalism" and discussing the differences between patriotism and nationalism, as well as their exchange in contemporary China. D. Grossworth Kachtan (2017) examines the process of "acting ethnicity" and demonstrates that, in certain circumstances, people act in keeping with an ethnic identity. Naoko Takei (2021) explores the construction process of ethnic meaning using Japanese mixed-race children as an example.

Nurhayat Bilge (2019) uses principles of Cultural Fusion Theory (Croucher & Kramer, 2017), this study focuses on representations of Syrian refugees in mainstream Turkish newspapers to determine. Ming tak Chew and Matthew (2021) analyzed how the commercialization of subordinate races and ethnicities (CPOARAE) generates boundary processes that disrupt established ethnic and racial hierarchies. Isabella Ng(2023)explores an unusual multi-ethnic cluster in a walled village in rural Hong Kong.

The review of academic history shows that there is almost no research on the integration of the "One Country, Two Systems" policy in Hong Kong and Macao with the national process of the Chinese national community, and there is a lack of research on the construction of the Chinese national community in the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area from the perspective of national process theory.

### **3. The institutional arrangement of "One Country, Two Systems" and the institutional innovation of the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong and Macao to the big family of the Chinese nation**

The proposal of "one country, two systems" is a major strategic decision made by the CPC to solve the historical problems of Hong Kong and Macao. This institutional innovation not only maintains national sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also respects the history and current situation of Hong Kong and Macao, achieving a win-win situation for national unity and regional prosperity.

#### *3.1 The milestone of Hong Kong and Macao sovereignty returning to China*

The return of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macao to China is an important milestone in the history of the Chinese nation. Through the institutional arrangement of "One Country, Two Systems," Hong Kong and Macao have smoothly returned to the embrace of the motherland and become special administrative regions of the People's Republic of China, while maintaining the original capitalist system and way of life unchanged. This historic transformation not only demonstrates China's national strength and international status, but also deeply reflects the Chinese nation's firm pursuit of unity and solidarity.

#### *3.2 Practice of institutional innovation*

The core of 'One Country, Two Systems' lies in the organic combination of the foundation of 'One Country' and the benefits of 'Two Systems.' Under the premise of 'one country,' Hong Kong and Macao enjoy a high degree of autonomy, including administrative power, legislative power, independent judicial power, and final adjudication power. At the same time, the central government is responsible for diplomatic and defense affairs in Hong Kong and Macao, ensuring national unity and security. This institutional innovation not only ensures the long-term stability and development of Hong Kong and Macao, but also provides useful reference for the international community to solve similar problems.

### **4. The Relationship between Ethnic Processes and National Politics**

Ethnic processes, as an important field of sociological and anthropological research, involve multiple levels such as ethnic formation, evolution, interaction, and integration. This process not only concerns the survival and development of the nation itself, but also has a profound impact on the stability and prosperity of multi-ethnic countries.

#### *4.1 How to understand ethnic processes?*

The ethnic process is a dynamic, complex, and continuous process that encompasses multiple stages of ethnic formation, development, transformation, and integration. In this process, factors such as ethnic culture, ethnic identity, and ethnic relations are intertwined, jointly shaping the characteristics and destiny of the nation. The ethnic process is not only a historical process, but also a social process that constantly evolves with the development of the times and changes in society.

What is the relationship between ethnic processes and multi-ethnic countries? A multi-ethnic country refers to a country composed of multiple ethnic groups, with rich and diverse ethnic cultures and ethnic relationships within it.

The ethnic process is of great significance for the stability and development of multi-ethnic countries. On the one hand, the smooth progress of ethnic processes helps to enhance unity and harmony among various ethnic groups,



promote political stability and economic development within the country; On the other hand, contradictions and conflicts in ethnic processes may also pose a threat to national stability, and even trigger social unrest and division. Therefore, multi-ethnic countries need to handle ethnic relations properly and promote the healthy development of ethnic processes.

#### *4.2 The impact of political integration within ethnic states on ethnic processes*

The successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems" has not only achieved political stability in Hong Kong and Macao, but also promoted the political identity and cohesion of the Chinese nation.

##### (1) The cornerstone of political stability

The 'One Country, Two Systems' policy has provided a stable political environment for the Hong Kong and Macao regions. Under the premise of 'one country,' Hong Kong and Macao enjoy a high degree of autonomy, avoiding political turmoil caused by institutional differences. At the same time, the central government guarantees the legitimate rights and interests of Hong Kong and Macao through the Constitution and Basic Law, ensuring the long-term stability of the region. These examples illustrate that political stability and social stability are prerequisites and foundations for economic and social development.

The practice of "One Country, Two Systems" has deepened the sense of identity and belonging of residents in Hong Kong and Macao towards the Chinese nation. On the basis of common cultural traditions and national feelings, residents of Hong Kong and Macao have gradually realized that they are not only Hong Kong and Macao people, but also Chinese people. The deepening of this political identity provides a solid political foundation for the unity and solidarity of the Chinese nation.

##### (2) Political integration and deepening of national identity

Political integration refers to the state adjusting and coordinating the relationships between various ethnic groups through political means and policy measures to achieve national unity and stability.

The impact of political integration on ethnic processes is mainly reflected in the following aspects: firstly, by formulating and implementing ethnic policies, promoting equality, unity, and common development among all ethnic groups; Secondly, by strengthening education on ethnic unity, we can enhance the sense of identity and belonging of all ethnic groups to the country; The third is to promote the economic and social development of ethnic regions, improve their living standards and comprehensive competitiveness. These measures help promote the positive development of ethnic processes and promote the harmony and stability of multi-ethnic countries.

##### (3) How to view the national process of the Chinese nation in the era of globalization?

The era of globalization has brought new opportunities and challenges to the national process of the Chinese nation. On the one hand, globalization has promoted communication and integration among different ethnic groups, providing a broader space for the cultural inheritance and innovation of the Chinese nation; On the other hand, globalization has also intensified competition and conflicts among ethnic groups, posing new challenges to the national identity and security of the Chinese nation. Therefore, in the context of globalization, the Chinese nation needs to actively promote the healthy development of the national process, strengthening national unity and cohesion while maintaining cultural diversity and innovation. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation to enhance the influence and competitiveness of the Chinese nation on the global stage.

In short, the ethnic process is a complex and important social phenomenon that is related to the stability and prosperity of multi-ethnic countries, as well as the survival and development of various ethnic groups.

## 5. From the perspective of national process theory, 'One Country, Two Systems'

### 5.1 From the perspective of ethnic process theory, 'One Country, Two Systems'

The ethnic process is a complex historical process involving the formation, development, evolution, and extinction of ethnic groups. Under this theoretical framework, "One Country, Two Systems" as a great initiative of socialism with Chinese characteristics essentially involves implementing two different social systems within the territory of a country. This institutional arrangement is not only an innovation of traditional ethnic political theory, but also an enrichment and development of ethnic process theory.

### 5.2 The Interwoven Relationship between Ethnic Political Processes and "One Country, Two Systems"

#### (1) The connotation of ethnic political process

The process of ethnic politics refers to the process in which ethnic groups seek to express their rights, participate in national governance, and build ethnic identity in the political field. This process involves the struggle for ethnic autonomy, the formulation and implementation of ethnic policies, and the adjustment and harmony of ethnic relations.

#### (2) The mechanism of political integration

The political integration of nation states aims to ensure equal participation and common development of all ethnic groups in politics through institutional design and policy implementation. This includes establishing a multi-ethnic inclusive political system, implementing regional ethnic autonomy, and promoting political mutual trust and cooperation among all ethnic groups.

#### (3) The Construction of Political Identity

Political identity is the cornerstone of the stability and development of a nation-state. Through the positive guidance of ethnic policies, the common promotion of ethnic culture, and the education and popularization of ethnic history, it is possible to effectively enhance the sense of belonging and identity of various ethnic groups towards the country. For example, China's concept of "Chinese national community" aims to strengthen the common historical memory and cultural identity of all ethnic groups, promote political integration, and deepen national identity.

Overall, the process of ethnic politics involves the formation of ethnic political entities, the adjustment of ethnic political relations, and the development and evolution of ethnic politics. In the practice of 'One Country, Two Systems,' the differences in political systems have not hindered the unity of the country and the solidarity of the nation. On the contrary, through the design of the special administrative region system, Hong Kong and Macao have achieved positive interaction and common development with the mainland while maintaining their original political system and social stability. This political flexibility and inclusiveness provide the possibility for harmonious coexistence among different ethnic political entities.

### 5.3 The mutual promotion between the national economic process and "One Country, Two Systems"

The process of ethnic economy is the material foundation of ethnic development, involving the formation, development, and interaction with other ethnic economies. The 'One Country, Two Systems' policy not only promotes the economic development of Hong Kong and Macao, but also enhances the overall economic process of the Chinese nation.

#### (1) Characteristics of Ethnic Economic Processes

The process of ethnic economy refers to the interaction and cooperation among various ethnic groups in economic activities, including resource allocation, industrial development, market circulation, and other aspects. This process is often influenced by multiple factors such as geographical environment, historical traditions, and policy orientation.

Under the framework of "One Country, Two Systems," the economic cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao has become increasingly close, forming an economic development pattern of complementary advantages and mutual benefit. By utilizing their respective economic advantages and resource endowments, we have achieved common prosperity and development in the economy. This economic integration and interaction have injected new impetus into the continuous advancement of the national economic process.

## (2) The Path of Economic Integration

The economic integration of nation states aims to achieve common prosperity among all ethnic groups by optimizing resource allocation, promoting regional coordinated development, and strengthening economic capacity building in ethnic regions. This requires the national level to formulate differentiated economic policies, support the development of characteristic industries in ethnic regions, and strengthen infrastructure construction to narrow the regional development gap.

The 'One Country, Two Systems' policy provides vast economic development space for Hong Kong and Macao regions. With strong support from the central government, Hong Kong and Macao have fully leveraged their unique geographical and institutional advantages to become an important bridge connecting the mainland and international markets. At the same time, the booming development of finance, trade, tourism and other industries in Hong Kong and Macao has injected new vitality into the economic development of the Chinese nation.

## (3) The dependence and development of the economy of Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions and the economy of the Chinese nation

The 'One Country, Two Systems' policy has promoted the coordinated development of the Chinese nation's economic process. Under the premise of 'one country,' economic cooperation between Hong Kong, Macao and the mainland is becoming increasingly close. By signing agreements such as the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and the Mainland and Macao Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, the Hong Kong and Macao regions have achieved a mutually beneficial and complementary economic development pattern with the mainland.

Through the construction of the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area, the Hong Kong and Macao regions can better integrate into China's national development, and the advantages of "one country" and "two systems" can be fully utilized in regional economic development and the economic development of the Chinese nation.

## *5.4 The Harmonious Coexistence of Ethnic Social Processes and 'One Country, Two Systems'*

### (1) The Basic Dimensions of Ethnic Social Processes

The process of ethnic society involves dynamic changes in the social structure, social interactions, and social relationships of ethnic groups. This process is related to social fairness and justice, ethnic unity, and social stability.

The process of ethnic society is the social aspect of ethnic life, including the structure, function, and changes of ethnic society. The "One Country, Two Systems" policy has not only promoted economic exchanges between Hong Kong, Macao and the mainland, but also facilitated social exchanges and integration between Hong Kong, Macao and Guangdong, enhancing the social and cultural identity of the Chinese nation.

### (2) Integration strategy of ethnic society

The key to social integration in nation states lies in building an inclusive social environment that promotes mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups. This includes promoting multicultural education, strengthening community building for ethnic integration, and improving mechanisms for mediating ethnic conflicts.

### (3) Strengthening ethnic and social identity

The key to social integration in nation states lies in building an inclusive social environment that promotes mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups. This includes promoting multicultural education, strengthening community building for ethnic integration, and improving mechanisms for mediating ethnic conflicts.

In the practice of "One Country, Two Systems," social stability and improvement of people's livelihoods in Hong Kong and Macao have been effectively guaranteed. By strengthening social management and public services, the government of the special administrative region has successfully maintained social harmony and stability, and improved the living standards of the people. This kind of harmonious coexistence at the social level provides strong guarantees for the smooth progress of the national social process.

## *5.5 The mutual nourishment between ethnic cultural processes and 'One Country, Two Systems'*

### (1) Characteristics of Ethnic Cultural Processes

The process of ethnic culture refers to the dynamic development of ethnic groups in cultural inheritance, innovation, and exchange. This process is crucial for building national identity, maintaining cultural diversity, and enhancing cultural confidence.

Through cultural exchanges and cooperation with the mainland, the cultural industry of the special administrative region has also made significant progress. This cultural mutual nourishment and integration not only enriches the cultural treasure trove of the Chinese nation, but also promotes the diversity and inclusiveness of national culture.

### (2) Ways of cultural integration

The process of ethnic culture is the process of inheriting, integrating, innovating, and developing ethnic culture. Under the "One Country, Two Systems" policy, the cultural characteristics of Hong Kong and Macao have been fully protected and inherited.

The cultural integration of nation states aims to promote the mainstream culture of the country while protecting and inheriting the excellent traditional culture of various ethnic groups, achieving the organic combination of cultural diversity and unity. This requires the formulation of cultural protection policies at the national level, strengthening the protection of cultural heritage, and promoting innovative development of the cultural industry.

### (3) Deepening cultural identity

Cultural identity is the core of the cohesion of a nation-state. By strengthening ethnic cultural education, promoting ethnic cultural exchanges, and creating cultural brands with national characteristics, we can deepen the cultural identity of various ethnic groups towards the country. For example, China's "the Belt and Road" initiative has not only promoted economic cooperation among countries along the Belt and Road, but also strengthened cultural exchanges and mutual learning, providing cultural support for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The practice of 'One Country, Two Systems' has enhanced the social and cultural identity of the Chinese nation. On the basis of common cultural traditions and ethnic emotions, the cultural identity and sense of belonging between residents of Hong Kong, Macao and mainland China have gradually strengthened. The enhancement of

this social and cultural identity provides a solid cultural foundation for the unity and solidarity of the Chinese nation.

In summary, "One Country, Two Systems" as an important institutional arrangement of socialism with Chinese characteristics not only conforms to the objective laws of the national process, but also provides strong support for the comprehensive development of national politics, economy, society, and culture.

## **6. Chinese national identity and forging a sense of community for the Chinese nation**

### *6.1 Multidimensional Understanding of Ethnic Identity*

Ethnic identity, as a complex and multi-level concept, encompasses multiple aspects of an individual's cognition, emotional belonging, and behavioral tendencies towards their ethnic group. At the theoretical level, ethnic identity is a common focus of attention in multiple disciplines such as ethnology, sociology, psychology, etc. It involves multiple relationships such as individual and collective, culture and identity, history and reality. From a practical perspective, ethnic identity is an important manifestation of the cohesion and centripetal force of a country and a nation, and is a key factor in maintaining ethnic unity and social stability.

To understand ethnic identity, it is first necessary to clarify that it is a dynamic process of development. With the changes of the times, the evolution of society, and the exchange and integration of cultures, the connotation and extension of national identity are constantly enriched and expanded. Therefore, we cannot simply view ethnic identity as a fixed and unchanging state, but rather as a constantly evolving and changing process.

### *6.2 The Rich Connotation and Profound Significance of Chinese National Identity*

As a special ethnic identity, Chinese national identity has its unique connotation and significance. It includes multiple aspects such as identity recognition as a member of the Chinese nation, recognition of the history, culture, and traditions of the Chinese nation, and recognition of the common interests and destiny of the Chinese nation. This identification is not only reflected in the individual's psychological level, but also in the cultural and political levels of society.

How to view Chinese national identity? We should adopt a comprehensive and in-depth perspective.

Firstly, Chinese national identity is the foundation of the unity and solidarity of the Chinese nation. In the diverse and integrated family of the Chinese nation, the identification between different ethnic groups is an important bond to maintain ethnic unity and promote social harmony.

Secondly, Chinese national identity is a manifestation of cultural confidence in the Chinese nation. By recognizing and inheriting our own national culture, we can enhance cultural confidence and promote Chinese culture to the world.

Finally, Chinese national identity is the spiritual driving force for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In the historical process of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, it is necessary to gather the wisdom and strength of the entire nation, and Chinese national identity is the source of this strength.

### *6.3 The close connection between Chinese national identity and forging a sense of community for the Chinese nation*

There is a close connection between Chinese national identity and forging a sense of community for the Chinese nation.

On the one hand, Chinese national identity is the foundation and prerequisite for forging a sense of community among the Chinese nation. Only when we have a profound understanding and recognition of our national identity,

historical culture, and common interests can we truly form a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the Chinese national community.

On the other hand, forging a sense of community among the Chinese nation can further deepen and consolidate the identity of the Chinese nation. By strengthening education on ethnic unity and promoting exchanges and integration among different ethnic groups, we can continuously enhance the cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese nation, thereby further consolidating and developing the Chinese national identity.

#### *6.4 Strategies for Enhancing Chinese National Identity and Strengthening Community Awareness in the Era of Globalization*

In the era of globalization, facing the impact and challenges of multiculturalism, how to enhance Chinese national identity and strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation has become an urgent problem to be solved. We can start with the following aspects:

Firstly, strengthen the inheritance and promotion of the historical and cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. By delving deeper into and organizing the historical and cultural resources of the Chinese nation, strengthening its promotion and publicity, we can enable more people to understand and recognize the history and culture of the Chinese nation, thereby enhancing their sense of national identity and belonging.

Secondly, promote communication, exchange, and integration among various ethnic groups. By organizing various forms of ethnic cultural activities, exchange activities, etc., we promote mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups, enhance friendship and cooperation, and thus promote the unity and progress of the Chinese nation.

Once again, strengthen guidance and support at the national level. The government can encourage and support ethnic cultural inheritance and innovation in various ethnic regions by formulating relevant policies and providing financial support, promoting the prosperity and development of Chinese national culture.

Finally, pay attention to cultivating the national consciousness and patriotism of young people. By strengthening guidance and education in school and family education, we aim to cultivate a sense of national pride and patriotism among young people, enabling them to become the backbone of inheriting and promoting Chinese culture.

#### *6.5 The Path to Strengthening National Identity and Community Consciousness in the Process of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation*

In the historical process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, strengthening national identity and forging a sense of community for the Chinese nation has important strategic significance. To achieve this goal, we need to make efforts in the following aspects:

One is to adhere to the development concept of putting the people at the center. In the process of promoting economic and social development, it is necessary to fully consider the interests and needs of all ethnic groups, ensure that they share the fruits of reform and development, and enhance their sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese nation.

The second is to strengthen the construction of ethnic unity and progress. By carrying out activities to promote ethnic unity and progress, strengthening propaganda and education on ethnic unity, and other means, we aim to create a favorable atmosphere for all ethnic groups to unite and strive for common prosperity and development, providing strong spiritual support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The third is to promote the innovative development and creative transformation of excellent traditional Chinese culture. While inheriting and promoting the excellent traditional Chinese culture, we should pay attention to its

integration with modern civilization, promote its innovative development and creative transformation, and make it shine more brilliantly in the new era.

The fourth is to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation. By strengthening exchanges and cooperation with other countries and regions, showcasing the unique charm and value of Chinese culture, enhancing the influence and discourse power of the Chinese nation on the international stage, and creating a favorable international environment for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

In summary, ethnic identity is a complex and profound topic that involves multiple relationships such as individual and collective, culture and identity, history and reality. In the era of globalization and the historical process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, it is necessary to enhance the identity of the Chinese nation and forge a sense of community for the Chinese nation through various ways and means, providing a solid ideological foundation and spiritual motivation for realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

## **7. From Strengthening the Awareness of the Chinese National Community to Building the Chinese National Community**

In the splendid history of the Chinese nation for over 5000 years (some say nearly 10000 years), all ethnic groups have jointly written brilliant cultural chapters and forged an indestructible national spirit. In today's era, with the deepening of globalization and profound changes in Chinese society, how to understand and strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation, explore the relationship between the sense of community of the Chinese nation, the shared spiritual home of the Chinese nation, and the identity of the Chinese nation, and build a community of the Chinese nation has become a topic of the times before us.

### *7.1 The integration and symbiosis of the sense of community, shared spiritual home, and national identity of the Chinese nation*

The sense of community of the Chinese nation is the foundation of national unity, the basis of ethnic solidarity, and the soul of spiritual strength. It embodies the consciousness of a community of shared destiny, emphasizing that as a community, the future and destiny of 56 ethnic groups are closely linked to the future and destiny of the country. The formation of this consciousness is not only a subjective understanding of the objective existence of the Chinese national community, but also a process of recognizing, evaluating, and identifying with the Chinese national community in social practice activities.

The common spiritual home of the Chinese nation is the sum of the cultural spirit, values and emotional attitudes that the community can rely on, be willing to inherit and carry forward together. It represents the spiritual driving force of the Chinese nation's endless vitality, unity, and progress, composed of a common cultural foundation, a common national spirit, and a common pursuit of ideals. In this spiritual home, the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation plays a pivotal role, accumulating the deepest spiritual pursuits of the Chinese nation and containing the fundamental spiritual genes of the Chinese nation.

Chinese national identity is an ideological and emotional connection formed by people within a certain ethnic group, which is the sense of identity and pride that people hold towards their own nation. The formation of this sense of identity cannot be separated from the guidance of the sense of community of the Chinese nation and the nourishment of the shared spiritual home of the Chinese nation.

From this, it can be seen that there is a close and complex relationship between the sense of community of the Chinese nation, the shared spiritual home of the Chinese nation, and the identity of the Chinese nation. Community consciousness is the ideological foundation of building a spiritual home, which is the fertile ground for the growth of community consciousness and national identity. National identity is the ultimate goal and value pursuit of community consciousness and spiritual home construction.

### *7.2 Enhancing national identity and community consciousness in the construction of a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation*

Building a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation is an important way to enhance Chinese national identity and strengthen the sense of community among the Chinese nation. Specifically, we can start from the following aspects:

Firstly, we should deeply explore and inherit the excellent traditional cultures of various ethnic groups, strengthen the protection of intangible cultural heritage, and promote cultural exchanges and mutual learning among all ethnic groups. Through cultural exchange and integration, enhance the sense of cultural identity and belonging among various ethnic groups, and promote the formation of a sense of community among the Chinese nation.

Secondly, organize various ethnic unity and progress themed activities, such as knowledge competitions, speech contests, essay contests, etc., to enhance the sense of community of the Chinese nation among all ethnic groups. These activities not only enhance understanding and friendship among people of all ethnic groups, but also inspire their enthusiasm and motivation to jointly maintain national unity and ethnic solidarity.

In addition, strengthening the promotion and implementation of ethnic policies and regulations is also an indispensable part. By thoroughly promoting the Party's ethnic policies, people of all ethnic groups can fully understand and recognize China's ethnic policies, thereby enhancing their sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese national community.

### *7.3 The basic path and substantive connotation of building a community of the Chinese nation*

Building a community in the Chinese nation is a systematic project that requires starting from multiple aspects. The basic path includes strengthening education on ethnic unity and progress, promoting economic and social development in ethnic areas, and governing ethnic affairs in accordance with the law. Through the implementation of these paths, we can gradually build a united, harmonious, and prosperous community of the Chinese nation.

The essence of building a community of the Chinese nation lies in achieving mutual integration of interests and interconnected destinies among all ethnic groups, promoting common development, mutual benefit and sharing among all ethnic groups. This requires us to adhere to the principle of equality and mutual respect among all ethnic groups, promote the inclusiveness and exchange of ethnic cultures, strengthen confidence in Chinese culture, and ensure the prosperity and development of the Chinese nation.

At present, the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao have deeply integrated into the overall development of the country, and the construction of the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area is constantly advancing. The construction of the Taiwan Strait Economic Cooperation Zone is also being promoted. The South China Economic Circle and the Fujian Taiwan Economic Zone have a "five cultural ties" of kinship, geography, cultural ties, material ties, and business ties. It is possible and necessary to establish a "Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Min Taiwan Chinese Ethnic Community Construction Pilot Zone" based on this "five cultural ties" to explore regional practices in the construction of the Chinese ethnic community in the southern and southeastern coastal areas. On the basis of the 1992 Consensus, we will continue to promote the all-round integration of politics, economy, society and culture between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits and the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions with the Chinese Mainland, so as to promote the "One China" construction of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### *7.4 Strengthening the Awareness of the Chinese National Community and Building the Chinese National Community: The Intrinsic Requirements and Cultural Consciousness of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation*

From forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation to building a community for the Chinese nation, it is not only an inevitable requirement for maintaining national unity and ethnic solidarity, but also an inherent



requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In this process, China's reform and opening up, as well as the smooth progress of the two "centenary goals," have demonstrated profound cultural consciousness.

Cultural self-awareness refers to people living in a certain culture having a "self-awareness" of its origin, formation process, characteristics, and development trends. In the practice of building a community of the Chinese nation, we deeply recognize the unique value and charm of Chinese culture, actively inherit and promote excellent traditional Chinese culture, and enhance cultural identity and confidence. This cultural consciousness not only helps us better understand and strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation, but also provides strong spiritual motivation and cultural support for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

In summary, from strengthening the awareness of building a community of the Chinese nation to constructing a community of the Chinese nation is a complex and profound process that involves multiple aspects such as culture, ethnicity, and politics. By deeply exploring and inheriting the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, organizing various themed activities on ethnic unity and progress, and strengthening the promotion and implementation of ethnic policies and regulations, we can continuously enhance the identity of the Chinese nation and forge a sense of community for the Chinese nation. At the same time, we should also recognize the essence and value pursuit of this process, which is to achieve mutual integration of interests and interdependence of destinies among various ethnic groups, and promote the common prosperity and development of the Chinese nation. This is not only an inherent requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also reflects the profound cultural consciousness and firm cultural confidence of the Chinese nation.

## 8. Conclusion

As a great initiative of socialism with Chinese characteristics, "One Country, Two Systems" not only successfully solved the governance problems after the return of Hong Kong and Macao, but also profoundly influenced the national process of the Chinese nation. Through institutional arrangements, political integration, economic integration, and social and cultural exchanges, "One Country, Two Systems" has promoted close ties and coordinated development between Hong Kong, Macao, and the mainland, enhancing the political identity, economic process, and social and cultural identity of the Chinese nation.

There is a complex and profound dialectical relationship between ethnic processes and nation states. Through the integration and recognition of political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, nation states can achieve harmonious coexistence and common development among various ethnic groups. In the future, with the deepening development of globalization, multi-ethnic countries should pay more attention to the dynamic management of ethnic processes and the deepening construction of national identity to cope with new challenges and opportunities. Although this article provides a relatively systematic analysis of the dialectical relationship between ethnic processes and nation states, there are still many issues worth exploring in depth. For example, how to maintain the uniqueness and diversity of national culture in the context of globalization? How to build a more effective ethnic policy system to promote equality and integration among all ethnic groups? These issues require further research and exploration by experts and scholars.

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# Effects of Financial Pressures to Business Performance: The Case of a Social Enterprise in Lanao del Sur, Philippines

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## Abstract

Social enterprises play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of inclusive growth, particularly in areas with volatile economies marked by disasters and conflicts, such as Lanao del Sur, Philippines. Social enterprises are unique due to their dual-centric mission, which pursues both social impact and economic goals. Anchored on Resource Dependence Theory and Institutional Theory, this study investigated the impact of financial pressures on the social and financial performance of a social enterprise in Lanao del Sur. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to uncover patterns, themes, and narratives related to financial pressures and balancing dual missions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings revealed that financial pressures stemming from income instability, cash flow shortages, liquidity crises, and financial strains significantly impair operational capabilities, hindering both the social and financial performance of the social enterprise. Furthermore, the study highlighted the vital role of government and non-government organizations in aiding the social enterprise. Grants, mentorship, networks, and collaborations helped the business survive and thrive amidst financial challenges. However, while these different types of support ensure implementation of social goals, they also indirectly exert pressure on the social enterprise to prioritize financial goals, potentially compromising their social performance. Thus, the study underscored the importance of balancing the dual mission, offering valuable information for social enterprises and other stakeholders in crafting effective programs, strategies, and initiatives that facilitate the achievement of both the social and financial goals of social enterprises while contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by fostering inclusive growth.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurship, Financial Pressures, Sustainable Development Goals, Financial Performance, Social Performance

## 1. Introduction

In today's world, the growing trend of social entrepreneurship has gained significant prominence as a formidable catalyst in tackling contemporary societal and ecological issues (Ahlgren, 2018; Houtbeckers, 2016; Martin & Osberg, 2015). Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, which primarily focuses on profit, social entrepreneurship emphasizes generating positive social outcomes (Moss et al., 2011). Social enterprises operate in a wide variety of cultures, geographic locations, and accordingly deal with a totally different set of social problems (Sud et al., 2009; Seda & Ismail, 2020). The emergence of social enterprise as a distinct research field offers a framework for

exploring growth barriers that extend beyond purely economic challenges (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Doherty et al., 2014).

Social enterprises are those who identify gaps in current social services (Defourney & Nyssens, 2006) and devise creative alternatives to address these deficiencies (Darko & Koranteng 2015). These social enterprises offer a glimmer of hope to the people of Lanao del Sur, who endured a devastating five-month long conflict that displaced over 360,000 residents and left them facing widespread destruction and profound humanitarian trauma. Social enterprises address the community needs by providing access to basic services, increasing job creation, alleviating poverty, and empowering marginalized individuals. However, despite their contribution to society, and efforts to promote sustainable development, they face numerous challenges that impact their sustainability and growth.

One significant obstacle for social enterprises is financial pressure (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Rabi, 2017). In the British Council study (2017), start-up and early-stage social enterprises expressed primary concerns related to financial constraints, with 53% facing issues with their capital, 46% encountering difficulties in obtaining grants, and 36% experiencing challenges with cash flow. The top three financial constraints identified were a limited supply of capital (51%), an underdeveloped business model (34%), and limited accessibility to investors due to a lack of network (31%).

Securing adequate funds is crucial for their operational continuity and the fulfillment of social objectives (Schaltegger et al., 2016; Bugg-Levine et al., 2012; Omorede, 2014; Cornforth, 2014). However, many social enterprises have struggled to secure sufficient funds due to the limitations of its business model (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Rabi, 2017). Haigh and Hoffman (2014) state that it can be challenging for social entrepreneurs to prioritize both social and economic objectives equally to create a solid equilibrium. This tension between financial sustainability and social mission is a defining characteristic of social enterprises and underscores the importance of addressing financial challenges, as financial pressure can significantly impair the operational capabilities of social enterprises.

### *1.1 Research Questions*

The major objective of this study is to investigate how financial pressure impacts the ability of social enterprises in Lanao del Sur, Philippines, to balance the dual mission of achieving both social impact and financial sustainability. The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How does financial pressure impact the financial performance of social enterprises?
2. How does financial pressure impact the social performance of social enterprises?

### *1.2 Review of Related Literature*

A social enterprise is a hybrid organization that operates with a dual-centric mission, simultaneously striving to achieve social impact and generate financial returns (Bugg-Levine, Kogut, & Kulatilaka, 2012; Battilana et al., 2012; El Ebrashi, 2013; Costanzo et al., 2014; Agafonow, 2014). This type of organization possesses a distinctive characteristic: it endeavors to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between social and financial objectives, rather than prioritizing one over the other. Thus, social enterprises implement growth plans rooted in values, aligning the pursuit of both financial success and social impact (El Ebrashi, 2013) as a fundamental concept guiding their strategic expansion.

However, achieving a balance between financial sustainability and social impact presents a complex challenge that can impede the long-term viability of an organization. The inherent dual mission of social enterprises—to generate profit while addressing social issues—complicates their financial landscape, as they must reconcile the need for revenue generation with their commitment to social objectives (Harsanto et al., 2022). The operational activities of social enterprises are often constrained by financial limitations, which may compromise their adherence to fundamental objectives (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Santos et al., 2015).

Social enterprises often face financial pressures stemming from income instability, cash flow shortages, and liquidity crises, creating a precarious environment for their operations. Income instability is a common issue, particularly for social enterprises that rely on grants, donations, or government support, which can fluctuate due to economic conditions or policy changes (Dono et al., 2022). This instability can lead to cash flow shortages, making it difficult for these organizations to cover operational expenses, pay employees, or invest in growth opportunities. Research indicates that a lack of collateral and excessive leverage often restrict access to external financing, further exacerbating cash flow challenges (Chaturvedi & Karri, 2022). Consequently, social enterprises may face liquidity crises, struggling to maintain sufficient cash reserves to cover short-term obligations, ultimately threatening their sustainability (Oliński & Mioduszewski, 2022).

Moreover, financial strains can significantly impair the operational capabilities of social enterprises. Inconsistent cash flow hinders their ability to plan and execute strategic initiatives effectively. For instance, without stable funding, social enterprises may be unable to invest in essential resources, such as skilled personnel or technology, which are critical for enhancing their social impact (Rabi, 2017). Additionally, the pressure to generate immediate revenue can shift the focus toward short-term gains at the expense of long-term social objectives, potentially resulting in mission drift (Duan & Yang, 2024).

Furthermore, a major challenge for social entrepreneurship is the lack of access to financial resources or assistance. Social enterprises often require substantial capital, particularly for initial investments in plant and machinery, but securing funds is challenging for nonprofits that rely on donations and membership fees (Tanimoto, 2012). Many social entrepreneurs use their own funds or borrow from local money lenders at high interest rates, creating significant financial burdens. Commercial banks rarely provide easy loans for social purposes due to the complexities of banking regulations. Similarly, private banks and the private sector are hesitant to offer startup loans or financing, citing concerns about loan security, while entrepreneurs often struggle to secure loans without collateral (Isenberg, 2011).

Financial capital from private equity, angel investors, debt, and public capital markets is crucial for social enterprises (Roundy, 2016). However, persuading investors to support non-profit initiatives can be challenging, as investors often lack the same conviction in the initiative as the social entrepreneur (Seda & Ismail, 2020). Investors typically rely on previous investment activities for comparison, but the social venture market lacks clear trends in delivering consistent returns (Ghanimeh, 2015). Additionally, while governments may provide startup funds, access to these resources depends on the specific projects and the perceived potential of the entrepreneurs (Isenberg, 2011).

### *1.3 Theoretical Underpinnings*

The study is grounded in Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) and Institutional Theory, which provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between social enterprises and their external environments. These theories not only elucidate the dynamics of these interactions but also highlight the pressures and mechanisms that influence the performance of social enterprises, particularly in maintaining alignment with their original mission.

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT), developed by Pfeffer and Salancik in the 1970s, highlights the influence of external resource constraints on organizational behavior. The theory posits that organizations rely heavily on external resources—such as funding, networks, collaborations (Liu & Li, 2017; Hulgård & Andersen, 2013), capital, expertise, information, and legitimacy (Cornforth, 2014)—to operate efficiently. According to this perspective, organizations seek to manage and control these external dependencies to ensure their survival (Doherty et al., 2014). For social enterprises, financial pressures often arise from their reliance on external funding sources, which can dictate budget allocations and create financial constraints.

Funding shortages can compel organizations to prioritize revenue-generating activities over their social missions. Donor requirements may also redirect the organization's resources and efforts toward specific projects, potentially misaligning with its original mission. Resource Dependence Theory (RDT) provides a lens to understand how these dependencies impact the performance of social enterprises. RDT emphasizes the effective management of

external dependencies through robust stakeholder connections, the cultivation of collaborative efforts, and the strategic utilization of social capital (Gregory et al., 2019). It posits that enterprises can mitigate risks associated with dependence on a single funding source by adopting diversified funding approaches (El Ebrashi, 2013). The theory also underscores the importance of competent individuals committed to achieving both social and financial objectives for organizational success (Chinakidzwa & Phiri, 2020). Furthermore, effective management of dependence on favorable regulatory environments is critical, necessitating engagement in lobbying efforts and strategic alignment with evolving regulations (Young, 2012; Cornforth, 2014).

Institutional Theory, introduced by DiMaggio and Powell, examines how external institutional pressures influence organizational behavior and conformity. Social enterprises operate within an institutional environment that includes societal norms, regulations, and expectations from various stakeholders. These institutional pressures can exacerbate financial constraints, pushing organizations to conform to market logic in order to maintain legitimacy and secure funding. This alignment with external expectations can affect the performance of social enterprises, often leading them to deviate from their original missions to meet financial and institutional demands.

Integrating these theories into the study enables a comprehensive analysis of how financial pressures influence the mission and performance of social enterprises. Financial pressures—such as dependency levels, budget allocation, financial constraints, funding shortages, donor requirements, and revenue generation pressures—are examined through the lenses of Stakeholder Theory, RDT, and Institutional Theory..

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

The research design for this study employs a qualitative method, providing a platform for in-depth insights into the experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of social enterprises in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (Ramus & Vaccaro, 2014). By utilizing qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews and observations in a case study, the researcher can uncover the nuances of how social enterprises manage to balance their dual missions, particularly the financial and social performance (Kwong et al., 2017).

Given the exploratory nature of the research questions regarding the dual-centric mission and social enterprise performance, a qualitative research design is well-suited for delving deeply into the subject matter (Jones et al., 2020). Qualitative methodologies offer flexibility in data collection and analysis, enabling researchers to adapt to the unique characteristics of each social enterprise and explore diverse viewpoints within a small sample size (Simatele & Dlamini, 2019). This method provides comprehensive information about the subject matter, especially in capturing the varied and dynamic nature of social enterprises operating in different contexts within Lanao del Sur.

### *2.2 Case Study Design*

Case studies are an effective method for obtaining plausible information and concrete content relatively quickly, drawing on the long-term experiences of participants. Case study research provides a structured academic approach to extracting knowledge from these studies. Robert K. Yin (2009) defines a case study as an empirical investigation and thorough analysis of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context. To thoroughly examine the influence of financial pressure on the performance of social enterprises in Lanao del Sur, the study adopted a case study research design and method as outlined by Robert K. Yin. This approach utilizes a linear but iterative process, allowing for a comprehensive and detailed investigation into the complexities and nuances of balancing financial sustainability with social impact in social enterprises. It acknowledges that the information gathered is inherently linked to individual experiences, which may cause the resulting knowledge to be intertwined with specific circumstances, actual data, and contextual factors (Felden & Wenzel, 2019).

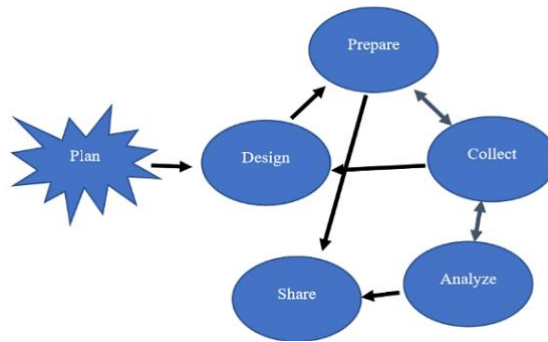


Figure 1: Phases of case study design by Robert K. Yin

### 2.3 Data Collection

The data collection strategy involved conducting semi-structured interviews following Kvale's (1996) approach with social enterprise leaders, beneficiaries, or community representatives. Semi-structured interviews imply that the questions were predetermined, but the interview process remained open to respondents' unexpected ideas (Noor et al., 2018; Peoples et al., 2020). As a result, some interview questions were added in later interviews. The data was collected firsthand by the researcher via Zoom, based on participant convenience and preferences. Each interview session lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

In conducting this research, a cover letter along with the consent form was emailed to the participant, providing an introductory guide that explains the research objectives and procedures. It also ensures that the participant is fully aware of her rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In line with the Republic Act 10173 - Data Privacy Act of 2012, the participant's name and responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to uncover patterns, themes, and narratives related to balancing dual missions, integrating insights from interviews. Thematic analysis is described as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher utilized this method to organize, structure, and interpret the extensive data gathered from the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Thematic analysis was chosen for the study because it allowed for the systematic identification of key themes and sub-themes, distilling the information into core ideas for further examination (Nowell et al., 2017; Attride-Stirling, 2001).

To conduct the thematic analysis, these are the steps that were followed:

- Organization of the gathered data

This step involves the systematic organization of the gathered data, a fundamental process prevalent in qualitative analysis. It requires the researcher to explore the data by reading the transcription, listening to the interview recording, and taking notes simultaneously. The process of note-taking facilitates the transformation of quotes into analyzable data. Understanding the data goes beyond surface-level comprehension, requiring analytical and critical interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The interviewee's responses prompt reflection on the significance of the data.

- Generating Initial Codes.

This process involves meticulous data analysis through coding. Codes serve as the framework for analysis that provide labels emphasizing data necessary to addressing the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Throughout this process, codes are created, and pertinent quotes are grouped under each code.



- Searching for Themes.

At this stage, the emerging codes start to uncover patterns that align with the research questions and objectives. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme represents a significant element of data that is pertinent to the research question, capturing recurring responses or meanings within the dataset. By revisiting all the codes, the researcher can identify possible themes and patterns. Once the data is coded, the process of searching for potential themes begins. This involves examining the codes for patterns, connections, and similarities, grouping them into potential themes based on shared meanings or content.

- Testing the themes.

Validation entails an iterative process where themes are evaluated against coded data and the entire dataset. Ensuring the quality of themes is paramount. Initially, themes are scrutinized against grouped data to assess their alignment. If there are instances where data does not align with certain themes prompt either discarding or reallocation to more fitting themes. This meticulous review process refines the boundaries of themes, ensuring the inclusion of relevant data within appropriate thematic contexts (Ibrahim & Hemavathi, 2020).

- Definition of the final themes.

This step involves precisely articulating the distinctiveness of each theme. The essence of each theme is condensed into a single sentence, with a focus on maintaining thematic exclusivity. While interconnected to address the thesis question, each theme retains its unique focus and scope, avoiding redundancy (Ibrahim & Hemavathi, 2020).

- Data Analysis.

The final step in qualitative analysis is facilitating an insightful narrative regarding the occurrence of balancing dual missions within social enterprises. Striving for clarity and academic rigor, this process aims to present a compelling narrative elucidating the why and how financial pressure affects the business performance of social enterprises in Lanao del Sur (Ibrahim & Hemavathi, 2020).

### 3. Results and discussion

The study revealed that financial pressure has significantly impaired operational capabilities, hindering both the social and financial performance of social enterprises in Lanao del Sur and the following key themes emerged from the thematic analysis:

#### *Theme 1: Income Instability*

Income instability is a significant challenge for these enterprises. *"Our sales depend on demand, and since our products are not fast-moving goods, income can be unpredictable,"* the social entrepreneur explains. Fluctuating demand for products like langkit and loom goods, which are not fast-moving consumer goods, leads to unpredictable sales and revenue. External events, such as the Marawi siege and the COVID-19 pandemic, further disrupt production and limit the movement of goods, impacting income stability. Additionally, limited access to technology and a lack of reliable local delivery systems hinder market expansion and increase operational costs, contributing to the instability.

#### *Theme 2: Liquidity Crisis*

The social enterprise has faced a liquidity crisis driven by slow-moving inventory and limited sales. High inventory levels of langkit and loom products, which are not fast-moving consumer goods, tie up resources in stagnant stock, creating a financial bottleneck. This immobilizes funds that could be used for operations or growth initiatives. Additionally, inventory issues like damage and obsolescence hinder the ability to reinvest in community-focused programs, further straining liquidity. These factors, combined with the challenges of income instability, create a precarious financial environment that makes it difficult for social enterprises to maintain adequate cash reserves and meet their financial obligations..

### *Theme 3: Cash Flow Shortages*

The social enterprise shares that cash flow shortages is a persistent concern, often stemming from the combination of fluctuating demand, high inventory levels, and delayed payments. *"At times, there are delays in revenue collection, particularly from government clients. They issue purchase orders without initial payments, creating cash flow gaps that are difficult to manage,"* the participant said. *"While some clients may offer advance payments, the overall delays in revenue collection, particularly from government clients, contribute to significant cash flow gaps, hindering daily operations and long-term planning,"* the participant added. The lack of well-structured business systems, characterized by poor record-keeping and ineffective financial management practices, exacerbates these challenges, as enterprises struggle to monitor and optimize their finances. *"Managing finances is tough without a dedicated record keeper,"* the participant emphasizes, underscoring the need for support in areas such as financial planning, bookkeeping, and accounting.

### *Theme 4: Limited Access to Capital*

The participant stressed that limited access to capital is a major obstacle for social enterprises in Lanao del Sur. *"Limited access to capital poses a significant challenge for social enterprises in Lanao del Sur, hampering their ability to sustain and expand their operations,"* the source says. While government grants and initiatives exist, complex requirements often make them inaccessible to many enterprises, particularly smaller organizations with limited administrative capacity. Eligibility criteria often involve *"registration with cooperatives or the submission of detailed narratives,"* which can be daunting for these enterprises. Moreover, the focus of many initiatives is on providing equipment and materials rather than direct financial aid. While these resources are helpful for production, they do not address the need for working capital to cover daily operational expenses and manage unforeseen challenges. *"Social enterprises require liquid funds to cover daily operational expenses, manage cash flow, and respond to unforeseen challenges,"* the participant explains. This gap in accessible financial support limits the ability of social enterprises to function effectively and achieve their social missions.

## **4. Conclusions**

This study highlights the essential role of social enterprises in fostering inclusive growth and addressing socio-economic challenges in volatile environments like Lanao del Sur. These organizations carry the dual responsibility of achieving financial sustainability while delivering meaningful social impact. However, this balance is often disrupted by significant financial pressures, which hinder their ability to operate effectively and achieve their objectives.

The financial challenges faced by social enterprises—*income instability, liquidity crises, cash flow shortages, and limited access to capital* - create a challenging environment that undermines their financial performance. These pressures frequently result in operational halts, as insufficient funds force enterprises to temporarily cease activities, disrupting production cycles and preventing them from fulfilling orders or delivering services. Additionally, inconsistent revenue generation and limited access to capital restrict their ability to scale operations or explore new market opportunities, threatening both their short-term operations and long-term sustainability.

Key findings reveal that these financial constraints not only limit the operational and financial sustainability of social enterprises but also jeopardize their social missions. When financial stability becomes the priority, enterprises risk mission drift, compromising their commitment to empowering communities and achieving social objectives. This tension underscores the need for targeted interventions to support these organizations.

Enabling institutions such as government agencies and non-government organizations play a critical role in mitigating these challenges. While grants, mentorship, and other support mechanisms are essential for sustaining social enterprises, they can also impose additional pressures by requiring enterprises to meet stringent performance expectations. This duality highlights the complexity of providing effective assistance to social enterprises.

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of social enterprises in Lanao del Sur, it is essential to design programs and strategies that:

1. Address financial pressures through stable funding mechanisms and accessible capital.
2. Provide capacity-building initiatives focused on financial management and operational efficiency.
3. Foster networks that facilitate collaboration and resource sharing among social enterprises.

Hence, by balancing financial and social goals, social enterprises can continue to contribute meaningfully to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in promoting inclusive growth in conflict-affected areas. This study offers valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders in crafting interventions that empower social enterprises to thrive amidst challenges.

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# Examining The Experience and Interest in Using Digital Maps as A Tourism Communication Medium Among Visitors in Bantul Regency, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study aimed to determine audience interest in using interactive digital tourism maps to increase tourism destination literacy. The theory and concept of digital interactive tourist maps and Geographic Information Systems explain how navigation and information systems that were previously manual have become digital tourist communication media to make it easier for tourists to obtain information according to their needs. Conduct surveys to test and accept six hypotheses on the impact of digital map application trials on users, which include: the influence of affect on continuous usage, the impact of affect on user value, the effect of usability on affect, the effect of usability on continuous usage, the influence of usability on user value, and the impact of user value on continuous usage. The results show that the system's appearance and user value are influenced by its perceived value. The map also reveals that the system's usability affects its perceived value but does not affect its continuous usage. The perceived value of a system is tied to its overall performance. The practical and theoretical implications of this research are discussed, providing insights into how the results can be applied or influence practices in the field of The Performance Tourism Digital Interactive Map for tourists in the Mangunan tourist destination, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Indonesia. The study focused on the Mataram cultural tourism literacy model using interactive digital maps in the Mangunan tourism area, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Indonesia, highlighting the lack of research on its impact on tourism activity.

**Keywords:** Digital Maps, Interactive, Literacy, Tourist Destinations

## 1. Introduction

Bantul Regency, as one of the regencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, has a diversity of main attractions for tourists; it can be seen from the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Bantul Regency. Based on data on tourist visits by regencies/cities in Yogyakarta, in 2019, the Bantul Regency contributed 8 million people, or around 28.29% (Prayitno et al., 2022; Suyoto et al., 2022). In 2020, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visits to DIY and to Bantul Regency fell to 10.83 million people and 2.3 million people. Bantul's contribution to total tourist arrivals in Yogyakarta decreased in 2019 but increased again in 2021

(Rahman & Hakim, 2024; S. T. Wibowo et al., 2020). Efforts to increase tourist visits, apart from increasing the attractiveness of tourist destinations and increasing online and offline promotional activities, also need to provide easy access for tourists through digital tourism maps (Kang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020).

Currently, tourism promotion activities in Bantul Regency, both through various social media and websites and various attraction activities, are pretty good. However, the ease of online access for potential tourists to find facilities and infrastructure still needs improvement. The importance of digital tourism maps is part of the transformation of the tourism industry in developing information technology and provides convenience for tourists and potential tourists (Choi et al., 2022; Pawan Kumar et al., 2022). In this context, interactive tourism maps appear to guide tourists to learn about a destination. Interactive digital maps of tourism as a medium for delivering information on tourist destinations interactively for tourists and prospective tourists (Maquera et al., 2022).

Tourists, as customers of a tourism activity, carry out several stages or processes before they arrive or are at a destination (Poux et al., 2020). There are three processes that tourists follow when determining their trip to travel, namely before purchase (prepurchase), consumption (consumption), and after consumption (post-consumption) (Baran & Baran, 2022; Choi et al., 2022; Pawan Kumar et al., 2022). In the first process, (prospective) tourists will identify and evaluate a tourism product or travel package plan offered (O'Keefe et al., 2019). From this process, they will look for various things related to the products and services they will get on a trip. At this stage, potential tourists will seek and obtain information about meeting their needs when deciding to become tourists. In the second stage, tourists purchase a tour service package based on the information received (Hu & Li, 2023; Rahman & Hakim, 2024). Tourists will experience or gain experience of tourism activities in a tourist destination. At this stage, various activities and events will be followed or experienced by tourists who are part of fulfilling their needs as tourists. In the third stage (Suominen et al., 2018).

Tourists have finished following their activities as tourists by evaluating the information obtained before buying tourism products or services (Virto & López, 2020). This evaluation stage is closely related to whether tourists get services based on what has been conveyed through searching for product and service information. When tourism services match the information obtained, positive impressions and recommendations to tourists' families or colleagues will be given (Kang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). On the other hand, negative impressions can arise when tourists have an unpleasant experience or their needs are unmet. The three processes above suggest that the right, fast, and accurate tourism information system can determine whether tourists buy a tourism product. Rahman & Haki (2024), indicates that tourists will look for information about their travels, especially transportation, accommodation, and activities at the destination.

In fact, in the era of information technology, as it is today, tourists will use various media, including online media, to get information according to their needs. One uses an interactive digital tourism map (Digital Interactive Tourism Map) (Hu & Li, 2023; O'Keefe et al., 2019). An interactive and digital-based tourist map will be a bridge to accessing the information needed. Suppose a potential tourist destination can provide accurate information with the ease of tourism services with a digital system (Li et al., 2020). In that case, prospective tourists can decide to buy products and determine the Digital Interactive Tourism Map, which provides information about the presence, location, distance, and existing travel routes based on digital technology (Li et al., 2020; Palamas et al., 2023). Digital Interactive Tourism Map has a vital function: first, it provides information to users (tourists) about the location of tourist objects, facilitates travel to tourist sites, assists in providing information on the choice of tourist areas visited, and helps in planning trips (Pawan Kumar et al., 2022). The content on digital tourism maps can be described as follows: geographic areas, attractive tourist locations, transportation services, supporting facilities, and tourism services. In addition, the categories of information in the Digital Interactive Tourism Map are Accommodation, Cultural Features, Entertainment, Facilities, Recreation, Services, Transportation, Unique Features, and Conditions for tourists (Baran & Baran, 2022; Kang et al., 2022; Wu, 2020).

President Joko Widodo has designated Borobudur as a super-priority tourist destination. The District of Bantul Tourism Office responds to this policy with a Mataram cultural tourism concept in the Kotagede-Pleret-Giriloyo (Imogiri)-Mangunan area as a buffer for Borobudur tourism (S. T. Wibowo et al., 2020). The area is connected by the journey of Sultan Agung, the former of the Mataram Empire when searching for his burial place (Rahman &

Hakim, 2024). The concept of integrating this historical tourist area will be packaged in an interactive and innovative digital tourist destination (Syahidi et al., 2022). This is by the policy direction and strategy of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy 2020-2024 point 6, namely encouraging research, innovation, and technology adoption with a plan of promoting research and innovation related to the development of creative tourism destinations that are oriented towards increasing added value and competitiveness as well as the adoption of information and communication technology, up-to-date effectively and efficiently (Damanik et al., 2022; Widianingsih et al., 2023).

People now use smartphones for navigation; millennials prefer to watch TV with cell phones (Liyushiana et al., 2022). Tourist attractions are promoted through the Internet. Internet use in the Indonesian economy in 2019 increased by \$40 Billion and is expected to triple by 2025 (Damanik et al., 2022). Searching for Indonesian travel information via Google increased by 39% in 2019, and Yogyakarta ranked 4th in Google searches for the traveling category. Tourism must now rule out Technology 4.0. The current tourism problem is the navigation system and information related to historical and cultural values, which are still manual. Traditional navigation systems such as paper maps or directional signs are no longer practical in this digital age (Lesmana & Sugiarto, 2021; J. M. Wibowo & Hariadi, 2024). Tourists find it challenging to identify tourist locations. Historical and cultural information related to the Mangunan is also not presented in a system that makes it easier for tourists (Budiarsa et al., 2021; Lesmana et al., 2022).

Information presented through interactive features, such as detailed information about each tourist location, optimal travel routes, previous user reviews, and recommendations for tourist attractions, can be the most essential part of this interactive digital map (Bijlani, 2021; Neyra-Paredes et al., 2021). Utilizing this interactive digital tourism map can positively contribute to the tourism system of Bantul Regency by increasing tourist satisfaction with the experience and creating a strong visual identity that distinguishes Bantul Regency tourist attractions from other places (S. T. Wibowo et al., 2020). In addition, with the help of this interactive tourism map, tourists are expected to have an exciting and informative experience with the tourist destinations of Bantul Regency. This map is the most essential part of modern tourism development to be an effective tool in promoting various tourist destinations, optimizing the overall trip, and increasing the attractiveness and satisfaction of the visit (Suominen et al., 2018).

Navigation systems and historical and cultural related information on electronic-based tourist maps may include: 1) web-based navigation systems used to inform history and culture; and 2) a digital-based tourist map application for mobile devices that provides various functions, including a navigation function that directs users to the tourist attractions of Mangunan correctly and quickly, 3) the function of historical and cultural information from the nearest tourist attraction in the Mangunan Tourism Area to plan the next stop and 4) route recommendations to a series of attractions.

A digital map prototype was made in the first year, and information data developed in this map will be inputted (Virto & López, 2020). Most of the tourist positions in the Ancient Mataram Kingdom have been identified and listed on the map (Nabila et al., 2021). The information collected has been included, although still at the general level. In this second year, as described in the first-year proposal, the research will continue to refine the information that needs to be conveyed to tourists (Manchanda & Deb, 2022; Rahman & Hakim, 2024). In addition to information that is literate, additional information supporting tourism, such as the location of places of worship, culinary delights, parking lots, souvenir shops (souvenirs), and so on, has yet to be included in this prototype. In addition, in its development, there are still locations that are part of the history of the Ancient Mataram Kingdom that have not been previously identified. In the second year, this information will be refined (Oliveira et al., 2022; Potdevin et al., 2021).

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a system that takes advantage of the advantages of spatial data and defines its relationship to information (Wei, 2021). This information can be in the location of an area, office address, and other information stored in a database. An essential part of GIS is data retrieval and storage. Spatial data from the data taken must be provided validly (Hu & Li, 2023). Spatial data storage is usually in vector form,

where the data stored is in the form of points, lines, and certain areas. Map display or presentation includes various forms, from printed maps to maps on mobile devices (Prabowo & Simanjuntak, 2021).

The reason for developing a Geographic Information System navigation application for tourist destinations in Mangunan is based on Android using the Waterfall method (Prabowo & Simanjuntak, 2021); apart from being easy to apply, this method has advantages when all system requirements can be defined entirely and correctly at the beginning of the project, so application design or development can be done, Running well and without problems (Hu & Li, 2023; Suominen et al., 2018). However, the disadvantage of using this method is that the next stage cannot be carried out correctly when one stage is blocked.

Some scholar indicate that tourist maps that can be accessed with smartphones can make it easier for tourists to obtain various tourism information and increase the income of people around tourist objects (Firmansyah et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2021; Pawan Kumar et al., 2022; Wu, 2020). According to Baran & Baran (2022), the map-based public service information model, mobile devices can quickly, and reasonably. On the other hand, the information desired by tourists will be better so that tourists are interested in visiting. In addition, every existing view will attract investors who want to invest in helping tourism development (Wei, 2021).

From the studies before, the researchers found a tendency for studies on interactive digital tourism maps to be carried out regarding making systems and their effects on tourists. During the tracking by researchers, no research has observed aspects of increasing literacy from an interactive digital tourism map on tourist activity, specifically the literacy of Mataram culture. Herein lies the novelty of this research. This research focuses on the Mataram cultural tourism literacy model based on an interactive digital tourism map. This research begins with exploring the community's need for Mataram cultural literacy through the application of technology-based media 4.0 as a demonstration of the system in the community, specifically for the Mataram historical cultural tourism manager. The study aims to combine tourism, historical value literacy, and Geographic Information System (GIS) technology in a Digital Interactive Tourism Map in Mangunan, Indonesia. It seeks to increase tourist visits and pass on historical value through interactive virtual technology innovations, aiding the District of Bantul Tourism Office program in building the tourist area. The study also aims to improve the economy of the tourism object management community and surrounding areas.

## 2. Method

This research employs a quantitative method centered around a survey of users trialing digital map applications to examine six specific hypotheses. The survey is designed to collect data on user experiences and perceptions, focusing on the following hypotheses: (1) effects on sustainable use, (2) effects on user value, (3) usability's impact on effects, (4) usability's impact on sustainable use, (5) usability's impact on user value, and (6) user value's impact on sustainable use (Li et al., 2020; Manchanda & Deb, 2022). Participants are selected to ensure a diverse and representative sample, and the survey includes questions that quantify user satisfaction, perceived value, usability, and their intentions for continued use (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021). The collected data is then statistically analyzed to identify patterns and correlations that support or refute the proposed hypotheses (Prabowo & Simanjuntak, 2021).

The quantitative approach allows for objective measurement and analysis, providing a robust framework to assess the relationships between usability, user value, effects, and sustainable use (Elsamadony et al., 2022). Statistical tools such as regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) are employed to determine the strength and significance of these relationships. By analyzing numerical data from a substantial user base, the study aims to produce generalizable findings that can inform improvements in digital map application design and functionality, ultimately contributing to enhanced user experience and long-term engagement (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021).



### 2.1 Data and Analysis Collection

The respondents of this study were tourists in Mangunan, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The number of respondents was 126 people using the survey method. Respondents were asked to respond to 45 statements to measure four variables: Usability, Effect, User value, and Continuance usage. Each respondent answers the level of agreement for each statement. The degree of agreement is based on the Likert scale 5-point equidistance expressed ordinally in the choice of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Each indicator is a reflexive indicator that determines one aspect of latent variables (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021; Elsamadony et al., 2022).

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS, the reason for using SmartPLS is because this application can be used for all data scales, does not require many assumptions, the sample required does not have to be large and can be used to build relationships that do not have a theoretical basis, or for testing propositions can also be used for structural modeling with reflexive indicators (Ramayah et al., 2017).

Table 1: Latent Variables

No	Latent Variables
1.	Usability
2.	Affect
3.	User Value
4.	Continuous Usage

The 39 reflexive indicator statements form 8 latent variables, which are the number indirectly observed, to construct hypotheses.

Hypotheses:

H1: the influence of affect on continuous usage

H2: the impact of affect on user value

H3: the effect of usability on affect

H4: the effect of usability on continuous usage

H5: the influence of usability on user value

H6: the impact of user value on continuous usage.

This study uses the outer model analysis and convergent validity. The Outer model analysis is to determine the relationship between latent variables and their indicators, or it can be said that the outer model defines how each indicator relates to its latent variables (Wahyudi & Yusra, 2021). Three measurement criteria were used in the data analysis technique using SmartPLS to assess the model. The three measurements are Convergent validity, reliability tests (Composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha), AVE values, and Discriminant validity (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021).

Convergent validity is used to prove that the respondent can understand the questions on each latent variable in this study in the same way as the researcher intended (Meivira, 2022). The indicator is valid if the factor loading value is above 0.7 (original sample value), although in the empirical experience of research, the loading factor value of 0.5 is still acceptable, even though some experts tolerate the number 0.4. After applying the convergent validity (multistep validity test and multistep deletion of invalid item), total of 7 items were deleted, namely Easy Trip Planning (AFF01), Understanding Application Content (AFF02), Menu required (AFF10), Writing Readability (USA06), No special knowledge required (USA13), Ease of Installation (USA15), Meet the sense of security (USV09), which has value < 0.7.

The outer Model Analysis and Convergent Validity are crucial for validating and optimizing design and research models, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of results (Jannah & Hazriyanto, 2019). These techniques enable economical testing and optimization of multiple design concepts before production, increasing confidence in performance and reducing costs. In intelligence agencies, they improve objectivity and quality, reducing cognitive biases and increasing threat assessment accuracy (Carlson & Herdman, 2022). In the private sector, they are

essential for co-creating value with customers and ensuring innovations meet market needs. Outer Model Analysis assesses latent constructs' convergent and discriminant validity, ensuring positive correlation and explanation of variance in indicators (Moreno-Llamas et al., 2020). Convergent validity is essential in educational settings, clinical research, and benefit transfer studies, helping refine skill models and improve predictive models of student performance. These techniques provide a robust framework for validating models and ensuring research and design efforts are reliable and applicable in real-world scenarios (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Outer Loading

The following table shows the estimated outer loading test calculation results using SmartPLS. From the output, it can be seen that all items have a loading factor value above 0.5 (Carlson & Herdman, 2022) (see the Original Sample column). With this, the items are valid.

Table 2: Outer Loading Test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV)	P Values
AFF03 <- Affect	0.736	0.734	0.048	15.282	0
AFF04 <- Affect	0.834	0.835	0.028	29.354	0
AFF05 <- Affect	0.775	0.775	0.042	18.571	0
AFF06 <- Affect	0.866	0.866	0.022	38.74	0
AFF07 <- Affect	0.878	0.876	0.023	38.178	0
AFF08 <- Affect	0.82	0.818	0.038	21.785	0
AFF09 <- Affect	0.839	0.837	0.034	24.907	0
AFF11 <- Affect	0.757	0.756	0.04	19.022	0
AFF12 <- Affect	0.858	0.857	0.03	28.354	0
COU01 <- Continuous Usage	0.872	0.87	0.029	29.694	0
COU02 <- Continuous Usage	0.905	0.904	0.02	45.353	0
COU03 <- Continuous Usage	0.891	0.89	0.025	36.29	0
USA01 <- Usability	0.76	0.759	0.04	19.235	0
USA02 <- Usability	0.786	0.787	0.035	22.627	0
USA03 <- Usability	0.762	0.76	0.037	20.583	0
USA04 <- Usability	0.839	0.838	0.028	30.001	0
USA05 <- Usability	0.721	0.72	0.048	14.939	0
USA07 <- Usability	0.753	0.754	0.046	16.528	0
USA08 <- Usability	0.816	0.816	0.037	22.017	0
USA10 <- Usability	0.831	0.829	0.029	29.083	0
USA11 <- Usability	0.806	0.804	0.038	21.385	0
USA12 <- Usability	0.828	0.825	0.032	25.974	0
USV01 <- User Value	0.751	0.751	0.041	18.498	0
USV02 <- User Value	0.702	0.699	0.054	12.917	0
USV03 <- User Value	0.795	0.796	0.035	22.821	0
USV04 <- User Value	0.807	0.807	0.03	26.98	0
USV06 <- User Value	0.849	0.847	0.027	31.279	0
USV07 <- User Value	0.857	0.858	0.032	26.444	0
USV08 <- User Value	0.858	0.857	0.024	35.458	0

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
USV09 <- User Value	0.867	0.866	0.022	40.062	0
USV10 <- User Value	0.813	0.811	0.038	21.287	0
USV11 <- User Value	0.804	0.803	0.032	25.476	0
USV12 <- User Value	0.809	0.808	0.034	23.58	0
USV13 <- User Value	0.805	0.806	0.033	24.27	0

A reliability test is a tool to measure a questionnaire, which is an indicator of a variable or construct. A measuring instrument or instrument in the form of a questionnaire can provide stable or constant measurement results if the instrument is reliable. The reliability of the research instrument in this study was tested using composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A construct is said to be trustworthy if the value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha is above 0.70 (Carlson & Herdman, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Elsamadony et al., (2022) the instrument is said to be reliable if the Composite reliability value is 0.6 for exploratory research and Cronbach's alpha 0.6 for exploratory research. The following are data analysis results from composite reliability testing and Cronbach alpha:

Table 3: Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Affect	0.938	0.94	0.948	0.671
Continuous Usage	0.868	0.871	0.919	0.791
Usability	0.933	0.935	0.943	0.626
User Value	0.952	0.953	0.958	0.658

The test results based on the output table 4 show that the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha results show a satisfactory value; namely, the value of each variable is above the minimum value of 0.60. This shows the consistency and stability of the instrument used are high. In other words, this study's constructs or variables have become a fit measuring tool, and all the questions used to measure each construct have good reliability.

The AVE value can describe the amount of variance or the diversity of manifest variables that the latent construct can contain. For the ideal in the AVE, which is 0.5, the convergent validity is good, meaning that the latent variable can explain the average of more than half the variance of the indicators. The AVE criteria for a valid variable must be above 0.50 (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021). The results of the SmartPLS output can be seen in the output above (see the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) column). The production shows that all variables have an AVE value of more than 0.5, so these variables have good validity (Meivira, 2022).

Discriminant validity proves that the questions on each latent variable are straightforward from respondents who answer questions on other latent variables, especially regarding the question's meaning (Li et al., 2020; Manchanda & Deb, 2022). Discriminant validity is met if the average variance extracted (AVE) of the extracted average variance must be higher than the correlation involving the latent variable. Discriminant validity shows that the latent construct predicts whether the value of the construct is better than the value of the other constructs by looking at the correlation value of the construct on the cross-loadings (Prabowo & Simanjuntak, 2021). Several ways to see discriminant validity are as follows:

### 3.1.1 See the value of Cross loading

Discriminant validity can be measured by looking at the value of cross-loading (Boboye & Taoheed, 2021). Suppose all indicators have a greater correlation coefficient with each construct compared to the value of the correlation coefficient of the indicator in the construct block in the other column. In that case, it is concluded that each indicator in the block is a constructor of the construct in that column.

Table 4: Cross Loading Test

	<b>Affect</b>	<b>Continuous Usage</b>	<b>Usability</b>	<b>User Value</b>
AFF03	0.736	0.514	0.632	0.648
AFF04	0.834	0.646	0.657	0.699
AFF05	0.775	0.561	0.591	0.68
AFF06	0.866	0.586	0.638	0.72
AFF07	0.878	0.673	0.708	0.74
AFF08	0.82	0.64	0.714	0.705
AFF09	0.839	0.675	0.672	0.677
AFF11	0.757	0.71	0.744	0.827
AFF12	0.858	0.641	0.719	0.735
COU01	0.658	0.872	0.577	0.703
COU02	0.73	0.905	0.676	0.771
COU03	0.666	0.891	0.646	0.708
USA01	0.544	0.508	0.76	0.622
USA02	0.616	0.576	0.786	0.663
USA03	0.646	0.564	0.762	0.685
USA04	0.627	0.547	0.839	0.67
USA05	0.563	0.464	0.721	0.578
USA07	0.721	0.673	0.753	0.716
USA08	0.709	0.659	0.816	0.738
USA10	0.715	0.572	0.831	0.759
USA11	0.643	0.484	0.806	0.638
USA12	0.721	0.547	0.828	0.682
USV01	0.666	0.666	0.771	0.751
USV02	0.709	0.635	0.753	0.702
USV03	0.74	0.644	0.739	0.795
USV04	0.749	0.659	0.744	0.807
USV06	0.799	0.676	0.691	0.849
USV07	0.773	0.671	0.695	0.857
USV08	0.739	0.681	0.664	0.858
USV09	0.735	0.707	0.678	0.867
USV10	0.654	0.624	0.646	0.813
USV11	0.632	0.594	0.664	0.804
USV12	0.689	0.749	0.654	0.809
USV13	0.612	0.644	0.636	0.805

From the output (table 5), it can be seen that most indicators have a more significant correlation coefficient with each of its variables compared to the correlation coefficient value of the indicator with other variables, so it is concluded that each indicator in the block is a constituent of the variable or construct in the column.

### 3.1.2 Comparing the root values of AVE

Discriminant validity was then measured by comparing the AVE root value of each construct with the correlation between the construct and other constructs in the model. Suppose the square root value of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlation value between constructs and other constructs in the model. In that case, it has an excellent discriminant validity value. The AVE root value is shown on the diagonal of the matrix (table 6).

Table 5: Discriminant Validity

	Affect	Continuous Usage	Usability	User Value
Affect	0.819			
Continuous Usage	0.771	0.89		
Usability	0.828	0.713	0.791	
User Value	0.876	0.819	0.858	0.811

Based on the results (table 6), it can be seen that the AVE root value of each variable is higher, and some variables are lower than the correlation value between that variable and other variables in the model. According to the AVE root test, the model does not have good discriminant validity (Prabowo & Simanjuntak, 2021). Because, based on the Convergent Validity test and the reliability test, appropriate items and variables have been obtained, the Discriminant validity analysis using the Cross loading value has shown promising results, and the AVE value has met the requirements, the PLS-SEM analysis is still feasible to continue (Li et al., 2020; Manchanda & Deb, 2022). Testing of the inner model or structural model is tested to see the value of R Square and test the influence between variables.

### 3.1.3 R Square Analysis

This analysis determines the percentage of endogenous construct variability, which can be explained by exogenous construct variability. This analysis also seeks to find out the goodness of the structural equation model. The greater the R-square number, the greater the exogenous variable can explain the endogenous variable, so the structural equation is better.

Table 6: R Square Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Affect	0.686	0.683
Continuous Usage	0.683	0.675
User Value	0.824	0.821

Based on the output (table 7), the contribution of usability to the affect factor is 68.6%, while other variables outside the model studied explain the rest. The contribution of usability, effect, and user value to the continuous usage factor is 68.3%, while other variables outside the model studied explain the rest. The contribution of usability and effect to the user value factor is 82.4%, while other variables outside the model studied explain the rest. The results of R2 above 0.67 for endogenous latent variables in the structural model can be said to have a strong influence.

In the hypothesis testing stage, whether there is a significant effect between the independent variables and the dependent variable will be analyzed (Li et al., 2020). The proposed hypothesis is tested by looking at the path coefficients, which show the parameter coefficients and the statistical significance value. The significance of the estimated parameters can provide information about the relationship between research variables. The limit for rejecting and accepting the proposed hypothesis is using a probability of 0.05.

Table 7: Hypothesis Test Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Affect -> Continuous Usage	0.238	0.241	0.112	2.114	0.035
Affect -> User Value	0.527	0.532	0.067	7.928	0
Usability -> Affect	0.828	0.831	0.031	26.62	0

Usability -> Continuous Usage	-0.031	-0.035	0.105	0.298	0.766
Usability -> User Value	0.422	0.417	0.078	5.423	0
User Value -> Continuous Usage	0.638	0.641	0.125	5.085	0

Table 8 explains the effect of Continuous usage. It can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $2.114 > 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected. Effect affects User Value. It can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $7.928 > 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected. Usability affects Affect. It can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $26.62 > 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected. Usability does not affect Continuous Usage. It can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $0.298 > 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected. Usability affects User Value. It can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $5.423 > 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected. User Value Affects Continuous Usage. This can be seen from the Path Coefficient output that the value of  $t$  count  $>$   $t$  table ( $5.085 < 1.96$ ), so  $H_0$  is rejected.

The results from the study on the Performance Tourism Digital Interactive Map in Mangunan, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, indicate that the system's appearance and user value are significantly influenced by its perceived value. This suggests that users' overall impressions and the value they derive from using the digital map are closely linked to how valuable they perceive the system (Firmansyah et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2021; Pawan Kumar et al., 2022; Wu, 2020). Elements such as the aesthetic design, ease of navigation, and interactive features likely contribute to this perceived value, enhancing the user experience and making the map more appealing and helpful to tourists (Hu & Li, 2023; Suominen et al., 2018).

Moreover, the study reveals that while the system's usability positively impacts its perceived value, it does not directly affect its continuous usage (Baran & Baran, 2022; Kang et al., 2022; Wu, 2020). This implies that even though users find the map easy to use and navigate, more than this factor is needed to ensure they will continue using it over time. Instead, the system's perceived value—encompassing factors like the quality of information, relevance, and user satisfaction—plays a more critical role in determining its overall performance and likelihood of sustainable use (Kang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). These findings highlight the importance of creating a user-friendly interface and ensuring that the content and features meet users' needs and expectations to maintain their engagement and continued use.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Performance Tourism Digital Interactive Map for tourists in the Mangunan tourist destination, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Indonesia is as follows: (1) Affect (the user's feelings influenced by the appearance or image of the system) affects User Value (the user's subjective judgment is tied to the system); (2) Usability (Objective Performance of the system or Level of Convenience of the system) affects Affect (the user's feelings influenced by the appearance or image of the system); (3) Usability (Objective Performance of the system or Level of Convenience of the system) affects Affect (the user's feelings influenced by the appearance or image of the system); (4) Usability (Objective Performance of the system or Level of Convenience of the system) has no effect on Continuous Usage; (5) Usability (Objective Performance of the system or Level of Convenience of the system) affects User Value (the user's subjective judgment is tied to the system); (6) User Value (the user's subjective judgment is tied to the system) affects Continuous Usage.

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# Jokowi: New Indonesia's Master of Politic of Symbols

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## Abstract

The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo or is popularly known as Jokowi, a political figure who utilizes political symbols in various situations. In many of his political manoeuvres, he has been using implied symbols. The study used literature study method applied to compare data from several global journals, which are summarized based on the author's experience, theories, and existing models. The results of this research concluded that *first*, the ability to utilize political networking cohesiveness. *Second*, the ability to influence as a leader to apply extraordinary political strategic. *Third*, the capability of employing symbolic politics as a way of communicating and political allies. As a conclude, President Jokowi carries out internal consolidation and a lot of underground political communication with various community organizations and political parties.

**Keywords:** Political Networking, Political Strategic, Political Communication, Indonesia Political Symbol, Politics of Symbol

## 1. Introduction

Joko Widodo, commonly known as "Jokowi," rose to prominence through a remarkable political journey. Born in the working-class city of Solo, he served as the Mayor of Solo from 2005 to 2012 before being elected as the Governor of Jakarta in 2012. As Governor, Widodo gained national attention for his hands-on, with his populism-reformist approach to governance, championing infrastructure projects and social safety-net program, called Bansos. Widodo's outsider status and image as a man from the people, with the term "*Rakyat adalah Kita*" (we are the people,- I am) helped propel him to the presidency in 2014, when he won a hard-fought election against the longtime political establishment figure Prabowo Subianto.

His extraordinary rise from the riverside slum where he grew up to become Indonesia's president shows how far the world's third-largest democracy has strayed from the brutal authoritarian era of previous decades. When his second and final five-year term ends in October 2024, President Jokowi is considered by some to be Asia's Barack Obama leaving behind a legacy of impressive economic growth and many of ambitious infrastructure projects, including plans to shift Indonesia's crowded capital to the border region in East Kalimantan at a cost of \$33 billion.

As president, Widodo has sought to cement his legacy through ambitious infrastructure initiatives, such as the plan to relocate Indonesia's capital city, as well as efforts to reduce poverty and inequality across the archipelago (Tyson & Apresian 2021). During the first days of his first term as President of Indonesia, Jokowi started building a reputation as a soft-spoken reformer and promised to fight poverty and inequality by harnessing Indonesia's extraordinary resources and tourism attractions to boost the economy of Indonesia, the largest country in the Southeast (Muhtadi 2015). He is also considered as a political lightweight by his rivals in Asia.

Taking the power as the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Jokowi, is known as a person who uses political symbols in various situations. In many of his political manoeuvres, he took the advantages of implied symbols of how good he is, which President Jokowi carried out internal consolidation and carried out a lot of underground political communication with various community organizations and political parties (De Ferrari 2017). During pandemic, according to Fealy (2020), President Jokowi may need assistants who do a lot of new things and work instead of acting in a way full of drama. Thus, he will easily consider replacing people who, according to him, are unable to solve problems and also people who like to create controversy in the public sphere.

When COVID-19 pandemic started to hit Indonesia, the country encountered the threat of the worst recession that confronted President Jokowi in 2020 (Fealy 2020). In the same year, his government faced many internal problems, from controlling the pandemic in the health sector to saving the economy, which was peppered with legal problems and corruption that ensnared several of his ministers. Two of his ministers resigned due to legal issues. First, Edhy Prabowo resigned from his position as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and then Juliari Batubara resigned from his position as Minister of Social Affairs.

Owing to this unfavourable situation, President Jokowi had to immediately act and make decisions after facing two serious challenges for too long because of the corruption case involving his two ministers, public trust in the government has also decreased. Apart from that, President Jokowi considers political considerations profitable by accepting proposals from community organizations and political parties. For example, consider certain positions that have been abandoned by previous officials affiliated with a particular political party. For example, the Gerindra Party lost Edhy Prabowo as Minister while Sandiaga Uno served as Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia, while Wishnutama was discharged.

President Jokowi also gave support to the National Awakening Party, the Ansor Youth Movement, and Nadhlatul Ulama to return as Minister of Religion. Tri Risma Harini, the most respected member of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, immediately picked up Juliari's place. President Jokowi to applied symbolic politics as a way of communicating and an approach to observing the reactions of his political competitors and colleagues. The way President Jokowi acts always invites different views and beliefs from politicians in Indonesia, as seen in his first cabinet reshuffle during the second term of his administration.

With a lot of political moves he made, Jokowi was forced to face his enemies and political supporters who were trying to gain influence and apply pressure. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, an unnoticed cabinet reshuffle would cause unwanted uncertainty. Regarding the national capital called Nusantara, President Jokowi stated that the construction of *Ibu Kota Nusantara* (IKN) as the new National Capital of the Archipelago was a big step towards transformation towards an advanced Indonesia (Purwaningsih & Widodo 2020). The capital of the Archipelago will truly show the greatness of the Indonesian nation and reflect national identity, guarantee social, economic, and environmental sustainability, and build a forest city, smart city, and advanced city.

Jokowi also made progress on social development goals, increasing access to healthcare and education, and implementing programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality (Purwaningsih & Widodo 2020). His administration's flagship initiative, the Universal Health Coverage (JKN) program, extended basic healthcare services to most of the Indonesia's population. However, Jokowi's presidency was also marked by significant controversies and policy failures. The plan to relocate Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan, for instance, faced heavy public backlash due to its immense cost and potential environmental impact.

Jokowi believes that the National Capital of the Archipelago will represent a superior nation. Apart from that, the National Capital of the Archipelago is proof of Indonesia's commitment to tackling climate change. This is demonstrated by achieving and managing various indicators to achieve net zero carbon and 100% new renewable energy by 2060. This shows a transformation in smart, creative, connected and integrated work (Sahide 2022). However, when Jokowi left his post as president, many people, including those who supported him, accused the furniture entrepreneur of combining "oligarchy" and intending to maintain power by preparing his eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, to run for the 2024 Presidential Election (Fatimatuzzahra & Dewi 2021).

At this point, the level of public satisfaction with President Jokowi's performance is still above 50%. However, disillusioned voices and a breakdown in relations with the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) have reduced this level of public satisfaction. President Jokowi appeared to be very careful in his actions and often took advantage of the situation to make the best decisions even when receiving setbacks from Machfud MD as Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security of the Republic of Indonesia during the contestation for the Presidential Election of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024-2029 period, and appointed Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, the Chief of Democrat Party as Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of the National Land Agency of the Republic of Indonesia and Hadi Tjahjanto as Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security of the Republic of Indonesia, replacing Machfud MD who had resigned from his post as the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security.

Currently, the level of public satisfaction with Jokowi turns out to be high, according to data released by several survey institutions. *Indikator* survey shows the figure reached 76.6%. Although this figure has decreased by 2% compared to before the election (Detik.com, 2024). Data from the *Indonesian Survey Institute* regarding public satisfaction with Jokowi is currently not much different from *Indikator* about 76.2% (Tempo.co 2004). Despite this high public satisfaction, Jokowi faced critical voices from academic groups from various universities in Indonesia, and from civil society groups, especially with regards to the controversy over the nomination of his son, Gibran, as running-mate to Prabowo.

Jokowi's relationship with his party, namely PDI P, also experienced a breakdown. Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, who has been long supporter of Jokowi also resigned. Facing this situation, Jokowi's skill and caution as a politician was visible. One of the steps taken by Jokowi was to invite Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY), Top Chair of the Democrat Party, which was previously known as the government's opposition, to step into the cabinet. This is interpreted as Jokowi's attempt to consolidate his power with Democrat Party which previously had launched criticisms on many of Jokowi's political moves and administration. AHY's appointment as Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency in February 2024 has placed Democrat Party's in Jokowi's embrace.

This research aims to analyse President Jokowi's trait as the new master political symbols in Indonesia. However, Joko Widodo's presidency has not been without its challenges to faced criticism from political rivals who accuse him of autocratic tendencies and favoritism towards his own political network; this is reflected in the overwhelming political endorsement for his family members in political practice (Abdurrahman et al. 2021). Allegations of corruption scandals involving his cabinet ministers have also threatened to undermine his reformist image at times.

Beyond concerns about cronyism, Widodo has also drawn heavy criticism for perceived attempts to establish a political dynasty by grooming his son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, for a future leadership role. Gibran's successful bid for Vice President, after previously serving as mayor of Solo in 2020, the same city where Widodo himself once served as mayor, has fuelled allegations that the president is engaged in an undemocratic transfer of power between himself and his family members. This has resonated with segments of the Indonesian public who are wary of entrenched political elites perpetuating their hold on power (Tyson & Apresian 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

In simple terms, political networking is described as a relationship graph that shows the relationship between different objects that are politically symmetrical and asymmetrical (Mcclurg 2003; Slater & Simmons 2012). In political networking, political objects can choose their own path of connection (discretionary), group based on the bias of similar characteristics between political objects (assortative mixing), or form reciprocal relationships (Gupta & Chauhan 2023). In a political party, it is easy to see how its members form relationships, group them, and whether the relationships formed are reciprocal (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Apart from that, Kahne & Bowyer (2018) also explained that many interesting concepts can be found in political networking theory, such as modularity, efficiency, centrality, degree, and betweenness.

Having a political networking perspective instilled in oneself can help to see and predict the dynamics of world complexity more accurately (Kahne & Bowyer 2018). With better understanding, political networking can see how political views, interests, wealth, and hoaxes spread (Mcclurg 2003). In different circumstances, political networking sometimes acts not in accordance with its habits so that if it is not ideal, then political networking will move on the wrong path and is difficult to correct (Gupta & Chauhan 2023). In building a political network in which there are individuals and/or groups, symbols are needed for demonstrating the similarity of interests among individuals and/or groups who are members of one network.

Symbols also play a role in identifying a person or group that has different interests from other groups. Theoretically, symbols are important for organizing human interests for the fact that symbols serve to shape one's perception and worldview. In the arena of political contestation and/or power struggle, symbols play a role in shaping and/or building a person's or group's interpretation, such as self-image and so on. In politics, symbols also facilitate a person or group to identify themselves and show a different position from other parties. In other words, symbols can mobilize hostile political factions indicating that these symbols are also central elements in the struggle for power (Gill & Ferrandez 2020).

Political communication is communication related to political messages and political actors or related to power, government, and government policies (Himmelboim et al. 2012; Bode 2016). Kubin & Sikorski (2021) stated that people involved in political activities try to influence and encourage other people to carry out political activities at the level of infrastructure and superstructure relations. According to McNair (2017), political communication includes the exchange of symbols, words, images, movements, body attitudes, mannerisms, and clothing.

In a broader sense, political communication is the activity of exchanging messages carried out by a person, group of people, or institution to gain strength to defend the people, both as implementers of government and as members of social society who can influence policies in various parts of the power or government system (Miller & McKerrow 2010). It is also necessary to understand that political communication is a field that investigates communication behavior and activities that are politically charged, with political consequences, and influence political behavior and activities (Serazio 2017). Political communication can also be defined as a communication process that has an impact on political action (Medveschi & Frunza 2018).

## 3. Methods

The type of literature study in this research employed in this research is the narrative review model to compare data from several global journals, which are summarized based on the author's experience, existing theories and models. The research method is a qualitative, with examined secondary data made available as source data. By collecting, identifying, compiling, and analyzing the various information found, researchers make use of analytical descriptive techniques (Berger 2014). An automatic search engine is benefitted to search for reference journals, which considers several factors, such as the indexer's reputation, the publisher's reputation, suitability of content, and completeness of searchable journal data (Snyder, 2019).

At the reference journal selection stage, the quality of the reference journal, the indexer's reputation, and the publisher's reputation are considered (Creswell & Poth 2018). Data analysis is the process of systematically

searching and arranging data, categorizing it, and making conclusions from the data (Berger 2014). The author conducted literature research by getting related and relevant information from several international journals with previous research for assessing President Jokowi as Indonesia's new main political symbols which provides more details on the specific steps involved in the narrative review process.

Such as how the relevant journals were identified, the methods used to extract and synthesize the data from those journals, and the conceptual frameworks or analytical lenses that guided the literature analysis. After analyzing the data, the author continues by interpreting and synthesising the literature findings to answer the research problem formulation and reach conclusions and reports such as Figure 1 below:

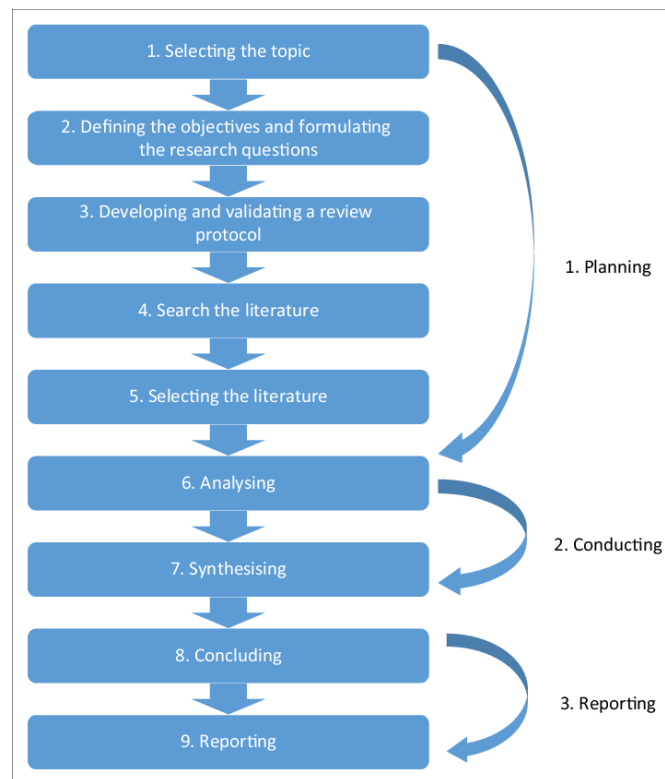


Figure 1: Steps of Literature Study and Analysis

Source: Berger, 2014

Data in this research were collected from secondary sources such as articles written by Aspinall (2013), Fatimatuzzahra & Dewi (2021), Muhtadi (2015), Raharjo (2016) and others, in addition to online media news sources such as Detik and Tempo. The researchers obtained data consisting of Jokowi's political strategies related to the way he consolidates power, builds self-image and how public satisfaction has been formed out of his political performance. The researcher then analyzed the data with various theories, such as political networks (Mcclurg 2003; Slater & Simmons 2012), and others, as well as political communication theory (Himmelboim et al. 2012; Bode 2016; Kubin & Sikorski 2021).

In addition, researchers also analyzed the data obtained with symbol and political theory (Gill and Ferrandez 2020). From the critical dialogue that is carried out simultaneously between the phenomenon and the theory, the researcher then tried to answer the problem and/or build conclusions regarding Jokowi's political strategy in using political symbols as a medium for political communication to build political networks on the one hand, and identify himself as having a different political position or interest from other parties in the future.

#### 4. Result

A series of successes of President Jokowi that have been successfully carved in the implementation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia are certainly inseparable from his own leadership style and model. This

leadership style and model is none other than charismatic. In the theory of charismatic leadership according to Klein & Delegach (2023), it is stated that a leader who is called charismatic is a leader who has followers who make heroic attributions or extraordinary leadership abilities when they observe certain behaviors. A charismatic leader has an unusual influence on his followers (Banks et al. 2017).

Kaluza et al. (2020) stated that followers of this charismatic leader believe that the leadership adopted by their leader is correct, obey their leader without question, have emotional involvement in the mission of the group or organization, believe that they can contribute to or the success of their mission, and have goals for good performance. Naturally, while we reflect on the past, we also recall President Soekarno's charismatic leadership style and model. The spirit of revolution that led to independence, the successful formation of the non-aligned movement (NAM) at the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955, the unification of West Papua into the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), and other notable accomplishments were all made possible by President Soekarno's leadership style and model.

This does not, however, imply that the charismatic leadership model and style is the sole one that is most suited for Indonesian leaders suited by Joko Widodo. The collaboration pact was not signed by 16 nations, despite his charismatic leadership. Because President Jokowi's measures encourage industry to downstream so that the natural resources exported would eventually have a high selling value, they are highly commendable. Indonesia is undoubtedly in a better position to control different global trade policies because of this circumstance. Furthermore, President Jokowi will make use of all the potential of both natural and human resources to optimize the benefits for Indonesia's trade sector in the rapidly expanding global arena.

Reducing economic inequality and economic growth will be President Jokowi's main priorities during his initial term (Davidson 2015). During this term, infrastructure would be a major concern and remain a key policy focus for the next five years. Research results from Sibarani (2018) concluded that President Jokowi stated that infrastructure and human resource development would be a top priority and acknowledged the failure to develop Indonesia's workforce and Indonesia's failure to attract investment from other Southeast Asian countries. Jokowi's presidency has had a mixed legacy, with both significant achievements and notable failures. On the positive side, he oversaw a period of steady economic growth, with Indonesia's GDP expanding by an average of around 4-5% per year during his time in office.

This was driven in part by his focus on infrastructure development, with major projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail line and the expansion of Indonesia's seaport and airport capacity, even though the projects have faced controversies among people due to their high costs and use of state budgets. Overall, Joko Widodo's legacy is a complex one, with both notable achievements and significant shortcomings (Tyson & Apresian 2021). While he oversaw a period of steady economic growth and made some progress on social development, his presidency was also marred by controversies, authoritarian tendencies, and failures to address pressing issues facing the country. Assessments of his tenure will likely continue to be shaped by these competing narratives.

President Jokowi is known for frequently making use of political symbols in various situations that he implied in many of his political manoeuvres. As a result, President Jokowi carried out internal consolidation and a lot of underground political communication with various community organizations and political parties so that tactically he was always successful in building political networks both at home and abroad (Abdurrahman et al. 2021). In carrying out a mental revolution to encourage the manufacturing sector it will be very important to overcome rigid labor laws that hinder investment with strong political support from *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (PDI-P) and the coalition of parties supporting the government has some insurmountable political obstacles.

In addition, President Jokowi has indicated that he would open new sectors accessible to international investment, but the details were not yet clear (Warburton 2016). The foreign investment coordinating body will clearly be upgraded to become an optimal ministry task. This will likely bring greater attention to key cabinet reform issues. Additionally, in recent months, the idea of moving Indonesia's capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan, which had

been debated for decades, has gained significant momentum so it was likely that this policy would consume a lot of time, attention, and resources in Jakarta, and even disrupted reform.

In political networking, political centrality serves as most important factor which also shows the cohesiveness of the network. Political centrality is the main goal that must be aimed at if one wishes to change the culture of a political organization or prevent the spread of social ills within it. In other words, the survival of a political network is highly dependent on the political level of the network within it. Political degree is a term used to indicate how close the relationship between two or more parties is when forming political cooperation and consolidation to interact directly with other political objects in networking.

As mentioned earlier, the shortest path that connects the outermost objects of a network is called "betweenness." A high number of betweennesses indicates better control over the network, while a low number of betweennesses indicates no good control over the network. Modularity, or modularity, is a measure of how important a structure is in a network. A political network that is very modular means that the political network is easy to connect with other parties, while political networking that is less modular tends to be more difficult to connect with other political networks.

As a leader, President Jokowi's has earned very large influence extraordinary political strategic abilities to determine every step of infrastructure development, developments in global political and social economic conditions, progress in resources and technological innovations that are recognized by many countries in the world. He adopts very precise political strategic intelligence and has almost never failed in running the government so far. Political strategy is an art that involves the ability to utilize all available resources to utilize them and achieve goals by obtaining maximum and efficient profits. Mature democracies typically have outgoing presidents who support the incoming one. Usually, the endorsement comes from an incumbent president who is no longer eligible to run for office because of legal limitations.

For example, once Hillary Clinton won the Democratic Party's nomination for the 2016 election, President Obama of the Democratic Party was forced to support her. In Indonesia, which has only conducted four direct presidential elections, this has not yet evolved into a political ritual. As his second term ended, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the former president of Indonesia and its sixth-elected leader, declined to support a candidate in the next presidential election. Given that a celebrity endorser is someone who has achieved notoriety and utilizes it to sell a product by utilizing it to appear with them, Jokowi, as president, falls into this category.

In addition to well-known actors and actresses, other categories of celebrities that serve as endorsers include athletes, politicians, corporate executives, artists, and members of the armed forces. But the focus of this piece is on Jokowi's presidential communication, not on his role as a celebrity advocate or influencer or its consequences. Political strategy is the art of using the means of battle to achieve war goals. Political strategy itself is a way that has been understood and planned to achieve certain political goals in the long term. Political strategic planning also includes a comprehensive analysis of the state of regional power, a clear picture of the final goals to be achieved, and the concentration of all forces used to achieve these goals (Purwaningsih & Widodo 2020).

To some extent, political strategy is utilized to achieve various political goals such as new regulations, new administrative structures, or deregulation, privatization, or decentralization programs (Kauppinen-Räsänen 2014). Experience shows that such actions are usually not well planned by parliamentarians and governments. Otherwise, many projects will fail. The absence of a strategic supervisory institution shows that there is no strategic planning within the scope of government and administration. In addition, political strategy is important for political campaigns and governments but also for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are active in politics (Knoll et al. 2020).

All non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including environmental groups, labor unions, human rights organizations, etc. To achieve long-term goals, there needs to be a political plan. Without a political plan, various changes or large projects would not happen at all. For example, an effective planning process is required for decentralization programs, such as implementing regional levels of government or regional autonomy. Authority,



organization, budget, and election of people's representatives are some of the elements that must be considered when making plans where overall planning for long-term strategies can be avoided (Aspinall 2013).

Mukti & Rodiyah (2020) explained that strategic planning in political change and processes consists of a comprehensive analysis of various states of power as well as a clear picture of the final goal to be achieved and the concentration of all forms of power to achieve it. It is not surprising that many projects fail if the legislature does not support the executive in implementing strategic policies but continues to question the objectives of these policies (Aspinall 2015). Often, these so-called "good" politicians are responsible for social conditions that cause millions of people to suffer, because they try to implement ambitious plans without strategy.

According to dramaturgical theory, society functions as the front stage in a play. Gray et al. (2024) stated that dramaturgy has also been used to understand organizational processes because "backstage" can influence provider's actions and society's experiences. Social interactions formed by people with various statuses and roles form the front stage (Argyle 2012). All the games on that stage are bound by their own motives and goals. Meanwhile, the front stage is the place where people see the actors in action. On the other hand, according to Kerrigan & Hart (2016) the activities and characters of actors that cannot be seen by the audience are called backstage, which setting and personal front are part of the front stage.

As for the settings in question, they are real things that actors use to play their roles. Dramaturgical theory analyzes the personal front in addition to the setting (O'boyle 2022). The personal front consists of various equipment used to communicate or introduce the actor's role to the audience. The equipment is adapted to the role played by the actor. Impression management theory and other theories originate from dramaturgical theory. Everyone tries to present themselves in social interactions. According to Indarti et al. (2020), in this impression management effort, people deliberately use communication to create the impression others want of them. This is in accordance with the dramaturgical theory mentioned previously, which states that actors play their roles on stage according to the goals they have set.

Self-presentation theories from dramaturgy and impression management produce methods that people use to present themselves and create an impression in the eyes of others. Types of self-presentation according to Hamid et al. (2022) are as follows: 1.) Ingratiation strategy with which people who want to be seen as good or friendly; 2.) Self-promotion strategy with which people who want to be seen as intelligent people; 3.) Exemplification strategy, people who want to be seen as a good organization or person to be an example or model for others; 4.) Supplication strategy, which is usually applied by organizations or individuals who cannot help society, where the individual shows himself as a weak party and a victim of the crisis; 5.) Intimidation strategy, which individuals apply as to be considered and strong capable of controlling the situation.

## 5. Discussion

President Jokowi as developed symbolic politics as a way of communicating and an approach to observing the reactions of his political competitors and colleagues. The current political socialization process uses social media in addition to broadcast media, print media and the internet. The next generation, which is dominated by young people, seeks information on politics and presidential elections, including profiles of presidential candidates, through tools such as smartphones, the internet, and social networks (Fulton & Kibby 2017).

Research results from Forgas & Williams (2016) illustrated that young people admit that searching for information on politics via social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and social networks, has a different sensation compared to getting one via the internet. President Jokowi benefits from the media to portray his image of all his abilities and personality of Indonesian presidents with Javanese culture, particularly the relationship between strategic presidential communication, character, and the way presidents utilize their authority (Abdurrahman et al. 2021; Tyson & Apresian 2021).

The communication style of Jokowi has been the subject of several research. claims, for instance, that Jokowi has a low-context communication style and appears to have a profoundly impactful communication style that is open,

domineering, gregarious, aggressive, and highly energetic. Social media is an ideal platform for conducting political campaigns because it is a cheaper communication tool than broadcasting and print media (Abdullah et al. 2021). On the other hand, the use of social media in political campaigns must be planned in accordance with programs that have been created by political figures to increase the credibility of the party or political figure.

Campaigns, in this sense, are persuasive activities carried out gradually, deliberately, and repeatedly over a certain period (Serazio, 2017). According to Fealy (2020), one way to do this by uploading photos in which he shakes hands with people, hands over free t-shirts or books, directly slips cash in envelope to people's palms and has a char with the crowd he meets which directly conveys simplicity, social harmony, and closeness to the people. Political communication is very strategic during the political process. Through political communication activities, various political structures, including the executive, legislative, judiciary, political parties, non-governmental organizations, interest groups, media, and citizens, continue to be involved in the process of exchanging meaning.

Political communication can include gathering interests, conveying, and receiving aspirations, negotiation, socialization, campaigns, lobbying, and much more. Political communication is simply about how public resources such as income, taxes, or earnings are distributed, who has the authority to create, make, and enforce laws, and what the government does (Goyanes et al. 2021). Conceptually according to Goyanes et al. (2021), there are three models of political communication, including:

- 1.) Systemic Model. This model is a complete political communication pattern consisting of interconnected parts. The theory underlying this model consists of a collection of statements relating to the relationship between dependent and independent variables which are considered to interact with each other.
- 2.) Process Model. The simultaneous transaction model is closely related to the dynamics of political communication. This model shows three components that influence the communication process because of its non-linear nature. In the end, a political communication process model will be built from this communication system.
- 3.) Effectiveness Model. A character's ability to be a good listener, the ability to send good messages or information, and the ability to use various media or audio-visual tools are all important components of effective communication.

Some scholars are interested in and have examined presidential communication in the context of Indonesian presidents with Javanese culture, particularly the relationship between strategic presidential communication, character, and the way presidents utilize their authority. The communication style of Jokowi has been the subject of several research. Jokowi, according to Mattingly & Yao (2022), has a low-context communication style and communicates in a way that is open, domineering, friendly, aggressive, and highly energetic, leaving a lasting impression. Raharjo (2016), on the other hand, looked at Jokowi's communication style and discovered that he mixes his approach as a doer and an influencer.

Anderson (2019) argued in his observation that Indonesia's political processes and structures are essentially distinct since Javanese culture predominates there. According to Anderson (2019), the Javanese people understand (political) power as something that is morally neutral, uniform, solid, and consistent in its overall magnitude. First, according to Anderson (2019), a fundamental idea of Javanese political theory is "Power is Concrete." Power is present regardless of who could utilize it. This is not a theoretical postulate, but an existential fact. The enigmatic, heavenly, and ethereal force that governs the cosmos is called power.

The next concept is "power is homogeneous," which suggests that all power has the same characteristics and comes from the same source. One person or group's possession of power is equal to that of any other individual or group. According to Anderson, the third notion of power in Javanese culture is "The quantum of power in the universe is constant," which holds that both the overall quantity of power contained in the universe and its expansion or contraction are fixed. Its overall number remains constant, even while the distribution of power in the universe fluctuates, since power just exists and is not the product of organization, riches, weaponry, or anything else; in fact, it precedes all of these and makes them what they are.

Using the concepts of political public relations, soft propaganda, and official communication, one might interpret President Jokowi's comments on his endorsement of the next presidential candidate from a different angle (Abdurrahman et al. 2021). The management process by which an actor for political purposes, through communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with key publics and stakeholders to help support its mission and achieve its goals is how political communication work. Jokowi was known for his savvy use of political symbols and communication tactics during his presidency. He often relied on "implied symbols" and "symbolic politics" to connect with the Indonesian public and project a populist image.

One of Joko Widodo's signature moves was his use of informal, man-of-the-people attire, such as his trademark checkered shirts and jeans. Nowadays, he wore long rolled sleeves more often, to show a worker, not the president. This was in stark contrast to the suits and formal wear traditionally favored by Indonesian political elites. By dressing down, Jokowi aimed to portray himself as a relatable, accessible leader who was in touch with the common citizen. Jokowi also made a point of frequently interacting with the public, staging impromptu visits to markets, villages, and other grassroots settings.

These "blusukan" events, as they were known, allowed him to be seen mingling with ordinary Indonesians, shaking hands, and addressing their concerns directly. This helped cultivate an image of Jokowi as a leader who was responsive to the people's needs. Additionally, Jokowi frequently invoked the legacy of Indonesia's founding president, Sukarno, tapping into nationalist sentiments and the country's revolutionary past. He would often make references to Sukarno's ideals of political sovereignty and economic self-reliance, framing his own agenda as a continuation of that nationalistic vision.

Ultimately, the legacy of Jokowi's presidency will be shaped not only by his policy achievements and failures, but also by the ways in which he leveraged political symbolism and communication to forge his image and relationship with the Indonesian people. It is important to note that Jokowi, who has built his self-image as a figure who is close to the people, humble, and tries to show his concern for the lower class, is a political symbol which explains why he is so popular. Jokowi is clearly aware of his popularity, as shown in various data that show that people's voting behavior in Indonesia is more determined by one's figures. In the 2024 political contest, Jokowi really took advantage of his popularity to support Gibran to run as a vice-presidential candidate.

When asked about his son running for the vice-presidential candidate, Jokowi's implicit message such as "*As a father I can only wish for the best [for Gibran]*" is perceived to be indication of his political support. On various occasions, Jokowi has also shown symbols that can be interpreted that his is in difference stance with the PDI P, the party that supported him. For example, when Jokowi was seen eating with Prabowo Subianto, the presidential candidate to whom Gibran is running-mate, Jokowi was also seen to be showing his closeness to Prabowo. Jokowi's support for Prabowo can also be traced back to the way the Jokowi placed some favour to the pro-Jokowi group led by Budi Arie who turned out to be clearly in support of Prabowo.

The party chaired by his youngest son, namely PSI, is also part of the coalition that supports Prabowo-Gibran candidacy. On the other hand, Jokowi's popularity is also widely recognized by several parties and therefore, without hesitation, support Jokowi's political agendas which consolidate and/or expand power and also leave a great legacy; parties such as PAN and PSI for example, claim themselves to be "Jokowi's Party" and/or "A Party Close to Jokowi" in hoping that they will get a positive effect from such popularity. Based on the analysis of Jokowi's presidential communication as politic of symbols, it can be described in Figure 2 below:

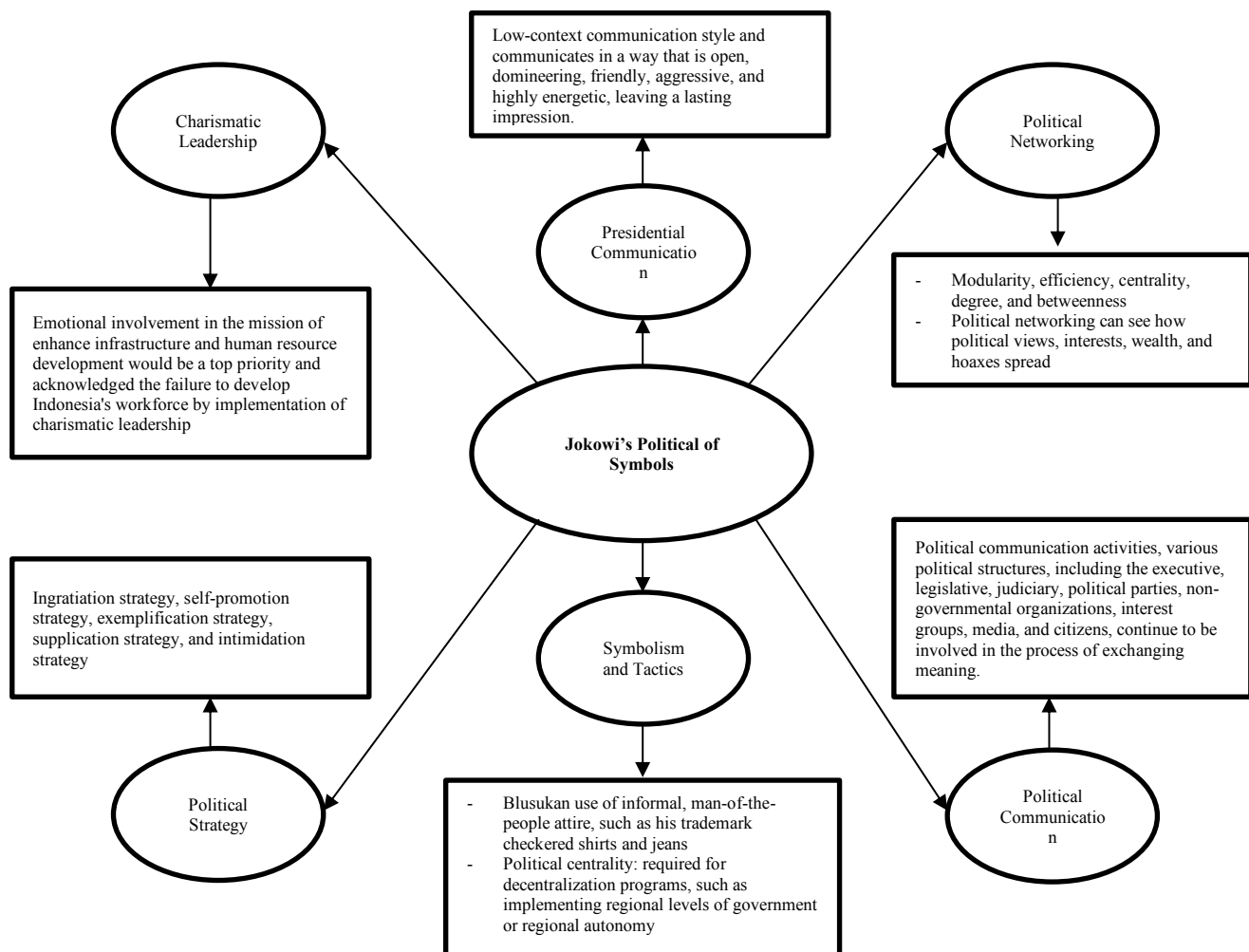


Figure 2: Analysis of Jokowi's Politic of Symbols

Source: Primary Data 2024

## 6. Conclusion

The results of this research conclude that President Jokowi as the new master politic of symbols has developed three identified main capabilities, namely: firstly, in political networking, political centrality is most important. It is the main goal of network cohesiveness in case one wishes to change the culture of political organizations or prevent social diseases from spreading; secondly, President Jokowi's influence as a leader is very large, and he has developed extraordinary political strategic abilities to determine every step of infrastructure development, development of global political and social economic conditions, progress in resources and technological innovation which are recognized by many countries in the world; thirdly, President Jokowi applies symbolic politics as a way of communicating and an approach to observing the reactions of his competitors and political colleagues.

One way to measure how well information is exchanged in political networking effectively and efficiently. Often, the level of efficiency of a network is determined by how rapidly information flows through its channels, also known as edges. The faster the flow of political information, the more efficient political networking will operate. As all power originates from a single homogenous source and the question of good versus evil comes before the question of power, "Power does not raise the question of legitimacy." Legitimate and illegitimate power are not synonymous. The reason this idea is utilized in this context is that Anderson's idea was thought to be among the most effective approaches to comprehend Indonesian politics. To achieve various political goals, such as new regulations, new administrative systems, or deregulation, privatization, or decentralization initiatives, strategic politics are employed.

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# Feasibility Study of HPP Plus 20% Incentive Policy Strategy in Supporting Food Sovereignty and Building a Proud Farmer Mindset in Badung Regency

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the feasibility of implementing the Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency to support food security and improve farmers' welfare. This study uses a triangulation method involving surveys of farmers, in-depth interviews with officials and experts, and secondary data analysis to understand the impact of incentive policies on income stability and local food production. The results show that this incentive has the potential to increase farmers' income by up to 18%, provide a more stable price guarantee, and encourage the interest of the younger generation to be involved in the agricultural sector. However, the main challenges in implementing this policy include funding sustainability, supervision effectiveness, and coordination between agencies. Based on these findings, this article provides recommendations for policy strengthening, including diversification of funding sources, application of technology in the surveillance system, and increased socialization among farmers. This research is expected to be the basis for local governments to design more effective and sustainable incentive policies to strengthen the agricultural sector and food security in areas that depend on the tourism sector, such as Badung Regency.

**Keywords:** Incentive Policy, HPP Plus 20%, Food Security, Farmer Welfare

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The agricultural sector in Badung Regency has experienced a decline in its contribution to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) over the past five years. Based on data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency of Badung Regency (2023), the contribution of the agricultural sector shows a significant downward trend, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, this sector still contributed 8.51%, but this figure decreased to 7.16% in 2022, and continued to 6.08% in 2023. This decline is inversely proportional to the tourism sector which continues to dominate the regional economy. This phenomenon indicates a shift in labor interest from the agricultural sector to the tourism sector, coupled with the increasing conversion of agricultural land for the purpose of building tourism facilities (Badung Regency Central Statistics Agency, 2023).



This condition poses a big challenge for Badung Regency in maintaining local food security. As an area that has a high dependence on tourism, food security is a crucial factor to ensure food availability in conditions of economic crises that can occur at any time. Efforts to increase the attractiveness and productivity of the agricultural sector are very urgent. One of the strategies that is considered potential is through the provision of financial incentives in the form of the Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20%, which provides price certainty for farmers. With this incentive, the government is committed to buying agricultural products at a price that is 20% higher than the market price, so that farmers have a more stable income guarantee. This policy is expected to reduce farmers' dependence on market price fluctuations and create more favorable conditions for them to remain focused on increasing productivity (Arnawa, 2024).

The implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive strategy is also expected to encourage the "Badung Bersovereign Food" program, a government initiative aimed at strengthening food independence at the local level. In addition to the aspect of food security, this program seeks to build pride in the farming profession. The low interest of the younger generation to work in the agricultural sector is one of the serious challenges, especially in maintaining the sustainability of this sector. With incentive policies that support farmers' income and economic stability, it is hoped that there will be a change in mindset, so that the younger generation is more interested in entering the agricultural sector. This is also in line with the idea of Bayu Putra (2024) who stated that policies that provide real support for farmers will not only increase productivity but can also be an effort to revitalize the agricultural sector in synergy with the preservation of the environment and local culture.

Therefore, providing HPP plus 20% incentives is an important strategy that needs to be studied in depth. This policy not only focuses on improving the welfare of farmers, but also on strengthening the agricultural sector as a sustainable economic pillar in the midst of challenges and dependence on the tourism sector (Mubyarto, 2000).

### *1.2. Research Question*

The decline in the agricultural sector's contribution to Badung Regency's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) over the past few years shows the need for effective strategic interventions to restore this sector's attractiveness. In this context, one of the proposed strategies is to provide incentives in the form of Government Purchase Prices (HPP) plus 20%. However, an in-depth analysis of this incentive strategy's feasibility is required before implementation.

Therefore, the first question asked in this study is: *What is the feasibility of the strategy of providing HPP plus 20% incentives?* This question requires a comprehensive study of the financial, economic, and sustainability aspects of the policy, as well as the relevance of this strategy in the context of the local market. This analysis will also include projections of the impact of policies on price stability at the farmer level and their effectiveness in achieving food security goals in Badung Regency.

The second question that focuses on is: *What is the impact of these incentives on the welfare of farmers and food production?* The purpose of the HPP plus 20% strategy is to provide farmers with a guarantee of higher prices than the market, so that it is expected to be able to increase their income and provide economic incentives to continue developing agricultural activities. As such, it is important to assess the impact of these incentives on the economic conditions of farmers as well as their contribution to overall food production. The analysis also includes a review of whether the increase in income will have an impact on the long-term well-being of farmers and whether these incentives can encourage increased productivity, both in terms of quantity and quality of agricultural products. The impact on food supply chains in the region must also be taken into account, especially in relation to how this policy can support food security and reduce dependence on extra-regional supplies.

The third question that needs to be answered is: *What are the challenges in implementing the strategy?* The implementation of the strategy of providing HPP plus 20% incentives certainly faces a number of challenges. The first challenge may arise from the aspects of funding and program sustainability, given the need for sufficient budget allocation to sustain this policy in the long term. In addition, administrative and regulatory challenges can

also hinder smooth implementation, including in terms of fund distribution, supervision, and stable pricing in the local market. Another challenge is the potential for resistance from farmers who are accustomed to traditional trading patterns, as well as the technical challenge of determining an accurate and relevant COGS to market dynamics. These factors require special attention in policy formulation in order to create an ecosystem that is conducive to the development of the agricultural sector.

### *1.3. Research Urgency*

This research is very important in the context of Badung Regency, where the high dependence on the tourism sector makes the economy vulnerable to global economic fluctuations and natural disasters. Experience during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how tourism, as a key sector, can experience a sharp contraction that has an impact on the economy and people's well-being. In this situation, the agricultural sector plays a role as a support for the local economy that is able to provide food needs, maintain social stability, and become an alternative source of income for the community (Mubyarto, 2000). Local food security, supported by a strong agricultural sector, is crucial in an effort to reduce this vulnerability. By ensuring sufficient and stable food availability, Badung Regency can be more resilient in facing future economic crises.

Furthermore, the provision of incentives in the form of Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20% can be a strategic step to maintain a competitive and attractive agricultural sector for the community, especially the younger generation. In the midst of the rate of urbanization and land conversion for tourism, interest in working in the agricultural sector tends to decrease, which has an impact on the availability of labor in this sector. Therefore, this research is urgent to be carried out in order to evaluate whether the incentives offered are effective enough in improving the welfare of farmers and reviving public interest in entering the agricultural sector. This incentive approach is also relevant to Badung Regency's vision of achieving food independence and reducing dependence on supplies from outside the region.

In addition, this study is expected to provide evidence-based recommendations regarding the implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy, including its challenges and opportunities. Thus, the results of this study can be a reference for local governments in formulating more targeted policies to support the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector. Without the right policy intervention, the agricultural sector in Badung has the potential to be further left behind, which not only affects food security but also the economic and socio-cultural sustainability of the area.

### *1.4. Purpose and Benefits*

This study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of the Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20% incentive strategy for farmers in Badung Regency. This step is important to answer the need for policies that can provide income protection and stability for farmers in the face of fluctuations in market prices. This assessment will cover a wide range of aspects, from direct economic impacts to long-term policy implications. More specifically, this study has the following objectives:

1. **Assessing the Effectiveness of Incentives in Supporting Farmers' Income and Welfare:** The HPP plus 20% incentive is expected to be able to provide farmers with a guarantee of higher prices than the market, thereby reducing the risk of losses due to falling agricultural commodity prices during abundant harvests. This study will evaluate the extent to which these policies can significantly increase farmers' incomes and their impact on their quality of life. With this incentive, it is hoped that farmers will have income certainty that encourages them to continue to develop their farming business. This evaluation will use both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to measure changes in farmers' incomes and how these policies affect their economic and social well-being.
2. **Providing Practical Policy Recommendations to Support the Sustainability of the Local Agricultural Sector:** Based on the results of the research, practical policy recommendations for local governments will be prepared to support the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector. This recommendation will include a strategy for implementing the HPP plus 20% incentive, a monitoring mechanism, and the possibility of developing a long-

term program to maintain the attractiveness of the agricultural sector in Badung Regency. This recommendation is expected to provide concrete direction in policy formation, including aspects of funding, regulation, and coordination between agencies needed so that this policy can run effectively and efficiently (Raka Suardana, 2024).

In addition, this study is also intended to provide guidance on policy implementation that is able to strengthen the position of local farmers in an increasingly competitive market. Currently, the agricultural sector in Badung Regency is faced with competition with the more dominant tourism sector, so the role of the government in providing protection and support for farmers is very important. With this guide, it is hoped that farmers can maintain and increase their productivity without having to be affected by market volatility that is often detrimental. The benefits of this research include direct and long-term contributions to the development of the agricultural sector in Badung Regency:

1. **Economic Benefits:** This research is expected to be the foundation for more effective policy-making in increasing farmers' incomes and the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. With the right incentive policies, the agricultural sector can become a more stable economic pillar, help reduce poverty rates among farmers, and increase local economic independence.
2. **Social Benefits:** In addition to economic benefits, this research is also expected to provide social benefits in the form of improving farmers' welfare, encouraging the pride in the farming profession, and attracting the younger generation to be involved in the agricultural sector. With the increase in welfare, farmers are expected to have a better quality of life, and can play a greater role in local social and economic development.
3. **Policy Benefits:** The results of this study can serve as a reference for policymakers in designing more sustainable and adaptive agricultural programs and policies for local needs. The resulting guidance can also be adopted by other local governments as a model of incentive policies that support food security and the welfare of farmers in their regions.

Overall, this research is expected to not only provide short-term solutions, but also a sustainable impact on the development of a resilient and competitive agricultural sector in Badung Regency.

### *1.5. Research Gaps and Novelty*

This study offers a new contribution using a triangulation approach, which is a combination of primary and secondary data obtained from in-depth interviews with farmers, policy experts, and analysis of policy documents and relevant statistical data. This approach allows researchers to obtain a more holistic view of the Government Purchase Price (HPP)-based incentive strategy of plus 20% in the context of Badung Regency which has unique economic characteristics and is highly dependent on the tourism sector (Bayu Putra, 2024). The triangulation approach helps to increase the validity and reliability of research findings because the data is verified from various sources, resulting in a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Most studies on agricultural incentive policies in Indonesia tend to focus on aspects of price subsidies or direct cash assistance without taking into account the needs of regions with high dependence on non-agricultural sectors, such as tourism. Existing research often sees incentives as a purely economic instrument, aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and farmers' incomes, but pays little attention to the social aspects and long-term impacts of such policies. For example, research by Mubyarto (2000) only focuses on the economic impact of agricultural subsidy policies without considering the social impact and changes in people's mindsets towards the agricultural sector. In the context of Badung Regency, which is experiencing pressure to transfer land use for tourism purposes, a more comprehensive approach is needed to examine how incentive policies such as HPP plus 20% can serve as an instrument to increase the attractiveness of the agricultural sector, as well as maintain the area of agricultural land (Arnawa, 2024).

This research contributes to filling the *research gap* in the agricultural incentive policy literature by researching HPP-based incentives which are relatively rarely researched in the context of regions that focus on tourism. For example, Arnawa (2024) stated that HPP-based incentives can help maintain price stability and reduce the risk of losses for farmers due to market price fluctuations. However, there have not been many studies that examine the

implementation of this policy in the context of tourist areas such as Badung Regency, where dependence on tourism can have an impact on the conversion of agricultural land and reduce the interest of the younger generation to work as farmers. Thus, this study presents *a novelty* by exploring the effectiveness of the HPP plus 20% incentive in improving farmers' welfare, strengthening food security, and attracting the younger generation to play an active role in the agricultural sector.

In addition, this study also introduces a new perspective related to how incentive policies can play a role in maintaining economic balance in regions with high pressure on land conversion. In the context of the economy of tourist areas, the agricultural sector often experiences a decline in attractiveness due to lower yield ratios compared to the tourism sector (Central Statistics Agency of Badung Regency, 2023). Therefore, this study aims not only to evaluate the feasibility of the 20% plus HPP incentive, but also to understand how these incentives can help maintain farmland and create a more sustainable agricultural ecosystem (Fischer & Schratzenholzer, 2001).

By providing empirical data related to the effectiveness of these incentives, this study is expected to be a reference for policymakers in designing agricultural policies that are more in line with regional characteristics. In this case, this study not only focuses on the technical aspects of policy implementation, but also considers the long-term impact on food security, farmer welfare, and agricultural land sustainability amid the pressure of the tourism industry. As a scientific contribution, this study can fill the literature gap related to effective agricultural incentive policies in regions with high dependence on the tourism sector, which has received little attention in agricultural policy studies in Indonesia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Studies

#### 2.1.1. Economic Incentive Theory

The theory of economic incentives states that incentives, both in financial and non-financial forms, can increase the motivation of individuals to participate in certain economic activities and increase their productivity (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). Incentives act as an incentive or attraction for individuals or groups to act in accordance with specific expectations or goals, such as improving productivity or quality of results. In the context of the agricultural sector, incentives in the form of Government Purchase Prices (HPP) plus 20% are a strategy that aims to provide additional motivation for farmers to be more active in producing agricultural products with high quality and adequate quantity, without worrying too much about losses due to market price fluctuations. The provision of this incentive is also expected to be able to create economic stability for farmers who depend on crops as their main source of income (Mankiw, 2014).

#### 2.2.2. Food Sovereignty Theory

The theory of food sovereignty focuses on food independence, namely the ability of a region or country to meet the food needs of its population independently without being overly dependent on imports (Patel, 2009). The principle of food sovereignty not only focuses on food availability, but also emphasizes the importance of sustainable policies that support local farmers so that they can meet their food needs with locally available resources (Rosset, 2006). In this context, the provision of financial incentives to local farmers, such as the HPP plus 20% incentive, is a policy instrument that supports the achievement of food sovereignty in Badung Regency. This policy serves as an effort to ensure price and income stability for farmers, so that they can continue to produce food without being affected by market uncertainty. Thus, this program plays an important role in maintaining long-term food security, which is in line with the vision of "Food Sovereign Badung."

### 2.2. Concept Study

In this concept study, the HPP plus 20% incentive strategy was identified as a policy instrument that can support food security and improve the economic conditions of local farmers. These incentives combine the basic concepts

of economic incentive theory and food sovereignty. The implementation of HPP plus 20% is a form of direct government support for farmers, which not only increases their income but also provides a more stable price guarantee. This concept is sustainable and is designed to address the uncertainty faced by farmers in managing their crops, especially when market prices decline below the cost of production (Arnawa, 2024).

### *2.3. Previous Research Review*

Previous studies have shown that providing financial incentives has proven to be effective in encouraging people's interest in entering the agricultural sector and increasing agricultural production. Research by Pagiola et al. (2007) shows that direct subsidies or incentives to farmers can improve the economic conditions of smallholders and increase their production yields. However, this study also underlines the challenges faced, especially in terms of suboptimal distribution and market access. This can hinder farmers from selling their crops, ultimately affecting the effectiveness of incentives.

In addition, research by Fischer and Schrattenholzer (2001) highlights the importance of government support in building a good distribution infrastructure to facilitate market access. Adequate distribution infrastructure allows farmers to sell their crops more easily, so the incentives provided really have a positive impact on farmers' welfare. Another study by the Central Statistics Agency (2023) in Badung Regency also shows that one of the factors affecting farmers' interest is access to a stable market, which can be supported through incentive policies and higher price guarantees.

This study also identifies gaps in the literature related to the effectiveness of HPP incentive policies in regional contexts that are highly dependent on non-agricultural sectors, such as tourism. Badung Regency is a relevant example, where the dependence on tourism makes the agricultural sector less in demand and vulnerable to economic pressure. Therefore, this study aims to enrich the literature by evaluating how this specific incentive policy can encourage the sustainability of the agricultural sector in tourist areas (Bayu Putra, 2024).

## **3. Research Methods**

### *3.1. Research Design*

This study uses a *mixed methods* approach, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches implemented with the triangulation method. This approach was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the perceptions and expectations of various stakeholders towards the HPP plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency. This triangulation approach aims to reduce bias and increase the validity of findings by utilizing a variety of data sources and complementary analysis methods (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The focus of this research is to identify the expectations and perceptions of farmers, policy makers, and experts in the agricultural sector regarding the implementation of the policy, as well as to simulate policy impact projections by utilizing historical data on the agricultural sector and local economic trends.

### *3.2. Location and Object of Research*

The research was carried out in an agropolitan area in Badung Regency, which is an area with significant agricultural potential and has experienced a direct impact from land conversion due to tourism development. The selection of this location is based on the relevance of food security issues and regional economic dependence on the volatile tourism sector. The object of this research includes farmers' perceptions of incentives, expectations of the government and related experts, as well as projected impacts of incentives on farmers' productivity and income in the region (Central Statistics Agency of Badung Regency, 2023).

### *3.3. Population and Sample*

The population in this study includes all farmers in Badung Regency who have the potential to receive incentives, experts and policy experts who have a deep understanding of the agricultural sector, as well as relevant government

officials involved in agricultural policy decision-making. In an effort to obtain relevant and in-depth data, sample withdrawal is carried out using *the purposive sampling method*, which is to select informants who are considered to have specific knowledge and direct involvement with the research topic. The research sample consisted of 50 active farmers representing various agricultural commodities in Badung Regency, 10 experts in the field of agriculture and local policy makers who understand the intricacies of agricultural sector policies, and 5 government officials from related agencies who have an important role in the implementation of agricultural policies. The selection of this sample is expected to provide a comprehensive view regarding the effectiveness and implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency.

### 3.4. Data Collection Methods

The data collection method in this study involves various techniques to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information related to the HPP plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency. First, questionnaires and expectations surveys are distributed to farmers to measure their expectations and views on the incentive policy, as well as its impact on their well-being. This survey uses a Likert scale of 1-5, where scale 1 indicates full disapproval and scale 5 indicates full agreement, to measure perception and level of support for the policy (Bryman, 2016). Through this survey, researchers hope to identify the extent to which incentive policies can motivate farmers to increase productivity and maintain the sustainability of their farming businesses.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with experts and relevant government officials to gain insights into their readiness and challenges that may arise in the implementation of this policy. This interview highlights the various challenges faced in the policy formulation process, as well as the prediction of their impact on the agricultural sector. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to provide flexibility to respondents in conveying their views in detail and depth, so that they could provide rich and in-depth information (Patton, 2015).

Third, secondary data analysis was used to obtain additional information, including data on the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) of the agricultural sector and food production trends in Badung Regency over the past five years. This data provides an overview of the contribution of the agricultural sector to the regional economy, as well as trends relevant to the implementation of incentive policies. In comparison, similar policies in other regions are also analyzed to see their effectiveness and relevance in the local context of Badung Regency (Mubyarto, 2000).

Finally, a projection simulation was carried out using a scenario analysis model that utilized historical data from the agricultural sector and previous market prices. This simulation is designed to predict how the HPP plus 20% incentive policy will affect farmers' productivity and welfare, taking into account variables such as market prices, production costs, and local economic fluctuations (Fischer & Schrattenholzer, 2001). Through this approach, the research is expected to be able to provide more accurate projections of policy impacts on farmers' welfare and regional food security.

### 3.5. Research Instruments

This study uses several instruments to ensure that the data obtained is relevant and in-depth in supporting the analysis of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. First, the expectations questionnaire is specifically designed to measure farmers' expectations and perceptions of these incentives, including questions related to the potential impact of the policy on the income and stability of their farming businesses. This questionnaire provides an initial overview of the extent to which farmers feel the policy will affect their overall economic well-being.

Second, the interview guide is prepared as an instrument to explore insights from experts and relevant government officials regarding the readiness of policy implementation and the various challenges faced in the process. This interview guide includes questions that allow respondents to provide an in-depth view of the opportunities and obstacles of incentive policies from a policy and operational perspective.

Third, the document analysis template is used to evaluate existing policies and analyze trends in the agricultural sector in Badung Regency. This instrument helps in compiling projections using historical data as a reference, thus supporting the assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of incentive policies in local contexts.

Finally, simulations are carried out with the help of software such as Excel or R to calculate the projected economic impact of these incentive policies. The simulation is designed to predict how the 20% plus HPP incentive policy may affect farmers' welfare, taking into account relevant economic variables such as market prices, production costs, and local economic fluctuations (Alkire & Foster, 2011). Through these instruments, research can measure the impact of policies more accurately and in depth.

### 3.6. Data Analysis Techniques

This study uses several data analysis techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. First, quantitative analysis was applied to the survey data by using descriptive statistics to identify patterns of farmers' expectations and perceptions towards incentive policies. The results of this quantitative analysis are visualized in the form of graphs and tables to facilitate data interpretation, thus providing a clear picture of farmers' support for the policy (Field, 2013).

Second, qualitative data from interviews and documents are analyzed using *content analysis* techniques, which allows researchers to extract key themes from interviews and policy documents. This method is useful for identifying relevant patterns, concepts, and meanings from qualitative data, which provides deeper insights into stakeholder perceptions and views on policy implementation (Patton, 2015).

Third, impact simulations and projections are carried out based on historical data from the agricultural sector to predict changes in productivity and farmers' incomes that may occur as a result of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. The analysis of these scenarios helps in anticipating the various possible economic impacts that can arise from the policy, providing a basis for understanding the long-term implications of the implementation of this policy (Pagiola et al., 2007).

Finally, the data triangulation technique is applied by comparing the results of surveys, interviews, and document analysis to ensure consistency and validity of the findings. The use of triangulation serves to improve the accuracy of research results by minimizing potential bias and strengthening the validity of findings, thus providing more reliable and in-depth results (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

### 3.7. Tools and Software Used

This research utilizes various tools and software to support comprehensive data analysis. Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets are used as the primary tools for survey data processing as well as projection, allowing researchers to organize, manage, and visualize survey data efficiently. For the analysis of interview data, NVivo software is used, mainly in the process of *coding* and identifying key themes. NVivo makes it easier for researchers to extract qualitative information from interviews and identify relevant patterns or concepts related to the implementation of incentive policies. In addition, SPSS or R is also used to conduct descriptive statistical analysis and projection simulations to measure the economic impact of the HPP plus 20% policy. The use of SPSS or R helps in ensuring that the results of statistical analysis can be interpreted accurately and supports the quantitative projection of policy impacts.

### 3.8. Validity and Reliability

This study ensures the validity of the results through the application of triangulation of sources and methods, namely by combining data obtained from surveys, interviews, and document analysis. This approach is carried out to verify the accuracy and completeness of the findings, so that each data collected can reinforce each other and provide a more comprehensive picture (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Meanwhile, the reliability of the data was tested through a consistency test technique, where the survey was repeated on a sub-sample at different times. This

process aims to ensure the stability of the data obtained, so that the research results are reliable and consistent under similar conditions (Field, 2013).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Research Results

#### 4.1.1. Eligibility of the HPP Plus 20% Incentive Strategy

Based on the results of a survey involving 50 active farmers in Badung Regency, it is known that 82% of respondents gave full support to the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. They argue that this policy can be an effective strategy to increase income and strengthen the stability of their farming business. These findings indicate that most farmers see this policy as a feasible and relevant step in dealing with market uncertainty that often negatively impacts farmers' incomes. This high support reflects farmers' confidence in the proposed policies, especially in the face of volatile fluctuations in agricultural prices.

Furthermore, the survey also showed that 75% of farmers believe that the HPP plus 20% incentive policy can provide more certainty of income guarantee. For farmers, this guarantee is very important to support the stability of their business, especially in the face of a period when agricultural commodity prices are declining. This price guarantee above the market price is expected to be able to reduce the risk of losses that farmers often face, especially when there is an overproduction that causes the market price to fall below the cost of production.

This policy is also expected to increase the attractiveness of the agricultural sector, which has been considered less profitable than other sectors such as tourism. This is relevant to the economic incentive theory which states that financial incentives can increase work motivation and interest in certain professions (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). Farmers' support for this policy shows that the HPP plus 20% incentive policy is not only important for the economic stability of farmers but also relevant to strengthen the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Badung Regency.

The following is Figure 1, which illustrates the percentage of farmers' support for several key aspects of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy, including increased income, farming stability, motivation in farming, and the interest of the younger generation to enter the agricultural sector.

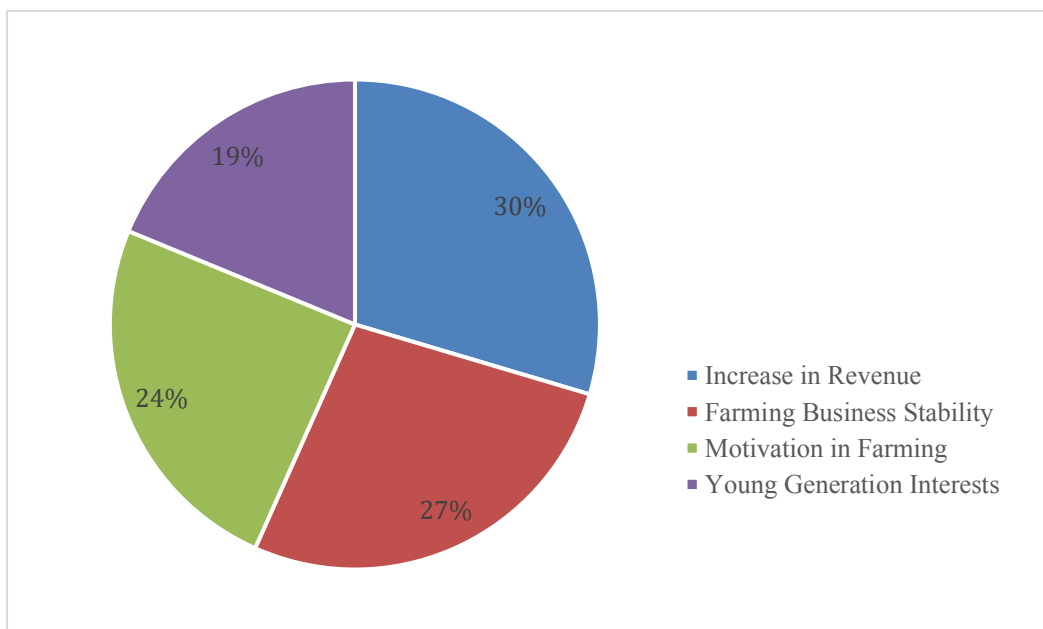


Figure 1: Percentage of Farmers' Support for HPP Plus Incentive Policy Aspects 20%



Figure 1 shows that the aspect of "Income Increase" received the highest support from farmers with 82%, followed by the aspect of "Stability of Farming Business" with 75% support. The "Motivation in Farming" and "Interest of the Young Generation" aspects had lower support, 68% and 52%, respectively, which shows that although these policies have great potential in improving the welfare of farmers today, additional efforts are still needed to increase the attractiveness of the agricultural sector for the younger generation.

Overall, this data shows that the HPP plus 20% incentive policy has great potential in strengthening the local agricultural economy, with a focus on improving farmers' welfare and farming stability.

#### 4.1.2. Impact of Incentives on Farmers' Welfare and Food Production

This study examines the projected impact of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy on farmers' income by using a simulation of income projections for the last five years. The simulation results show that this policy has a significant impact on increasing farmers' income, so it has the potential to improve their welfare in a sustainable manner.

Table 1 below shows the projected income of farmers in the last five years, both with and without incentive policies. The income difference shows that the HPP plus 20% policy plays an important role in maintaining stability and providing higher income guarantee for farmers.

Table 1: Simulation of Farmer Income Projections with and Without HPP Plus 20% Incentive Policy

Year	Income Without Incentives (Million Rupiah)	Income with incentives (million rupiah)
1	500	500
2	520	540
3	480	510
4	460	490
5	450	480

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that in the 2nd to 5th year, the income of farmers who receive HPP plus 20% incentives shows a higher value compared to income without incentives. The highest increase in revenue was seen in the 2nd year, with a difference of 20 million rupiah higher than income without incentives, reflecting an increase of 3.8%. This simulation shows that under the same market conditions, incentive policies are able to keep farmers' incomes in a stable range, even though market prices fluctuate.

##### a. Impact Analysis on Farmers' Welfare

More stable and likely increasing income has a direct impact on the welfare of farmers. With higher income security, farmers have better financial resources to meet basic needs and improve the quality of life. It also allows them to invest in aspects of production that can increase productivity, such as the purchase of superior seeds and improved land quality.

This increase in income is also in line with the results of interviews that show that farmers feel more optimistic about the future of their farming business. Most of the farmers interviewed stated that with this policy, they feel safer in running their farming business without worrying about adverse price fluctuations. These results are consistent with the economic incentive theory which states that financial support can motivate workers to increase their productivity (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010).

The following Figure 2 illustrates the trend of projected farmers' income with and without the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. This graph shows that with incentive policies, farmers' incomes are experiencing a more stable trend and tend to increase.

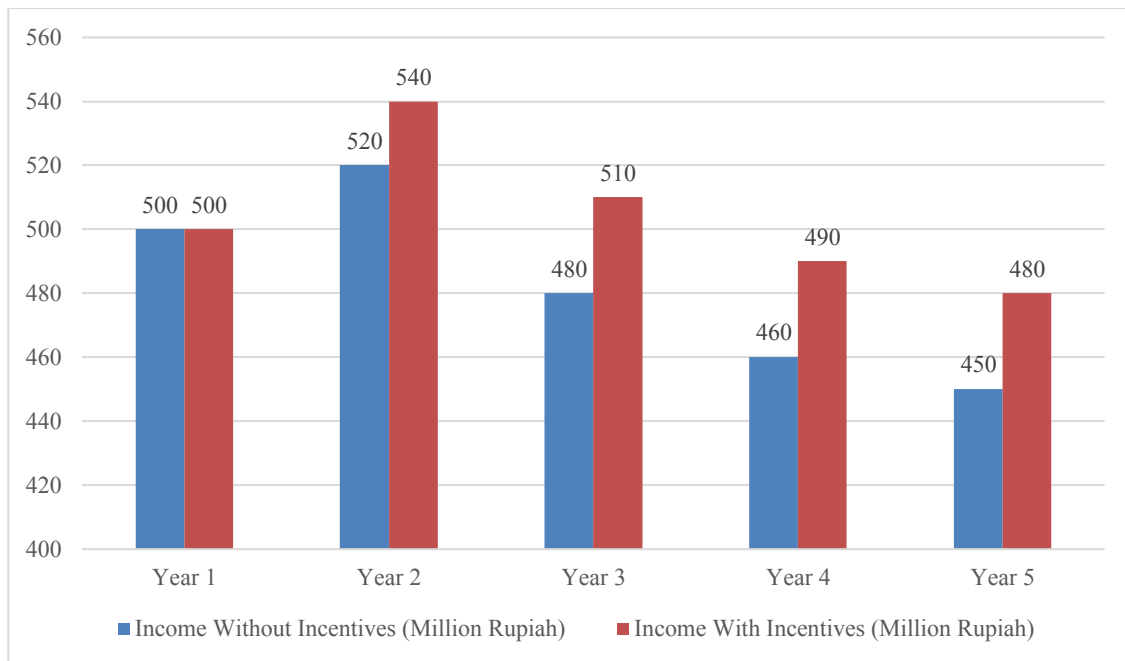


Figure 2: Projected Farmers' Income "without" and "with" the HPP Plus Incentive Policy of 20%

In this graph, it is clear that farmers' income without incentives tends to decrease every year, while income with incentives shows a stable trend with a slight increase. This policy shows the potential for an increase in income of up to 18% under the same market conditions, which has a significant impact on the farmer economy.

#### b. Impact Analysis on Food Production

In addition to welfare, the impact of the HPP plus 20% policy also includes the potential for an increase in food production. With the guarantee of higher prices, farmers are motivated to increase the amount of production because they have confidence that their crops will get a decent price. This policy can create a chain effect, where increasing local food production contributes to regional food security and reduces dependence on external supplies. Price stability and higher income also allow farmers to maintain product quality, so that food products become more competitive. In the long term, this can support the "Food Sovereign Badung" program by creating a more independent and sustainable food system.

#### 4.1.3. Challenges in the Implementation of the HPP Plus 20% Incentive Strategy

The implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency has several main challenges that need to be overcome so that this policy can run effectively and achieve its main goal of improving farmers' welfare and strengthening food security. Based on interviews with relevant officials and field analysis, these challenges include aspects of funding, supervision, inter-agency coordination, and income from farmers. Here is a detailed breakdown of these challenges:

##### a. Sustainability of Funding

Long-term funding is one of the main challenges in the implementation of this policy. The HPP plus 20% incentive program requires a significant budget allocation, especially if this incentive must be applied consistently every year. Based on the results of interviews with officials from the agriculture office, the sustainability of funding is often an obstacle, especially if there is a change in budget priorities at the local government level. The large budget dependence on local revenues can also affect the sustainability of these policies, especially in volatile economic conditions or in situations where the tourism sector — as the main source of revenue — is declining.

To address these challenges, governments need to look for alternative sources of funding or strengthen partnerships with the private sector. For example, cooperation with companies that have social responsibility (CSR) programs can be a solution to support funding. In addition, the involvement of banking institutions to provide financing

schemes for affected farmers can be another option. This strategy of diversifying funding sources is needed to ensure that the HPP plus 20% incentive policy remains sustainable in the long term (Mubyarto, 2000).

#### *b. Effectiveness of Supervision*

Supervision is a critical aspect of the implementation of incentive policies to ensure that incentive funds are actually received by eligible farmers. Without an effective monitoring system, there is a risk of irregularities or misuse of funds. Based on the results of the interview, the official stated that one of the obstacles in supervision is the lack of adequate field supervisors. In addition, limited technology and up-to-date data on eligible farmer data also hinders the effectiveness of supervision.

To increase the effectiveness of surveillance, an information technology-based system is needed that allows real-time monitoring and minimizes potential deviations. The implementation of the Building Management Information System (SIMBG) or other digital technologies that integrate farmer data with the fund distribution system can help improve the accuracy of supervision and minimize budget leakages. In addition, participatory-based monitoring involving local institutions, such as farmer groups, can also strengthen surveillance at the field level (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

#### *c. Coordination Between Agencies*

Another challenge in the implementation of this policy is the need for strong coordination between agencies, including the agriculture office, the finance office, and related local institutions. The implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy requires cross-sectoral synergy, especially in terms of budget allocation, basic purchase pricing, and distribution of incentive funds. In practice, weak coordination can lead to delays in the distribution of incentives or inconsistencies in budget management.

Based on the results of the interviews, several officials stated that one of the obstacles in coordination is the difference in priorities and operational procedures between related agencies. To overcome this, the government can form a special working team or committee involving representatives from each agency to ensure more effective communication. In addition, the coordination mechanism can be improved through regular meetings and the preparation of integrated operational guidelines, so that each agency has the same understanding of their respective procedures and responsibilities.

#### *d. Farmer Acceptance and Participation*

Farmers' acceptance and participation in this program is also an equally important challenge. Based on the survey, although most farmers support the HPP plus 20% policy, there are concerns about the government's long-term commitment to supporting this program. Some farmers also expressed doubts about the effectiveness of incentive programs due to the lack of clear information on the mechanism of disbursement of funds and guarantees of price stability. In addition, there are still concerns from farmers about dependence on government-set prices, which may not always be in line with market conditions.

To increase farmers' income and participation, it is necessary to carry out more intensive socialization regarding the objectives, benefits, and mechanisms of the HPP plus 20% incentive program. This socialization can be carried out through farmer groups or other agricultural organizations to ensure that farmers understand the policy and have confidence in its sustainability. In addition, the government can involve farmers in the policy evaluation process, so that they feel they have a hand and are more motivated to actively participate in this program (Patton, 2015).

Overall, the challenges of implementing the HPP plus 20% incentive policy in Badung Regency include the sustainability of funding, the effectiveness of supervision, coordination between agencies, and receipts from farmers. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is needed, including diversification of funding, strengthening of surveillance technology, cross-sector synergy, and improved communication with farmers. By overcoming these challenges, the HPP plus 20% incentive policy is expected to run effectively and have a significant positive impact on the welfare of farmers and regional food security.

## 4.2. Discussion

### 4.2.1. Policy Feasibility

Based on survey data and interviews conducted, the majority of farmers support the Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20% incentive policy as an effective effort in improving their welfare and supporting food security in Badung Regency. This support shows a strong feasibility for this policy, as incentives are considered to be able to provide price stability that farmers urgently need in the face of market uncertainty. As stated in the theory of economic incentives, financial incentives can be a powerful motivator in increasing farmers' participation and productivity, especially when they offer price guarantees above market prices (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010).

In addition, this policy is in line with the concept of food sovereignty which emphasizes the importance of food independence and sustainability of local supply as the basis for regional food security. According to Patel (2009), policies that strengthen local production and provide price guarantees for farmers will support regional food supply stability, especially in situations where dependence on other sectors (e.g. tourism) poses a major risk to economic stability. In Badung Regency, dependence on the tourism sector has led to the conversion of agricultural land into tourism land, which has the potential to reduce local food production capacity. In this context, the HPP plus 20% incentive policy is a strategic effort to balance the need for food security and the challenge of land conversion.

The HPP plus 20% policy also functions as price protection for farmers when there are fluctuations in commodity prices in the market. Based on the results of the interviews, farmers stated that the existence of price guarantees can help them manage the risk of losses during the abundant harvest season or when commodity prices in the market fall sharply. With price guarantees, farmers can plan their farming businesses better and feel safe to continue producing. This is consistent with the results of the study by Pagiola et al. (2007), which stated that incentive policies that provide protection against prices can motivate farmers to produce sustainably and have a positive effect on their welfare.

In the context of significant land use transfer in Badung Regency, this policy also serves as an effort to attract the interest of the younger generation so that they remain interested in working in the agricultural sector. Based on the survey results, several young farmers stated that financial incentives make the agricultural profession look more promising, because there is a guarantee of a more stable income. This shows that incentives can be an attraction for the younger generation to stay in the agricultural sector, support the sustainability of regional food security, and reduce dependence on food imports or supplies from outside.

Thus, the HPP plus 20% policy is not only feasible from the perspective of farmers' welfare, but also relevant as a strategy to maintain regional food security. This incentive provides the guarantee farmers need to face market price uncertainty, increase their motivation in production, and attract the interest of the younger generation. Therefore, this policy supports the stability of food security in Badung Regency amid challenges from the dominance of the tourism sector and sustainable land conversion.

### 4.2.2. Impact on Farmers' Welfare

The results of this study show that the HPP plus 20% incentive policy contributes significantly to the increase in farmers' income, with an average increase of 18% compared to income without incentives. This impact shows that stable financial incentives not only help in increasing incomes, but also promote the overall well-being of farmers. This increase in income provides assurance for farmers that their farming business remains profitable and sustainable, even in the midst of market price uncertainty. These findings are in line with the results of a study by Pagiola et al. (2007), which stated that stable financial incentive policies can have a positive effect on the welfare of farmers and increase their capacity to produce sustainably.

This increase in income allows farmers to overcome short-term financial challenges, such as financing daily necessities and managing production costs. Furthermore, a more stable income provides important financial security for farmers to plan their farming ventures in the long term. With a guaranteed income, farmers have more

room to make decisions that are beneficial to the sustainability of their farming business. They can be more free to invest in increasing productivity, for example through the purchase of superior seeds that are more resistant to diseases or pests, which in turn will improve the quality of crops.

In addition, with more guaranteed incomes, farmers are more encouraged to apply innovative agricultural technologies, such as water-saving irrigation or the use of organic fertilizers, which can improve production efficiency and maintain land sustainability. These kinds of innovations not only increase the quantity of agricultural products, but also maintain the quality of products, which can improve the competitiveness of local agricultural products in the market. For example, the use of more efficient irrigation technology allows farmers to better manage water resources, especially in uncertain weather conditions. This has a positive impact on the environment while increasing production, which means that farmers' welfare can be maintained without having to sacrifice the sustainability of natural resources.

The financial benefits of this policy also encourage farmers to expand the scale of their production. With a higher price guarantee, farmers feel safer to increase the planting area or expand the types of crops planted. This not only contributes to an increase in individual income, but also has an impact on regional food security as a whole. With a larger scale of production, Badung Regency can reduce dependence on food supplies from outside the region, supporting the vision of "Food Sovereign Badung" which wants to achieve local food independence.

Improving farmers' welfare through this incentive policy also has a long-term impact on socio-economic stability in rural areas. When farmers have a more stable income, they tend to stay in the agricultural profession and contribute to the local economy. This indirectly creates a multiplier effect where higher incomes in the agricultural sector increase demand for local goods and services, which in turn can create additional jobs in other sectors. This condition helps maintain rural economic stability and reduce the flow of urbanization, where many rural residents are looking for work in big cities.

Overall, the HPP plus 20% incentive policy not only increases farmers' income in the short term, but also contributes to improving long-term welfare. These incentives provide financial security that allows farmers to further invest in production, implement more efficient technologies, and scale up their farming ventures. Thus, this policy serves as a foundation for sustainable agricultural development and stronger food security in Badung Regency.

#### 4.2.3. Implementation Challenges

The implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy faces a number of major challenges that can affect the effectiveness and sustainability of policies in supporting farmers' welfare and regional food security. Interviews with relevant officials and data analysis revealed that the long-term success of these policies is highly dependent on sustained funding, effective surveillance systems, and solid cross-sectoral support. Here is a detailed description of these challenges.

##### *a. Sustainable Funding*

One of the biggest challenges in the implementation of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy is ensuring consistent and sustainable funding. This policy requires a significant budget, especially if it is implemented in the long term and covers different types of agricultural commodities. Based on interviews, officials stated that the sustainability of funding is often an obstacle, especially considering that Badung Regency's main source of income comes from the tourism sector, which is vulnerable to global economic fluctuations and natural disasters. When the tourism sector declines, the ability of local governments to provide budgets for these incentives can be disrupted, so there is a risk of funding instability.

This challenge is in line with the findings of Fischer and Schratzenholzer (2001), which stated that the success of incentive policies is highly dependent on stable and sustainable sources of funding. To overcome this challenge, local governments can consider diversifying funding sources, for example through partnerships with the private sector, the use of CSR (*Corporate Social Responsibility*) programs, or support from banking institutions that can

provide financing schemes for farmers. In addition, the government can seek financial support from the central government or international institutions that focus on food security and agricultural development.

#### *b. Effective Supervision*

Effective monitoring is a crucial aspect to ensure that incentives actually reach eligible farmers and are used for their intended purpose. The results of the interviews showed that one of the obstacles in supervision was the lack of field supervisors and limited data and supporting technology. Without strict supervision, there is a risk of misuse of funds or inappropriate incentive recipients, which can ultimately reduce the effectiveness of the policy.

To overcome this obstacle, it is necessary to implement a technology-based monitoring system that can integrate farmer data in real-time and enable transparent monitoring of incentive distribution. The use of digital applications or platforms that record every transaction and verify farmer data can help minimize potential irregularities. Additionally, a participatory-based monitoring approach, in which farmer groups or local communities are involved in the monitoring process, can provide an additional layer to ensure transparency. By involving farmers and local communities, the effectiveness of monitoring can be improved because they have a direct interest in the success of the policy.

#### *c. Cross-Sector Support*

The third challenge is to ensure strong cross-sectoral support in the implementation of this policy. The HPP plus 20% incentive policy requires synergy between various agencies, such as the agriculture office, the finance office, and supervisory agencies, so that the policy can run according to its goals. In practice, coordination between agencies often faces obstacles, both due to differences in priorities and differences in operational procedures. This results in delays in decision-making, especially in terms of basic pricing or budget allocation.

To improve coordination, the government can form a special team or cross-sectoral committee consisting of representatives of relevant agencies. This team may be responsible for harmonizing procedures, establishing integrated operational guidelines, and conducting regular meetings to evaluate the progress of policy implementation. This approach can ensure that each agency has the same understanding of their respective procedures and responsibilities, thereby minimizing the potential for overlap or conflict in policy implementation.

#### *d. Farmer Acceptance and Participation*

In addition to administrative challenges, farmers' acceptance and participation in this policy is also an important factor that needs to be considered. The results of the interviews show that although most farmers support this policy, there are concerns about the consistency of the policy and the government's long-term commitment. Some farmers are skeptical about the sustainability of the policy, especially if changes in policy or economic conditions cause incentives to be discontinued.

To increase farmers' income, it is necessary to carry out intensive socialization regarding the objectives, benefits, and incentive mechanisms of HPP plus 20%. This socialization program can be organized through farmer groups or farmer organizations so that the information provided is easier to understand and receive. In addition, the government can involve farmers in the policy evaluation and monitoring process, so that they feel they have a role in determining the sustainability of the program. By actively engaging farmers, the government can build a stronger sense of trust among farmers and encourage their participation in the program.

Overall, the main challenges in the implementation of the HPP plus 20% policy include sustainability of funding, effective monitoring, cross-sectoral support, and income from farmers. These challenges show that policy success depends not only on budget allocation, but also on management effectiveness, cross-sectoral synergy, and active farmer engagement. By overcoming these challenges, the HPP plus 20% incentive policy can have a significant impact on the welfare of farmers and food security in Badung Regency.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### *5.1 Conclusion*

Based on the results of research, data analysis, and interviews with various stakeholders, it can be concluded that the Government Purchase Price (HPP) plus 20% incentive policy is a feasible and relevant strategy to support the welfare of farmers in Badung Regency and strengthen regional food security. This policy successfully answers the formulation of research problems related to feasibility, impact on farmers' welfare, and implementation challenges.

1. **Policy feasibility:** Survey and interview results show that 82% of farmers support this policy, considering it as the right step to increase income and stability of farming. This policy is in line with the theory of economic incentives which states that financial support can increase farmers' motivation and productivity, and is in line with the concept of food sovereignty which emphasizes the importance of local food security.
2. **Impact on Farmers' Welfare:** With the incentive policy, farmers' income increased by an average of 18%, which had a significant positive impact on farmers' welfare. This increase in income allows farmers to make investments in production, such as the purchase of superior seeds and agricultural technology. This impact shows that this policy can provide better financial security for farmers, thus encouraging them to increase the scale of production and the quality of agricultural products.
3. **Implementation Challenges:** The implementation of this policy faces challenges in terms of sustainable funding, monitoring effectiveness, cross-sectoral support, and smallholder revenues. Funding limitations and potential budget instability affect the consistency of these programs. In addition, suboptimal supervision and coordination between agencies are challenges in ensuring that this policy can be implemented on target.

Overall, the HPP plus 20% policy has a positive impact in the short term on farmers' income and their welfare, and has great potential to support food security in Badung Regency. However, the success of these policies requires consistent support in terms of funding, inter-agency coordination, and active involvement from farmers.

## 5.2 Recommendations

### *a. Recommendations to the Government and Stakeholders*

1. **Ensuring Funding Sustainability:** To ensure that this policy can be implemented consistently, the government needs to look for alternative sources of funding outside the APBD. One option is to form partnerships with the private sector through CSR programs, which can support the financing of these incentives. The government can also apply for assistance from international financial institutions or the central government that focuses on agricultural development and food security.
2. **Improving Surveillance with Digital Technology:** The government is advised to implement a technology-based surveillance system, such as a digital platform that can monitor the distribution of incentives in real-time. This system can ensure that incentives are given to eligible farmers, reduce potential irregularities, and increase policy accountability. An app that records farmer data and records every incentive transaction can increase transparency in policy implementation.
3. **Building Strong Cross-Sector Coordination:** The government needs to form a cross-sectoral team consisting of representatives of the agriculture office, the finance office, and supervisory agencies. This team is tasked with harmonizing procedures, developing integrated operational guidelines, and conducting regular evaluations of policy implementation. Strong cross-sectoral coordination will ensure that each agency has the same understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities in supporting policy success.
4. **Intensive Socialization to Farmers:** The government must carry out comprehensive socialization regarding the objectives, benefits, and mechanisms of the HPP plus 20% incentive policy. This socialization is important to increase farmers' understanding and acceptance of the policy, so that they feel they have a part in this program. Socialization can be carried out through farmer groups, local institutions, and other communication media to reach all farmers who are the target of the incentive.

### *b. Recommendations for Further Research*

1. **Long-Term Impact Analysis:** Further research needs to be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of the HPP plus 20% policy on farmers' welfare and regional food security. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into the sustainable impact of these policies, including their effects on production scale, agricultural product quality, and rural economic capacity.

2. Comparative Studies with Other Regions: Further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies with other regions that have implemented similar policies. This study can help identify best practices that can be applied in Badung Regency as well as provide lessons from the challenges faced in other areas.
3. Evaluation of Technology in Supervision and Distribution of Incentives: Given the importance of supervision in the implementation of this policy, research that evaluates the effectiveness of the use of technology in surveillance systems is urgently needed. This study can explore the benefits and constraints of implementing technology-based surveillance systems and their impact on policy transparency and accountability.
4. Social Impact Analysis of Incentive Policies: Further research can explore the social impacts of the HPP plus 20% policy, such as changes in public perception of the agricultural profession, the interest of the younger generation to enter the agricultural sector, and the contribution of this policy in maintaining social stability in rural areas. This social impact is important to understand the extent to which these policies support local food security and regional economic sustainability.

In conclusion, the HPP plus 20% policy has great potential in improving farmers' welfare and supporting food security. However, the government and stakeholders need to ensure the sustainability of funding, a strict monitoring system, and strong coordination for this policy to be effective. Further research is also needed to explore the long-term impact of these policies and identify opportunities for improvement that can be implemented in the future.

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# "This Place is the Source of Our Identity": The Case of the Indigenous People of Atoni Pah Meto with the Mutis Timau National Park in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Identity is always intertwined with collective identity and the surrounding natural environment, and it is the fundamental foundation that defines who they are to the surrounding nature. In the context of decision-making, Mutis Timau National Park shows that a lack of voice in Indigenous peoples is accommodated and a lack of identity recognition, but only involves specific individuals selectively. This paper is based on an explanatory case study, and the findings of this study reveal the importance of space for better environmental policy design, especially those guided by collaborative action in environmental decisions by accommodating the voices of indigenous leaders or community leaders from various clans fairly. Environmental communication with respect for culture and identity recognition will enhance collaboration and support the effectiveness of nature conservation and socio-cultural sustainability. The theoretical contribution of this research corroborates a significant contribution to the environmental communication literature and offers a practical framework contribution to be applied to inclusive communication strategies in a global context.

**Keywords:** Environmental Communication, Cultural Identity, Environmental Identity, Indigenous People, National Park

## 1. Introduction

National parks are a globally accepted concept as a conservation way to protect the integrity of ecosystems, education, research, and community well-being. In addition, it significantly contributes to the effective conservation of biodiversity by protecting various species and their habitats (Jiao et al., 2022). They also serve as a sanctuary for endemic and rare flora and fauna, help maintain ecological balance, and prevent species extinction (Dahal, 2021). National parks in different regions have provided essential ecosystem services, including water resource protection, climate regulation, and soil conservation (Javeed et al., 2023). In addition to offering ecosystem services, national parks also develop tourism, which is very important for the economy of local communities (He & Guo, 2021; Silva et al., 2023). As such, national parks are invaluable for scientific research

and long-term ecological monitoring, providing insights into natural processes and human impacts on ecosystems (Heurich et al., 2010; Javeed et al., 2023).

Conservation is essential to balance ecology, biodiversity, and wildlife sanctuaries. Biodiversity is essential for the stability and functioning of ecosystems. Of course, this strongly supports ecosystem services beneficial for human society, such as clean water, air, and fertile soil (Durmaz et al., 2024; Mestanza-Ramón et al., 2020). Effective conservation strategies include establishing protected areas, sustainable use of resources, and ecosystem restoration, helping preserve and ensure long-term ecological sustainability (Durmaz et al., 2024). Sustainable resource use requires the implementation of practices that support a balance between human needs and environmental sustainability.

National parks are used as a tool of state control over natural resources to be protected as a form of state protection of their territory. As such, governments build national parks to conserve natural resources, often implementing strict regulations that limit local communities' access to and use of these resources (Bonye et al., 2023; Kariyawasam et al., 2020; Siburian et al., 2024). In some cases, national parks are used as state interventions over critical natural resources that require state protection, such as coal, water, and timber, which often leads to conflicts with local communities that depend on these resources for their livelihoods (Bonye et al., 2023).

National parks are managed based on zoning and regulatory principles that protect landscapes without completely separating the land from its ownership or use but instead adapting it to conservation needs. This approach presents challenges in ensuring optimal resource conservation and offers essential advantages in encouraging local community participation. This approach not only increases people's sense of belonging and commitment to conservation efforts but also supports the sustainability of ecosystems and biodiversity in the long term. The involvement of local communities in decision-making and management, various studies have shown positive results, namely that they can produce more sustainable and harmonious results (Siburian et al., 2024).

Efforts to conserve biodiversity must ensure the sustainability of ecosystems, which is why national parks are an essential instrument that combines environmental protection with socioeconomic benefits. Therefore, the establishment and management of national parks are often guided by national policies and legal frameworks that aim to balance conservation goals with the needs of local communities (Javeed et al., 2023; Li & Li, 2022). In some regions, there is a push toward co-management strategies that engage local stakeholders and provide alternative opportunities to generate revenue to offset restrictions imposed by national parks (Chowdhury et al., 2009). The co-management approach is designed to empower local communities as active partners in conservation, ensuring that they not only comply with the restrictions in place but also experience the direct benefits of the existence of national parks.

Unfortunately, in nature conservation efforts, it is not easy for policymakers to integrate traditional cultural values around the region to support conservation that aligns with local communities' beliefs. Conservation policies enacted with uniformity at the national or international level often fail to incorporate local cultural values. For example, the EU's conservation policy does not provide enough alternatives to integrate local values, which can create local conflicts and undermine diverse cultural values (Michaelidou & Decker, 2005). In North America, conceptual and practical challenges often arise in integrating local cultural values with natural resource management in landscape-based conservation planning (Brown & Murtha, 2019). Indigenous peoples or local communities prioritize their territory differently than international conservation organizations. In Melanesia, local communities attach more importance to cultural heritage sites than other ecosystem resources, so conservation policies need to be aligned with these values (Brown & Murtha, 2019). For example, traditional local beliefs have been marginalized in Uganda due to increased extra-cultural religiosity, creating challenges in adopting a cultural values approach to conservation (Infield & Mugisha, 2018).

Differences in how different cultures treat and view nature are due to various interrelated factors, including history, religious and spiritual beliefs, economic relationships, and local ecological conditions. These differences affect how different cultures identify and appreciate nature, and these differences affect the ecological relationship between humans and nature, which is a complex study (Fox & Xu, 2017). The world's diverse cultures

conceptualize human-nature relationships in various ways, such as kinship, partnership, or rational management (Novo et al., 2024). The socio-ecological system framework cannot accommodate the dynamic interaction between values, attitudes, and people's understanding of human-nature relationships. Therefore, a model is needed to integrate these socio-cultural concepts to influence environmental governance and behavior (Muhar et al., 2018). The concept of relational values, which includes justice, reciprocity, care, and responsibility for nature today, is entirely developed, but it needs further refinement (Calcagni et al., 2022; Campbell & Gurney, 2024). The integration of conservation and culture has been recognized but has not been fully understood by the global community, primarily Indigenous peoples' concepts and strategies in ecosystem protection (Caillon et al., 2017; Cocks, 2006).

The separation of Indigenous peoples from mythical narratives, histories, worldviews, and their relationship to their place of residence and view of a particular space is a very complex and complex problem. The obscuration of the history of places and the indigenous history of indigenous peoples often changes when shaped by colonial narratives, which portray places as relics of the past or as stereotypes of the present (Fish & Counts, 2021; Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2006). Colonialism and subsequent industrial exploitation disrupted nature and cultural practices associated with Indigenous peoples, leading to a loss of ecological integrity and cultural health (Wathl thla et al., 2022). The perspective of separation between nature and culture often impacts natural heritage sites and separates those places from their social and cultural contexts. Ultimately, it often removes the stories and meanings important to indigenous peoples (Vannini & Vannini, 2020). Indigenous peoples' views that emphasize traditional knowledge systems refer to interconnectedness and reciprocity with nature with respect, and this context is often ignored in favor of the Western scientific paradigm (Dovchin et al., 2024; Sherwood, 2016). Indigenous peoples often refer to oral traditions, including their relationship with the land. The perspective of Western narratives has led to a decline in the transmission of oral traditions and myths, which is crucial for maintaining a worldview and cultural identity (Frey, 2007).

Indigenous peoples' participation and integration of traditional knowledge are essential in nature conservation, sustainable development, and natural resource management. Indigenous peoples, in general, have a deep connection to their environment, and knowledge about how to preserve nature has been passed down from generation to generation. Participation in environmental decision-making is essential but does not adequately accommodate Indigenous peoples' knowledge and the right to self-determination (Black & McBean, 2016; Brock et al., 2023; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). Knowledge of traditional values in treating nature is often considered as data and not a tool of governance, thus weakening the sovereignty of existing communities (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). Systemic and technical barriers inhibit Indigenous people's involvement in decision-making processes due to a lack of mutual respect, ineffective communication, and inadequate social and economic inclusion (Brock et al., 2023). Conflicts arise when indigenous peoples apply traditional knowledge, which often becomes unbalanced. Applying methods from outside their culture often causes resistance from local communities (De La Cruz Nassar et al., 2020).

Dialectical environmental communication, which involves the exchange of different perspectives and knowledge systems, often creates tensions between policymakers and indigenous peoples. Lack of understanding of how to improve collaborative communication to make conservation policy an obstacle to transparent and open dialogue. Effective communication can navigate the system of meanings that become environmental conflicts and often cause dialectical tension (Rice, 2022). Integrating traditional local knowledge into environmental evaluation is still problematic due to knowledge mismatches due to colonization and failure to implement best practices (Eckert et al., 2020). Indigenous peoples often receive neglect from key decision-making centers, resulting in procedural injustices. This neglect makes it challenging to dialogue and communicate the traditional local knowledge and perspectives they have (Solorio et al., 2023)

This research is necessary because it aims to understand the dynamics of environmental conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the government regarding the change in the status of the Nature Reserve to Mutis Timau National Park in order to gain recognition of the identity inherent in their living space and carry out environmental communication strategies that prioritize cultural empathy. Indigenous peoples' struggle for recognition is closely linked to their cultural identity and territorial rights. Establishing national parks often disrupts traditional

governance and livelihood structures (Batiran et al., 2023). An effective environmental communication strategy should prioritize cultural empathy for traditional local cultural identities and beliefs and involve collaborative governance (De Pourcq et al., 2017). Integrating Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems with a scientific approach can lead to new insights and effective conservation outcomes. Strong collaboration and support from governments and international bodies are urgently needed (Niigaaniin & MacNeill, 2022).

This research is focused on the respect of indigenous communities for their identity and worldview regarding sacred territories. However, they are rarely involved in research or invited for dialogue by the government in environmental decision-making.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Study Design

This research design uses a qualitative method of case studies with a constructivist paradigm. Qualitative research in the constructivist paradigm is focused on understanding how individuals construct meaning from their experiences. This study takes from the narrative perspective of the Atoni Pah Meto traditional leader, which is sifted through a single case and focuses on only one phenomenon. The main focus of this study is directly at the core of the problem.

Using various data sources, case studies explore in-depth cases in a specific reality (Ko, 2020). The constructivist paradigm emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and the construction of shared knowledge between researchers and participants. Constructivist research refers to the belief that reality is subjective and is built through social interaction and experience (Burns et al., 2022; McLeod, 2017). In construction research, co-construction is built in the interaction between the researcher and the researched object and builds collaboration as shared knowledge (Bogdanovic et al., 2012)

Explanatory case studies are used in this study to explain a relationship between two or more variables, where there is a relationship between one variable and another. Explanatory case studies aim to identify and explain causal relationships between variables, which involves understanding which causes produce which effects in a given context (Martinson & O'Brien, 2015). Rigorous data collection and analysis methods to ensure the validity and reliability of findings often require various methods and levels of analysis to obtain the complexity of the phenomenon being studied (Barrett & Sutrisna, 2009; Cepeda & Martin, 2005).

### 2.2. Participant

The key informants involved in the study were selected using a purposive sampling technique, where participants were selected based on their ability to provide in-depth and relevant information per the research objectives and questions. The key informants were selected from indigenous stakeholders from various clans in North Central Timor, especially in the Mount Mutis area, which is the Mutis Timau National Park area. Indigenous stakeholders not involved in environmental decisions are essential data resources, such as people with expertise, experience, or roles relevant to the topic and the research objectives and questions. The selection of participants was carried out very carefully, and local cultural ethics were strictly followed when collecting data. This research also ensures ethical practices in selecting participants to maintain the integrity and validity of the research. The key informant in question can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: List of Informant

Key Informant	Age	Status
Informant-1	76	Custom Leader
Informant-2	76	Custom Leader
Informant-3	71	Custom Leader
Informant-4	72	Custom Leader
Informant-5	70	Custom Leader

### 2.3. Data collection and analysis

The data collection technique in this study is carried out through in-depth interviews and observational observations to collect complete and detailed information. These methods effectively explore complex phenomena in the field, understand participant perspectives, and generate deep insights. Although the research interview uses a structured element guide, the flexibility to adjust according to the context or response of the respondents is more important, mainly so that the key informants feel comfortable during the interview so that they can explore sensitive issues where participants find it difficult to divide them into groups. Interviewing key informants takes enough time and skills (Williamson, 2018). However, in-depth interviews have an advantage, allowing for exploring individual experiences and perspectives (Marvasti, 2009).

Meanwhile, researchers conduct direct observation, directly observing phenomena, behaviors, or scenarios in the field to understand them in detail. Direct observation allows researchers to understand behavior and events according to reality. In addition, live observation offers rich data (McKenzie & Van Der Mars, 2015). Direct observation can reveal unique, taboo, and rare phenomena that other methods may miss (Fix et al., 2022). Data triangulation is carried out in this study by using various data sources, methods, or theories to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. Data triangulation is the main characteristic of case study research, so the study is credible by providing a thick, rich, and contextual description (Smith, 2018). Triangulation helps validate findings by comparing different types of data analysis

## 3. Results

For centuries, indigenous peoples around the Mount Mutis area depended on nature for their livelihoods, and they identified themselves as the guardians of the Mount Mutis area and preserved the spring water sources. High respect for nature implies the enactment of a period of taboos and prohibitions in certain months after going through rituals led by traditional stakeholders so that people do not cut down trees, cut down branches and uproot reeds as a form of empathy for nature to rest from human disturbances and let nature recover itself. Trees that have been cut down or where the land is considered critical will immediately carry out reforestation. For large trees and certain trees in the felling process, they first perform sacred rituals as a tribute to the spirits that reside. The livestock grazed in the forests, and the Mount Mutis area is not disturbed. Forest honey is seen as communal property. Poaching is prohibited in customary law so violations will receive social and customary sanctions. Indigenous peoples reject the change of the function of the Mutis Timau Nature Reserve to a National Park, affirming the meaning of Mutis Timau as a source of their identity through sacred rituals, rejection of the national park and peaceful demonstrations to the government, and direct rejection in the socialization of the Decree of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry which is considered to have uprooted their identity and cultural roots from the Mutis Timau Area.

### 3.1. Place as a source of identity

The existence of clans in this area is inseparable from the story of an oral tradition passed down from generation to generation about the massive migration of the Atoni Pah Meto tribe from Belu, West Timor, brought by Emperor Sonba'i. The government system is based on the traditional royal system. During colonial rule, the royal system was still accommodated as an extension of power, with a system of districts and sub-districts led by the royal family and a hereditary brotherly relationship. This government based on the feudalism system is highly respected by people with the status of ordinary people. Every change of tribe will establish a ritual place as a marker of identity and become the forerunner of the birth of a village. By creating ritual sites, migrating communities build new settlements that reflect the cultural heritage instilled by their ancestors in order to provide a sense of belonging and identity (Domínguez, 2020).

*"Our ancestors established a ritual place as a source of identity so that we do not lose our identity, become our reliance on knowing the history of our clan so that we remain connected to the place of our ancestors, who established the village where we live in the Mount Mutis area" (Informant -4).*

The existence of sacred ritual places of various clans in Mutis is seen by informants integrated with the area and building a sense of place with the community. The informant's statement conveys ecological, historical, cultural, and spiritual values that are important to them regarding the musical area. Indigenous peoples often connect spiritually with their environment and consider themselves protectors who need protection to defend their cultural values and traditions (Thaker, 2021). Therefore, indigenous stakeholders who feel uninvolved in environmental decisions feel separated from their identity when the place is transformed into a national park. Although a zoning system is offered for spiritual and cultural spaces, for the informant of the customary stakeholders, the entire area is seen as sacred and inseparable. Sacred forests and sacred sites with cultural value are closely related to the identity and worldview of indigenous peoples, and culturally meaningful communication is important (Dutta, 2020). Ensuring equitable involvement in the design of environmental messaging is essential for communication to align with the purpose in which the community is placed as the center of intervention (Boyd & Furgal, 2019). (Shiferaw et al., 2023)(Shiferaw et al., 2023)

### 3.2. Access Restrictions

Restrictions on entry into the Mount Mutis area are restricted to respect and maintain the sanctity of the mountain they consider to be the "mother" — a symbol of life, a source of livelihood, and a deep connection to their cultural and spiritual identity. Informant-3 is one of the key players in entering this area from the North Central Timor region through Noepesu Village, which is trusted by the local community and is traditionally legitimized to lead traditional rituals first. The restrictions also aim to protect sacred ritual sites from external disturbances or activities that can desecrate cultural practices important to those who blend nature conservation, worldview, identity cultural defense, and spiritual values.

*"I do not want anyone to get hurt in the Mutis area, so we have to do a ritual first. It is not allowed to enter this area carelessly. The customs of manners enter the sacred area" (Informant -3)*

Access restrictions allow traditional stakeholders and local communities to maintain the depth of spiritual and cultural meaning regarding the Mount Mutis area. They will warn visitors to obey customary restrictions not to damage or disturb trees and animals. Visitors are also prohibited from committing moral violations, including being polite to nature and sesame. Sacred areas are often seen as natural centers for spiritual and psychological fulfillment. Therefore, these places must always be closely guarded (Allison, 2015; Nyangila, 2012; Samakov & Berkes, 2016). In addition, local communities provide access restrictions, especially when applying customary laws to protect spiritual practices and identities. Thus, the sanctity of the place will always be maintained, and they can continue their spiritual practice without interruption (Allison, 2015; Chami, 2021; Ormsby, 2013). In Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal, the influx of immigrants or tourists entering the sacred area led to a severance of their connection with the worldview and ritual practices due to the growth of tourism (Mu et al., 2019).

### 3.3. Emotional connectivity with nature

Indigenous peoples build emotional bonds with nature and integrate their lives with the surrounding environment, mainly because in Mount Mutis and the National Park area, many ritual places are markers of identity and places of clan establishment. The informant said that their history and identity will be blurred if it becomes a national park or a natural tourism park. Mainly, it is about their worldview and identity that has become integrated with the region. The emotional bond with nature is mainly because the elements in nature are part of their inseparable identity (Pandey & Kumari, 2024).

A sense of connection with nature implies a deep appreciation of the nature they inhabit that they protect and protect. They see Mutis Timau as an extension of the community's identity and as a unit in life. Mini-style protection practices are carried out by them selflessly and are carried out as sacred worship to the Ancestors, Nature, and the Creator. For the Atoni Pah Meto tribe, destroying nature is seen as a great sin because it destroys His creation, which has been entrusted to humans to take care of it. The local community sees Rituals in sacred places in the Mutis Timau area as a way to connect a sense of unity with nature and strengthen a sense of identity.

In addition, rituals in nature can strengthen people's bonds with their land to find spiritual meaning (Cogos et al., 2017).

### *3.4. Kinship and Nature Networks*

Identity is never singular but is always intertwined with the collective identity and the surrounding natural environment. In the context of collective identity, relationships between individuals in society are built through a complex network of kinship systems. The kinship system in the Atoni Pah Meto society forms a social structure and is the fundamental foundation that defines who they are, how they interact with others, and their surrounding nature. Kinship is essential in bringing communities together and providing a system for social interaction as well as building a sense of identity (McConvell et al., 2013). The identity of the clans in the Atoni Pah Meto community is one of the elements that connect the collective identity. Identity and clan markers and collective identities are marked through sacred sites owned by each clan and given a clan name. These sacred sites function not only as clan symbols but also as historical markers, spiritual values adhered to, and the relationship of each clan with its ancestors. Sacred sites in the Mutis Timau area illustrate the close connection between people, culture, and the natural environment with an irreplaceable spirit, history, and value. The kinship dimension has integrated spiritual and ecological values.

*"Our identity has always been one with nature; through marriage, we become a society and unite the sacred sites in Mutis that we maintain together" (Informant-2)*

In the context of the kinship of the Atoni Pah Meto community, the informant's statement shows that kinship has a significant influence on the preservation of the Mutis Timor area. In the context of kinship relations with nature, in some Indigenous peoples, kinship networks play a role in the management of their natural resources (Ziker, 2006)

### *3.5. Struggle through identity narratives*

The sacred ritual is a way for the traditional leaders of various clans to affirm their rejection of the Indonesian government's decision to inaugurate Mutis Timau as a national park. They believe communication with nature through rituals in the Mount Mutis area expresses sadness and disappointment separated from the source of their identity and worldview. The community carried out demonstrations and was supported by various elements of student organizations and non-governmental organizations. Traditional leaders continue to call for a peaceful path while giving open speeches about the urgency of Mutis Timau as a garden of spiritual and cultural identity, and they reject the global concept imposed on the region.

Indigenous peoples' resistance to using identity narratives is a way of using communication to express, protect, and fight for their rights, which is different from the general approach to communication because meta-communication events often appear in it. Indigenous narratives often reveal contradictions in traditional understandings of identity and are often contrary to narratives imposed from outside cultures (Guntarik, 2009). Cultural and epistemological differences are problems faced by Indigenous stakeholders in particular and Indigenous peoples in general, so the global concept of national parks is difficult to understand and is seen as uprooting from the roots of their identity that have been embedded since their ancestors. Indigenous peoples have a holistic approach to their territory that is integrated with life where mutual relationships are carried out with respect and have become their cultural identity and traditions (Brondízio et al., 2021; Menzies et al., 2024)

With ecological care practices based on indigenous knowledge, all informants said that their ways of protecting the Mutis Timau area have maintained their sustainability over time. This context shows that community ecological knowledge includes nature conservation and encourages ecological regeneration resilience (Akaliyev et al., 2024; Huambachano & Cooper, 2021). The practices of customary knowledge with traditional rituals and local wisdom in treating nature have been done by imitating what their ancestors have done, and the informant said that there will be ancestral punishment and natural punishment if they destroy the nature that has been inherited, including the loss of water sources and plants they will fail. These practices are at odds with the human-

centered Western approach, where nature is separate from humans and embraced by the global environment (Akaliyev et al., 2024; Huambachano & Cooper, 2021)

#### 4. Discussion

In the context of conservation and planning of National Parks, communication can be implemented by applying cultural sensitivity by environmental policy stakeholders. Ethics guides environmental communication as an operational framework where there is respect for the worldview and cultural identity of the local community. Researchers should adopt ethical practices that respect the opinions of Indigenous peoples and ensure accurate representation in environmental communication (Banerjee & Sowards, 2022).

Involving Indigenous stakeholders and communities in the research, planning, and decision-making stages is a way to accommodate voices previously not understood by the government. Through transparent communication, environmental decisions are more likely to gain the support of indigenous peoples. Accommodating local spiritual values, traditions, and cultures will be easier to get community support and participation (Ma et al., 2023; Queiros, 2023; Siburian et al., 2024) As a case comparison, a model of ways to engage indigenous peoples through good environmental communication strategies can be seen in the Cordillera Azul National Park, Peru, where local communities actively participate despite previously limiting community involvement in decision-making (Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2010). However, ethical, environmental communication and transparent decision-making are foundations for building trust and cooperation. (Benetti & Langemeyer, 2021; Moswete et al., 2012).

Dealing with indigenous peoples requires cultural sensitivity and understanding of the worldview of the environment from which their identity is sourced, and this must be done with care. Local narratives must be accommodated to harmonize the relevance between conservation programs and local culture with conservation messages. This is important, especially in overcoming cultural barriers and negative perceptions; thus, conservation is about things that can be cooperated and not clash. The case of Khao Yai National Park in Thailand, where local traditions and cultures reinforce each other with national parks and local culture is a reference (Yng & Kaoteera, 2021). Justice is needed to accommodate local and global perspectives that often clash and cause conflicts, as in the Mutis Timau National Park case. Policies that include various local cultural values are more hopeful for the community to be accepted and increase participation in conservation (Infield & Mugisha, 2018; Michaelidou & Decker, 2005).

Involving Indigenous leaders and local community leaders from various clans equally becomes a data resource in environmental research and decision-making, ensuring inclusivity in the decision-making process. Accommodating all voices within Indigenous communities, rather than selectively involving specific individuals, promotes justice and transparency (Bonatti et al., 2023; Mistry et al., 2023). Their active participation strengthens community trust and commitment to the success of conservation initiatives, thereby creating a solid foundation for sustainable outcomes that are in harmony with cultural values. Effective communication with Indigenous leaders and community leaders strengthens understanding and harmonious collaboration. Through open dialogue and an inclusive communication approach, the goals and benefits of the program are conveyed transparently while listening to the community's aspirations, concerns, and suspicions. Developing a communication strategy that involves all parties can increase social equity and align with local priorities (Rice, 2022). Therefore, for national park policymakers, it is essential to create a space for open dialogue with indigenous leaders in the Mutis Timau area on an equal footing and with equitable information by not only selecting certain people to be involved in environmental decision-making. This approach allows both parties to listen to each other, understand each other's perspectives, and find solutions together. Regular meetings and transparent communication will help reduce tension. Learning from previous cases, various studies have shown that Indigenous people-led conservation can improve conservation outcomes (Emini et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2023; Moola et al., 2024; Ungar & Strand, 2012; von der Porten et al., 2019).

This research highlights that the Mutis Timau area is a source of identity that contains the worldview and local spiritual beliefs of the Atoni Pah Meto, indigenous people and was then decided to become a national park by the government. The findings of this study reveal the importance of space for better design of environmental policies,



mainly guided by collaborative action in environmental decisions by accommodating the voices of Indigenous leaders or community leaders from various clans fairly. Environmental communication with respect for culture and identity recognition will increase collaboration and support the effectiveness of nature conservation and socio-cultural sustainability. Meanwhile, this contribution supports the importance of inclusion-based communication and collaboration in managing national parks, which integrate indigenous values as an integral part of the sustainability strategy.

The theoretical implications of this research make an important contribution in the context of communication science, especially in the study of environmental communication. This research emphasizes that the management of conservation areas, especially the establishment of national parks, must be community-based and integrate local cultural identities through inclusive, fair, ethical, and culturally sensitive communication. Meanwhile, the practical implications of this study provide guidelines for national park area managers and environmental policymakers to actively involve Indigenous stakeholders from various clans and layers in natural resource management and ensure that cultural and environmental preservation will occur justly. A collaboration-based approach and transparent dialogue can be applied in more inclusive and adaptive regional management policies.

This study involves informants from traditional leaders in the Mutis Timau area of North Central Timor Regency and so has not provided another complete picture of the traditional leaders of South Central Timor Regency.

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# Regency Minimum Wage Increase Policy and Investment Growth in Sidoarjo Regency

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## Abstract

Government policies related to the increase in minimum wages have been regulated in Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and Government Regulation Number 36 of 2021 concerning Wages. This study aims to explain the extent of the influence of the increase in the regency minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, and the value of production on the value of investment in Sidoarjo Regency. This explanatory quantitative research uses saturated samples. The primary data of this study were obtained from four Regional Apparatus Organizations of Sidoarjo Regency, namely: Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Office; Industry and Trade Office; Manpower Office, and the Central Bureau of Statistics. The primary data were the value of the regency minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, the value of production, and the value of investment from 2008-2022. The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis. The value of the regency minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, and the value of production together affect the increase in investment in Sidoarjo Regency with an R coefficient of 93.3%. The most influential factor in increasing investment in Sidoarjo Regency is the value of the regency minimum wage and the number of workers. This research shows that there is a difference with previous studies that the increase in investment occurs due to an increase in the regency minimum wage and the number of qualified workers.

**Keywords:** Regency Minimum Wage Policy, Production Value, Labor Force, Investment Value

## 1. Introduction

Wages are the rights of workers or laborers received and stated in the form of money including allowances for workers and families as compensation from employers that are determined and permitted based on work agreements, agreements, or regulations (Labor Law No.13 of 2003, 2003). The reality in the field regarding workers' wages in Indonesia still discusses many problems because of the conflicting interests between workers and employers (Damanik & Zalukhu, 2021). The struggle of workers to get a decent living is still ongoing almost every year (Rahma et al., 2022). This demand is not without reason, the rising price of basic necessities is the main trigger for the demand for wage increases (Lestari, 2022; Mahendra, 2017).

Disputes that arise between workers and employers are caused by salaries/wages given by the company not being in accordance with the Provincial Minimum Wage (UMP), Regency/City Minimum Wage (UMK), and Sectoral Minimum Wage (UMS) policies (Santoso & Djastuti, 2011). The workforce considers that the wages received are

not balanced with the work done. This makes the workforce go on strike because there is no harmony of will between the workforce and the employer (Sugiyanto, 2021). The demand for an increase in the minimum wage is actually a dilemma for companies. If workers ask for higher wages, employers will inevitably increase the price of products, both goods and services. This affects trade competition in a free market. Trade competition certainly pays attention to the value of goods and their quality according to the cheapest price.

Investors will choose a country where they invest with a low minimum wage rather than a high minimum wage. An example is the regency minimum wage in Laos and Indonesia. Laos is a country with a lower minimum wage than Indonesia. Because the regency minimum wage in Laos is lower than in Indonesia, investors will prefer Laos as their investment location, because they will take into account the costs incurred for the production process. If workers continue to demonstrate en masse for an increase in the minimum wage and the government sets it from afar higher than the standard, investors will certainly be reluctant to invest in Indonesia and choose to invest in other countries. If the minimum wage applied by the Indonesian government does not take into account the company's ability, many companies will go bankrupt because they are unable to pay the minimum wage for workers. The possible impact is that many companies will go bankrupt or go bankrupt and workers or laborers will be laid off (M. B. K. Dewi, 2019). This condition certainly cannot be used as an excuse for companies to unilaterally terminate employment (PHK) which is detrimental to workers. Several studies have shown that the increase in regency/city minimum wages is directly proportional to the increase in investment in a region (Frederica & Juwita, 2014). Likewise, the number of workers (Hartono et al., 2018), the number of business units and production value (Julianto & Suparno, 2016) contribute to increasing investment in regency/city.

The government policy regarding the increase in the Minimum Wage has been regulated in Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation and Government Regulation Number 36 of 2021 concerning Wages. The wage policy in Sidoarjo Regency is regulated in Regional Regulation Number 16 of 2012 concerning Protection of Workers/Laborers in the Sidoarjo Regency Area. The implementation of the labor wage policy so far has still been detrimental to workers (Ahmaddien & Sa'dia, 2020; Iswaningsih et al., 2021; Kartikasari & Fauzi, 2021; Nasihuddin et al., 2013; Yanti & Cahyani, 2020; Zabarullah, 2021). Among them, several companies do not provide definite regulations regarding overtime pay, do not provide pay slips and do not explain the calculation of overtime wages received, and do not provide rest time or food and drink supplies during overtime. In addition to formulating policies, the government must pay attention to good investment climate conditions, maintaining economic stability, and strategies to achieve high economic growth and investment. This is intended so that neither workers nor companies are disadvantaged.

Sidoarjo is a regency whose economy is mostly engaged in the industrial sector. The number of large and medium industries in Sidoarjo Regency in 2021 was 1.106 (Statistik, 2021). Geographically, Sidoarjo is a strategic regency and is located close to Surabaya as the capital of East Java which can be beneficial for industrial growth. This condition can be utilized by the Sidoarjo regional government to attract and mobilize a number of investors to invest, because improving the investment climate is one of the milestones of the development strategy. Investment in Sidoarjo Regency has always increased by more than 5% each year (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). In 2020, investment increased by less than 2% and did not increase in 2021. Investment conditions in Sidoarjo Regency have decreased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has led to the phenomenon of large-scale Termination of Employment (PHK) in Sidoarjo Regency. At least 7.232 employees of companies (factories) in Sidoarjo were laid off or experienced Termination of Employment (PHK). Based on data from the Manpower Office (Disnaker) of the Sidoarjo Regency Government, there are 16 companies that have carried out Termination of Employment (PHK) and laid off thousands of their employees (Momentum, 2020). This mass layoff triggered a demonstration movement, around 450 workers who are members of the Indonesian Muslim Labor Union (Sarbumusi) of Sidoarjo Regency held a demonstration in front of the Grahadi State Building (Dwi, 2022).

The decline in investment in Sidoarjo Regency was further exacerbated by the relocation of eleven companies from Sidoarjo at the end of 2020. Most of these companies are labor-intensive companies. The biggest reason for the relocation of several companies from Sidoarjo Regency was the high regency minimum wage (UMK) (Supriyatno, 2020). This condition continued until 2021. There were nineteen companies that expanded to other areas, while in Sidoarjo Regency only their offices remained. In the same year, there were 94 medium to small

companies that moved. The reason was also mostly due to the high minimum wage (UMK) of Sidoarjo Regency (Ramadan, 2021).

Based on the review above, this study aims to explain the extent to which the increase in the regency minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, and production value affect the investment value in Sidoarjo Regency. This study is important to discuss because the regency minimum wage is always an interesting topic every year. The regency minimum wage is the reason why labor groups always hold demonstrations every year and is often used as political promises in campaigns. The regency minimum wage problem is a labor dynamic in every region as is the case in Sidoarjo Regency. There are differences in employee salary systems in Sidoarjo Regency between one company and another even though they have been regulated in the Job Creation Law and its derivatives related to the regency minimum wage. The company unilaterally laid off workers who held demonstrations demanding an increase in the regency minimum wage. This shows that workers are considered as if they do not need protection.

The hypothesis of this study is first, there is an influence of the regency/city minimum wage on the investment value in Sidoarjo Regency. Second, there is an influence of the number of workers on the investment value in Sidoarjo Regency. Third, there is an influence of the number of business units on the investment value of Sidoarjo Regency. Fourth, there is an influence of production value on the investment value of Sidoarjo Regency. Fifth, there is an impact of the regency /city minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, and production value together and partially on the investment value of Sidoarjo Regency.

## 2. Method

Research on Policy Analysis of Increase in Regency Minimum Wage (UMK) and Investment Growth in Sidoarjo Regency in 2022 is included in explanatory quantitative research. Explanatory quantitative research is a type of research that measures the influence or impact of increases in Regency Minimum Wage (UMK), Labor, Business Units, and Production on investment growth. The primary data of this study is in the form of time series data (sequential) from 2013-2021. Data was obtained from four Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) in Sidoarjo Regency, namely the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Office; Industry and Trade Office; Manpower Office, and the Central Statistics Agency of Sidoarjo Regency. The primary data is related to the variables used in this study, namely the Regency Minimum Wage (X1), Labor (X2), Business Units (X3), and Production (X4) as independent variables or free variables. The dependent variable of this study is the investment value (Y).

The Regency Minimum Wage variable (X1) refers to the Regency/City wage standard from 2008-2022 based on the Decree of the Governor of East Java concerning the Regency/City Minimum Wage. The Labor variable (X2) is seen from the number of workers in 2010-2021 obtained through data from Central Statistics Agency of Sidoarjo Regency and the Industry and Trade Service. Business Unit (X3) is seen from the development of business units in Sidoarjo Regency from year to year since 2010-2021. The data was obtained from the Industry and Trade Service. Production Value (X4) is seen from the development of production value in Sidoarjo Regency from year to year since 2010-2021. The data was obtained from the Industry and Trade Service. The dependent variable of this study is investment value (Y). Investment value is seen from the development of investment value in Sidoarjo Regency from year to year since 2010-2021. The data was obtained from the Industry and Trade Service. Data normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z shows normal data distribution.

Table 1: Data normality test

Model	Asymp. Sig. Value (2-tailed)	Significance Level	Information
Regency Minimum Wage	0.032	<0.05	Abnormal
Investment Value	0.737	>0.05	Normal
Business Unit	1,000	>0.05	Normal
Labor	0.885	>0.05	Normal
Production Value	0.070	>0.05	Normal

Source: Processed Results, 2023



Table 1 shows the results of the regency minimum wage data normality test with a significance value of  $\alpha 0.032 < 0.05$ , which means it is not normally distributed. The investment value has a significance value of  $\alpha 0.737 > 0.05$ , which means the data is normally distributed. The significance value of  $\alpha$  for the business unit variable is  $1,000 > 0.05$ , indicating normal data. The labor variable is also normally distributed with a significance value of  $\alpha 0.885 > 0.05$ . The production value is normally distributed with a significance value of  $\alpha 0.070 > 0.05$ . Although Table 1 contains variables that are not normal, regression tests on all of these variables can still be carried out. The results of the multiple regression analysis test on data normality also show a normal data distribution. This is indicated by a plot that is evenly spread from left to right and from bottom to top. Based on the results of the autocorrelation test of 1,666. This value is included in the category of no autocorrelation (Table 3).

There are two types of data analysis in this study, namely univariate and multivariate with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for The Social Sciences) version 25. Univariate analysis uses descriptive statistics, namely the presentation of numbers in the form of tables, graphs, or diagrams. Multivariate analysis of this study uses multiple linear regression. In simple terms, the multiple regression equation model is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4$$

Where: Y = dependent variable (investment value)

$\alpha$  = Constant

$\beta$  = Regression coefficient

X1 = each regency minimum wage value

X2 = number of workers

X3 = number of business units

X4 = production value

### 3. Results

The high level of economic growth is indicated by the high value of GRDP. A high GRDP value indicates that the activity of producing goods and services in a region is high. This will affect the absorption of labor that carries out production activities. The following is the GRDP data for Sidoarjo Regency at Current Prices for 2012-2021.

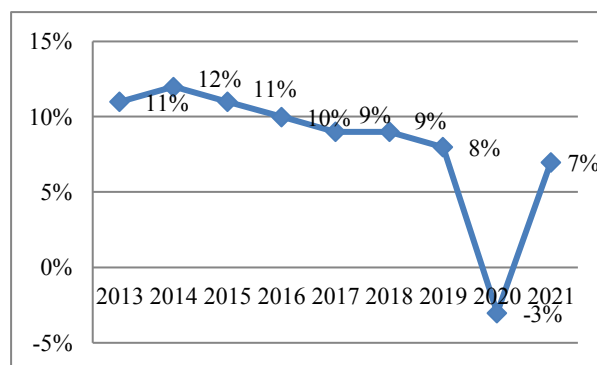


Figure 1: Growth of Gross Regional Domestic Product Based on Current Prices of Sidoarjo Regency 2013-2021

Source: Central Statistics Agency of Sidoarjo Regency, 2023 (processed)

Figure 1 shows that the Gross Regional Domestic Product at Current Prices of Sidoarjo Regency in the period 2013 to 2021 tended to decline. The highest growth occurred in 2014, which was 12%; and the lowest growth was in 2020 at -3%. The sharp decline that occurred in 2020 was the result of the Covid-19 pandemic which paralyzed economic activities. In addition to the ADHB GRDP, economic growth can also be viewed from the Gross Regional Domestic Product at Constant Prices (GRDP ADHK). The following is the GRDP data for Sidoarjo Regency at Constant Prices for 2012-2021.

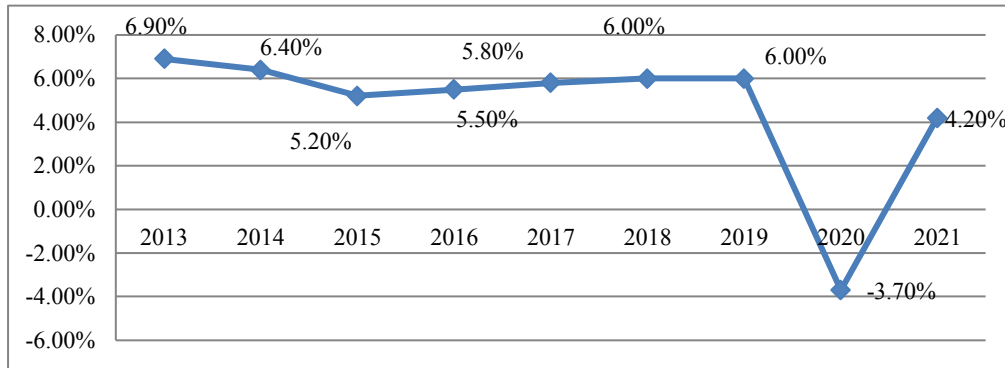


Figure 2: Growth of Gross Regional Domestic Product at Constant Prices of Sidoarjo Regency 2013-2021

Source: Central Statistics Agency of Sidoarjo Regency, 2023 (processed)

Figure 2 shows that the Gross Regional Domestic Product at Constant Prices of Sidoarjo Regency in the period 2013 to 2021 tends to increase. The highest growth in the Gross Regional Domestic Product at Constant Prices 2010 (GRDP ADHK 2010) of Sidoarjo Regency occurred in 2013, which was 6.9%; and the lowest growth was in 2020 with a value of -3.7%. This is inseparable from the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the economy. Economic growth can be influenced by the minimum wage in force in a regency/city area. The following is data on the Regency/City Minimum Wage (UMK) of Sidoarjo Regency.

Table 2: Regency/City Minimum Wage (UMK) in Sidoarjo Regency 2009-2022

Year	Regency Minimum Wage Value (Rupiah)	Growth
2008	743.500	-
2009	955.000	28%
2010	1.005.000	5%
2011	1.107.000	10%
2012	1.252.000	13%
2013	1.720.000	37%
2014	2.190.000	27%
2015	2.705.000	24%
2016	3.040.000	12%
2017	3.290.800	8%
2018	3.577.428,68	9%
2019	3.864.686,20	8%
2020	4.193.581,85	9%
2021	4.293.581,85	2%
2022	4.368.581,85	2%

Source: Decree of the Governor of East Java 2007-2021 (processed)

Table 2 shows that the highest regency minimum wage growth occurred in 2013 at 37 percent (IDR 448.000) from the previous IDR 1.252.000 to IDR 1.720.000. The lowest growth occurred in 2021 and 2022 with a value of 2%. This condition is the result of the Covid-19 pandemic which has had an impact on various business sectors. The following is data on the growth in the number of business units in Sidoarjo Regency from 2011-2021.

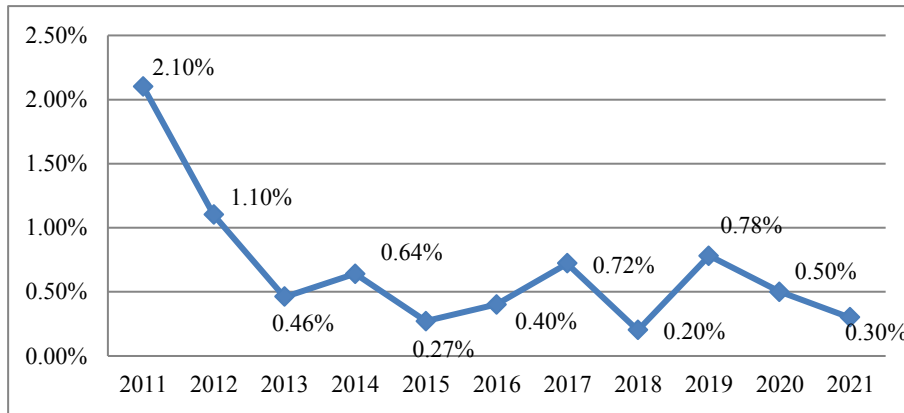


Figure 3: Growth in the Number of Business Units in Sidoarjo Regency 2011-2021

Source: Department of Industry and Trade, 2023 (processed)

Figure 3 shows that the highest growth in the number of business units in Sidoarjo Regency occurred in 2011, which was 2.1%; and the lowest growth was in 2018 with a value of 0.2%. Industrial growth can also be seen from the number of workers. The following is the workforce data for Sidoarjo Regency for 2010-2021.

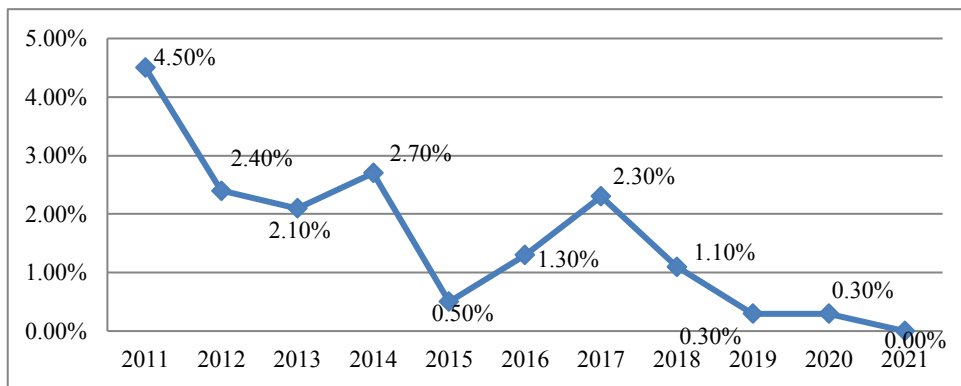


Figure 4: Growth in the Number of Workers in Sidoarjo Regency 2011-2021

Source: Department of Industry and Trade, 2023 (processed)

Figure 4 shows that the number of workers in Sidoarjo Regency in 2011-2021 tends to fluctuate. The highest growth occurred in 2011, which was 4.5%; and the lowest growth was in 2021 with a value of 0%. Industrial growth can also be seen from the industrial value. The following is data on the production value of Sidoarjo Regency 2010-2021.

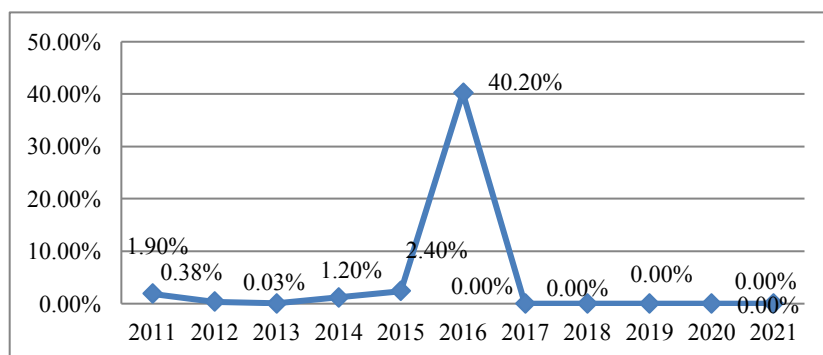


Figure 5: Growth in Production Value of Sidoarjo Regency 2011-2021

Source: Department of Industry and Trade, 2023 (processed)

Based on Figure 5, it can be seen that the highest growth in the production value of small, medium, and large industries in Sidoarjo Regency occurred in 2016, which was 40.2%; and the lowest growth occurred from 2013 with a value of 0.03%. From 2017 to 2021, the production value did not experience growth. Industrial growth can also be seen from the investment value. The investment value data for Sidoarjo Regency can be shown in the following figure.

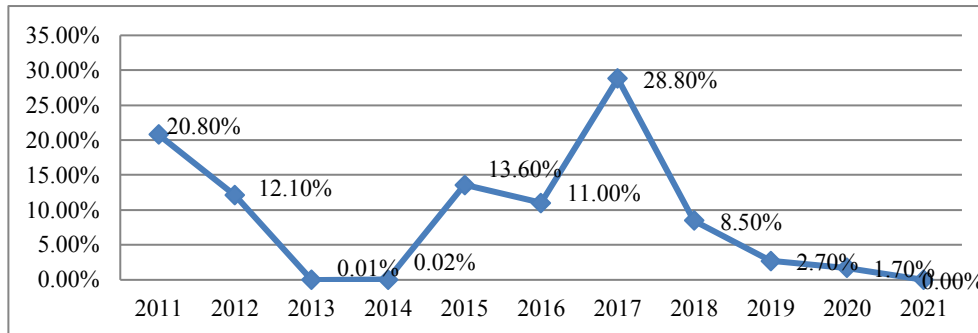


Figure 6: Investment Value Growth in Sidoarjo Regency 2011-2021

Source: Department of Industry and Trade, 2023 (processed)

Figure 6 shows that the highest growth in the investment value of small, medium, and large industries in Sidoarjo Regency occurred in 2017, which was 28.8%; and the lowest growth was in 2013 with a value of 0.01%. In 2021, the investment value did not experience growth. This is inseparable from the Covid-19 pandemic which has had an impact on various economic activities.

#### 4. Discussion

The hypotheses in this study include: there is an impact of the regency/city minimum wage on investment value in Sidoarjo Regency (H1); there is an impact of the number of workers on investment value in Sidoarjo Regency (H2); there is an impact of the number of business units on investment value in Sidoarjo Regency (H3); there is an impact of production value on investment value in Sidoarjo Regency (H4); there is an impact of the regency/city minimum wage, number of workers, number of business units, and production value (H5) together and partially on investment value in Sidoarjo Regency.

To measure whether the hypothesis is accepted or not, the criteria used are as follows:

1. H0: if the probability of the calculated result  $> (0.05)$  then H0 is accepted. This means that the working hypothesis is rejected.
2. H1-H5: if the probability of the calculated result  $< (0.05)$ , then H0 is rejected. This means that the working hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3 shows that regency minimum wage has an effect on investment value with a significance of t count of 0.006 smaller than the significance of  $\alpha (0.05)$ . This means that the working hypothesis stating that regency minimum Wage has an effect on investment value can be accepted. Hypothesis 2 states that the number of workers having an effect on investment value can be accepted with a significance of t count of 0.000 smaller than the significance of  $\alpha (0.05)$ . Hypothesis 3 states that the number of business units has an effect on investment value cannot be accepted. This is because the significance level of t count of 0.866 is greater than the significance of  $\alpha (0.05)$ . Because the number of business units does not affect investment value, it is removed from model 3 using the backward method. Hypothesis 4 states that the production value has an effect on investment value cannot be accepted. This is because the significance level of t count of 0.328 is greater than the significance of  $\alpha (0.05)$ . Because the production value does not affect investment value, it is removed from model 3 using the backward method.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-3.702E12	8.1336E 1		-4.441	.002
2	Regency Minimum Wage	882.515	244.223	.403	3.614	.006
3	Number of workers	3.085E7	5345135.343	.643	5.771	.000
4	Number of business units	-1.035E8	5.904E8	-.090	-.175	.866
5	Production value	431.505	410.832	.182	1.050	.328
Description N: 17217 R: 0.972 R-Square: 0.945 Adjusted R Square: 0.933 F: 77.197 Df: 11 Sig F: 0.000 Sig $\alpha$ : 0.05 Autocorrelation test: $1.55 < 1.666 < 2.46$ Y: $3.702 + 882.515 \text{ Regency Minimum Wage (X1)} + 30.850.000 \text{ Number of workers (X2)}$ a. Dependent Variable: investment value						

Source: Processed results, 2023

Based on Table 2 multiple linear regression can be explained below:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2$$

$$Y = -3.702 + 882.515 \text{ Regency Minimum Wage} + 30.850.000 \text{ Number of workers}$$

1. The constant of -3.702 states that if there is no Regency Minimum Wage (X1) and the number of workers (X2) then the investment value is IDR -3.702. This means that investment has decreased by IDR -3.702.
2. The value of the Regency Minimum Wage regression coefficient (X1) of IDR 882.515 means that if the Regency Minimum Wage value (X1) increases by one unit, it will increase the investment value (Y) by IDR 882.515 assuming the other variables are constant.
3. The regression coefficient value of the variable number of workers (X2) is Rp. 30.850.000, meaning that if the value of the variable number of workers (X2) increases by one unit, it will cause an increase in the investment value (Y) of Rp. 30.850.000, assuming the other variables are constant.

Hypothesis 5 states that the impact of regency/city minimum wages, number of workers, number of business units, and production value together affect the investment value can be accepted. This can be seen in Table 3 on the F Test showing that the calculated F result is 77.197 with a significance of 0.000 smaller than  $\alpha$  (0.05). Table 3 shows the coefficient of determination of the influence of regency minimum wage and the number of workers on the investment value. Based on Table 3, regency minimum wage and the number of workers on the investment value have an effect of 0.933 (Adjusted R Square). This means that the effect of regency minimum wage and the number of workers on the investment value is 93.3%. The remaining 6.7% is influenced by other variables outside the model used. The large value of Adjusted R Square 0.933 indicates a very strong degree of influence.

Table 4: Guidelines in the Degree of Interpretation of Correlation Coefficients

Value of Influence Power	
0,00-0,20	Very weak
0,21-0,40	Weak
0,41-0,70	Moderate
0,71-0,90	Strong
0,91-0,99	Very Strong
1	Perfect

Source: (Sugiyono, 2019)

The number of working age population in Sidoarjo Regency in August 2021 was recorded at 1.813.189 people. This number increased by 29.42 thousand when compared to the conditions in August 2022. Of the total working age population, 1.205.169 people were included in the workforce category and the rest were not in the workforce

category. This means that the number of people in the workforce category has increased by 0.58 percent. The increase in the number of the workforce in Sidoarjo Regency was not matched by an increase in the Labor Force Participation Rate (TPAK). The TPAK of Sidoarjo Regency in 2021 fell by 0.7 percentage points when compared to 2020. This makes the increase in the number of the workforce greater than the market's ability (read companies) to absorb the workforce in Sidoarjo Regency.

One of the reasons for the decline in the workforce absorbed is that many companies have laid off their employees or even some companies have stopped operating due to the impact of Covid-19. In addition to the impact of Covid-19, the decline in workforce absorption in Sidoarjo Regency is due to the inability of companies to provide appropriate standard wages to workers in Sidoarjo Regency. This is proven by the existence of 19 companies in 2021 that have expanded to other areas that have a lower regency/city minimum wage than the Sidoarjo Regency Minimum Wage (Supriyatno, 2020).

Several studies show that the presence of workers affects investment growth in regions or cities. The increase in workers followed by increased skills will benefit investors because it is profitable (Zainuddin, 2009). This is in line with research (Amalia & Nurhayati, 2022; R. F. Dewi et al., 2016; Menajang, 2019; Novriansyah, 2018) which states that every additional 1 worker will increase the investment value by IDR 30.850.000 per year. These results are in accordance with research stating that there is a correlation between minimum wages and labor absorption also presented in research (Indradewa & Natha, 2015; Lestiyasari, 2013; Syahputra, 2019; Wihastuti & Rahmatullah, 2018).

The Minimum Wage of Sidoarjo Regency has a high nominal value (top 10 among regions in Indonesia) (Kumpan.com, 2022). It is recorded that from 2008 to 2022, the regency minimum wage has increased every year (East Java Governor Regulation, 2007-2021). The highest increase occurred in 2013 by 37 percent compared to the minimum wage in the previous year (see Table 4.10 Regency/City Minimum Wages). Currently, the nominal minimum wage in Sidoarjo Regency has reached IDR 4.368.581,85 or an increase of 2 percent compared to 2021. Each increase in regency minimum wage can increase the investment value in a region. This is certainly in line with the results of the hypothesis test of this study which states that every increase of 1 rupiah can increase the investment value by IDR 882.515. The same thing was also found in research (Amalia & Nurhayati, 2022; Anggraini et al., 2020; Cubitt & Heap, 1999; Ernita et al., 2013; Frederica & Juwita, 2014; Geng et al., 2018; Groot et al., 2019; Jaya & Kholilah, 2020; Mentari & Yasa, 2016; R. E. Putra, 2012; Sely, 2019; Swanitarini, 2016; Syarief et al., 2015; Tegep et al., 2019; Yuliany & Nursini, 2022) that the increase in the regency minimum wage has an impact on increasing investment, so that every increase in the regency minimum wage, investment will also increase.

This is different from the studies conducted by (B. A. Putra, 2018) and (Anggrainy, 2012) which stated that the increase in the Minimum Wage had a negative impact on investment. Putra in his research in Lamongan Regency stated that the higher the regency minimum wage in Lamongan Regency, the lower the investment. The increase in the Minimum Wage in Lamongan caused the demand for money to increase which had an impact on increasing interest rates. Investment decreased because investors took interest rates into account. Investors will benefit if investment income is higher than interest costs. In addition, investors also take labor costs into account. If the minimum wage increases, the costs incurred will be higher. Meanwhile (Anggrainy, 2012) stated that the minimum wage is one of the production costs. If wages increase, it means that costs also increase. Low labor wages will increase investment because the company's production costs are low (Swara et al., 2013).

The difference in the results of this study with the two studies above is due to differences in regional conditions. This study took place in Sidoarjo Regency, which is known to have a large number of industries, amounting to 17.217 companies compared to Malang City (654) and Lamongan Regency (15.931). The economy of Malang City relies on the tourism sector and Lamongan Regency relies on maritime and fisheries.

The number of business units in Sidoarjo Regency also increases every year. Although the increase is not significant, the movement of changes in the number of business units in Sidoarjo Regency is in a stable condition.

This is evidenced by the number of large industries in Sidoarjo Regency which has not increased or decreased, which is 368 types of businesses.

Company growth only occurs in small and medium industrial businesses. The increase in the number of business units indicates that the population of working age has a great opportunity to get jobs. However, the increase in the number of business units is not balanced by an increase in production value in Sidoarjo Regency. Ideally, if the number of business units increases, the production value will also increase. From 2017 to 2021, it is known that there was no increase in production value in Sidoarjo Regency.

The lack of increasing production value can be a new problem. Considering that if the production value does not increase with the minimum wage value which increases every year, it will cause the company to expand more to other areas. Bankruptcy of medium and small industries cannot be avoided, causing the unemployment rate in Sidoarjo Regency to increase. If this condition continues to occur, people's welfare will decline, consumption power will decrease, and there will be no economic movement in Sidoarjo Regency which will reduce the attractiveness of investors. Therefore, to anticipate this incident, a strategy is needed that can be applied in the future. Prevention can be done by increasing investment in Sidoarjo Regency. Based on the results of calculations with 4 variables, namely the number of business units, the number of workers, production value and minimum wage, it is known that the number of workers and regency minimum wage have an influence on the investment value. The influence on investment can be assessed when the variables of the number of workers and minimum wage have a significance value that is smaller than 0.05 compared to the significance value of the indicator of the number of business units and production value greater than 0.05. The level of significance of regency minimum wage and the number of workers is smaller, then the influence can be accepted. While the variables of production value and number of business units cannot be accepted to influence the investment value. If based on the interpretation of the correlation coefficient, it can be seen that the influence of regency minimum wage and the number of workers on the investment value has a very strong influence, namely with a value of 93.3 percent and the remaining 6.7 percent is influenced by other variables.

The relationship between minimum wage, the number of workers and investment can affect the increase in production value. The increase in demand for capital goods will also increase the demand for the number of workers. The demand for the number of workers is what opens up the expansion of job opportunities in Sidoarjo Regency. The economic growth of Sidoarjo Regency is higher than that of East Java Province in the last five years, except during the Covid-19 pandemic. This shows that the minimum wage of Sidoarjo Regency meets the requirements for an increase. As Government Regulation Number 36 of 2021 explains, the minimum wage is set based on economic and employment conditions which include the balance of purchasing power, labor absorption rate, and median wages. Adjustments to the minimum wage value are made every year. The regency/city minimum wage (UMK) is set by the governor by fulfilling the requirement that the average economic growth of the regency/city over the last three years is higher than the average economic growth of the province. If the minimum wage calculation result is lower than the provincial minimum wage, it cannot be recommended to the governor. Law Number 25 of 2007 concerning Investment explains that investors are given equal treatment by the government, receive legal certainty and protection, ease of service and licensing, and the right to transfer and repatriate. This regulation also provides obligations and responsibilities to investors, namely prioritizing Indonesian citizens in meeting labor needs, conducting training in order to improve workforce competency, maintaining environmental sustainability, prioritizing worker welfare, safety and health.

Laws related to employment and investment at the central level are used as guidelines for local governments and companies in meeting labor needs. The current condition is that many companies do not pay attention to worker welfare. There are still many companies in Sidoarjo Regency that provide wages below the minimum wage provisions. Workers often do not get details of salaries and overtime. This shows that Law Number 11 of 2020 concerning Job Creation has not been fully implemented by employers. Article 88E Paragraph 2 of the Job Creation Law explains that employers are prohibited from paying wages lower than the minimum wage. Sidoarjo Regency Regional Regulation Number 16 of 2012 concerning Protection of Workers/Laborers explains that companies are required to provide wages with a minimum amount of the minimum wage to workers/laborers who have worked for less than one year. The wages of workers/laborers who have worked for one year or more must be above the

minimum wage provisions as stipulated in the company's wage structure and scale. Employers are required to provide a detailed list of wages to each worker along with the payment of wages. The position of workers becomes weak, companies give workers leave during the month of Ramadan, this is indicated so that companies do not have an obligation to provide Eid al-Fitr holiday allowances.

## 5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is, first, the value of the regency/city minimum wage (UMK), the number of workers, the number of business units, and the production value together influence the increase in investment in Sidoarjo Regency. The contribution of the regency/city minimum wage, the number of workers, the number of business units, and the production value to the increase in investment value in the regency/city is 93.3%. Second, the factors that have the most influence on the increase in investment in Sidoarjo Regency are the minimum wage value and the number of workers. Third, the contribution of the minimum wage value and the number of workers to the increase in investment value in Sidoarjo Regency is 40.3% and 64.3%, respectively. Theoretically, this study strengthens the Harrod-Domar theory which states that economic growth in a region is influenced by the amount of investment that comes in. The benchmark for increasing investment can be seen from the increase in minimum wage, the number of professional workers, production value, and the number of business units. The implication of this study is that the Sidoarjo Regency government needs to increase the minimum wage every year while still paying attention to the quality and productivity of the workforce. In order to support the increase in existing investment, the Sidoarjo Regency Government needs to expand employment opportunities and the number of workers. The Sidoarjo Government also needs to create regulations that benefit the business world, simplify the licensing bureaucracy in building new businesses, and take strict action against extortion. From the corporate side, entrepreneurs need to minimize the impact of the increase in minimum wages by viewing workers/laborers as human investments in production with wages as the medium. This is because wages are one of the factors that affect the welfare of workers/employees which can ultimately increase the productivity and performance of employees/laborers.

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# The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Customer Loyalty: Exploring the Mediating Effect of Service Quality

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## Abstract

Corporate social responsibility plays a critical role in enhancing a company's reputation, building customer trust, improving employee satisfaction, and contributing to sustainable development, all of which drive long-term business success. Customer loyalty is equally crucial, as it fosters repeat business, strengthens brand reputation, reduces marketing costs, and ensures long-term profitability and sustainable growth for a company. Service quality enhances customer loyalty by providing a superior and consistent experience, which builds trust, satisfaction, and emotional connection, encouraging customers to return and recommend the brand. This study explores the mediating role of service quality in the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty within Nepalese commercial banks. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 397 customers across various branches, employing a convenience sampling approach. The data were analyzed using Process Macro 4, with a 95% confidence interval and 5,000 bootstrap samples. The results indicate that service quality fully mediates the impact of CSR on customer loyalty, highlighting its critical role in fostering stronger customer relationships in the banking sector. This study demonstrates that enhancing service quality can help foster customer loyalty across various demographic groups. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of implementing CSR initiatives that focus on improving service quality to develop greater customer loyalty towards the organization.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Service Quality, Customer Loyalty, Customer Trust, Commercial Banks

## 1. Introduction

Business operations significantly impact the external environment, societal structures, and consumer behavior, shaping the interconnected dynamics of modern economies (Matten & Moon, 2020). In response to the challenges posed by these influences, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a proactive and strategic approach to addressing the broader consequences of business activities. By prioritizing social, environmental, and ethical considerations, CSR serves as a bridge between corporate objectives and societal well-being. It underscores the importance of aligning corporate values with customer expectations and societal demands. As a continually developing concept, CSR reflects the growing emphasis on sustainable practices and responsible business conduct, reinforcing its relevance for both companies and stakeholders in an ever-changing global landscape (Herrmann et al., 2017).

In recent times, corporate social responsibility has emerged as a powerful strategic tool for businesses, driving profitability, enhancing customer loyalty, fostering client engagement, building credibility, and cultivating positive brand perceptions (Calabrese et al., 2016). The growing demand among consumers for socially responsible practices underscores its significance in today's corporate landscape. Businesses are increasingly recognizing the value of addressing social issues as part of their operations, not only to align with ethical standards but also to strengthen trust and loyalty among their customers. By integrating CSR into their core strategies, companies can transform social responsibility into a competitive advantage, fostering long-term relationships and solidifying their position in the market. This shift highlights the evolving role of CSR as a cornerstone of modern business practices, emphasizing its potential to bridge societal expectations with corporate success (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016).

Customer loyalty is a key determinant of business sustainability, characterized by a customer's repeated interactions, advocacy, and commitment to a brand despite competitive alternatives. It is built on the foundation of satisfaction, trust, and positive customer experiences, which foster long-term emotional bonds (Oliver, 2019; Reichheld & Sasser, 2020). Customer loyalty is increasingly driven by personalized experiences, rewards programs, and enhanced emotional engagement, especially in competitive environments (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2021; Zeithaml et al., 2019). Loyal customers contribute to consistent sales through repeat purchases and are more likely to advocate for the brand, generating organic referrals and positive word-of-mouth (Reichheld & Sasser, 2020). This advocacy not only attracts new customers but also strengthens the business's competitive positioning in the market. Moreover, customer loyalty reduces marketing expenses, as retaining an existing customer costs significantly less than acquiring a new one (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Businesses with strong customer loyalty also benefit from customer feedback, which helps refine products and services, thereby driving innovation and continuous improvement (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2021). In a digital era, loyalty programs and personalized experiences have become instrumental in retaining customers, enabling businesses to gather valuable data and deepen customer relationships (Upshot.ai, 2023; Comarch, 2023). This symbiotic relationship between customer loyalty and business growth underscores its vital role in ensuring sustainable development.

Corporate Social Responsibility significantly impacts customer loyalty by fostering trust, emotional connection, and brand advocacy. Companies that actively engage in CSR initiatives such as environmental sustainability, ethical practices, and community development which demonstrate a commitment to values that resonate with customers, enhancing their perception of the brand (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). CSR activities help build a positive brand image, which strengthens emotional bonds with customers and drives repeat purchases (Lee et al., 2013). In modern markets, where consumers are increasingly conscious of social and environmental issues, CSR has become a competitive advantage. For instance, brands with well-executed CSR strategies report higher levels of customer retention and advocacy compared to those without such initiatives (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). This underscores CSR's role not just as a moral obligation but as a strategic tool for building sustainable customer loyalty.

CSR initiatives in Nepal are often hindered by limited resources, lack of regulatory enforcement, and insufficient integration into core business strategies, which affects their impact on customer loyalty (Poudel & Sirohiya, 2021). Despite these issues, businesses in sectors such as banking and tourism have started leveraging CSR to enhance their reputations and build customer trust, which is vital for loyalty (Acharya & Paudel, 2020). Service quality also plays a pivotal role in fostering customer loyalty, but Nepalese businesses often grapple with inconsistent service standards due to inadequate training, outdated technology, and infrastructural limitations (Adhikari et al., 2022). These issues are particularly pronounced in rural areas, where businesses struggle to meet customer expectations. However, businesses that successfully combine CSR with improved service quality, such as by aligning CSR efforts with community needs and customer expectations, have reported increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shrestha & Bhandari, 2023). Economic instability, marked by dependence on remittances and agriculture, further impacts businesses' ability to invest in customer-oriented strategies and CSR activities (World Bank, 2023). The slow adoption of technology and inadequate focus on sustainability exacerbate these challenges, limiting Nepalese businesses' ability to compete in an increasingly globalized market (Acharya & Paudel, 2020). In light of these issues, this study seeks to investigate the impact of corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty in Nepalese commercial banks, specifically examining the mediating role of service quality.

## 2. Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility signifies an organization's commitment to ethical practices, sustainable economic development, and improving the well-being of employees, their families, communities, and society at large. Schwartz and Carroll (2003) categorize CSR into four dimensions: legal, ethical, philanthropic, and economic responsibilities. These dimensions outline a holistic approach to how businesses can align their goals with societal expectations. Johnson (2011) offers another perspective, emphasizing that CSR involves implementing social programs that ultimately contribute to long-term profit maximization. This viewpoint highlights how responsible business practices can lead to sustainable profitability, aligning societal and corporate interests. Michael Hopkins underscores the significance of CSR as a framework for ethical and responsible treatment of stakeholders, coupled with a commitment to fostering economic progress. The World Council for Sustainable Development supports this perspective, advocating for CSR as a driver of sustainable growth. Susanto (2009) expands on this by identifying CSR as encompassing humanitarian efforts, adherence to legal frameworks, ethical conduct toward surrounding communities, and contributions to economic education. Similarly, Schwartz and Carroll (2018) emphasized the role of decision-makers in prioritizing public welfare and enhancing societal well-being through their actions. In essence, CSR embodies a multidimensional approach where businesses balance profitability with their broader societal responsibilities, ensuring the interests of all stakeholders are addressed ethically and sustainably.

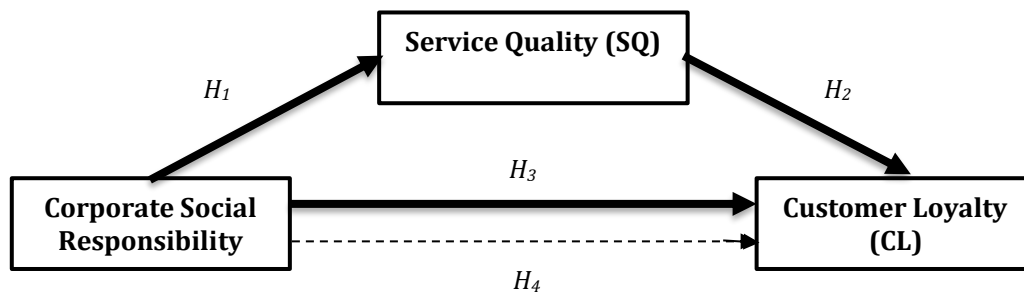
Customer loyalty refers to a consumer's dedication to consistently engaging with a product, service, or brand, even when faced with situational challenges or competing marketing efforts. Sangadji and Sopiah (2013) define it as a commitment to future use, unaffected by external influences. Susanto (2009) views customer loyalty as a strong positive attitude towards a brand or supplier, demonstrated through regular and repeated purchases. Hasan (2014) describes it as the tendency of customers to return frequently to the same provider to meet their needs, indicating a preference for specific products or services. Similarly, Kotler (2012) explains customer loyalty as a commitment to chosen products or services, with a strong intention to repurchase, regardless of external factors. In essence, customer loyalty combines emotional attachment and consistent behavior. It involves not only frequent and repeat transactions but also a positive and enduring attitude toward the company or brand. This loyalty fosters a deeper relationship between the customer and the provider, shaping purchasing decisions and driving long-term engagement. Ailawadi et al. (2014) found that customers' favorable perceptions of corporate social responsibility initiatives by retail sellers significantly enhance customer loyalty.

Martinez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2013) similarly provided empirical evidence of a strong connection between CSR and customer loyalty within the hotel industry. Perez and Bosque (2015) demonstrated that CSR positively influences client loyalty in the banking sector, while Kang and Hustvedt (2014) highlighted a positive association between CSR and repurchasing behavior among customers. Castaldo et al. (2009) argued that in the context of fair-trade goods, CSR contributes to brand loyalty by shaping positive customer perceptions. Park et al. (2022) revealed that in the retail industry, customers' perceptions of an organization's commitment to CSR positively impact their loyalty to the organization. Furthermore, Choi and La (2023) confirmed that in service-oriented sectors such as hospitality, travel, and financial services, customers' awareness of a company's socially responsible behavior significantly enhances their loyalty. Collectively, these findings underscore the critical role of CSR in fostering customer loyalty across diverse industries.

Corporate social responsibility has emerged as a significant determinant of customer loyalty, fostering trust, emotional attachment, and positive brand perceptions (Ailawadi et al., 2014; Kang & Hustvedt, 2014; Castaldo et al., 2009; Park et al., 2022). The mediating role of service quality in this relationship, showing that CSR efforts are more impactful when paired with high service standards. Martinez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2013) revealed that in the hotel industry, CSR influences customer loyalty through improved service quality perceptions. Similarly, Perez and Bosque (2015) identified service quality as a critical mediator in the banking sector, where CSR initiatives strengthen client loyalty. In retailing, Park et al. (2022) found that customers' loyalty is shaped by their perception of both CSR commitments and the quality of services provided. Furthermore, Choi and La (2023) confirmed that in service-oriented sectors like hospitality and financial services, superior service quality amplifies the loyalty-building effects of CSR initiatives. These findings collectively highlight the intertwined roles of CSR and service quality in enhancing customer loyalty.

Service quality plays a pivotal role in driving customer retention by directly impacting customer satisfaction and fostering long-term loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Alshurideh et al., 2023). High-quality service ensures positive customer experiences, which in turn enhance their commitment to the brand and increase repeat business (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Monferrer et al., 2023). It also creates a competitive edge, as customers are more likely to remain loyal to organizations that consistently deliver exceptional service (Zeithaml et al., 2016). Additionally, service quality strengthens trust and emotional connections, further reinforcing customer retention, especially in service-intensive industries (Alshurideh et al., 2023; Monferrer et al., 2023). Therefore, businesses prioritizing service excellence not only retain customers but also reduce the costs associated with acquiring new ones (Monferrer et al., 2023). Understanding the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty is vital for organizations aiming to build trust and foster lasting relationships with their customers. This study focuses on examining how CSR influences service quality and, in turn, affects customer loyalty in the context of Nepalese commercial banks. Based on existing empirical evidence, research hypotheses have been developed to explore these relationships. Additionally, a conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1, illustrating the proposed connections between CSR, service quality, and customer loyalty, which form the foundation of this investigation.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



H1: Corporate social responsibility has a significant influence on service quality.

H2: Service quality has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.

H3: Corporate social responsibility significantly and positively affects customer loyalty

H4: Corporate social responsibility significantly influences the customer loyalty mediated by service quality.

### 3. Methods

This study adopts a descriptive and causal-comparative research design to investigate the relationships among the study variables. The sample comprises 397 customers of Nepalese commercial banks located in the Kathmandu valley, selected through a convenience sampling method. Out of 425 distributed questionnaires, 410 were returned, resulting in a robust response rate of 96.47% (Babbie, 2016). After removing 15 incomplete responses, 397 valid responses were retained for analysis. The study variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), ensuring a standardized evaluation of participants' perceptions. The data analysis utilized Process Macro 4 (Hayes, 2022) to examine the proposed relationships. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the constructs (Cronbach, 1951). Table 1 summarizes the Cronbach's alpha values for corporate social responsibility (5 items,  $\alpha = 0.87$ ), service quality (5 items,  $\alpha = 0.92$ ), and customer loyalty (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). All values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that the measurement items are reliable and exhibit strong internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items	Reliability
Corporate Social Responsibility	0.87	5	Yes
Customer Loyalty	0.88	6	Yes
Service Quality	0.92	5	Yes

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study includes a diverse range of participants from varying demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. Of the 397 respondents, 61.96% were male and 38.04% were female. In terms of marital status, the majority (68.51%) were married, while 31.49% were unmarried. The age distribution reveals that 19.90% were under 25 years, 35.01% were between 25 and 35 years, 35.77% were aged 36 to 45 years, and 9.42% were over 45 years. Regarding educational qualifications, 6.8% were literate, 17.13% had completed school-level education, 44.84% held a bachelor's degree, and 31.23% possessed qualifications beyond a bachelor's degree. This systematic distribution helps to represent a broad cross-section of the population, ensuring varied perspectives based on age, gender, marital status, and educational level.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

N= 397

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	246	61.96
Female	151	38.04
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	272	68.51
Unmarried	125	31.49
<b>Age</b>		
Below 25	79	19.9
25-35	139	35.01
36-45	142	35.77
Above 45	37	9.32
<b>Academic Qualification</b>		
Literate	27	6.8
School level	68	17.13
Bachelor	178	44.84
Above Bachelor	124	31.23

Source: Field survey, 2024

### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 4 presents the mean scores for key variables measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "strongly dissatisfied" and 5 indicates "strongly satisfied." The mean score for service quality is 4.12 (SD = 0.52), for corporate social responsibility (CSR) is 3.88 (SD = 0.58), and for customer loyalty is 3.98 (SD = 0.56). All mean scores are above the midpoint of 3, indicating that respondents generally perceive these factors as satisfactory. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis reveals strong positive relationships between service quality and CSR ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), service quality and customer loyalty ( $r = 0.85$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and CSR and customer loyalty ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings suggest that service quality and CSR are significantly associated with customer loyalty, reinforcing the importance of both in driving customer retention (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Alshurideh et al., 2023).

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis and Correlation Coefficients

Study Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Service Quality	4.12	0.52	1		
2. Corporate Social Responsibility	3.88	0.58	0.78**	1	
3. Customer Loyalty	3.98	0.56	0.85**	0.72**	1

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

#### 4.3 Regression Analysis and Test of Hypotheses

This study explores the direct and indirect impacts of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customer loyalty (CL), with service quality (SQ) serving as a mediating factor. In this model, CSR is positioned as the independent variable, CL as the dependent variable, and SQ as the mediator. The results, presented in Table 5, demonstrate that CSR accounts for 2.85% of the variance in SQ, with the overall model achieving statistical significance,  $F(1, 395) = 9.022$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . Further analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between CSR and SQ ( $\beta = 0.943$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , LLCI = 0.0675, ULCI = 0.2214), providing robust evidence in support of Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>, which asserts that CSR positively affects SQ. These results are consistent with prior research emphasizing the critical role of CSR in enhancing service quality, which subsequently impacts customer loyalty (Alshurideh et al., 2023; Monferrer et al., 2023). This highlights the strategic importance of CSR initiatives in fostering superior service quality and strengthening customer loyalty in competitive markets.

Table 5: Regression analysis of CSR on SQ

<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>P</b>
0.2166	0.0285	0.8426	9.0223	1	389	0.001
<b>Model</b>						
	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
Constant	2.3713	0.1521	9.2102	0.001	2.0781	3.0614
CSR	0.943	0.0723	3.0069	0.001	0.0675	0.2214

Note: CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility, SQ – Service Quality

Table 6 displays the regression analysis results, with customer loyalty (CL) as the dependent variable and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and service quality (SQ) as the independent variables. The findings reveal a significant indirect effect of service quality (SQ) on customer loyalty (CL) ( $\beta = 0.7126$ ,  $t = 9.6620$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; LLCI = 0.3157, ULCI = 0.5374). The exclusion of zero from the lower limit confidence interval (LLCI) and upper limit confidence interval (ULCI) further validates the significance of this relationship. These findings provide strong support for hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>, which states that service quality significantly and positively influences customer loyalty. This result is consistent with prior studies that highlight the critical role of service quality in fostering customer loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Alshurideh et al., 2023). Furthermore, the regression analysis demonstrates that corporate social responsibility (CSR) also has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty (CL), as evidenced by the results ( $\beta = 0.0558$ ,  $t = 1.0122$ ,  $p = 0.0018$ ; LLCI = 0.0215, ULCI = 0.1232). The confidence intervals (LLCI and ULCI) do not include zero, confirming the significance of this relationship. These findings support the acceptance of hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>, which asserts that CSR significantly influences customer loyalty. This aligns with previous research, which highlights the positive impact of CSR initiatives on fostering customer loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013; Alshurideh et al., 2023). Additionally, the indirect effect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customer loyalty (CL) through service quality (SQ) is significant, as indicated by the regression results ( $\beta = 0.2409$ ; bootstrapped 95% confidence interval: LLCI = 0.0254, ULCI = 0.1322), as shown in Table 7. This suggests that CSR influences CL primarily through its effect on SQ. The confidence intervals do not include zero, confirming the significance of this indirect effect. These findings support a full mediation model, where SQ fully mediates the relationship between CSR and CL, thus accepting hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>, which posits that SQ mediates the relationship between CSR and CL. This is consistent with the prior research highlighting the mediating role of service quality in the CSR-customer loyalty relationship (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013).

Table 6: Regression analysis of CSR and SQ on CL

<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>P</b>
0.6532	0.4267	0.5132	75.1821	2	395	0
<b>Model</b>						



	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
Constant	0.6171	0.2351	3.0507	0.0026	0.2536	1.1806
CSR	0.0538	0.056	1.0122	0.0018	0.0215	0.1232
SQ	0.7126	0.0532	9.682	0	0.3157	0.5374

Note: CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility, SQ – Service Quality, CL – Customer Loyalty

Table 7: Indirect Effect of CSR on CL

<b>Path</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>	<b>Boot LLCI</b>	<b>Boot ULCI</b>
CSR → SQ → CL	0.2409	0.0456	0.0254	0.1322

The analysis of the study supports all four hypotheses. Firstly, it confirms that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a positive effect on Service Quality (SQ), as indicated by H<sub>1</sub>. Secondly, H<sub>2</sub> is supported, showing that higher Service Quality leads to greater Customer Loyalty (CL). Additionally, H<sub>3</sub> demonstrates that CSR directly influences Customer Loyalty in a positive manner. Finally, H<sub>4</sub> is also supported, as Service Quality was found to fully mediate the relationship between CSR and Customer Loyalty, meaning that the impact of CSR on customer loyalty occurs through its effect on service quality. A summary of the hypotheses testing results is provided in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Paths</b>	<b>Results</b>
H <sub>1</sub>	CSR → SQ	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	SQ → CL	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	CSR → CL (Direct)	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	CSR → SQ → CL (Mediation)	Supported

#### 4.4 Discussions

The results of this study provide strong evidence supporting the positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and service quality. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that companies that engage in socially responsible behaviors often enhance their service quality, as CSR initiatives contribute to a positive organizational reputation and improve customer perceptions (Lee & Shin, 2010). CSR activities, such as environmental sustainability efforts, ethical business practices, and community engagement, can enhance the overall service experience by fostering trust and reliability, which in turn improves the quality of service offered to customers (Kotler & Lee, 2005). This relationship underscores the growing importance of CSR in enhancing the customer service experience, suggesting that companies should integrate CSR into their operational strategies to improve service quality.

In addition, the study confirms that service quality is positively associated with customer loyalty, supporting the notion that customers are more likely to remain loyal to businesses that consistently provide high-quality services. This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies, such as those by Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Parasuraman et al. (1988), who highlighted that superior service quality fosters customer trust and satisfaction, which are key drivers of loyalty. The emphasis on service quality in the service sector, particularly in the hospitality and banking industries, suggests that businesses must prioritize service excellence to maintain competitive advantage and customer retention.

Furthermore, the direct positive influence of CSR on CL, as demonstrated in this study, adds to the growing body of literature supporting the direct benefits of CSR on customer relationships. Previous research has shown that CSR initiatives not only improve the perception of the company but also foster emotional connections with customers, leading to increased loyalty (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Customers who perceive a company as socially responsible are more likely to support it in the long term, as they identify with the company's values and mission (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). This direct relationship between CSR and customer loyalty highlights the potential of CSR as a strategic tool to build lasting customer relationships.

Finally, the study finds that service quality fully mediates the relationship between CSR and customer loyalty, suggesting that the impact of CSR on customer loyalty is channeled through its effect on service quality. This result is consistent with the work of Martínez & del Bosque (2013), who found that CSR influences customer loyalty indirectly by enhancing service quality. By improving service quality, CSR initiatives help create a more satisfying customer experience, which in turn leads to greater loyalty. This mediating effect underscores the importance of focusing on service quality as a key mechanism through which CSR initiatives can influence customer behavior and loyalty.

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of corporate social responsibility that plays in enhancing service quality, which subsequently leads to greater customer loyalty. The positive relationship between CSR and service quality demonstrates that businesses engaging in socially responsible activities are likely to improve the quality of the services they provide. Customers today are increasingly aware of the ethical and social practices of the companies they engage with, and as such, CSR initiatives not only help fulfill societal obligations but also contribute to tangible improvements in service delivery. By incorporating sustainable practices, ethical values, and community engagement, organizations are able to strengthen their service offerings, resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction. This improved service quality creates a deeper emotional connection with customers, which leads to increased customer trust and satisfaction, ultimately fostering long-term loyalty.

Furthermore, the findings from this study emphasize that CSR has a direct, positive effect on customer loyalty, and that this impact is mediated through its influence on service quality. Customers tend to reward organizations that are perceived to act responsibly by becoming more loyal, as they appreciate companies that contribute positively to society. The service quality that arises from CSR initiatives creates a strong foundation for customer trust, making customers feel more valued and respected. This connection further solidifies their commitment to the brand. Therefore, it is evident that CSR not only serves as a tool for societal impact but also functions as a strategic driver of customer loyalty. As businesses seek to differentiate themselves in competitive markets, investing in CSR initiatives should be viewed not only as an ethical obligation but also as a long-term business strategy that enhances service quality and strengthens customer loyalty, ensuring sustained organizational success and a positive brand reputation.

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# Study of the Decorative Motifs of the Tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari in Herat Gazergah

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## Abstract

Gazergah stands as one of the most magnificent historical monuments in Herat, situated in the northern part of the city. This remarkable site is a testament to the rich Islamic culture and civilization that has flourished in the region. Notably, it is the birthplace of renowned scholars, including Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Heravi, a prominent figure in the realms of religious and mystical education. The primary aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive description of the Gazergah monument, delve into its intricate decorations, and present an overview of the mystical personality of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari. Additionally, the article seeks to enhance understanding and analysis of the decorative arts—specifically illumination—found on the tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Heravi. This research employs objective observations to assess the aesthetic qualities and authenticity of the illumination art present at this significant site. By examining the artistic elements and their historical context, the study aims to illuminate the cultural importance of Gazergah and the enduring legacy of its artistic heritage, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on Islamic art and architecture in Herat.

**Keywords:** Gazergah, Illumination, Herat, Islamic Motifs and Art

## 1. Introduction

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, a pivotal figure in the spiritual and intellectual life of Herat, occupies a distinguished place in Islamic history as a revered scholar and mystic. His contributions to religious thought and mystical education have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of the region. The Gazergah Shrine, dedicated to his memory, is not only a significant site of pilgrimage but also a remarkable example of Islamic architecture and artistry. This monument encapsulates the essence of Herat's historical and cultural identity, embodying the city's rich legacy of scholarship and spirituality.

The Gazergah Shrine is celebrated for its intricate decorations, which reflect the artistic prowess of the Herat School. The tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari is adorned with exquisite illuminations and motifs that demonstrate the sophistication of Islamic decorative arts.

Among the notable features of the tomb's decorations are the geometric patterns and floral motifs, which are emblematic of Islamic art. These designs, often characterized by their complexity and symmetry, illustrate the harmony between aesthetic beauty and spiritual significance.

As we delve into the study of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari's tomb and its decorations, we aim to highlight the importance of these artistic expressions in preserving the cultural heritage of Herat. This exploration not only honors the legacy of a great mystic but also emphasizes the need to safeguard the artistic and historical treasures that continue to inspire generations. Through a detailed examination of the illuminations and motifs, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of the relationship between art, spirituality, and cultural identity in this extraordinary monument.

### *1.1 Problem Statement*

The significant role of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari as a religious and mystical figure has not received the scholarly attention it warrants in recent years. Furthermore, the gradual erosion of the intricate details and decorative elements—particularly the illuminations engraved on the lower section of the tomb—poses a risk of permanent loss due to climatic factors.

### *1.2 Issue Importance*

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, the Gazergah Shrine, and the decorative arts associated with this site collectively exemplify the distinctive features of Islamic art. The preservation of this historical identity, along with the artistic heritage of the Herat School, is of paramount importance. Understanding these elements not only honors Ansari's legacy but also enhances appreciation for the cultural and artistic contributions of the region.

### *1.3 Research Questions*

1. What are the processes and motivations behind the creation of art, particularly in the context of religious art?
2. What factors have historically compelled certain groups to prioritize the preservation and revitalization of Islamic shrines and traditional sacred sites in Herat?
3. Why are miniature painting and illumination art commonly classified as distinct forms of Islamic art within the cultural context of Herat?

## **2. Methodology**

This research employed a combination of library and field studies. The library component involved a thorough review of historical narratives by various historians, which provided valuable insights into the origins of the carved designs. In the field component, the author visited the Gazergah Shrine to closely examine the lower section of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari's tomb, where decorative illuminations are prominently displayed. The author meticulously observed and documented several technical aspects of these artistic elements. The findings indicate that the carved and painted decorations surrounding the tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari not only remain intact but also highlight the significance of the artistic traditions of the Herat School.

## **3. The Essence of Art**

Art aligns with humanity's most profound mission on Earth: the quest for understanding the truth of existence. It encompasses the interplay of art, mysticism, and religion. Within each individual lies a reservoir of perspectives, talents, and vivid imaginings that yearn for expression. This intrinsic need drives the creation of all artistic works, whether through poetry, painting, or other forms of creative expression (Shariati, 2000:63).

Islamic scholars have historically regarded art not merely as a practical invention but as an integral component of wisdom, theoretical contemplation, and intuitive insight. In this context, religious art possesses both general and

specific meanings. Broadly, it is associated with virtues and the pursuit of perfection within Islamic culture. More specifically, art manifests in various imaginative forms, embodying beauty and glory while engaging with reflection, logic, and reality (Madadpour, 2008:231).

The journey of the artist, as facilitated by art, is fundamentally a spiritual odyssey that traverses the realms of imagination and reality. Through this creative process, artists ascend to new heights of understanding and expression, contributing to a deeper appreciation of the human experience.

#### **4. Herat City**

Herat is a province located in the northwest region of Afghanistan, recognized as one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. The city is prominently referenced in ancient texts, including the Avesta, as well as other historical sources, underscoring its long-standing significance. Renowned for its rich cultural heritage and educational advancements, Herat has earned a reputation as a distinguished center of learning.

Throughout history, the presence of esteemed scholars and educators has contributed to the city's esteemed image. A multitude of intellectuals and scientists from various Islamic countries have historically journeyed to Herat to pursue knowledge and education. This influx of scholars has fostered a vibrant cultural and religious atmosphere, enhancing the city's prosperity and intellectual brilliance (Khalili, 1989:14).

Herat's landscape, adorned with mosques, schools, and libraries, reflects its historical commitment to scholarship and the arts. The city has achieved notable scientific honors, and its lush greenery further amplifies its reputation. Firmly rooted in knowledge and rich in intellectual treasures, Herat continues to shine as a beacon of cultural and educational excellence (Sharwa, 2013:5).

#### **5. Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Heravi**

Abu Ismail Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Heravi was a distinguished sheikh and mystic of the fourth and fifth centuries AH. Born in 1006 in the castle of Kahendzh, located in Herat, he emerged as a prominent scholar who illuminated the intellectual landscape of the region with his profound understanding of logic and Sufism (Rajabi, 2010:12).

Khwaja Abdullah was the son of Abu Mansur Ansari Heravi, who was also a Sufi and lived a life deeply rooted in mysticism. Influenced by his father's spiritual practices, Khwaja Abdullah was guided from an early age to embrace the principles of Sufism.

His childhood and adolescence were marked by notable achievements. He began his formal education at the age of four and commenced reciting the Holy Quran by the age of seven. Following this, he delved into the study of Arabic and Persian literature. By the age of fourteen, he had mastered a range of traditional sciences, including Arabic literature, the science of interpretation (Tafsir), hadith studies, Hanbali jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy. This extensive educational background set the foundation for his later contributions to Islamic thought and mysticism (Farhadi, 1981:257).

#### **6. Achievements of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari**

One of the notable innovations of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari was his ability to intertwine poetry with prose, creating a harmonious relationship between the two forms of expression. This synthesis allowed him to convey profound spiritual and mystical insights in a manner that resonated deeply with his audience (Honarwar, 2011:12).

In Herat, literacy was widespread, and the educational institutions where Khwaja Abdullah studied provided a robust foundation in both Arabic and Persian literature, facilitating his intellectual growth. His mystical discourses are rich with literary subtleties and complex ideas, demonstrating an expansive understanding of mystical concepts.

Khwaja Abdullah had a remarkable talent for articulating the nuances of the self, presenting various terms such as egotism, self-portraiture, self-love, self-cultivation, and self-loathing with clarity and depth. His exploration of these themes reflects his mastery of language and his commitment to addressing the intricacies of human experience, showcasing the breadth of his literary and mystical contributions (Naseri, 1991:23).

### **7. Instructors of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Heravi**

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari was profoundly influenced by a number of esteemed teachers throughout his educational journey. Among his most notable instructors were Khwaja Imam Yahya Ammar Shaibani, Sheikh Abu Abdullah Taqi, Abu Bakr Haidari, Sheikh Abul Hasan Kharqani, Khwaja Ahmad Chishti, and Sheikh Abu Sayyid Abul Khair. These scholars played a pivotal role in shaping his intellectual and spiritual development (Habibi Heravi, 2015:18).

In addition to these prominent figures, Khwaja Abdullah was also taught by other respected scholars, including Qazi Abu Mansur Azdi, Abu Al-Hasan Bashari Sajzi, Taqi Sajistani, Jarahi, Bashani, and Abu Al-Hasan Ali Tarazi (Farhadi, 1981:62).

### **8. Notable Works of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari**

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari is renowned for his many valuable books, treatises, and writings, although some of these works are scarce and difficult to obtain. His scholarly approach often includes citing a verse from the Holy Quran at the beginning of each chapter, illustrating the harmony between Sharia (Islamic law), the spiritual path, and the ultimate truth (Takestani, 1993:10).

One of his most notable contributions is *Manazil al-Sa'irin*, which is composed in both Arabic and Persian. This work is regarded as one of the most significant texts in the realm of practical mysticism and has been taught in religious seminaries for many years (Khalili, 1989:78).

Among his other important works are the extensive *Kashf al-Asrar*, which spans ten volumes, and *Kanz al-Salkin*. Additionally, Khwaja Abdullah authored several other influential texts, including *Zad al-Arifin*, *Munajat-e-Nameh*, *Ilahi-Nameh*, *Dhim al-Kalam*, *Risalat Dil wa Jan*, *Risalat al-Waredat*, and *Qalandar-e-Nameh*, all produced over various years (Takestani, 1993:12).

Another celebrated work is *Nafhat al-Ans*, which was written in the local dialect of Herat. This text was later translated into Persian by Khwaja Abdul Rahman Jami in the ninth century of the lunar calendar (Madadpour, 2008:20).

Many of these works have been published in various countries, including Egypt and France, as well as in the Dominican Collection of Eastern and Western Studies, contributing to the preservation and dissemination of Khwaja Abdullah's profound insights and teachings (Farhadi, 1981:277).

### **9. Late Life and Demise of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari**

Throughout the eighty years of his life, Khwaja Abdullah Ansari devoted himself tirelessly to guiding his disciples and educating his students. However, at the age of seventy-two, he experienced a decline in health that resulted in blindness. Despite this challenge, he remained committed to his scholarly pursuits (Abbasi Delkani, 2019:21).

In the latter part of his life, Khwaja Abdullah aspired to complete his interpretation of the Holy Quran. He worked diligently to provide insights into the text, often dictating to his students who transcribed his interpretations. Unfortunately, he was unable to finish this monumental task before his passing.

Khwaja Abdullah Ansari died in 1098 at the age of eighty-five. Following his death, a large crowd from Herat accompanied his body to the cemetery at Gazergah, where he was laid to rest. His grave has since become a site



of veneration, attracting visitors from around the world who seek to pay their respects to this revered figure in Islamic mysticism and education (Farhadi, 1981:213).

## 10. Gazergah

Gazergah is situated on a mountainside to the north of Herat city and has been referred to by various names throughout history. One such name, Gazer, translates to "laundry," reflecting the local tradition of washing clothes in the area. Another name, Karzargah, is derived from the historical significance of the site, where many martyrs were believed to have been buried in seven wells, thus designating it as a cemetery (Bahre, 2009:61).

Historical research indicates that Gazergah was established during the reign of the kings of Crete and underwent significant development. The site was further enhanced with exquisite structures during the Timurid period, leaving behind inscriptions and decorative elements that still adorn the area today (Farhadi, 1981:265).

Gazergah is the final resting place for many Sufis, mystics, and notable individuals, including Timurid princes. Notably, Amir Dost Mohammad Khan, a prominent king of Afghanistan, is also buried here. Additionally, the tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari and his sons is located on the northern side of the Gazergah complex (Seddiqi, 1981:59).

The shrine possesses a sacred atmosphere and has been a focal point throughout the history of Herat, witnessing major military and political events (Rajabi, 2010:12).

The Islamic architecture of Gazergah has ancient roots, featuring large palaces, ponds, and magnificent gardens, showcasing the pinnacle of architectural achievements from earlier times (Khalili, 1989:56).

Notably, artifacts from the tenth century AD, along with valuable works from the Sassanid and Umayyad periods, exhibit a unique blend of ancient artistic traditions and emerging Islamic architectural styles.

To fully appreciate the decorative arts at Gazergah, it is essential to evaluate the progression of each artistic tradition utilized in this historic site (Abbasi Delkani, 2019:72).

The architectural and engineering feats of the Timurid monuments are often attributed to Master Qavam al-Din Mimar ibn Zain al-Din, who is believed to have played a significant role in the construction of both the tombs and the pilgrimage site at Gazergah. Master Qavam al-Din is renowned among architects, celebrated for his exceptional works that continue to garner admiration and respect (Azhand, 2008:307).

## 11. Decorative Art of Illumination

The art of illumination has its origins in the early centuries of Islam, deeply rooted in the rich cultural and artistic traditions of the vast Asian region. The absence of emphasis on portraiture, often due to religious prohibitions, facilitated the development of this distinctive style of painting, known as decorative arts and illumination (Honarwar, 2011:17).

As this art form evolved, it became associated with Islamic and Arab governance, eventually being recognized as a key aspect of Islamic art. Illumination artists excelled in creating works that now grace museums around the world, establishing illumination as a prominent and enduring art form (Takestani, 1993:26).

What renders this significant art so important is its application in conjunction with verses from the Holy Quran, hadiths, scientific and cultural texts, poetry collections, as well as its presence in mosques and other sacred sites. In the city of Herat, illumination has experienced remarkable growth and flourishing. From the Timurid period to the present, the illumination of the Herat School has maintained a distinct and esteemed place in the artistic landscape, earning recognition from historians and researchers both in the East and the West (Sarwatian, 1989:10).

A notable perspective within the discourse surrounding this art form is that illumination, along with its symbolic representations, is considered one of the original Islamic arts. This viewpoint asserts that illumination has not faced significant opposition within the Islamic world and has garnered approval from Islamic scholars, largely due to its avoidance of depicting faces or representations of living beings. Thus, illumination continues to thrive as a revered and accepted art form within Islamic culture (Madadpour, 2008:234).

### *11.1 Definition of Illumination*

Illumination refers to the art of decorating texts with gold or golden hues, resulting in illuminated artworks that feature ornate motifs, borders, and miniature illustrations. This technique enhances the visual appeal of the written word, creating a harmonious blend of art and literature (Takestani, 1993:28).

### *11.2 Applications of Illumination*

Illumination art has a wide range of applications across various contexts. These intricate designs have been employed to adorn the walls of mosques, minarets, mihrabs, courtyards, and palaces. Additionally, illumination is utilized in tiling, carving, and the engraving of silver and gold in sacred spaces. The enduring presence of this art form continues to exemplify the artistic vision and finesse of its creators (Naseri, 1991:35).

### *11.3 Historical Course of Illumination*

The historical trajectory of decorative arts, particularly illumination and miniature painting, can be traced through several significant periods that followed the advent of Islam: Sassanid Period, Seljuk Period, Ilkhanate Period, Timurid Period, Safavid Period, Qajar Period, Pahlavi Period

Each of these eras contributed to the evolution and refinement of illumination techniques and styles (Dastgiri, 1960:29).

One notable figure in the revival of the Herat miniature school after centuries of decline is the esteemed artist Saeed Mashal Ghorji Heravi. Following his efforts, the faculty members of the Fine Arts Department at Herat University have continued to uphold the tradition of illumination art, fostering its growth and recognition in contemporary times (Banwal, 1982:132).

### *11.4 Famous Illuminators of Herat*

During the Timurid era, several skilled illuminators emerged from the Herat Miniature School, including Amir Khalil Sayyid Mirak Naghash, Maulana Haj Muhammad Naghash, Maulana Yari, Maulana Mahmud, Muhammad Hassan Kateb, and Khwaja Nasruddin Muhammad. Among them, Maulana Hedayi distinguished himself with extraordinary skills in tile making and painting, often adorning his poetry with exquisite motifs and illuminations, showcasing the rich artistic heritage of Herat (Rajabi, 2010:159).

### *11.5 Elements of Illumination*

In his work *Qanun al-Suwar*, Sadeghi Bek Afshar identifies seven fundamental styles, referred to as "elements of illumination." These are: Arabesque, Angelica, Cloudy, Waq, Niloofar, Farangi, Romie.

Among the decorative arts of the Timurid period, the traditional Arabesque style was particularly prominent and held significant value as an illumination element. The intricate Arabesque designs, characterized by complex plant motifs, were often combined with calligraphy and inscriptions. This fusion not only enhanced the visual appeal but also established a sense of balance and symmetry within the compositions, resulting in a harmonious and captivating beauty in the illuminated works (Azhand, 2009:53).

## 12. Discussion

In this section, the author examines and analyzes the decorative motifs present in the lower sections of the tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, focusing on the intricate geometric motifs that have endured over time.

### *12.1 Location of the Tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari*

The rectangular tomb is situated directly in front of the entrance gate of the Gazergah shrine, at the far end of the courtyard. This prominent location enhances its visibility and significance within the complex. The tomb features three distinct outlines, each adorned with geometric motifs and illumination designs characteristic of the Herat school. These artistic elements contribute to the tomb's prominence, marking it as one of the finest examples of artistic craftsmanship from the region during that period. The geometric motifs, often referred to as knotting, are rendered in various forms, including arrangements of flowers, leaves, and specific geometric shapes governed by established rules. The illumination designs and geometric motifs used in this context warrant further detailed research. Due to the complexity and richness of these motifs, the current analysis will focus on a selection of technical decorative elements.

### *12.2 Second Outline of the Tomb*

The second outline of the tomb is crafted from black marble, commonly known as soapstone. The decorative geometric motifs carved into this stone feature a six-pointed star pattern, intricately combined with a star knot at its five corners. These designs exemplify the imaginative artistry of the Herat school during the Timurid era.

Although climatic factors have caused some deterioration of these motifs, their overall structure remains clearly visible. The geometric designs are arranged in the form of a shamsa, an intricately decorated rosette or medallion that often appears in various artistic contexts. This particular design features two symmetrical halves on either side, with two full circles centrally positioned within the overall composition, showcasing the exceptional craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibility of the artists of the time.

### *12.3 Hexagonal Knot*

The hexagonal knot is intricately carved into stones and mosaic tiles, utilizing a palette of azure blue, fawn, and black colors. These designs take the form of a hexagonal star, featuring repeating divisions that create a rhythmic aesthetic, enhancing their overall beauty.

These techniques are grounded in the division of hexagons into equal parts derived from a circle, resulting in star motifs that foster visual harmony. The designs possess richer, more sublime characteristics, contributing to the intricate beauty of the artwork.

### *12.4 Top and Bottom Borders of Geometric Motifs*

The upper and lower sections of this design are embellished with a distinctive border known as a lock knot. The lower borders are adorned with flower and leaf motifs arranged in a crown shape, symmetrically repeated to enhance the visual appeal of the petals.

All elements within the illumination are anchored around a central circle, with the crowns surrounding it enhancing the diversity and beauty of the motifs. It is likely that these petal designs were also conceived in circular forms, as this approach yields a more aesthetically pleasing effect. Additionally, these motifs can be rendered in smaller sizes, demonstrating versatility in design.

In the center of the petals, variations take the form of crowns, which are elaborately detailed and enhanced with intricate line work. This suggests that the petals were executed in multiple stages, with each layer adding depth

and complexity. The motifs along the edges are further beautified through the use of smooth Arabesque tracery, which creates a cohesive visual stability among the elements.

### *12.5 Middle outline design*

The middle outline of the tomb is crafted from white marble, which has aged to a yellowish hue over time. This section features decorative geometric motifs in the form of a Shamsa, characterized by two halves at the center and complete designs framing the edges.

The Shamsa design draws inspiration from both the circle and the sun, and its hexagonal divisions bear significant similarities to the geometric designs found on the black marble. The divisions within the Shamsa can range from 1/8 to 1/24, with the central voids being of a medium size—balanced neither too large nor too small. These empty spaces add a unique charm to the decorative geometric designs.

Overall, Shamsa designs can yield a variety of combinations, such as those seen in hexagonal configurations, showcasing the creativity and adaptability of the illumination art form.

### *12.6 The Lower Part of the White Marble*

The lower section of the tomb, made from white marble, has undergone color changes over time. To create harmony with the surrounding decorative forms, the artist integrated an inscription with illuminated motifs. Encircling the inscription is a border pattern in Kufic script, embellished with Arabesque tracery. The text reads, "Allah is there and there is nothing other than Him," reflecting the themes of religious unity that are fitting for this sacred site.

The Arabesque tracery serves as the main axis of the illumination motifs, incorporating spiral movements and various decorative elements. At the foundation of these designs, circles are often employed, with decorative features such as petals, almonds, and leaves arranged around them. Fortunately, the intricate details of these geometric motifs remain clearly visible.

The smoothness of the Arabesque tracteries, combined with their alternating designs, enhances the overall composition. In the center of these motifs, the Arabesque tracteries are adorned with petals, creating a beautiful rhythmic effect. Recognized as a legitimate form of Islamic art, these tracteries are frequently used to decorate the Holy Quran, mosques, and other holy sites, including shrines.

### *12.7 Columns and Decorative Motifs*

Surrounding the circumference of this lower part are columns made from black and white marble. The bases of these columns feature decorations of half-Toranj, Ringent, and Kashkul motifs, although some details may not be fully discernible. The Toranj motifs began with simple compositions that evolved into more complex designs, beautifully carved with combinations of Toranj, half-Toranj, Ringent, and Kashkul elements interspersed with tiny petals.

The starting point of the Toranj motif is notably elongated, contributing to a pleasing rhythm as these patterns are strategically positioned to ensure balanced movements throughout the design. The decorative motifs of Toranj, Ringent, and Kashkul are crafted to introduce variety and enhance overall beauty. Border patterns are typically drawn from the corners first, with smooth rotations integrating other decorative elements throughout the designs. Some Toranj motifs positioned centrally add strength and beauty to the entire illuminated composition.

### *12.8 Kashkul and Ringent Motifs*

Kashkul, also known as the beggar's bowl, is a container traditionally carried by wandering dervishes within the Sufi tradition. It is used to collect alms and other offerings. Variations of Kashkul motifs can be created by altering

certain elements, maintaining a circular main axis while surrounding it with leaf designs or other decorative features. This approach amplifies diversity and volume, effectively filling empty spaces within the design.

The Ringent motif is another important component of illumination, widely utilized in various geometric forms. Its inclusion enhances the strength and cohesion of the overall design when combined with the Toranj and Kashkul motifs. The Ringent can manifest in numerous styles, easily integrated with almonds, petals, and other decorative elements, both large and small. These proportions contribute delicacy and are applied thoughtfully according to the design's scale, achieving a visual perfection that captivates the observer.

### 13. Conclusions

The exploration of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari's tomb at the Gazergah Shrine reveals the profound interplay between art, spirituality, and cultural identity in Herat. As a central figure in Islamic mysticism, Ansari's legacy is intricately tied to the artistic expressions found within this historical monument, which serve as both a tribute to his teachings and a reflection of the vibrant artistic heritage of the region.

The decorative arts, particularly the illuminations and geometric motifs that adorn Ansari's tomb, exemplify the sophistication of Islamic art as practiced in Herat. These designs are not merely ornamental; they encapsulate deeper philosophical and spiritual meanings, aligning with the broader Islamic tradition that views art as a pathway to understanding the divine. The intricate patterns and rich colors of the illuminations evoke a sense of transcendence, inviting contemplation and reflection, which are essential aspects of the mystical journey that Khwaja Abdullah Ansari championed.

Furthermore, the historical significance of the Gazergah Shrine cannot be overstated. It stands as a testament to Herat's cultural and educational prominence throughout history, serving as a hub for scholars and artists alike. The continuity of artistic practices, such as illumination, from the Timurid period to the present demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of Herat's artistic traditions. This research highlights the urgent need for preservation efforts to safeguard these invaluable artistic expressions, which are at risk of deterioration due to environmental factors and neglect.

In conclusion, the examination of the decorative arts at the Gazergah Shrine not only honors the memory of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari but also reinforces the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of Herat. The illuminations and motifs serve as a bridge connecting past and present, emphasizing the significance of art in expressing spiritual truths and cultural identity. Future research should continue to investigate these artistic elements to ensure they receive the recognition and protection they deserve, allowing them to inspire generations to come.

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