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The Challenges of Contract Lecturers at Public Universities in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Public universities in Afghanistan have faced various ups and downs during the past century. Escaping and leaving university professors in mass form due to the existence of war has been one of the big challenges for universities in Afghanistan. In order to solve this challenge public universities and higher education institutions in Afghanistan hire contract lecturers, which after this process contract lecturers are facing with many big challenges during the teaching as a contract lecturer in public universities and higher education institutions. By Understanding the importance of the subject, this paper seeks to answer this question; What are the most important challenges of contract lecturers in Afghanistan's public universities? The hypothetical answer is that it can be seen that in the recruitment of contract lecturers, no minimum points have been considered for the recruitment of contract lecturers. The procedure is the same as that of a simple worker, and the hiring of contract lecturers is associated with challenges such as discrimination, lack of material and spiritual privileges, lack of job security, lack of social security and etc. The research method of this article is also done with descriptive analytical method and in collecting the information of this article, an effort has been made to use both field and library methods in order to present the important issues for the audience of this article.

Keywords: Challenges, Contract Lecturers, Public University, Human Rights

1. Introduction

Higher Educational institutions and universities in Afghanistan do not have history of more than a century. Higher Educational institutions and universities in Afghanistan have faced various ups and downs during this period. Along with Higher educational institutions in Afghanistan, administrative institutions can also be seen in Afghanistan which has a history of about a century and the first cabinet in Afghanistan was created during the time of Shah Amanullah Khan, the first king of Afghanistan who gained the independence of Afghanistan. Educational institutions have always been under the administration of the government since the independence of Afghanistan from 1919 to 2024. Although the method of recruiting employees and professors in educational institutions and universities in Afghanistan has been different for nearly a century, but after 2001 it can be seen that Recruitment of employees and professors in Afghan universities, especially public universities is done with a different procedure compared to public administration, and the recruitment of academic staff members in Afghan universities is of a certain independence compared to other public administration employees. Afghanistan, which has experienced great challenges and crises during nearly a century of its contemporary history, the effect of it has

been seen in many cases, especially in the situations of wars and instability, that the scientific institutions and universities of Afghanistan are resistant to difficult conditions. Security has been faced with a shortage of employees and professors, or in unfavorable conditions, professors and employees of universities and educational institutions, especially public universities and educational institutions, decide to leave Afghanistan, in which case there is a big gap in the structure of educational institutions. and universities are created, but in order to fill this gap, Afghanistan educational institutions and public universities start hiring contract lecturers, and in many cases, it can be seen that these lecturers are hired with different degrees from bachelors to doctorate. By no means are the standards of working conditions of Afghanistan's labor law and human rights conditions, especially in the material and moral rights sector equal.

By understanding this great challenge in the structure of educational institutions and public universities of Afghanistan, in this paper we seek to find the big challenges of contract lecturers in educational institutions and public universities of Afghanistan with a human rights approach, and for this purpose, in this article, we are looking for an answer to this question; What are the most important challenges facing contract lecturers in educational institutions and public universities in Afghanistan? By understanding the importance of the issue, we can give such a hypothetical answer to this question. Since it can be seen that the recruitment of professors and employees in educational institutions and public universities of Afghanistan takes place with different conditions and processes compared to other employees of public administrations of Afghanistan, and in many cases it has been seen that for professors and permanent employees of educational institutions and The government of Afghanistan has considered good material and spiritual and special points, but it can be seen that when these educational institutions and public universities of Afghanistan are looking to hire contract lecturers, they have not considered any minimum points for hiring contract teachers. It can be seen that contract lecturers are treated like a simple workers and even lower than an ordinary and uneducated workers in educational institutions and universities of Afghanistan, and they do not have the minimum material and spiritual privileges, especially the salary that is in a The hour for contract lecturers is set at about half a dollar per hour, and a lecturers can have a maximum of three hours of lessons in one day, meaning that a contract lecturers will earn a salary equal to one and a half dollars in one day. It can be seen that contract lecturers are facing the challenges of employment, discrimination, lack of material and moral privileges, and lack of future guarantee in educational institutions and public universities of Afghanistan.

In the discussion of the background of the research, it should be mentioned that no research has been done on this issue, and in the discussion of the research method, this article has been conducted with the analytical research method, and in collecting the information of this article, an effort has been made to use the method A combination of library and field by referring to the national laws of Afghanistan, national and international documents, reports and works of the authors, and also interviews with a few number of contract lecturers in public universities, I will present the important issues for the audience of this article.

2. The Concept of Human Rights

Because our research is based on human rights, we wanted to start the research with the definition of human rights, which can greatly help the audience to understand the concept of human rights. In today's era, human rights are defined as a set of rights that everyone should benefit from in an equal way with others due to their inherent dignity and inseparable. It means that human beings are entitled to these rights regardless of their gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, religion, social class, economic status, livelihood and the like. There is no superiority. For example, everyone has the right to education and has the right to receive equal education at all educational levels, whether he is poor or rich, male or female, Muslim or Hindu, everyone has the right to participate in the political life of society and from Anywhere in the country, regardless of gender, race, income level, and livelihood, he has the right to participate in elections or to become a candidate for the government seat. Or in a more general sense, it considers human rights as a set of privileges with the theme and concept of human dignity, which a person is entitled to regardless of any religious, racial, sexual, linguistic and similar affiliations, and even the level of individual ability and competence, regardless of the circumstances. The social variable has it and is related to human dignity and respect and character. Although human rights are not contractual in nature, but to emphasize and to ensure their implementation, the governments have explicitly committed to observe them for human beings.

Human rights seek to provide a legal guarantee for human existence by maintaining all aspects of his dignity and freedom and to create a recognized social framework for it (Noori, 2018, p. 36). Realizing the importance of human rights, Afghanistan had accepted its guarantee in the 2004 constitution and considered itself bound to comply with all international human rights documents that had been attached to it.

3. Recruitment of permanent professors in public Universities and Higher Educational Institutions in Afghanistan

Before 2001, Afghanistan's educational institutions and universities had suffered great damage due to civil wars, but after 2001 and with the establishment of a new political system with the support of the international community, significant gains were made, including the reactivation of 38 public universities and institutions of higher education (Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan, 2024, p. 1) and 140 private universities and institutions of higher education (Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan, 2024, p. 1) that were started by national and international investors and by obtaining a license from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan, during the operation of these institutions from 2001 to 2021 Nearly millions of students graduated from these institutions, and besides that, thousands of others were able to be recruited as professors in these universities and educational institutions, and the Ministry of Higher Education in order to be able to open the doors of public and private universities and educational institutions for Let the researchers and professors approve the general conditions for employment in public and private institutions under the title of the bill for the recruitment of academic staff members. This is how he described higher education.

The Ministry of Higher Education recruits academic staff members or new professors based on academic rank and academic documents, and those who are recruited to universities and institutions of higher education must complete these conditions.

3.1. Post of Candidate for Lecturer

- Having at least a bachelor's degree
- Being less than 30 years' old
- Having at least 75 percent of average grades
- Not having more than one back in academic subjects
- Obtaining at least 60 marks in the international language exam
- Obtaining at least 60 marks in the specialized exam
- Successful completion of the scientific conference
- Not having duties in other government departments
- Having perfect health
- Not being convicted of a crime (Article 4 of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Scientific Staff Recruitment Bill 2017)

3.2. The Conditions of the post of Teaching Assistant

- Having a bachelor's degree
- Being less than 35 years' old
- Having at least 70 percent of average bachelor's grades and 80 percent of average master's grades.
- Similarity of at least 60% between the themes of the bachelor and master courses
- Obtaining at least 65 marks in the international language exam
- Obtaining at least 65 marks in the specialized exam
- Successful completion of the scientific conference
- Not having duties in other government departments
- Having perfect health
- Not being convicted of a crime (Article 5 of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Scientific Staff Recruitment Bill 2017)

3.3. Post Senior Teaching Assistant

- Having a doctorate
- Being less than 45 years' old
- Similarity of at least 60% between the themes of the bachelor and master courses
- Obtaining at least 70 marks in the international language exam
- Obtaining at least 70 marks in the specialized exam
- Successful completion of the scientific conference
- Not having duties in other government departments
- Having perfect health
- Not being convicted of a crime (Article 6 of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Scientific Staff Recruitment Bill 2017) (Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan, 2023).

It is necessary to remember that the legislator has considered special regulations and privileges for professors of universities and public higher education institutions compared to other employees of government departments. According to the fifth article on the salary and privileges of academic staff members of higher education institutions, the salary for the academic staff members of the first step of the fourth appendix of the law of civil service employees has been changed. (Salary and Privileges Regulations for Academic Staff Members of Higher Education Institutions, approved in 2019) The Civil Service Employees Law of Afghanistan in its first appendix provides a salary of 9900 Afghani for the first step of the fourth batch (Civil Service Employees Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2008 ,951 Official Gazette).

In addition to the salary and benefits law for academic staff members of higher education institutions, in addition to the salary mentioned in its fifth article, in its seventh article, it also provides monthly benefits for university professors under the title of benefits. In its seventh article, this law provides 30,000 Afghanis for teaching assistant, 35,000 Afghanis for senior teaching assistant, 45,000 Afghanis for associate professor, 55,000 Afghanis for professor, and 65,000 Afghanis for professor who are the last rank of professor in universities and public higher education institutions in Afghanistan. In addition to these privileges, the legislator has provided other privileges for university professors such as pension, health services, social services, etc. in the law.

4. Recruitment of Employees in Afghanistan Government Offices

Recruitment is the process by which a person enters the public administration structure with voluntary consent and agreement. According to the Civil Service Employees Law of Afghanistan approved in 2008 the Labor Law of Afghanistan approved in 2006 and the Law of Government Officials approved in 1977 for public administration officials, a number of conditions and procedures have been established for the officers of the public administration, according to which Afghan citizens can enter the structure of the administration after passing this process. In the following, I will briefly mention some of these conditions.

4.1. General Conditions

A person who wants to enter as an employee in the government offices of Afghanistan must complete the following conditions under the heading of general conditions in order to enter the government offices of Afghanistan:

A person who wants to enter Afghan government offices must meet the following conditions:

1. Have the citizenship of Afghanistan.

- The person's age should not be less than 18 years and not more than 64 years.
- Have a health certification from the competent authorities of the Ministry of Public Health.
- Have a baccalaureate degree or higher from an official educational institution inside or outside of Afghanistan.
- He has not been convicted of a crime by the definitive and final judgment of the competent court.

2. A person who is employed as a contract employee in civil service departments who has the qualifications listed in the components (1, 2, 3 and 5) of the previous paragraph.

3. A person appointed to a position who is a direct superior of his first-degree relatives cannot. First-degree relatives are father, mother, children, husband, wife, brother and sister.

In addition to these cases, the administrative structure of Afghanistan has also established some special conditions for entering the Afghan government administrative institutions, which have been discussed under the title of special conditions of employment in the administrative law of Afghanistan. Afghan jurists have defined special conditions for the recruitment of competent and highly educated people for government positions at different levels, the most important conditions of which can be listed as follows:

4.1.1. Minimum Specific Conditions

In this condition, three groups of minimum conditions, which are minimum education, minimum experience, and minimum management and planning ability, have been proposed. Based on this, the minimum education required to hold civil service management positions, post-baccalaureate to bachelor's degree, the minimum required experience of one to four years of work experience and the minimum management and planning ability, the ability to implement and plan policies have been stated (Mohammadi, 2020, p. 371_375). Therefore, a person who wants to be a seat holder in the service structure of the Afghan Public Administration must meet these minimum requirements. Of course, these minimum conditions for employment in the positions of public service institutions in Afghanistan are different based on the positions of the Afghan civil service, for example, a person who wants to enter the position of the first position must have at least a bachelor's degree and four years of work experience. and have the ability to lead and plan, or a person who wants to enter the second level of Afghanistan's civil service must have at least a bachelor's degree, have at least three years of work experience, and have the ability to lead and manage, and in the third level, at least Post-baccalaureate and have two years of work experience and policy implementation, and like this, the conditions are different in the final positions. The violation or the challenge that has been taken regarding the recruitment of Afghan civil service employees is the same as the recruitment of people who have a doctorate or master's degree. It is usually seen that no special value has been placed on appointing people with long scientific documents in the discussion of employment in Afghanistan's public service institutions, which can be considered a great damage to the administrative structure of Afghanistan, and besides that, it is a defect in the general legal principle, that is justice.

4.1.2. The Most Specific Conditions

Following the criticisms of how to hire people with low academic ranks in the recruitment process in the public administration in Afghanistan, it has been seen that the legislators in Afghanistan sought to solve this challenge in the recruitment process in the institutions of the public administration in Afghanistan. For this purpose, the priorities for people who had a long scientific document, I will mention two examples of these priorities.

A: A person who has a master's degree must have at least two years of work experience to be employed in the second position, and at least three years of work experience to be employed in the first position.

B: A person who has a doctorate degree must have at least one year of work experience to perform duties in the second position, and at least two years of work experience to perform duties in the first position. (Mohammadi, 2020, p. 378)

In the discussion above, although it can be seen that the legislator sought to find a solution for talents who have a long academic degree, but it can be seen that this solution is also controversial and challenging because a person who wants to obtain his master's and doctorate because the scientific capacities in the universities and educational institutions of Afghanistan were low, due to the internal conflicts of half a century in Afghanistan, a person is forced to travel outside Afghanistan to obtain these documents and to obtain a master's degree It takes at least three years of time and thousands of dollars of funds for a person to obtain it after passing great challenges, and for a person who wants to obtain a doctorate, it takes at least five years of time and thousands of dollars of capital. Another challenge is to spend money outside of Afghanistan to get his doctorate. In addition, it can be seen that the legislator in Afghanistan has made a miscalculation, because in the 21st century, he has never defined five years of academic education and spending thousands of dollars as equal to two years of experience, or three years of academic education and scientific experience. He has equivalent to one year of work experience in Afghanistan's internal administrations. This issue, besides the fact that it can bring great challenges to Afghanistan's administrations and harm Afghanistan's large internal capacities, it can also be defined against the moral, legal and general principles of law.

The recruitment process of employees in Afghanistan's government offices, based on the current recruitment laws and system of Afghanistan, which was designed after 2001, all civil service positions or all administrative positions are divided into eight categories, and all these eight positions are given to candidates based on the system of open competition. Based on this, the officers are evaluated according to their conditions, capacity, and qualities, and if they succeed in the exams for the respective positions and complete the necessary conditions, they will be hired (Mohammadi, 2020, p. 380). And the legislator has provided material and spiritual privileges for the persons who enter the government offices of Afghanistan as officials, which material privileges are salary, components and appendices, the highest salary for public service officers for the first batch is 32,500 Afghani and the lowest salary For the sixth batch, an amount of 6,500 Afghanis has been provided, in addition to the salary paid under the title of overtime and incentive salary, Afghan administrative employees are also expected to receive money for having a high school diploma, working in difficult environmental conditions, and receiving money for working on Multiple devices, night work, travel expenses and food expenses, providing a vehicle, providing health services, national assistance in special conditions, etc. are among the material privileges that he has provided for the employees of the Afghan administrative services. In addition to these material privileges, the legislator has also provided moral privileges for civil service officers, which include raising the ranks of the employees, awarding letters of appreciation and commendation by the authorities to the officer, and various types of leave are among the moral privileges for government officers. In the administrative system of Afghanistan, it has been foreseen by the legislator.

An important thing that should be remembered is that the salary and privileges of political officials or people who work in government political positions are different compared to the public service structures of Afghanistan, that is why a special law has been considered to determine the material and moral privileges of political positions. It is the highest salary in the political positions of the president with a factor of 15 and the lowest salary is also received by the members of the municipal assembly (Ruhani, 2021).

5. Recruitment of Contract Lecturers in Public Universities and Higher Educational Institutions of Afghanistan

As in the introduction, we have briefly provided information about the recruitment of contract lecturers, but due to the importance of the issue of how to recruit contract lecturers in universities and government institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, I will also raise this issue. Since Afghanistan has not experienced political stability at least in the last half-century and during this half-century Afghanistan has experienced bloody wars and Afghanistan is one of the few countries where governments always face failure in this country and the last case The failure of the republican system was on August 15, 2021, since the speed of events in Afghanistan is high, these events and negative transformations cause negative developments to affect various aspects of the lives of Afghan citizens, for this reason, universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan It has been one of the most influential structures in Afghanistan, which has suffered the most changes and injuries during this period, along with education, and among the negative effects of these developments is the flight and abandonment of professors and employees of universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan. The challenge can be seen that in order to fill this gap, the legislator has tried to solve this challenge, for this purpose, he has proposed a regulation under the title of the regulation of the employment of contract lecturers in the higher education structure of Afghanistan.

The legislator states that colleges and universities, if necessary, can recruit contract lecturers to recruit permanent professors again. The lawmaker states that contract positions should be announced first, and then contract lecturers should be shortlisted and recruited to universities by taking an exam and signing a contract. The important factors that attract contract lecturers according to the provisions of the legislator are the monetary privileges that the legislator has considered for contract lecturers in the law. According to the regulation of recruitment of contract lecturers, contract lecturers must be paid 65 Afghanis per hour that contract lecturers teach in the university, which is about half a dollar. Since in the education system of Afghanistan, a student usually studies for three hours in a day, according to this system, a lecturer cannot teach more than three hours in a day, and this means that a contract lecturer can teach daily one and half dollar. If we multiply these one and a half dollars by 30 days, it will be about 45 dollars a month, and this is in the conditions that contract lecturers with bachelor's, master's and doctorate

degrees are engaged in teaching in Afghanistan universities and educational institutions. and this problem goes further when a contract lecturer has to teach three hours every day to earn these 45 dollars in a month, and if he teaches less than three hours a day, the salary is much lower than 45 dollars in They will get the moon.

In addition to the challenges that we have mentioned, another challenge can be presented According to the law of higher education in Afghanistan, students must complete two academic semesters in one year, and students must spend one semester usually in four months or sixteen weeks. According to the contract lecturers' employment regulations, the contract lecturers' salary must be paid at the end of the semester. If we want to calculate the salary of a contract lecturer who has taught every day for a full semester, it will be around 180 dollars during a semester or four months and due to bureaucratic reasons And the centralization of Afghanistan's administrative system, after the termination of the contracts that the lecturers made with the faculties, the relevant faculties must go through the procedures and submit them to the university, and the contracts must be submitted to the ministries of higher education after referring them to the scientific and financial branches. It will be sent to the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul and after a few months, it will be sent to the relevant universities, and the universities, especially the scientific and financial departments of the universities, will collect the lecturer's teaching reports from the relevant faculties and send them to the approval department. Also, after checking the reports, they sends it to the bank that receiving this 180 dollars during one semester is a big challenge for contract lecturers, and if we calculate this annually with all these challenges, a contract lecturers during two semesters and with teaching He earns about 360 dollars during a year, while in other government offices and even permanent professors in universities and higher education institutions, they have extraordinary material and spiritual benefits, while contract lecturers only earn They have a salary of around 360 dollars, and that too if the majority of these contract lecturers who are hired have bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees and do not enjoy any other material or spiritual benefits during teaching, and in many cases with challenges such as discrimination, Not having a job guarantee, they face mental challenges, which in fact is considered the biggest challenge of contract lecturers in the education system of Afghanistan, which represents the institutional deficit in Afghanistan.

Salary of Contract lecturers in Afghanistan Public Universities and Higher Educational Institutions ¹		
Number	Salary Amount	To USD
1	Salary Amount per hour	0.5
2	Salary Amount per day	1.5
3	Salary Amount per month	45
4	Salary Amount per semester	180
5	Salary Amount per year	360

In addition to the things mentioned above, based on the interviews and discussions we had with about fifteen contract lecturers and administrative employees involved with contract lecturers regarding the recruitment and challenges of contract lecturers at least in five different provinces of Afghanistan, how to recruit and the challenges of contract lecturers We asked them by asking the questions that we prepared in advance, which can be summarized as follows.

Among these fifteen interviewed lecturers, 87.5 percent were men and 12.5 percent were women, of which 12.5 percent had a bachelor's degree and 87.5 percent had a master's degree, and all of these interviewees had teaching experience. In the government universities of Afghanistan, they had contracts as lecturers, and among them, the majority of lecturers, which is about 62.5 percent, were satisfied with teaching in universities, and 37.5 percent were not satisfied, further from the interviewees. We asked about their salary, and about 63% of them answered that they receive 65 Afghanis per hour, 12.5 percent answered that they receive a salary of 60 to 80 Afghani an hour, and 12.5% said that they receive a salary of 60 Afghani an hour, and 12.5% said that they receive a salary of 1000 Afghani an hour. Regarding the teaching of contract lecturers in Afghan public universities, it is worth mentioning that a contract lecturer can usually teach only three hours in a day. They were satisfied with the salary they received, and about 87.5 percent were not satisfied with the salary they were receiving. We asked these

¹ At the time when this article was being researched, one USD dollar was equivalent to more than 90 Afghanis, around 100 Afghanis, and 65 Afghanis was roughly equivalent to more than half a USD dollar.

lecturers if they have other privileges, such as social, welfare, and health privileges, in addition to the salary they receive. etc. All these lecturers answered no, they don't receive any other privileges, then we asked all these lecturers if they experienced discrimination while teaching as contract lecturers in government institutions and universities, or if they faced discrimination around 71.4 percent of them answered that they experienced discrimination and they were never treated equally like other permanent professors, especially in terms of privileges and employment. 75% of the respondents answered that they had a negative effect on the quality of the lesson and 25% said that it had a positive effect. Meanwhile, we asked all these lecturers whether the low salary they receive for teaching is a violation of domestic laws and International documents, especially human rights documents, know that 50% stated that they are a violation of Afghanistan's internal laws and international documents, and the other 50% answered no. Especially about labor rights, you know that 50% answered yes and the other 50% said no. Further, we asked all these interviewees for their opinions about the challenges of contract lecturers, and these lecturers expressed their most important suggestions as follows:

- All these lecturers stated that the salary they receive in exchange for teaching as a contract lecturer in the universities and government educational institutions of Afghanistan was not acceptable and they stated that serious attention should be paid in this area.
- All these lecturers proposed a contract that material, social and health benefits should be provided for them in the structure of the law in addition to a suitable living wage.
- All these contract lecturers complained about how to be employed as contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education and stated that a transparent and fair process should be established in how to hire contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan.
- And as the last proposal, they stated that a legal structure regarding the position of contract lecturers in the structure of the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan should also be proposed. (lecturers, 2024) ²

6. Defects in International Human Rights Documents:

According to Article 7 of the Constitution approved in 2004, Afghanistan is committed to the implementation of all international documents, especially the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2004, Official Gazette 818) For this reason, in the following, the most important international documents that have been raised regarding the protection of workers' rights, especially in the issue of wages and discrimination, will be discussed. Since the contract lecturers in the universities and educational institutions of Afghanistan are among the most educated and literate citizens of Afghanistan, paying 45 dollars per month for teaching is a violation of human and labor rights, for this reason, according to a number of important international documents and rights Humanity will be discussed about the worker.

6.1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on December 10, 1948, emphasizes equality and prohibits any discrimination in its second article, states that all human beings, regardless of the group they belong to, are entitled to all the rights and privileges that are in all the provisions of this There are notices. This declaration also emphasizes in its seventh article that everyone is equal before the law and people should be protected from any discriminatory act against the law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a clear emphasis on the protection of workers in its article 23. This declaration raises important discussions in this article in four paragraphs, including in the first paragraph of this article, it states that every person has the right to freely choose the job of his choice. to choose, every person has the right to have good working conditions and the right to be protected against unemployment, in the second paragraph of this article, it emphasizes on equal wages and states that every person has the right regardless of any discrimination in They should receive equal wages against the employer, in the third paragraph of this article, the emphasis is on supporting the worker's family, and in the fourth paragraph of this article, the formation of labor unions is also emphasized (Universal Declaration of Human Rights December 10, 1948). Examining the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding the

² It is necessary to remember that due to the request of the interviewees we did not include their reputations, and these interviews were conducted with contract lecturers from the first month of 2024 to February 13, 2024 in five provinces of Afghanistan.

protection of labor rights, it is seen that there is a clear deficiency in the case of contract lecturers in the universities and educational institutions of Afghanistan.

6.2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966

The Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which is considered to be the most important document of human rights after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in addition to the important discussions that it states in its introduction, emphasizes in paragraph one of its second article that any kind of discrimination based on different bases is prohibited, in The first paragraph of the eighth article emphasizes that no one can be enslaved and rejects any type of slavery, and in the third paragraph of this article, it also defines hard and forced labor as a type of slavery and prohibits it. In Article 26, it emphasizes that all persons are equal before the law and should enjoy all privileges and equal protections. By examining this important international document, it can be seen that it has important protections related to human rights, and if we apply the provisions of this document to the rights of contract lecturers of universities and government educational institutions, it can be seen that the provisions of this document apply to contract lecturers in universities. and higher education institutions are violated. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, December 16, 1966)

6.3. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966

The Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant of Political and Civil Rights, which is also known as the International Charter of Human Rights, is one of the most important human rights documents that have been approved regarding the protection of labor rights, and the articles make explicit statements about the protection of labor rights, including this convention, in addition to emphasizing economic rights, in its seventh article, it explicitly emphasizes labor rights in three paragraphs, this convention emphasizes wages and salaries in the first paragraph of the first paragraph of this article Equality is equal to work, and in the third paragraph of this article, it emphasizes the support and promotion of workers, and in the ninth article, it emphasizes the provision of insurance for employees (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, December 16, 1966). By examining the important provisions of this important international document, it can be seen that contrary to the provisions of this document, there are major challenges in the way of contract lecturers in the universities and educational institutions of Afghanistan, and it is necessary for Afghanistan, as one of the addressees of this document, which has signed it, to take practical measures to improve the conditions of contract lecturers in universities and government educational institutions of Afghanistan.

6.4. Declaration of Islamic Human Rights (Cairo) 1990

The Islamic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is considered one of the most important human rights documents in Islamic countries, has special attention in the discussion of labor rights, especially the rights of workers, including this document in its first article condemns any discrimination and treats all human beings as equal and equal. introduces, in its eleventh article it condemns the existence of any kind of slavery and defines colonialism as the worst kind of slavery, and further in its thirteenth article it states that every human being has the right to work and it is among the duties of governments to improve the working conditions for Provide their citizens. (Declaration of Islamic Human Rights approved in 1990 by the Organization of Islamic Conferences, Cairo) By examining these important articles of the Islamic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it can be seen that this document paid special attention to labor rights.

6.5. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950

This convention, which is considered one of the important human rights documents, especially in Europe, emphasizes in its article 14 that the addressees of this document should benefit from all the rights and privileges included in this document without any discrimination (European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms amended based on Rome Protocol No. 11, November 4, 1950 and entered into force in 1953). By examining the provisions of this important article of this document, it can be seen that the issue of

discrimination has not been considered in the discussion of contract lecturers of universities and educational institutions in Afghanistan.

6.6. American Convention on Human Rights 1979

This convention, as one of the important human rights documents, emphasizes in its first article that all the member states of this document provide the opportunity to benefit from the rights of this document for all citizens who are the addressees of this convention, without considering discrimination based on race, color, gender, language, religion, political belief, social, economic status or place of birth or other matters (American Convention on Human Rights adopted in 1979).

6.7. Statute of the International Labor Organization in 1944

The International Labor Organization, which is considered one of the oldest organizations of human society, has raised important issues regarding the protection of workers' rights in its constitution, for this reason, this organization states its most important goals in its strategic goals section in its constitution. In order to create a suitable environment for the employment of women and men, and also to improve social coverage, the organization also states in the annexed section of this statute under the title of declaration related to the goals and objectives of the International Labor Organization in the first article of this declaration that poverty is a serious challenge. It is considered for this organization, in the first paragraph of the second article, it states that all human beings, regardless of race, creed or gender, have the right to pursue both their material and spiritual well-being in the conditions of freedom, honor, economic security and equal opportunity. In the fourth paragraph of the third article, it states that the conference has a great and serious commitment of the International Labor Organization regarding the advancement of global programs, including policies related to wages and income, hours and other working conditions in order to ensure that all people Humans should get an equal share of the fruits of progress and all the working people and the needy should receive at least a living wage (International Labor Organization Charter May 10, 1944).

6.8. Guidelines for workers for Employment and Decent work for peace and flexibility Recommendation No. 205 of Geneva International Labor Organization

Recommendation letters, which, unlike conventions, are not mandatory and have more of a guideline and order aspect, for this reason, countries do not consider themselves bound to implement the provisions of the recommendations, but they cannot ignore these recommendations, for this reason, the provisions of this recommendation We will check as an example. This recommendation has the most important provisions in the protection of workers' rights in the field of rights, equality and non-discrimination, which states in its fifteenth article that members should provide opportunities and services for women and men without considering any kind of discrimination according to the wage convention. according to No. 100 and Recommendation No. 90 of 1951 and the Convention on the Source of Discrimination (Guidelines for workers for employment and decent work for peace and flexibility Recommendation No. 205 of the Geneva International Labor Organization).

7. Defects in Afghanistan's Internal laws

After 2001, Afghanistan achieved great legal achievements, among which the most important of these achievements can be considered the approval and creation of important domestic laws, for this reason, in this section, we discuss the most important laws related to our topic.

7.1. Constitution Afghanistan 2004

The Constitution of Afghanistan approved in 2004, which is considered to be one of the best constitutions in the history of Afghanistan's one-century laws and one of Afghanistan's achievements during the twenty years from 2001 to 2021, states in its seventh article that Afghanistan is committed to implementing the United Nations Charter. Interstate treaties, international covenants to which Afghanistan has joined, the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights. Also, in its twenty-second article, it states that any kind of discrimination between Afghan citizens, men and women, is prohibited, and in its article 48, it emphasizes that work is the right of every Afghan and providing it is one of the duties of the government (Constitution of Afghans approved in 2004). According to the provisions of this article, the Constitution of Afghanistan is committed to respect the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Conventions on Political and Civil Rights, and the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but it can be seen that in the case of contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education Afghanistan has violated all provisions of these cases.

7.2. Labor Law of Afghanistan 2006

The labor law, which is considered one of the great achievements in the field of legislation in the field of worker protection, was approved by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2005. This law has many important provisions with the approval of international human rights documents in the protection of workers, which are in the form of for example, we will examine some important articles of this law. This law, in its second article and its second and fourth paragraphs, defines the goals of this law as the support of the Afghan government for the equal rights of employees as well as increasing the capacity of employees. In its fourth article, it prohibits any type of forced labor and any type of forced labor that is against the will of the worker. In its eighth article, it states that employees in Afghanistan have the right to equal pay for equal work, in its ninth article, it rejects any kind of discrimination and states that any kind of discrimination in the process of hiring employees, salary and other privileges of employees inside Afghanistan It is prohibited and in the twelfth article, Afghanistan is required to comply with all international documents and covenants of the International Labor Organization, which Afghanistan has joined (Labor Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2006. 914 Official Gazette). By examining these cases, it can be seen that the labor law of Afghanistan has stated many important issues regarding the protection of the rights of employees, while it can be seen that none of these protections are seen in the contracts of contract lecturers in the universities and government educational institutions of Afghanistan.

7.3. Civil Service Employees Law of Afghanistan 2008

The Civil Service Employees Law of Afghanistan, which has been approved to regulate government employees in Afghanistan's public offices, is one of the laws that regulates how to hire government employees and the privileges of employees in Afghanistan's public offices. There are government offices in Afghanistan, which we will deal with a few limited cases in the protection of employees' rights in this law as an example. The important thing that this law states in the fourth paragraph of the second paragraph is that the provisions of this law cannot be applied to professors, and the law mentions it in the same way and it is not clear whether the purpose of professors in the law is university professors or school teachers. The term professors are understood to include both university professors and school teachers. In addition to this, the third paragraph of this law defines contract employees and states that contract employees include professional and professional employees who are hired to provide services in the government office in accordance with the provisions of this law, in the seventh article of this law. In the employment section, the law states that the persons who want to be appointed as professors in the university must complete the special conditions specified in the law in addition to the general conditions mentioned in the law (Civil Service Employees Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2007, 951 Official Gazette). By examining these cases, it can be seen that this law is more related to the regulation of the staff of public administration institutions than specialized institutions such as universities and scientific institutions.

7.4. Government Officials Law of Afghanistan 1977

According to the fourth chapter of this law, the government employee can use rights such as salary with its attachments, legal holidays, promotion and pension rights. (Law on Government Officials of the Republic of Afghanistan 1977, Official Gazette 364). While it can be seen that in contrast to these privileges, none of these privileges are seen for contract lecturers of universities and government institutions of higher education in Afghanistan.

By examining some examples of important laws related to the rights of employees, it can be seen that the Afghan legal system pays special attention to the rights of employees in its legal structure, including the emphasis of the Afghan Constitution, which obliges the Afghan government to comply with all international documents, including It is known as human rights, but in the case of contract lecturers in the universities and government institutions of Afghanistan, it can be seen that the minimal attention that has been given in the legal system of Afghanistan in the protection of employees has not been paid to the contract lecturers in the universities and educational institutions of Afghanistan.

8. Deficiency of the General Principles of Rights

8.1. The principle of fairness

The principle of fairness, which is used to resolve disputes by a judge or arbitrator, is sometimes used as a general legal principle (principle of fairness) and sometimes as a high moral principle that can override legal rules (principle of justice and fairness) (Matiei & Varki, 2018, p. 137). The principle of fairness, which means the involvement of judgment, conscience, and common sense in the issuance of judgments, has now penetrated into various national and international arenas, both judicial and arbitration, and until now, the International Court of Justice is the most important judicial authority in various contexts. He has used this principle in his opinions, and according to the opinion of jurists, this principle is considered as legal rules and based on the provisions of the subject. The consent of the parties does not differ and this principle has been recognized for almost a century. (Matiei & Varki, 2018, p. 156) And this principle is respected and used in most of the legal systems, but if the subject of contracts for contract lecturers is studied in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, it can be seen that the principle of fairness has not been paid the slightest attention in these contracts.

8.2. The principle of good faith

Although the principle of good faith has been defined and recognized in various legal systems and has provisions in many countries' laws, it can be seen that it has not been explicitly defined in the majority of countries' legal systems. For this reason, according to many experts, the concept of goodwill is a subjective and qualitative category that is difficult to define, but nevertheless, in the dictionary definition, goodwill is an additional combination of the two words goodwill and intention, which is used together with the interpretation of fair behavior. And they define it as having good intentions or lack of intention to cheat or gain privileges against conscience. (Bariklo & Khazaei, 2011, p. 55). It is difficult to see the principle of good faith that good faith is not defined in the legal system of Afghanistan. (Moheghi, 2019, p. 17) However, it can also be seen that the principle of good faith is accepted in the Afghan legal articles and points to its observance, for example in Article 698, it states that contracts that are not accompanied by the principle of good faith cannot be enforced (Stephanie, et al., 2013, p. 85). This in itself shows the approval of the principle of good faith by the legal system of Afghanistan, by examining the principle of good faith that is accepted in most international legal systems and the legal system of Afghanistan, it can be seen that in contracts with contract lecturers or university fees and institutions Higher education takes place in Afghanistan, there is no sign of the principle of good faith in these contracts, and contract lecturers have no will to express their opinion and share their opinion in the preparation of contracts, which is the defect of the principle of good faith.

9. Research Findings

The findings of this article indicate the difficult situation of contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education and it was seen that they face many big challenges while performing their duties and teaching in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, which include a number of these important issues.

It can be listed as follows:

- Violation of internal laws of Afghanistan; Violation of the internal laws of Afghanistan, which has been approved in its territory to protect the rights of citizens and workers, including the constitution and the labor law.

- Defects in international human rights documents; It can be seen that in the case of contract lecturers in universities and higher education institutions, most of the international documents that have been approved in the United Nations General Assembly and other international and regional organizations in support of human rights and labor rights are in the contract. There is a shortage of contract lecturers in universities and higher education institutions in Afghanistan.
- Violation of the citizenship and human rights of lecturers, which usually the activities and teaching of these lecturers are very similar to one of the definitions of hostage taking in the new era.
- Systematic discrimination; Facing systematic discrimination in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, especially in the salary sector, which in no way means that receiving 360 dollars in one working year does not represent equal salary for equal work, and this is an example of slavery in the new era.
- Violation of social security; violation of social security of contract lecturers in universities and government institutions of higher education in Afghanistan. In the majority of cases, it has been seen that contract lecturers with at least bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees as active citizens did not have the right to social security in Afghanistan in the 21st century.
- Lack of job security: It can be seen that contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan do not have any job security.

10. Conclusion

Afghanistan has been experiencing instability and long war for at least half a century. The long instability and devastating wars in Afghanistan caused this country to lose many of its infrastructures, millions of Afghans became victims and millions of other Afghans migrated. It is at the level of the international system that has experienced the most human rights violations in different sectors. Education institutions, along with other institutions, have been among the institutions that have experienced the most damage during half a century of instability. After 2001, with the support of the international community led by the United Nations, Afghanistan was experiencing reconstruction after many decades, and among these institutions of higher education and education were among the institutions that had the most positive changes during the two decades after They experienced from 2001 to 2021, an example of which can be pointed out that tens of millions of children are engaged in education in public and private schools and millions of students are engaged in public and private universities.

As we mentioned earlier, the civil wars caused millions of Afghans to be killed and millions of others forced to leave Afghanistan, and among them, Afghan university professors and elites were among the Afghans who left Afghanistan and went to The countries of the region and the world immigrated, and as a result of this migration, it was seen that educational institutions, including universities and state institutions of higher education, were faced with a shortage of professors and university employees, and the leadership of the Ministry of Higher Education, universities and state institutions of Afghanistan in order to fill this gap, he hires professors under the title of contract lecturers, and in the process of hiring contract lecturers, they were seen to face great challenges, including human rights violations, discrimination, lack of adequate livelihood, lack of job security, The absence of social security and other material and moral benefits that are intended for other employees including permanent professors in universities and higher education institutions of Afghanistan can be seen for this reason, which proves the hypothesis that we raised in response to the question of this article. These cases are examples of the challenges faced by contract lecturers in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, which can have destructive effects on the quality of services provided in universities and institutions of higher education in Afghanistan, along with other negative effects.

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Institutional Deficit and its Effect on Afghan Political Order: Narrative of Decay within the Government

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Abstract

The Bonn Agreement signed on December 5, 2001 is considered as the starting point for establishing a democratic government in Afghanistan. The new government created hope for a bright and progressive future for the international community and Afghans with the slogan of commitment to the rule of law, accountability, and efficiency in services. However, the reality of Afghanistan tragedy indicates a severe deficit in the government-committed institutions. The constitution, as the most critical institution, provided the ground for emerging a king in the clothes of the president. The strong presidential structure with the "president as king" approach failed to establish political order and democracy, as well as planting the seeds for the lack of accountability and flagrant violation of laws, resulting in abuse the power by officials and even members of the National Assembly. The law and institutions failed to control people within the government and no one paid attention to its implementation or non-implementation, resulting in setting the stage for the crisis of legitimacy. The present study aims to assess the method of weakening the political order by the institutional deficit during the last 20 years. Based on the hypothesis, the institution's insignificance, as well as institutional noncompliance and instability within the government led to the concentration of power and weakening of government efficiency, rule of law, and accountability. The historical institutionalism theory proposed by Robinson and Acemoglu was used to test the hypothesis. This study was conducted by conceptual analysis with explanatory approach. The data were collected based on the document-library information and the references are presented based on the APA method.

Keywords: Institutional Deficit, Political Order, Rule of Law, Nepotism, Separation of Powers, Constitution

1. Introduction

Military forces led by the United States of America (USA) entered Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Then, the Bonn Agreement was signed between the leaders of Afghanistan to establish a democratic government led by Hamid Karzai. Hope increased for the future of Afghanistan as a democratic government with capable institutions that can institutionalize the rule of law, legitimacy, and accountability. Only a fraction of poured dollars were utilized to build infrastructure, schools, or other public services critical to developing inclusive institutions or even restoring order and rule of law. The presence and cooperation of the international community in Afghanistan weakened the government and its laws, instead of strengthening the institutions of the government.

Most of the resources were catastrophically corrupted and wasted due to the lack of a strong and accountable government. The suffocating rule of the national and local petty kings who ruled the political and economic life of the people broke the chain of the rule of law or well-functioning legal system. The extreme weakness of the rule of law and the lack of accountability of the government raised the alarm of robberies and big political and economic thefts, resulting in forcing the democratic government born in the Bonn Agreement to go astray and turn into an uncontrollable monster. According to development thinkers such as Robinson and Acemoglu, Afghanistan appears to have become a bankrupt state due to the existence of weak and non-inclusive governmental institutions or the lack of powerful political and economic institutions. The result was disastrous, despite efforts to establish a democratic, pluralistic, accountable, and transparent Afghan government whose orders are implemented throughout the country, indicating that no institution in the history of Afghanistan or any part of this country provides an example of such an extensive effort. Traditionally, Afghanistan has been regarded as a geographical term for a region which was never under the unified rule of any single power, rather than a country in the conventional sense. Thus, the weakness of political institutions in Afghanistan is among the most critical influencing factors in the lack of political order in this country.

In the light of this concern, this study seeks to address how institutional deficit undermined the political order in the government supported by the international community from 2001 to 2021. This hypothesis can be proposed that the institutions insignificance, as well as institutional noncompliance and instability within the government led to the concentration of power and weakening of its efficiency, weakness of the rule of law, and its lack of accountability. The historical institutionalism theory suggested by Robinson and Acemoglu was applied to test the hypothesis. A completely different objective is pursued here unlike other studies. To this aim, the present study traces the course of events occurred a decade before the establishment of the new government during 2001 to show how far the post-2001 political structure actually functioned.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Institutionalism

During the past few years, institutions were mainly defined casually in different studies in political science and economy. However, they have attracted a lot of attention due to their critical role in creating the relationship between politics and economy. This change does not stem from the popularization of an academic fashion. Rather, it represents a vital development in the evolution of development theories in political science and a correct understanding of the value of institutions (Steinmo, 2013). The aforementioned development is considered as the product of studies in the field of political development and economic growth in different countries about the role of institutions (e.g., North, 1990, 2006; Huntington, 1973; Fukuyama, 2011; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012) (Nayab, 2016, p.64).

According to institutionalists, institutions are regarded as "stable, respected, and repetitive patterns of behavior" which continue to exist even after the end of the working period of the responsible persons. Institutions are considered as stable rules which shape, bind, and guide human behavior in a certain direction (Fukuyama, 2014, p.16). To understand this point, try to imagine a world where no rules exist: in this anarchic order, every time people encounter each other, they attempt to insure only their own survival and interests. (Steinmo, 2013). Hobbes quoted about societies with no strong and comprehensive government institutions that There is a constant fear and danger of horrible death with life being "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." (Hobbes, 1998, p.217). Hobbes adds that in such a scenario, there are houses that no one tries to maintain or repair, with holes in their walls and porches; murder is the daily routine of the people. There is no stable trade or commerce; local powerholders are the "gods" and enforcers of laws over society. (Hobbes, 1998, p.23) Therefore, the citizens' security or appropriate conditions for the growth of individuals are not provided in the absence of a central authority which benefits from a legitimate monopoly on the use of force. Government with central authority does not mean authoritarian government with centralized institutions. Here, the vital principle indicates government with open, yet bound institutions such as political ones which exhibit a high level of social mobilization. Social mobilization means the participation of the whole society, especially non-rulers in political affairs, which appears in non-institutional forms such as revolutions, protests, petitions, and general pressure on superordinates through associations or

media, and institutional forms including free elections or legislative assembly (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p.19).

The tyranny comes from the inability of the society to influence the policies and actions of the government. To make a government accountable, responsive, and bound by the rule of law a strong social mobilization which actively participates in political affairs is required. Thus, the range and scope of action of a constitution or any other governmental institution depends on the ability of ordinary people to defend its principles and demand what it has promised, even if by resorting to non-institutional means (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2016). Accordingly, most of the backward societies such as Afghanistan are drowning in corruption, destruction, and poverty due to the lack of political institutions with capacity and being involved with the deficit of governmental institutions. Institutional deficit means a government whose political institutions fail to function in a real method, resulting in reducing its capacity in the efficiency of public services and accountability for the society (Fukuyama, 2014, p.63). Institutional deficit indices include the following with which the data of the indicated study is analyzed.

2.2. Institutions' insignificance

The institution's insignificance means that rules and regulations are not followed by actors and cannot alter the behavior of individuals or government officials. An institution such as the constitution or vote of the National Assembly regarding prohibiting the exercise of government is considered as insignificant when any intended result expected by dominant and powerful actors becomes a product. In other words, institutions are regarded as redundant when they fail to play any role in guiding the behavior of the relevant actors. For example, institutions insignificance occurs when the American constitution fails to prevent the manipulation and abuse of its presidents in behaviors such as centralizing power or prolonging the term of service in the form of a dictatorship (Brinks, Levitsky, & Murillo, 2019, p.4).

2.3. Institutional misalignment

Misalignment denotes non-implementation of laws and behaving against fixed rules by government officials and individuals. Such deficit sometimes appears due to the existence of unequal structure or nature of institutions, resulting in strengthening the context of unbalanced behavior of actors. In other words, in the case of misalignment, institutions due to structural weakness are derailed and subjected to misuse and abuse. In such institutional weakness, political elites or officials decide not to implement or agree to implement the laws based on their interests and expediency. The unbalanced nature of the institutions in this process increases the actors' self-confidence. However, noncompliance often occurs because government actors decide not to enforce the rules. In most of the cases, corruption, as well as individual and group benefit comes first during the noncompliance. Such institutional weakness derives more from the structural nature of institutions. The actors cannot exploit the weakness of the institutions when they are designed based on the geographical conditions of the country (Levitsky & Murillo, 2009).

2.3.1. Institutions instability

Stability is among the most critical characteristics of an institution, which cannot be. In the case of institutions instability, the vital principle includes the expansion of actors' preferences and direction of their objectives, which aim to focus institutional changes towards personal goals. Here, institutions instability is defined as an extremely high rate of institutional change, which makes it impossible for political actors to develop stable expectations about the function of the rules or clear strategies to pursue their interests. Institutions which alter with the changing wishes and whims of the political elite cannot be called strong. Political elites in most of the unstable countries seek to direct the laws in line with their objectives under the pretext of institutional reforms (Levitsky & Murillo, 2009). What is explained as the final analysis is considered as a hybrid institutionalism called "historical institutionalism," which emphasizes the political institutions of the government. Historical institutionalism is based on an institutional organization in government management and political economy of the government although it regards the non-governmental social and political institutions as vital in building different national paths (Niknami, 2022, p.352).

2.4. Political order

Students and researchers who work in the field of stability and political order within the framework of institutions always seek to understand how and when political orders are created, maintained, or eliminated at the level of domestic and international actors (March & Olsen, 1998, p.953). How can the anarchic order based on nepotism and corruption alter in a government? What are the indices and pillars of a political order inside a government? The meaning of political order is explained by providing answers to the above-mentioned questions. The political order has three main hypotheses which our data are examined in its framework.

2.5. State

A complete understanding of political order requires focusing on the concept of state. The existence of the state indicates the presence of a set of institutions which organize and regularize the behavior of officials and leaders based on fundamental rules (Vincent, 1987, p.17). The state institution means establishing concrete institutions such as the army, police, strong bureaucracy, ministries, parliament, and the like, which is performed through hiring the necessary manpower, training employees, preparing offices and workplaces, providing the necessary budget, and passing necessary laws and instructions (Fukuyama, 2014, p.43). The ability to employ power to enforce laws, create order, provide services, and procure basic public goods is among the most critical functions of the government. Probably, the control of violence by the state is among its main functions. In addition, the existence of social mobilization and a social contract among citizens are among the influential features in the quality of state institutions (Pippidi, 2015). Eliminating the patronage system and strengthening the principle of meritocracy is probably one of the most basic features of modern states, which can strengthen their capacity and quality in the long run. In this regard, Woolcock and Andrews argued that "imitation or copying the apparent forms of the state in developed countries is among the biggest obstacles faced by developing states, which fail to provide services such as education, health, security, and peace at the level of developed states (GSDPP, 2013).

2.6. Rule of law

Rule of law means that some laws limit and regulate the sphere of action for even the most powerful political actors and government officials in a society. The rule of law should be distinguished from what is sometimes called ruling through the law. In the case of the latter, the law is considered as the ruling order, which does not limit anything (Fukuyama, 2014, p.21). In the rule of law, the laws are regarded as clear and stable, which reflect the principles of justice in a particular society. For the rule of law to be real, the laws should be binding on the most powerful people in society i.e. the king, president, prime minister, religious-local leaders, army, generals, and the like. The society suffers when the people who hold the executive power in a certain society set and implement the laws based on their wishes (GSDPP, 2013).

2.7. Accountability

Accountability means the government response to the interests of the entire society. Accountability mechanisms limit government power to ensure that such power is only used in a consensual and restrained manner (Pippidi, 2015). The government is considered as limited if its institutions can be held accountable to society and citizens. Such government is limited not only due to being bound by constitution but more importantly, people are allowed to complain, demonstrate, rebel if officials deviate from their path and encroach upon the public domain. The presidents, prime ministers, and legislators in this government are elected and dismissed by the society when they do not like their actions. The bureaucrats in this government are subjected to criticism and supervision. Such a government has a harmonious coexistence with the society and listens to the citizens. Therefore, the political order is formed in the coordination of the aforementioned hypotheses. Such order represents a limited government, which is considered as an institution restrained by the society and restraining the society (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p.46)

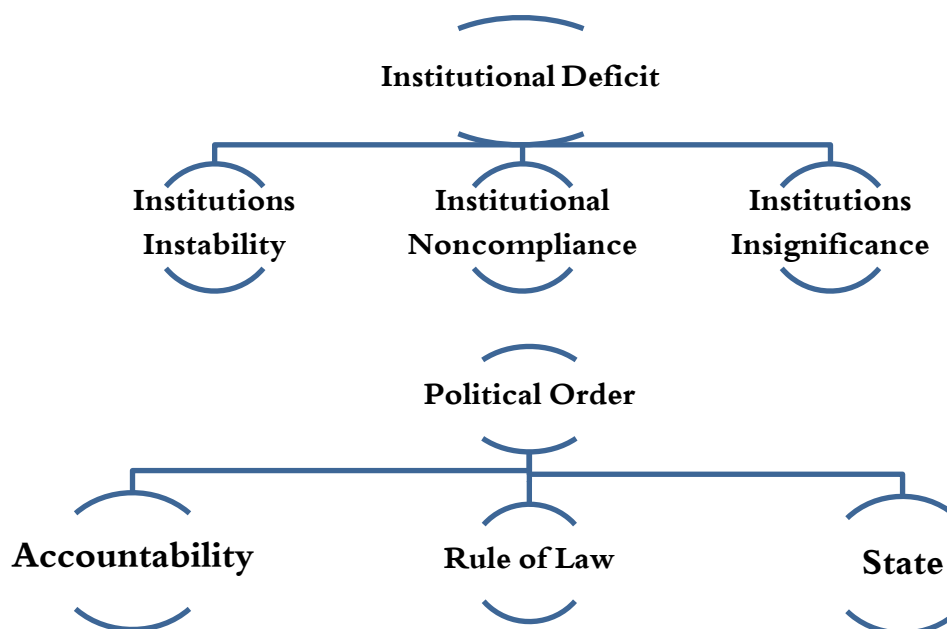


Figure 1: General structure of institutional deficit and political order

3. Method of analysis

The method is based on conceptual analysis with an explanatory approach. To this aim, the researcher seeks to set the logical hypotheses as criteria and interpret the meaning of the concepts in a comparative manner in order to measure their impact on each other. Such method is proposed by researchers who support the approach of logical positivism to operationalize the concepts. The keywords of political order are operationalized based on the framework of historical institutionalism of development and meaning in the geography called Afghanistan. Here, the operationalized meaning differs from other interpretations and studies conducted in this field.

4. Afghanistan's state and noncompliance

The agreement to establish the interim government in Afghanistan with the cooperation of the international community was concluded in Bonn, Germany on December 5, 2001, which is usually regarded as the starting point in establishing the Afghan government. The interim government was announced under the chairmanship of Hamid Karzai. Then, a process was defined to form the loya jirga (traditional council of tribal elders) in order to design and approve the institutions of the Afghan government (Latif & Mahmmodi, 2016, p.46). The international community seeks to help form a democratic, pluralistic, transparent, and accountable Afghan government, whose orders are implemented throughout Afghanistan. However, the reality of Afghanistan tragedy does not provide any sign of comprehensive and coherent institution in its history. Traditionally, Afghanistan has been considered as a geographical term for a region which was never under the unified rule of any single power (Kissinger, 2014, p.381). Thus, Afghanistan is not even worthy of being regarded as a real state, despite the international community efforts to create an inclusive and pluralistic government. The local and national petty kings are still considered as a big obstacle to dominating the territory and population of this country and the laws are only on a piece paper since they should be formulated based on their wishes and interests. Otherwise, the laws are nothing more than a piece of paper. The above-mentioned process affects the public trust in government projects and public service provision negatively (SIGAR, 2022, p.35).

4.1. *flawed separation of powers*

The lack of a competent administrative apparatus with laws which neutralize each other while encroaching on the public domain is among the most critical gaps faced by bankrupt governments. Institutions crush each other in the

absence of such a mechanism (Fukuyama, 2014, p.61). Separation of powers was proposed for the first time in the 1932 Constitution of Afghanistan, despite its elementary nature. However, meaningful separation of powers was only foreseen in the 1964 Constitution. Based on this concept, a despotic government emerges when only one of the government institutions establishes, implements, and monitors laws and other ones are isolated or exiled (Hamidi & Jayakody, 2015, p.6). According to Montesquieu, institutions and government fail to manifest the public will unless the separation of powers is such that power prevents power (Agu, 2014, p.40). However, limiting the powers of the government is considered as the vital function of the constitution as a set of institutions. The authors of the 2004 Constitution aimed to create a strong executive branch in Afghanistan due to historical and practical reasons, resulting in setting the stage for a constant battle between the institutions of power. The separation of powers was only observed on worthless paper at the desk of the law enforcers, which never materialized in practice, despite its recognition by the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan. Accordingly, the power was concentrated in the capital of the country and much power was granted to the executive branch to encourage the government system work (Hussaini, 2022, p.5-6). According to the 2004 Constitution, the power and authority between the three institutions of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches were heavily weighted towards the government, resulting in neutralizing the effectiveness of the order of separation of powers because this process becomes effective when the distribution of power is equal and obvious both on paper and in the field of action. Therefore, the separation of powers based on the 2004 Constitution shows weaknesses, both on paper and in practice. Power is decisively tilted in favor of the executive branch and at the expense of the judiciary and legislature branches. Based on the 2004 Constitution, the president can enact laws, as well as controlling appointments at all of the levels in government institutions (Hamidi & Jayakody, 2015, p.7), resulting in affecting the separation and balance of power among the three branches of the government. Thus, the overreach of the executive branch has been among the biggest challenges to the implementation of the constitution in Afghanistan under the 2004 Constitution (Hamidi & Giacudi, 2015, p.4), which turned the president into a despotic Leviathan due to the absence of balancing institutions such as strong legislature, independent judiciary, and active political parties. The process of abuse and misbehavior to achieve non-public demands by the president and his cabinet increased institutional noncompliance in the Afghan government (Giacudi, 2015).

4.2. Structural tyranny of Afghanistan 2004 Constitution

Structural tyranny in the constitution means a high degree of centralization of the government, where the executive branch is largely unchecked by the judiciary and legislature, resulting in facilitating the abuse of authority, which is largely ignored (SIGAR, 2022, p.40). Throughout the modern history of Afghanistan, the constitutions have been implemented for the centralization of power and development of the government in remote areas without the supervision and involvement of the people in the political decision-making process. The central government does not accept any accountability in the provinces due to the flawed separation of power enshrined in the Constitution (Ibrahimi, 2019, p.44), resulting in turning the president into a king. The Constitution established an exclusive centralized presidential system during 2004. Based on the Article 60 of the Constitution, "the president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, as the head of the government, exercises his powers in the executive, legislative, and judicial spheres." Therefore, the president found the monopoly of ruling over all of the regions in this country, as well as obtaining the necessary authority to exercise power like a dictator (Hussaini, 2022, pp.6-7). However, the 2004 Constitution emphasizes that the president has enough power in the executive, legislative, and judicial spheres (Constitution of Afghanistan, 2004, 60).

Such delegation which was free from a strong mechanism for accountability and oversight sow the seeds of authoritarian rule. According to Shahrani, the 2004 Constitution paved the way for the emergence of a "president more powerful than a king" (Shahrani, 2018). To understand the weaknesses of the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan, the list of the President's powers and competencies in the constitution is presented, which identifies a high degree of concentration of power in the executive body of the government.

- Appointing one-third of the members of the Senate (Ibid, 35)
- Monitoring the implementation of the constitution (Ibid, 36)
- Leading all of the army forces in the country (Ibid, 37)
- Making the necessary decisions to defend territorial integrity and maintain independence (Ibid, 38)
- Issuing presidential decrees (Ibid, 359)

- Organizing Loya Jirga (Ibid, 40)
- Opening of parliament and Loya Jirga sessions (Ibid, 41)
- Inviting to referendum (Ibid, 42)
- Accepting the resignation of the vice presidents (Ibid, 43)
- Dismissing or accepting the resignation of ministers, judges of the Supreme Court, head of the central bank, and head of national security
- Determining the heads of political representation in foreign countries and international institutions
- Accepting credentials of political representatives of foreign nationals in Afghanistan (Ibid, 47)
- Approving the law and judicial rulings (Ibid, 48)
- Reducing and amnesty of punishment (Ibid, 49)
- Appointing high-ranking officials, city governors, police officers, heads of courts, and presidents of universities

Carothers argued that the dominance of the legislature by the executive in most of the developing countries is rooted in their constitution, resulting in reducing the quality and effectiveness of the legislative branch against the tyranny of the government significantly (SIDA, 2003, p.28). The relationship between the executive branch and parliament has been relatively hostile and reactive since the first parliament started working during 2005. The executive and legislative branches (both under President Karzai and Ashraf Ghani) have regularly sought to undermine the parliament. The head of the executive branch has ignored a large number of decisions adopted by the parliament including the approval of a law or dismissal of a government minister. Parliament mainly employs the threat of impeachment and vote of no confidence against government ministers to create obstacles for the president, resulting in undermining the effectiveness of the modern constitutional model (Pasarli & Maliar, 2018, p.28). Thus, the president has often exercised his power alone without considering the parliament vote due to the institutional weakness and more specifically the severe weakness of the legislature. For instance, the president has violated the House of Representatives vote of no confidence in the ministers either by their re-appointment as "acting ministers" or referring this vote to the judiciary and deeming their function to be unconstitutional (Hussaini, 2022, p.7). The aforementioned cases have been repeated in Afghanistan for twenty years. For example, Rangina Hamidi, the candidate for the Minister of Education; Mujib Rahman Karimi, the candidate for the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Ajmal Ahmady, the Governor of the Central Bank, were nominated by President Ashraf Ghani to win a vote of confidence in the parliament, while all of the three candidates were rejected by the majority after the vote. However, President Ghani appointed the above-mentioned people as ministers of the aforementioned institutions, despite the lack of a vote of confidence by the parliament (UNAMA, 2021). Rola Ghani, the first lady of Afghanistan, declared in a media session that "the candidates remain in their positions regardless of their acceptance or rejection by the parliament" (Sadr, 2021, p.72). In fact, her declaration was an "obvious contempt to rule of law and separation of powers" in Afghanistan. In addition, 12 ministers were impeached for not spending more than 70% of the development budget of the ministries, and seven in Ashraf Ghani's cabinet were voted no-confidence by the parliament during November 2016. However, the dismissal of the ministers in Ashraf Ghani's cabinet was strongly opposed by the government so that he ordered the dismissed ministers to continue their work contrary to the parliament vote (Pasarli & Maliar, 2018, p.29).

The Afghan Parliament summoned and impeached Rangin Dadfar Spanta, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Akbar Akbar, the Minister of Immigrant Affairs, because of Afghan refugees crossing the border of Iran during 2008. The parliament gave a vote of no confidence to both ministers after the impeachment hearing. President Karzai accepted the vote of no confidence in Akbar's case. However, he rejected this vote in Spanta's case and appealed the case to the Supreme Court, the judges of which are appointed by the president who has significant influence in this regard. The Court interpreted the vote of no confidence in Spanta against the constitution, leading to its cancellation. The battle between the weak parliament and powerful executive branch ended in favor of parliament (Giacudi, 2015). The parliament took revenge against the government and Supreme Court by enacting the law to establish an independent commission to monitor the implementation of the constitution and tasked it with explicit authority to interpret the constitution to this commission. The president referred the law to the Supreme Court, and the Court declared that the law was in conflict with the Constitution. The parliament rejected the vote of the Supreme Court and interpreted its decision as an order of the president. However, the long battles between the executive branch and parliament damaged the public trust and legitimacy of these institutions (Hamidi & Giacudi, 2015, p.8).

In this regard, the committee for monitoring and evaluating the fight against administrative corruption investigated the nature of the relationship between the government and parliament, reporting that a large number of legislative decrees issued by President Ghani came into force and implemented without being approved by the parliament. For instance, 16 laws including those related to fighting corruption, protecting whistleblowers, state-owned companies, mines, and municipalities came into force without passing through the parliament when its members (MPs) were on vacation during summer of 2019 (Soltani, 2019). This case is considered as a clear example of a despotic government which ignores people and their votes.

5. Nepotism of the judiciary

Nepotism among political institutions indicates the type of mutual trading or bargaining between government officials to achieve their private interests. In a relationship based on nepotism, two people with different status mutually exchange two things which they are interested in. Accordingly, the master gives the supporting and subordinate person the things which he/she wishes in exchange for his/her loyalty and political support. A sharp decrease in the quality of government institutions is regarded as the first and most significant effect of nepotism (Fukuyama, 2014, p.26). In a strong and stable political order, judicial officials should benefit from lifelong security so that their political independence is not limited. However, the behavior of the judicial branch officials changes significantly when the security rules related to the tenure of judges are usually violated so that the judges know that voting and taking action against the executive branch can lead to their dismissal (Brinks, Levitsky & Murillo, 2019, p.11). The independence of the judiciary is considered as a fundamental principle in a democratic system based on supervision and accountability (Ibrahimi, 2019). The 2004 Constitution claims that the judiciary is regarded as independent from the government, which is not influenced by anybody in its decisions (Ibid, 116). However, what has been included in the constitution to separate the jurisdictions of the executive and judiciary has rarely been implemented as the constitution intended. The president controls the formation and functioning of the entire judiciary carefully. None of the established regulations are followed in practice, despite the existence of a well-defined mechanism in appointing the Supreme Court officials. Judges are appointed by the president for a specific period of 10 years in Afghanistan unlike most of the democratic countries where the Supreme Court judges are appointed for life. The above-mentioned factor has led to the emergence of nepotism so that judges do not benefit from lifelong job security and are dependent on the president. In other words, these people expect the president to be appointed to another position after the end of their term of service (Hussaini, 2022, p.16). The president can dismiss the Supreme Court officials in case of disagreement between the two sides. Based on the 2004 Constitution, the president can approve or cancel death sentences and reduce the punishment of the accused. In addition, the president can play the role of judge when the government minister is accused of gross violation the laws. According to Article 112 of the Constitution, the president continuously controls the financial, administrative, and judicial affairs of the judiciary. Pensions, shelter, as well as health and welfare facilities can be implemented with the personal approval of the president, resulting in reducing the independence of the Supreme Court (Hamidi & Jayakody, 2015, p.16).

The judiciary has suffered from contradictions in the field of efficiency and implementation of the rule of law due to several reasons. First, the existence of systematic and deep-rooted corruption among the officials and judges of this institution forced the Organization for Monitoring and Fighting Corruption and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to report that one in four people paid bribes to Afghan Supreme Court officials to buy freedom and reduce punishment (UNODC, 2012). Accordingly, President Karzai increased the salaries of judges up to 2000 dollars, which did not reduce corruption. Second, the lack of efficiency of the central government in providing security and establishing a safe environment for implementing the law forced the authorities of the Supreme Court to be impartial in this regard. For example, one of the Afghan prosecutors in Baghlan asserted that "the families of the guilty persons did not allow the situation to calm down when I tried and imprisoned those young men. A murder could happen, and me and my family might be killed" (Eddy, 2009, p.16).

6. Ambiguity in supervision

The 2004 Constitution discusses the vote of no confidence, as one of the most critical supervisory powers of the parliament, ambiguously. Article 92 of the Constitution indicates that the vote of no confidence against the

government minister should be based on "convincing reasons" (Ibid, 172) which are not clear. In addition, nobody knows what happens after a vote of no confidence. Does the minister should continue in office until a new minister is appointed? Should the minister resign immediately or should the minister be dismissed indefinitely? (Kamali, 2014) Violations of the constitution are revealed after every vote of no confidence in the parliament. In such scenarios, the executive branch exploits the ambiguities of the constitution to weaken the parliament and vetoes the issuance of a vote of no confidence by claiming the lack of convincing reasons. For example, the executive branch argued that the vote of no confidence was not based on valid reasons when parliament ousted Spanta, then- Foreign Minister, during 2007, leading to his retention in his position. President Ashraf Ghani acted similarly during 2006 to ignore the decisions of the parliament regarding the validity of the vote of no confidence against seven ministers (Pasarli & Maliar, 2018, p.29).

7. A Government that fails to end violence

Afghanistan has always witnessed insecurity and violence in most of its history (Ibrahimi, 2019) due to different reasons including the lack of a powerful and comprehensive government. Hobbes quoted about societies with no strong and comprehensive government institutions that "There is a constant fear and danger of horrible death. Human life is regarded as isolated, poor, miserable, cruel, and short." (Hobbes, 1998, p.34) The lack of institutional and structural mechanisms to ensure order and security has contributed to the increase in violence and victimization of people. In addition, Afghan society and political institutions have always been affected by the nature and context of villages in the ontological aspect of security. In other words, the government authority originates from tribes, not from a central government. A strong society against a weak government is among the most prominent features of Afghanistan. The lives of Afghans have always been full of constant chaos and insecurity due to the lack of effective control of the central government over society (Deshiari, 2020, p.29). Petty kings or local strongmen, benefitting from popular bases rooted in ethnicity, language, and geography, have influenced the politics and government of Afghanistan throughout its history significantly. In this regard, the Transparency International (TI) reported that the influence of local elites and their widespread corruption in the security and defense sectors has weakened the security structure and intensified internal violence and crimes (Osmani & Niakooee, 2022, p.218).

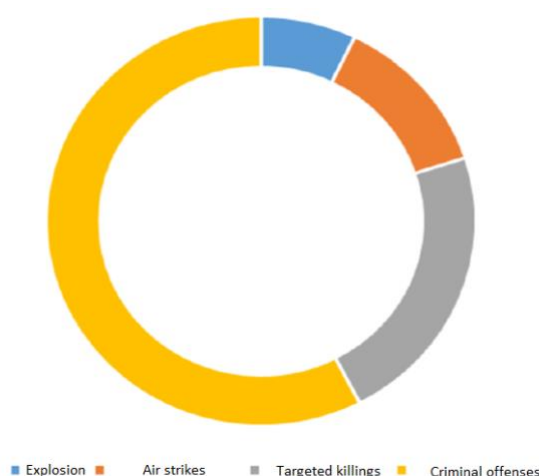


Figure 2: Index of casualties among the civilian during 2020

The influence of strongmen in various government institutions strengthened corruption and trading, resulting in reducing the efficiency and effectiveness of security and defense institutions. In addition, the government failed to implement the laws and provide security by weakening the institutions capabilities (Noorzad, 2021, p.14). The roots of such institutional weakness in the central government should be sought in the failure to complete the process of nation-state building in Afghanistan. The population in Afghanistan is divided into four major ethnic groups including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks, as well as several smaller tribes. Ethnicity, kinship, and Islam form the basis of individual and collective identity in Afghanistan and most of the organizations and social structures are formed on these bases. The aforementioned concepts play a critical role in mobilizing social movements and regulating the interaction of individuals and social groups (UNAMA, 2017). In fact, the

commanders of the army, national security, and security areas of urban zones were appointed based on the balance between ethnic leaders and the agreement of political parties with local warlords, not based on expertise and competence. The formation of the national unity government between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, where the majority of government departments were managed by supervisors, was considered as the peak of conflicts over the distribution of power resources including security institutions (SIGAR, 2021, p.66).

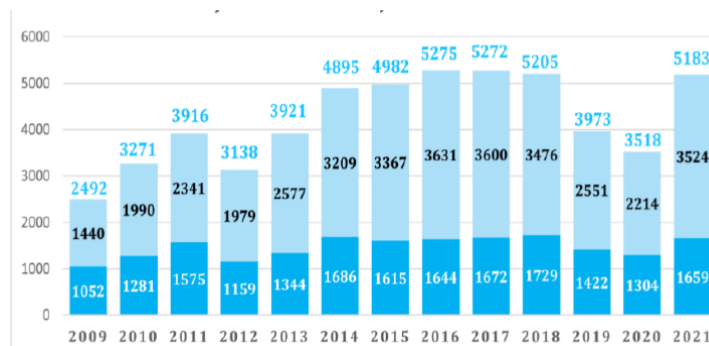


Figure 3: Casualties and injuries among the civilians due to violence

8. Rule of law and institutions insignificance

The existence of clear rules is regarded as the first element of almost any definition of the rule of law. There can be no discussion regarding the uniform implementation of the laws and subordinating the government to the laws without clear rules (Eddy, 2009, p.6). The rule of law is considered as the main protection of people against the formation of tyrant governments and nepotism. However, the institutions are extremely weak and paper-based in Afghanistan since the government official laws have become powerless and disrespectful to the personal laws of strongmen and local warlords due to their influence (WJP, 2019). For instance, "SIGAR" (2015) reported that the mayor of Khost province was sentenced to seven years in prison due to corruption of about 226,165 dollars. However, he was still free, despite the conviction due to his personal relationships with government officials (SIGAR, 2014, p.157). According to any definition of the rule of law, Afghanistan is far from a government based on the rule of law. Still, petty kings rule in most areas of Afghanistan and refuse to implement government activities when they do not match their interests. Violence prevails in most parts of the country as a natural instrument, and corruption, nepotism, and illegal behavior are found a lot (Eddy, 2009, p.7). In such a situation, the path to institutions insignificance becomes smoother because elites and local actors in Afghanistan tend to strengthen their political power anyway since such power is regarded as the source of income, rent-seeking, nepotism, and other privileges. The effects of reducing the political power by the institutions on the political order and economic growth are observed in the long term (Their & Worden, 2020, p.6). A large number of local and ethnic strongmen such as local petty kings managed to find their way into various government institutions including the parliament and ministries using their power and influence (SIGAR, 2021, pp.59-60). The presence and influence of powerful and corrupt people strengthen the non-implementation and ignorance of law reciprocally. In other words, the lack of strong institutions in subordinating evil and corrupt people to respect and comply with the laws, and institutional weakness plays a vital role in increasing the self-confidence of powerful people in crushing the ruling laws.

8.1. Legislators fail to appreciate the law

According to the 2004 Constitution, the Afghan parliament is considered as the most significant and main legislative body of the government, which contains the House of Representatives and the Senate (Ibid, 82). Based on the constitution, the parliament is regarded as the highest legislative authority and manifestation of the people's will, the representatives of which should be free from any criminal history. The parliament can review the actions of the government, impeach ministers, and make decisions regarding the budget and development programs of government. This institution can vote no confidence on any cabinet minister. In addition, approving laws and proposing to obtain or grant loans is among the most critical powers of the parliament (Ibid, 81-85). Based on the rule of law, the law should be binding on all of the citizens including government officials and even its founders.

However, Afghans are widely dissatisfied with the government officials and their opposition in the parliament. The nepotism of the parliament and an increase in their dealings with the officials of the executive branch affected the legitimacy and public trust negatively. The MPs, who should work for the public interest, engage in rent-seeking and bargaining to strengthen their position and secure their personal interests. However, they do not believe in any accountability to the people (Eddy, 2009, p.4). Thus, the laws or institutions become extremely insignificant because institutions fail to influence the actors' behavior. For example, Farooq Wardak, the Minister of Education in Afghanistan, was accused of embezzling millions of dollars by creating thousands of imaginary schools and corruption in textbook printing contracts. However, the Afghan parliament failed to take any action for his prosecution since he neutralized the authority of laws utilizing his personal relationships and business dealings with the MPs (Mehrdad, 2023).

Afghanistan ranked 117th among 180 countries in terms of transparency during 2005. However, it fell to 176th and became one of the most corrupt countries in the world during 2008. Corruption was shadowing like a black cloud in all of the parts in Afghanistan including its parliament (UNODC, 2012) because most of the strongmen, local elites, land usurpers, and powerful rentier groups dominated the majority of government institutions including the parliament and dominated the majority of ministries through force and bargaining after the establishment of the parliament. This has been one of the strong factors for violating the laws, especially the constitution (WJP, 2019). A large number of people in the parliament were accused of corruption and numerous crimes during the past years. However, they were neither the government officials nor MPs. There is evidence of their punishment so that a large number of people believe that the MPs are above the law and strongly resist its implementation (Soltani, 2019), meaning that laws and institutions lack the necessary capacity and quality to alter the behavior of government officials and representatives. The resistance of MPs and government officials to laws stems from several factors. First, President Hamid Karzai sought to balance the distribution of power through informal deals with ethnic elites and local strongmen during 2001-14, indicating that he needed to be close and achieve the consent of the ethnic leaders and local strongmen to obtain the vote of confidence of the people and win the general elections. In fact, he aimed to achieve this satisfaction through mutual transactions. For instance, Yunus Qanuni was considered as the speaker of the Afghan parliament during the presidency of Hamid Karzai and a representative of the Tajik tribe, who achieved a large number of government posts and resources through cooperation with the president. Second, the Afghan MPs applied their legal powers to engage in cross-dealing with government officials to obtain personal benefits. Taking money from ministerial candidates in exchange for a vote of confidence, employing personal relationships to achieve ministry contracts for special individuals and companies, dealing with ministerial candidates to hire relatives in ministries, communicating with embassies to obtain visas, and corrupting consulates in different countries by MPs are among the most prominent cases of nepotism in the parliament (Karimi, 2021) such as the government contract of Ghorī cement, which was negotiated by strongmen and relatives of MPs. Ghorī Cement is a state-owned company in Pol-e-Khomri, which was handed over to a private company called "Afghan Investment Company" during 2007. The shareholders of this large state-owned company included Mahmud Karzai, the brother of Hamed Karzai, the former president of Afghanistan, Haji Hasin Fahim, the brother of Marshal Fahim, the first deputy of Hamed Karzai, Ghafar Dawi, the husband of one of the lawyers in the Majlis, and Ubayd Allah Ramin, a MP. The above-mentioned contract was signed for 49 years, while based on the new mining law of Afghanistan during 2005, the duration of contracts is 25 years. In addition, the shareholders of the company should have invested 45 million dollars for the reconstruction of the first and second production center to generate 1000 tons of cement per day, while the reports and evidence represent that none of the articles of the contract were implemented (Pajhwok & Daribi, 2018). The aforementioned case is considered as an example of institutions insignificance by officials and MPs which clarifies the method of turning political power to the source of income and rent-seeking of elites. Most of the MPs competed with each other for their personal interests, and the government took full advantage of the institutional noncompliance of the legislature since the MPs tend to implement laws only when their personal interests are involved. During 2017, numerous evidences were published about the corruption and secret transactions of MPs and ministers of the government with the contracted companies of the ministries, indicating imaginary figures in the contracts such as oil, meat, clothes, construction, and the like, as well as looting millions of dollars (SIGAR, 2016, pp.11-15).

Therefore, the MPs extremely tended to be loyal and bargain where the government could offer more profitable incentives. The MPs aimed to cooperate and unite with the president and government ministers after being elected

because access and proper relations with the government could facilitate a wide range of benefits for these people and their families (Hamidi & Jayakody, 2015, p.15). For example, Abdul Rahim Ayoubi, the representative of the people of Kandahar in the Afghan Parliament, severely criticized the existence of mediation and bargaining in the House of Representatives during 2014 and asked the representatives to resign en masse so that this institution does not suffer more. Ayoubi claimed that "ministers pay between 5000-10000 dollars to achieve a vote of confidence from the MPs or make deals to hire their relatives." (Karimi, 2021) In addition, Ramazan Bashardost, the representative of the people of Kabul in the parliament, claimed in one of his interviews that "professional thieves and drug smugglers are present in the parliament as people's representatives." The scope of such statements and criticisms has always existed about this institution (Mezedi & Raja, 2017, p.76). Another example is related to the embezzlement of more than 54 million Afghanis by Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi, the head of the Afghan Parliament, during 2018 which was spent for the rent of his house from the budget of the House of Representatives. The weakness and absence of strong laws allowed Ibrahimi to commit corruption by using government resources and facilities, and the laws remained powerless and silent in this regard (Soltani, 2019). Based on the TI, Afghanistan was ranked 165th among the corrupt countries in the world during 2020. Further, it was recognized as the most corrupt country in the world after North Korea with 19 points out of 100 ones (TI, 2020).

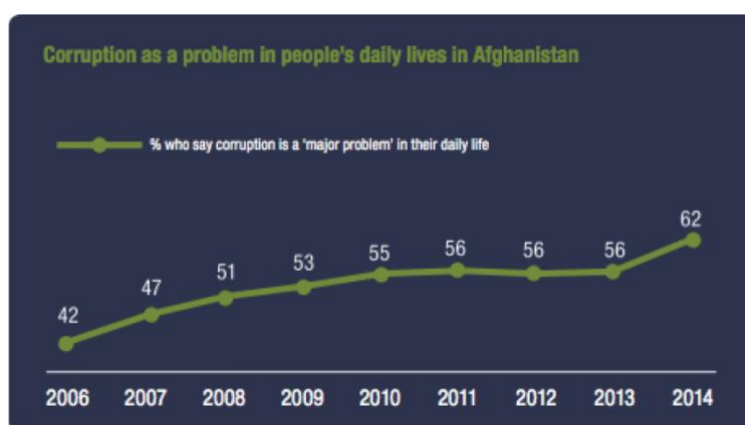


Figure 4: Corruption index as a big problem for people

The existence of widespread corruption and nepotism in various government departments and even among the people's elected representatives severely affected political legitimacy and public trust. According to TI, corruption and nepotism are regarded as the biggest problems for the people in Afghanistan (TI, 2015, p.20).

8.2. Political crises and sleeping parliament

As indicated, the existence of a strong presidential system created the conditions for various crises in Afghanistan. Power was concentrated in the capital and few powers were observed in the provinces and districts. The legitimacy of government institutions was minimized and the elements of participation were extremely weak (Akbar & Akbar, 2011, p.4). Furthermore, Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system was selected by Afghan and international actors deliberately to eliminate parties partly due to their violent reputation during the 1990s civil wars and partly for avoiding opposition to new government formation during 2001. The SNTV system in Afghanistan strengthened the executive branch (Hussaini, 2022, p.13). Experts consider the proportional representation (PR) or single transferable vote (STV) system to be more appropriate for the participation of political parties in the parliament. However, the Afghan election system utilizes the SNTV system which encourages candidates to adopt individual policies and limits participation or presence of political parties. For example, only 32 candidates (1.2% of all of the candidates) belonged to a party in parliamentary elections in Afghanistan during 2010 (Yazdanfar, 2020). The SNTV system does not allow the parties to grow and institutionalize their presence in the parliament. Selecting this system may be a strategy to weaken the parties and prevent the emergence of a strong opposition in the parliament (Larson, 2015, p.16). According to the constitution, the electoral and presidential system strengthens the ground of power concentration and abuse of the president as a king. The SNTV election system prevents people from joining together around common objectives, both today and in the future, in addition to hindering the principle of party organization and discipline. This factor has forced the MPs of Afghan to be isolated and pursue

personal objectives, resulting in sacrificing the public interest or common goals based on the interest of society for individual interest (Jalali, 2015). For instance, only a tangential connection is observed between representatives and voters under the SNTV system. Voters do not know their representatives and representatives do not need to answer to voters. Thus, parliamentary seats are considered as rent-seeking opportunities, and the creation of legal immunity is regarded as its added advantage. The mediation of elections by a central authority led by a small, yet powerful group of decision-makers creates a large number of incentives for corruption due to lucrative nature of parliamentary office and general climate of impunity (Darnolf & Smith, 2019, p.15). In a parliamentary system, the cabinet is considered as a decision-making structure determined by the parliament, which distributes power proportionally in various departments and layers of the government structure. The leader of the party who wins the majority of seats in the parliament is appointed as the prime minister. The prime minister and his cabinet are constantly accountable to the parliament and nation in their decisions and performance. The opposition and smaller parties can prevent the ruling party from monopolizing by uniting and forming a coalition, even in cases where a single party has the majority of seats in the parliament (Larson, 2015, p.7). Based on the survey conducted by the "Afghanistan Free and Fair Elections Foundation" during 2017, 60% of people seek to alter the electoral system to provide the basis for the strengthening and presence of parties (Yazdanfar, 2020). The lack of the above-mentioned mechanisms increases nepotism and systematic corruption among the MPs and government officials, resulting in affecting the efficiency of parliament negatively. Afghanistan experienced deep political crises in several election periods such as 2014, during which the parliament failed to resolve the crisis, resulting in establishing the national unity government between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. The crisis was accelerated by two basic factors including the SNTV electoral system with related institutions, which made it impossible to establish a stable political system, and continuation of political dissatisfaction with the nature of the centralized political system with the president's monarchy (Their & Worden, p.7). The crisis intensified when both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani declared their win in the 2014 elections simultaneously, and none were willing to accept defeat. The crisis reduced months later with the mediation of John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, and with the agreement of the National Unity Government with power sharing between Ghani and Abdullah (International Crisis Group, 2017). "Clear humiliation of the peoples' will and flagrant violation of the constitution" was accompanied by the establishment of the national unity government, which was repeated during the 2019 elections. The Afghan parliament never succeeded in representing the peoples' will in any political crisis.

9. Accountability: Governments which breaks the chains

According to the majority of political science thinkers, the laws should be binding on the most powerful people in the society including the king, president, prime minister, ministers, and government officials which should be accountable for their performance in order for the rule of law to exist in real terms. The law fails to chain power and government when it is violated or misused by the law enforcers who are not accountable to any institution (GSDPP, 2013) just like what is happening in Afghanistan. Such government fails to respect any of the limitations in the law and does not set boundaries for its performance. According to Abdul Ali Mohammadi, the legal adviser of Ashraf Ghani, "violating and disregarding the law is common in the Afghan government" (Mezedi & Raja, 2017, p.32).

9.1. Issuing legislative decrees of the president

According to Article 79 of the 2004 Constitution, the government can issue legislative decrees in cases of "urgent necessity" when the parliament is in recess. These decrees are automatically enforced with the approval of the president. However, all of the orders issued under Article 79 should be submitted to the parliament within one month following the resumption of the parliament. The houses of the parliament can reject the decrees when both agree. Practically, this provision of the constitution was applied by the executive branch in countless cases. However, there was no "urgent necessity" for legislation during the shutdown of the parliament and most of the decrees were enacted without the review and approval of the parliament (Giacudi, 2015, p.7). For example, 16 laws including those related to fighting corruption, protecting whistleblowers, state-owned companies, mines, and municipalities, were enacted by the order of the president without passing through the parliament during its shutdown in the summer of 2018. Rostam Ali Peyman, a member of the Parliament Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, approves the entry into force of some of the president's decrees as official law (Soltani, 2019).

Contrary to the law, President Ghani managed almost 50% of the cabinet of the government for two years by acting ministers during the second term since the ministers who had the temporary title were easily removed unlike those who received a vote of confidence from the parliament, resulting in opening the space for negotiation with those who sought to create trouble among opposing groups (Mehrdad, 2023). This authority and competence enables the president to bypass the legislature and issue arbitrary orders. The president seeks to ignore this issue, even in cases where the parliament exercises its powers according to the constitution. For instance, the plan proposed by the government during the COVID-19 disease crisis, called "National tablecloth," was decisively rejected by the parliament. However, the president insisted on his position, resulting in implementing the plan by support of the World Bank worth 240 million dollars, despite the corruption (Sadr, 2021, p.60). Dawood Sultanzoy was among the most loyal associates of President Ghani. At that time, he was regarded as the mayor of Kabul and conducted the biggest corruption case in the "National tablecloth" project, as well as embezzling more than 10 million dollars without being prosecuted by the government (Mehrdad, 2023).

9.2. Illegal democratic government

According to Article 68 of the 2004 Constitution, the first vice president is considered as the second person in the government, who has extensive powers in the executive field after the president (Ibid, 68). Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum, the first vice president of Ashraf Ghani, was out of Afghanistan for more than two years due to a dispute with President Ghani. In fact, his absence provided the ground for President Ghani's isolation (Constale, 2020). During the second term of his government, President Ghani ruled through a selected and narrow circle of loyalists without listening to the people's voice and answering their questions, resulting in destabilizing the government at a critical point. At this point in time, a circle of power was formed by President Ashraf Ghani with the presence of Fazel Fazli, advisor to the president as chief of staff, and Hamdullah Mohib, as national security advisor. During the last two years of the government, Mohib dismissed and appointed the heads of security institutions with no experience or knowledge in this field. The people, who suffered greatly from a non-participatory and non-democratic government, humorously called this circle of power "three-member republic" (SIGAR, 2021, p.60). This type of governance by Ashraf Ghani increased the distance between the government and people, resulting in weakening the legitimacy of the government severely. "SIGAR" identified the lack of internal legitimacy or people's dissatisfaction with the actions of the government as the most significant factors in the failure of the Ghani government (SIGAR, 2022, p.27). President Ashraf Ghani always claimed that "I am the elected president of the people in Afghanistan and I have come to power based on free elections and people's vote." However, his claim was nothing more than a joke in the opinion of the majority of people because only less than 10% of the 20 million eligible citizens went to the polls in the 2019 elections in which Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah faced with each other. In addition, widespread allegations of fraud at all of the levels in the electoral process led to a five-month delay in announcing the winner (SIGAR, 2023, p.12). The same thing occurred during the 2014 elections. In this regard, SIGAR declared that democracy in Afghanistan is far from a stable Jeffersonian one since democracy is regarded as the source of legitimacy for leaders and government actions, which never existed in Afghanistan (SIGAR, 2022, p.28).

10. Conclusion

Afghanistan is still among the poorest and most devastated countries in the world, despite 20 years of the presence in the international community and spending hundreds of billions of dollars to establish a developed and modern government. Accordingly, the people of Afghanistan and international community should know what went wrong in this country. This issue helps understand the future path of Afghanistan and gives the insight to avoid repeating the fatal mistakes made after 2001. Here, the deficit in government institutions was found to be the main obstacle faced by the political order and the main reason for its deterioration in Afghanistan. Every political order is based on institutions such as government, rule of law, and accountability. The government is considered as a centralized and hierarchical institution which benefits from the monopoly of employing legitimate force in a specific territorial area. The lack of political order in Afghanistan is among the most critical challenges to the formation of a powerful and comprehensive government throughout the history of this land. The weakness of the government political institutions has severely challenged the political order in Afghanistan over the years, leading to great and permanent suffering of the Afghan society.

Noncompliance in government institutions with the 2004 Constitution, which was hastily prepared and approved, did not match the existing ethnic and political realities. The constitution designed a "centralized and autocratic structure of government." The president enjoyed unbridled powers and authority in the absence of meaningful separation of powers and strong presidential control. The concentration of power in the institution of government weakened the foundations of its legitimacy and turned the government into an authoritarian one. President Ashraf Ghani took a position contrary to the parliament vote, vetoed its resolutions, and implemented his decrees. Corruption, coercion, and abuse of power became a delicacy for Afghan officials. President Ashraf Ghani became known as the three-member republic by concentrating power and abusing his powers. This opportunity was provided for Ghani by the flawed structure of the 2004 Constitution. The government refused to respond to any political institution such as public opinion or legislature because the legislature was stuck in the swamp of corruption, nepotism, and dealings with political officials. The MPs tended not to violate or implement the laws in order to obtain their personal objectives and achieve their own interests, resulting in spreading the institutions insignificance. The MPs were busy looting resources for their own benefit and their families, instead of eliminating obstacles and addressing people's demands. Friends and relatives of the MPs were never punished and imprisoned for violating laws and criminal acts since they enjoyed extensive relations with government officials using their power and competences. The candidates for cabinet ministers should make personal agreements with the MPs to obtain their votes. In addition, the SNTV system played an essential role in paving the way for tyrants, corrupt people, and warlords because it was regarded as a big obstacle in the participation of active and democratic political parties, resulting in providing the basis for corruption, ethnocracy, bargaining, and looting for the government and parliament. Weak institutions which lacked necessary authority to control government officials were considered as the main element which eroded the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people, resulting in deteriorating the political order in Afghanistan.

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Consolidating Democracy in Ghana: The Role of the Social Sciences

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Abstract

Theories that underpin democratic consolidation makes allowance for movements either towards or away from stable democratic practice. But in all, the most significant underlying assumption in the plethora of literature on consolidation is that, after a successful transition, democratic values and norms become secured due to their entrenchment and favourable conditions that exists in society to make it work. Democratic consolidation connotes entrenching the practice where the people are involved in the day-to-day decision-making and also making sure that institutions work and work effectively. Since 1992, Ghana has transformed its rule from military to civilian one, democracy – where the citizens directly or through their representatives take the day-to-day decision on behalf of the people. The main objective of the study is to examine the role of the various disciplines in the social sciences namely - political science, economics, development studies, sociology, psychology, law etc in the democratic consolidation process. The study is based on content analysis and desk review. It is the thesis of this paper that, practitioners in these disciplines mentioned could help in the entrenchment of democratic values by engaging the rule and the ruled to play their respective roles as established under the legal framework of the country. This eventually will lead to the strengthening of institutions, inducing transparency and accountability and imbibing in the citizenry civic culture and values thereby enhancing participation in decision-making and eventually consolidating democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Policy Reforms, Social Sciences

1. Introduction

The Gold Coast was declared an independent state on 6th March, 1957 and its name changed to Ghana, after an ancient empire in Sudan which was vibrant economically from the fourth to the tenth centuries (Ziorkli, 1993). Since independence, Ghana's political history reflects the alternation of power between military governments and democratically elected ones. Immediately after independence, the country embarked on a multi-party democratic system. Due to some political developments in the country, the Nkrumah government passed a legislation in 1964 that introduced a one-party state, invariably curtailing multi-party politics and moving the political system to an authoritarian one. Interventions by the military in the politics of the country from 1966 through to 1993, with 'two short-lived democratic interludes in 1969-72 and 1979-81', heightened authoritarianism in the body politic of the

country (IEA, 2008). It is duly acknowledged that, countries that transition from colonialism to independent countries usually face political challenges in ensuring stability, consolidating democracy and rising to meet the expectations of the citizenry (Girven, 2024).

The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) which ruled from 1981 to January 6th 1993 was the longest government in the history of the country. It operated on a vision and ideology of social revolution with participatory democracy as the driving force for change (Gyimah-Boadi, 1993). This was a military government which ruled without the mandate of the people. Beginning from 1988, calls intensified for a return to democratic rule from the PNDC, and so in 1991 a Consultative Assembly was established to draft and write a new constitution for Ghana which was approved by the public through a referendum (Ayee, 1993). In April 1992, the draft constitution prepared by the Consultative Assembly was approved by an overwhelming majority of Ghanaians which constituted about 92 percent. This paved the way for the ban on party politics to be lifted in May, 1992, in preparation for elections based on multi-party democracy (Bureau of African Affairs, 2008). The National Democratic Congress (NDC), National Convention Party (NCP) and the Eagle party alliance won the first presidential elections conducted under the fourth Republic.

Since then, Ghana has been able to have a peaceful transfer of power from one democratic government to another resulting in the 9th parliament of the Fourth Republic under the 1992 Constitution being ushered into office on 7th January, 2025. The focus of this paper is to look at the extent to which Ghana has consolidated its present democratic experience and the role that the disciplines under the Social Sciences have played in the consolidation. This paper is presented in nine sections. Section one contains the introduction. This is followed by the profile of successive governments, and relevant theoretical issues in democracy and democratic consolidation. The fifth section examines strategies for democratic consolidation, while the sixth discusses the 1992 Constitution and Ghana's democratic experience. The seventh, looks at the synergy between the social sciences and development, and the last, but one highlights the role of the Social Sciences in democratic consolidation and how the various disciplines contribute to the development of policy. The conclusion concentrates on the key roles of the Social Sciences in the consolidation of democratic norms to enhance national development.

2. Methodology

The review of the literature examined information from various important sources such as journals, academic publications, books, magazines and a host of websites which covers the major area of the paper, social sciences and democratic consolidation. Through this methodological approach, the paper was able to bring to the fore key information that spans the social sciences and the consolidation of democracy. Further to the above, the paper highlights the significant contribution of the social sciences to societal development. As an academic discipline, scholars and students who study in the disciplines under it, study the workings and the various institutions of society, and through that, are able to contribute to policy formulation as well as the needed reforms to ensure national development.

3. Results

3.1 Profile of successive governments and their economic policies

On 6th March, 1957 the then Gold Coast, gained independence from its colonial master Britain. The country then became a republic under the leadership of the late Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah of the Convention Peoples Party on 1st July, 1960. On 24th February, 1966 the Police cum military staged a successful coup and overthrew the Nkrumah government (Oquaye, 1980). The Progress Party led by Busia then came to power on 2nd October, 1969 but was short-lived and was overthrown by Kutu Acheampong on 13th January, 1972 (Oquaye, 1980). There was a 'Palace Coup' in 1978 where the chief of staff of General Kutu Acheampong, General Akuffo took over power and ruled till 1979. Flt. Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings took over on 4th June, 1979 and held power until elections (Chazan, 1988). After years of military rule in the country, democracy was again re-instated and the People's National Party (PNP) was elected into power on the 24th of September, 1979. The PNP government established a

constitutional democracy fashioned along that of the United States where all government ministers came from outside the legislature (Ninsin, 1989).

On 31st December, 1981 on the eve of the new year, the PNDC government which had ushered in the PNP government overthrew same in a bloodless coup whiles Ghanaians were asleep. The military government led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, its Chairman then ruled the country for eleven continuous years without any viable opposition or parliament. The country's public sector went through a series of reforms between 1980 and 1990 which resulted in the World Bank - National Institutional Renewal Programme. International as well as domestic demands for a multi-party government and constitutional rule led to the opening of the political space and finally a referendum on 28th April, 1992 on a new constitution. The PNDC government then metamorphosed into the National Democratic Congress (NDC), with Jerry Rawlings as its presidential candidate which won the 1992 elections that were boycotted by the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the main opposition party. The president-elect was then sworn in on the 7th of January, 1993.

After two terms in office, the incumbent party lost power to the NPP led by John Agyekum Kufour which was also sworn into power in 2001. Prof. John Evans Atta-Mills took over from the Kufour government and ruled till the 12th of May, 2012 when he passed. His Vice-President John Dramani Mahama then took over and won the 2012 elections.

Summary of the political and economic profile, 1957–2021

Dates	Government	Type	Economic stance
1957-66	K. Nkrumah, Convention People's Party	Civilian	Socialism with Eastern Bloc orientation, Protectionism; High public expenditure and establishment of State-Owned Enterprises.
1966-69	A. Afrifa/E. Kotoka, National Liberation Council	Military	Renounced socialism, austerity measures, move to liberalise economy.
1969-72	K.A. Busia, Progress Party	Civilian	Market economy, liberalisation, devaluation of the national currency.
1972-77	General I.K. Acheampong, National Redemption Council	Military	Home-grown solutions to resolve economic challenges. Reversal of Busia's devaluation, Operation Feed Yourself, and feed Your Industries.
1975-78	General I.K. Acheampong, Supreme Military Council I	Military	Adopted home grown solutions, Operation Feed Yourself, and Feed Your Industries.
1978-79	General F.W.K. Akuffo, Supreme Military Council II	Military	Inward looking, protectionist.
1979	Flt. Lt. Rawlings, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council	Military	Reforms, but a general tightening of economic Controls.
1979-81	Hilla Liman, PNP	Civilian	Continuation of the economic control.
1981-92	Flt. Lt. Rawlings, Provisional National Defence Council	Military	Initially a tightening of controls, but from April, 1983 an outward-oriented Economic Recovery Programme (ERP).

1988	Divestiture Implementation Committee	Military	Integral part of the ERP, oversee and implement the divestiture/privatisation process.
1993	Flt. Lt. Rawlings, National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Civilian	Continuation of ERP, privatisation and divestiture. No regular opposition in Government/Parliament.
1996	Flt. Lt. Rawlings (NDC)	Civilian	Second election year under the 4 th Republic. The minority parties participated in the re-election.
2001	President J.A. Kufour, (NPP)	Civilian	Private sector as engine of growth and golden age of business. Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy given impetus within a development framework.
2004	President J.A. Kufour, (NPP)	Civilian	Growth and poverty reduction programme and good governance.
2009	John Evans Atta-Mills (NDC)	Civilian	Social democratic policies and Ghana Shared Growth and Opportunity Programme
2012	John Dramani Mahama (NDC)	Civilian	Continued the Social intervention policies, with intervention from the IMF
2017	Nana A. D. Akufo-Addo (NPP)	Civilian	Democracy with free market economy and social intervention programmes such as Free Senior High School education
2021	Nana A. D. Akufo-Addo (NPP)	Civilian	Continuation of policies and programmes from the first term

Source: Roe and Schneider (1957 - 1992); and Dordunoo C.K. (1993-1996); Authors' construct, (2001 – 2021).

This was challenged at the Supreme Court where he was affirmed as the country's newly elected leader. He lost power in the 7th December, 2016 elections to Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the NPP who has currently finished his second term. This is the longest establishment of democratic government that the country has enjoyed. Gradually, institutions are acquiring maturity, but not as expected to be able to deal with economic challenges currently confronting the country.

3.2 Democracy: what is it? Relevant theoretical issues

According to Schmitter and Karl (1991), the word democracy has been “circulating as a debased currency in the political market place”. Various political actors with varying beliefs and practices, strive to describe their actions as democratic (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). It resonates in the people's mind daily, and comes from their mouths as they fight for their civil liberties and better economic prospects. There is therefore, an imperative need to craft a valid meaning, if it is to be of significant use in analysing political discourse and practice. Democracy is derived from the Greek word (dimokratia), “popular government” which was coined from (demos), “people” and (kratos) “rule” in the middle of the 5th-4th BC (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010). In contemporary discussion, democracy entails a system of political governance where those who rule are held accountable for their actions through periodic elections by the citizenry, either directly or indirectly in a competitive process by their chosen representatives (Sodaro, 2001). Even though, scholars have not agreed on a universal definition of ‘democracy’, two key principles underlie any given definition. The first, and foremost principle is that, each member of the society has ‘equal access to power’, and secondly, all men enjoy their civil liberties guaranteed under international law (Schmitter & Karl, 1991).

Democracy goes beyond periodic elections, and embraces ‘meaningful dialogue, debates and political discussions that are geared towards resolving issues that arise within the community. Participation in decision-making, is one of the key essentials to notions of modern democracy. This is because citizens will be able to take part in decisions concerning their communities, which may pave way for a direct form of democratic governance where the views of the ordinary citizens may be heard. There is deliberation of issues that concerns all citizens. A meaningful deliberative democracy involves dialogue on pressing national issues among all competitive interests within the community on critical issues that confront them. Democratic governance at the local level promotes political education (IDEA, 2001).

By participating in decision making on challenges that confront them at the local level, individuals acquire a good knowledge about societal issues, which hitherto would have been the preserve of elected public officials and professional administrators. Further, there are three other significant features of democracy, which include civil liberty and equality before the law, competitive elections and constitutionalism, which embrace the rule of law, transparency and accountability (Tsai, 2024). These must be there to support the consolidation process (Tsai, 2024). A well-informed and educated citizens in a democratic society, make pluralist decision-making possible and more effective. Participation help narrow the gap between the “political elite” and community members (Levinson, 2011).

Proponents of participatory democracy, such as John Stuart Mill and other advocates, have opined that, by having deliberations with the people on issues that confront society at the local level, it unlocks the virtue and intelligence of the members of the community which intend to promote ‘good governance and social welfare’ (Kolak, 1999). This is because, democracy will eventually enhance good relationships among the citizenry, and help build a community that can map up strategies for their own defined needs. Another advocate of participatory democracy, Rousseau was of the firm believe that, by participating in decision-making on issues that confront the people, it brings about what is good for all through consensus reached, by simple majority (Rousseau, 1762). This essay will examine the extent to which the social sciences enhance these attributes in democratic consolidation.

Democracy also involves having periodic or regular and credible elections, where power is transferred through universal adult suffrage without any coercion. In well-established democracies, there is the presence of a guaranteed opposition where political opponents and minorities can express their views and influence decision – making i.e. this goes beyond mere representation in the policy making process (Heywood, 2000). In instances where minorities views cannot be factored, opposition should be institutionalised and should not be violent. There should be respect and protection of the basic fundamental human rights of the citizenry which includes civil and political rights. Other scholars are also of the view that, democracy should entail ‘development, economic and environmental rights such as clean water, housing, and opportunities for employment’ (IDEA, 2001).

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) have also emphasised under Article 2, under the objectives of the charter that democracy could be deepened if member states promote and imbibe universal values and principles. Added to this, is respect for human rights, promoting and enhancing adherence to constitutionalism, and rule of law anchored on the supremacy of the constitution in all political arrangements. Moreover, the charter also stipulates the holding of regular, free and fair elections to ensure institutionalised legitimate authority of representative government, as well as democratic change of government. The Charter on democratic governance also prohibits, and rejects unconstitutional change of government in any member state as a serious threat to stability. It promotes peace, security and development and ensures the protection of judicial independence (African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, 2007).

Further, the charter also highlights the nurturing, support and consolidation of good governance through the promotion of democratic values, which includes building and strengthening institutions of governance and inculcating political values in the citizenry. This has also been reiterated by Tsai (2024) who has opined that, democracy embraces three key essential values such as civil liberties, democratic pluralism and constitutionalism. It also encourages effective co-ordination and harmonisation of governance policies amongst state parties, with the aim of promoting regional and continental integration, sustainable development and human security. The charter also speaks against corrupt practices that occur within the state, encourages the establishment of democratic

norms that enhance the participation of the citizenry in decision-making, guarantees transparency, free access to accurate and timely information, free press and accountable governance in public administration (African Charter on Elections and Governance, 2007). The attainment of human development goals is contingent on strong bonds that exist between good governance and sustainable development.

Sodaro (2001) in his book “Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction” has stated that, the key ingredient of democracy is the ability of the people to determine those that govern them. In several instances, the people elect those who govern them, that is key government officials and hold them accountable through periodic elections and questioning time in the national assembly on actions taken. Democracy also places legal limits on the powers of the government through the guarantee of certain basic rights to the citizenry. Governance entails a collection of means in electing people to public offices, the attributes of those who are eligible to hold public office and those who cannot, and the rules that govern the making of public policies. For this to be able to work to achieve the desired ends, there must be laid down procedures which are known and accepted by all (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). Lastly, but not the least, democracy must enhance gender equity and equality in the governance process and guarantee international best practices in elections management to ensure political continuity that leads to democratic consolidation.

3.3 Democratic consolidation

Democratic consolidation entails the process whereby a newly established democracy matures to the extent that, it is very difficult to relapse into dictatorial tendencies without an external shock. Some academics are of the view that, democratic norms become consolidated through the creation and promotion of secondary structures that nurtures it. The term “democratic consolidation” also refers to a situation of making sure that newly-established democracies become secured, their existence prolonged and safeguards provided to ensure that it does not relapse into authoritarian rule (Schedler, 1998). Further, it involves an improvement in the electoral system, enhancing transparency and accountability, upholding rule of law, intensifying effective communication among and between leaders and followers, and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the various democratic actors as well as increasing the knowledge of discerning voters. Hadiwasito (2024), Linz and Stepan (1996), in their contribution have pointed out that, rule of law is one of the key pillars of democratic consolidation. This is aimed at ensuring justice, peace, stability and economic growth, which are pre-requisites of national development and improved standard of living (IDEA, 2008).

Linz and Stepan (1996), see democratic consolidation as when democracy becomes the only ‘game in town’, and when individuals do not resort to other means aside what the democratic space allows. People who aspire to public office only use the legitimate process to acquire power. It is believed that, the most genuine test of consolidation is whether an institutionalised democratic governance can withstand any autocratic tendencies during difficult times. Social scientists as well as political practitioners discuss whether young democracies such as that of Ghana will fall back into their authoritarian pasts, and what kind of conditions might foster their struggle for democratic survival. The overall label for entrenching democracy so as not to be able to slip into authoritarianism is what is called democratic consolidation.

Three main theories have been put forward on the consolidation of democracies, institutionalising informal rules, civic culture and rule of law. Scholars such as Nova (2011), are of the view that, a democratic form of government gets consolidated when ‘secondary institutions that make democracy work are improved’. In the view of Muhammad and Kinge (2024), democratic consolidation connotes the process of ensuring that institutions get strengthened, acquire stability, and the entrenchment of democratic culture. Whereas democracy is ‘a process’, its consolidation highlights the end result of the process.

O'Donnell (1996), in his account has also emphasised that, instituting rules that relates to an election is not one of the key features of democratic consolidation. The author's approach is premised on the fact that, there should be laid down procedures which are entrenched within the constitution that guides the actions of public officials. Consolidation according to this process is when rules are institutionalised that nurture and support democratic values (Diamond, 1997). Almond and Verba (1996) also brought civic culture as the prime focus of democratic

consolidation. In their view, democracy is consolidated when the 'values and attitudes' which are present, support the participation of the citizenry in established democratic structures, and how the people in the political system relate to each other when dealing with their personal interests.

Putnam (1993), in his contribution has also stated that, democracy is consolidated when 'political capital' is accrued. It has also been emphasised that, the alternation of power in a country serves as a measure of a country's consolidation of democracy and highlights the level of fairness and integrity of the electoral process (Idowu & Oluwafemi, 2020). Scholars of democratic consolidation vary in their assessment of the precise nature of these threshold conditions. They stipulate that, democracy become consolidated when democratic institutions become legitimised (Linz & Stepan, 1997), the acceptance of laid down procedures under a rational framework (O'Donnell, 1996), the alternation of power in a "two-turnover test" (Pasquino, 1993), a strong civil society to check political abuse and excesses (Diamond, 1999), and the institutionalisation of civic norms and values within the society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). All of these have a common threshold, that is there should be a successful transition from an incumbent regime to an opposition without disrupting the political process.

Fukuyama buttressed Almond and Verba's view, that the key to consolidation is a supportive political culture. Anikwe et al. (2024), in their assessment have intimated that, democratic consolidation emphasises the process where a new democracy is stabilised and secured, by putting in place mechanisms to ensure that it does not relapse into authoritarian rule. It is a well - known fact that, democratic consolidation plays a vital role in protecting the unity of a country, ensuring the integration of the country within the social and political milieu (Hadiwasito, 2024). Muhammad and Kinge (2024), have noted that Africa's trajectory to democratic rule is fraught with uncertainties which has resulted in authoritarian rule in some of the countries in the continent, with coup d'état in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Guinea. We will turn our attention to strategies for consolidation to see if some of the key values and attributes are present in the Ghanaian context.

3.4 Strategies for democratic consolidation

Democratic consolidation is anchored on the quality of the moral life of the citizens within the country. The entrenchment of human rights and rule of law in the legal framework of governance is "a necessary, but not a sufficient condition" for ensuring the success of democratic rule (Linz & Stepan, 1996a). The valued norms, as well as the settled practices of the society are very significant to the consolidation of democracy. The desire of the citizenry to support and nurture democratic rule such as in Ghana, the constitution, emphasising the concept of rule of law are significant for a successful consolidation of democracy. Further, Diamond (1997) has posited that, the people in a democratic system must have integrity and be honest. They must also have an appreciable level of education to be able to comprehend issues better together with a good income and be able to tolerate dissenting opinions, respect the rights of minorities and be predisposed to maintain a high threshold in public administration (Diamond, 1997).

Customary laws and practices need to be strengthened and enforced with those acquiring notoriety becoming part of the laws of the land. In this sense, Article 11 of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana place emphasise on customary law. Traditional institutions need to be included in the decision-making process and the governance of the state. It is trite knowledge that, no government in the world can be successful in its endeavours in effective and efficient policy formulation, as well as implement them without the participation of the citizenry (Abdi et al., 2005). After all, what concerns all, must be approved by all. This therefore calls for inclusive or participatory governance if democracy is to be consolidated. In addition to these, civil society groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) need to be vibrant. These are institutions that play a two-fold function, first as partners with government in the development process, and second acting as a pressure group to either lend support or critique the policies of government. They play a crucial advocacy role in bringing the citizens closer to the policy makers (Nova, 2011).

Moreover, there is the imperative need to ensure the participation of women in the various institutions of state, as well as making sure that their voices are heard. The number of women in the eight Parliament was 40, out of the 275 members. This is not in tandem with the population of the women in the country which is more than half of

the population. This is the same with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and female positions in the public sector. It has been stated that, when it comes to the discussion of democracy and democratic consolidation in Ghana, women who are more than half of the population should have their views and voices heard (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021). The question is, has Ghana all the tenets as suggested by the theories and to what extent are these attributes part of the legal framework of governance under the 1992 constitution.

4. Discussion

4.1. The 1992 Constitution and Ghana's democratic experience

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana creates the structural framework on which the governance of the country is centred. Specifically, under the Directive Principles of State Policy in chapter six:

Article 35(1) states that, "Ghana shall be a democratic state dedicated to the realisation of freedom and justice; and accordingly, sovereignty resides in the people of Ghana from whom all its powers and authority are derived" (Constitution, 1992). This constitutional anchoring is further enhanced by;

Article 36 (6) d which stipulates that: "the state shall take appropriate measures to make democracy a reality by decentralising the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government".

Democratic experience in Ghana under the fourth republic is characterised by three main features. First, and foremost, the fundamental law of the land, the 1992 Constitution of the republic emphasise keen competition among political actors, especially political parties to all elective positions in the country (Constitution, 1992). The competition envisaged by the constitution is one that should occur periodically, and avoid the use of force. Second, people should have the free will to participate in political activities (Diamond, 1997) when it comes to the selection of leaders and policies. This should be done through a free, fair and credible elections where no segment of society is excluded (African Charter on Elections and Governance, 2007). Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution stipulates these as follows:

1. The right to form political parties is hereby guaranteed.
2. Every citizen of Ghana of voting age has the right to join a political party.
3. Subject to the provisions of this article, a political party is free to participate in shaping the political will of the people, to disseminate information on political ideas, social and economic programmes of a national character, and sponsor candidates for election to any public office either than to district assemblies or lower local government unit.

Finally, the constitution guarantees the basic civil and political liberties of the citizenry to ensure a meaningful as well as a healthy competition among political actors together with their participation in decision making. Chapter 5 of the Constitution, specifically Articles 12 -33 spells out the basic fundamental freedoms to be enjoyed by the citizenry. Most importantly, every person within the democratic space should be able to enjoy his or her basic fundamental human rights (IEA, 2008). Further, power should be derived from the express opinion of the people. Consequently, right from the preamble to Article 1 (1) of the 1992 Republican Constitution stipulates as follows:

"The sovereignty of Ghana resides in the people of Ghana in whose name and for whose welfare the powers of government are to be exercised in the manner and within the limits laid down in this Constitution" (Republic of Ghana, 1992).

Since 7th January, 1993, the political landscape of the country has been characterised by a multi-party system of governance, with the ruling government operating within the limits laid down by the constitution and a guaranteed opposition putting government on its toes and engaging in a healthy and in some occasions acrimonious debates.

The legislative arm of government is fashioned out in such a way that, it helps ensure that the executive acts within the established framework, while there is a vibrant judiciary which is striving to assert itself each day. Judicial independence is guaranteed under Article 125 (1) of the Constitution. There is also a free and vibrant media, both electronic (television and radio stations) that have been living up to its accolade as the fourth Estate of the realm.

One of the key and significant feature of Ghana's democratic experience is the survival of the present constitution for the last thirty-two years, and the alternation of power between the two main political parties with each ruling for a total of sixteen years. Ghana again has been hailed as a democratic country with the conduct of the elections in 2016 and the smooth transfer of power to the elected party of the NPP on 7th January, 2017 and to another term on the 7th of January, 2021. On the 7th of December, 2024, Ghanaians again went to the polls to elect another President, as well as Members of Parliament for the 9th Parliament. This is significant, since this will be about the ninth general election held in the country since 1992.

In addition to periodic, free and fair elections is the presence of a stable socio-economic and a political environment that is conducive for nurturing the constitution. Constitutional provisions typically define political processes and relationships, distribute power within the state and between state and non-state institutions and generally provide the macro-political context within which democracy is practiced (Linz & Stepan, 1996a). Democratic values manifest itself in processes and institutions that are developed over time to support and nurture the democratic processes, which intend protect the rights of the citizenry, and reinforce the basis for the existence of the state to exercise its territorial powers.

In instances where established structures and the institutions of state are unable to protect the rights of the people, and moreover, propel the state to exercise its functions and provide the needs of the people, the whole political system collapses. This is important with institutions such as political parties, the Electoral Commission, the media, CSOs, women groups, the youth as well as traditional institutions whose effectiveness and efficiency cannot be discounted in democratic governance (Diamond, 1997).

Ghana's democratic experience under the fourth Republic is anchored on constitutional representation as spelt out in the 1992 Republican Constitution. The constitution is made up of twenty-six (26) chapters, as well as two (2) schedules which are made up of transitional provisions and oaths of office of key public officers, such as the President, Vice, Speaker of Parliament and the Chief Justice. These constitute the legal framework of governance for the country, which has provided a stable macro-political environment for democratic consolidation. The country's democracy hinges faithfully on important democratic concepts such as separation of powers (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary), the rule of law, checks and balances, respect for fundamental human rights, a National Commission for Civic Education and an independent and assertive judiciary.

Since 1992, there have been various petitions filed at the apex court, the Supreme Court to challenge the election of presidents elected. But, of all these the two prominent ones have been the election petitions of 2013, where the court declared John Mahama as the winner, and that of 2021, filed by the NDC to challenge the elected president of the NPP, where Nana Addo-Dankwah Akufu Addo was declared the winner. The judiciary asserted itself as the stabilising institution as stipulated in the 1992 Constitution and resolved the controversies that emerged. Currently, on November, 12th 2024, it again delivered a landmark ruling on the Speaker of Parliament's ruling on vacation of seats by four Members of Parliament which had the tendency to derail the democratic credentials of the country. Ghana is now seen as a democratic country with these various experiences. This is in consonance with the point reiterated by the IIDEA that, a state's legitimacy is brought down when the judiciary fails to act as "a positive force for social change", where they are independent and act in a positive manner to promote 'ethical political leadership' (IDEA, 2016).

4.2. Social Science and democracy – A synergy for development

Social science is "the scientific study of human society and social relationships". It is that branch of science that spells out the various institutions and structures that deals with the crucial functioning of the human society (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010). Social science is a significant segment of academic discipline which entails the

workings of the various structures within society. In its broadest sense, it is about how society and its people act and promote the world in which man lives (Economic and Social Research Council, 2017). Social sciences, as an academic discipline deals with the study of social life of different groups within society. Further, social science studies the human society, together with what individuals do in society. It proceeds further to give a vivid account of the world, and help us to understand how society works, such as the causes of employment, what engender economic growth, in addition to why citizens have to vote.

Through the social sciences, vital information is provided for government, policymakers, local government institutions and CSOs to work (Economic and Social Research Council, 2017). The various disciplines under the social sciences provide students and scholars with insight into human behaviour in a scientific manner, thereby enabling them to see the significance of ‘science’ in their daily lives and to contemporary happenings in the world around us. Consequently, academics as well as students get exposed to the most critical issues that relate to human, socio-economic, cultural and how institutions behave. The study of the various disciplines is vital for the future society.

Social capital theory emphasise that, the broader dimensions of ‘social trust’ is significant and play a key role in the myriad of institutions as well as the behaviour of individuals which provides the grounds for an effective and efficient democratic governance (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). Trust within the various facets of society provides grounds for co-operation within the social system, which enhance group behaviour and dynamics with its attendant impact on the whole society (O’Neil 2002; Uslaner, 2002). When there is trust, it enables the citizenry to live together to resolve pressing societal issues in view of the fact that it makes it convenient and easy to participate in decision-making on civic matters, enhance the strengthening of social institutions on which a peaceful, stable and a vibrant democracy is anchored (Muller & Seliosan, 1994; Seligman, 1997). Democracy and good governance, will then invariably strengthen the conditions where social and political trust can be nurtured, which consequently will enable the citizenry to live in harmony by co-operating with each other in the attainment of both private and public sector administration (Zmerli & Newton, 2008).

Under social capital theory, ‘social and political trust’ are closely related and mutually reinforce each other (Newton, 2007; Rothstein & Stalle, 2003; Rutnam, 2000). Implicit within the social capital theory is the notion that, when there is the presence of a network of groups relating to each other, it makes the conduct of public decisions effective and convenient, due to the fact that the members of the society are able to come together to co-operate easily (Nahapiet & Ghoshals, 1998). The theory has *prima facie* plausibility and, as a basic proposition of political sociology that tries to link the social with the political, a great deal of potential theoretical power (Dekker & Uslaner 2001; Sztompka, 2000). A proper picture of the use and value of social science data for government and administration can be seen in the following statements of different political groups at different times.

“If it has been possible to start relevant research work earlier, some of the labour market problems confronting us today might have been tackled in a better way.”

“Above all, I expect the social sciences to help us imagine future developments and instead of merely issuing increasingly resigned warnings against the risks of technology, finally to attempt to identify the opportunities for shaping the social and economic structures of our technology-based society (Dekker & Uslaner 2001; Sztompka, 2000).

I hope that social scientists will use their imagination and take up the burning issues of today, thus abandoning their common self-centred approach” (Zmerli & Newton, 2008).

These quotations reflect the prevailing expectations concerning the contribution of the social sciences to politics and the value of their results for government and administration. Policy makers, like those who are concerned with the rational design of a component of society such as industrial enterprises need scientific advice. A political approach can only be rational if the assumptions on which political action is based correspond to the real-life situation (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). It is only social science research that can offer a scientific approach towards making predictions for the politician in a stable democracy so that the government can use the results for the

research for planning purposes. Political experience gained from previous action is not enough to guarantee such correspondence. Society is constantly changing due to the application of the rapidly growing scientific and technological knowledge, the ever-increasing prosperity, and the rapid development of man's options for the life in our industrial world and due to the change of orientation and priorities regarded as a change of values (UHL, 1989).

Politics is supposed to adjust social institutions, standards and conditions to changed reality. This requires a reliable analysis of the changes that have occurred. Political reproduction of former realities entails a waste of resources and a loss of authority and legitimacy, just as actions based on improper assumptions about realities (Newton, 2007). A rational policy i.e. action which pursues a particular goal and relates to reality must exploit all opportunities to perceive reality and identify its revealing pattern. This implies that it must be open to a critical evaluation of methods, to an objective, unbiased, i.e. scientific counselling. Such counselling is a pre-requisite for rational policy-making. This is crucial in liberal democracies. It is only social science research that can offer the platform for perceiving the relation in society (Rothstein & Dietlind, 2003).

In today's society, political decisions and measures must be carefully considered, prepared and legitimised during a public debate. This debate on the objectives, values, instruments, strategies, costs, etc of political action includes the use of social science knowledge as a major aspect, social science data help identify the major social problems as well as social factors and causes (Newton, 2007). Modern liberal democracies hinges on participation. Social science research may sensitise decision-makers to new issues and turn what were non-problems into policy problems (Lollo, 2012). In turn, it may convert existing social problems into non-problems. It may drastically revise the way a society thinks about issues that it faces (Uhl, 1989), and policies that are viewed as susceptible to alteration and the alternative measure it considers. This could be achieved through debates in the media, submission of memoranda and public debates. Social science research is needed in finding out the opinion of the public and sensitise government decisions. Social science data is crucial in public policy and administration (Rothstein & Dietlind, 2003).

It is evident how important economic research is for the modern social welfare state, which aims to achieve full employment, economic growth and monetary stability. Researchers work hard to establish a perfect data system for national economies. Theoretical economics and the empiric economic sciences develop an impressive set of indicators, which seemed to make possible accounting at national, regional and international levels (Seibert et al., 2001). The percentage growth of the gross national product – monthly, annually or over many years – seemed to provide an objective yardstick for measuring the development of prosperity, full employment and monetary stability. It is widely believed that the economic sciences had thus been admitted to the select circle of the exact empirical sciences and a sound basis created for economic decisions to be taken by policy makers and administrators. Each percent up or down the scale of gross national product development usually not only prompted a new wave of public debate on economic policy, but in most cases also predetermined economic policy to a considerable extent (Sodaro, 2001).

Geographers, planners are involved in the day-to-day development of our towns, cities, and the building of infrastructure. When governments are carrying out development projects, development plans are drawn up for policy makers to engage various stakeholders and if the project will involve resettlement, dialogue is held with the would be affected people, who contribute to the process by offering suggestions (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Contemporary peace education focuses on peace research which is characterised by the endeavour to foster the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values necessary for promoting peace, tolerance, understanding, rule of law and respect for fundamental human rights (Tuffuor, 2023). Peace education has the potential to facilitate interpersonal communication and negotiation of development and political matters with politicians and leaders at the local and national levels. Peace education can also cultivate political determination to uphold democracy. In the view of Tschudin (2018), the implementation of effective democracy and decentralisation can enable governments to not only provide services, but also function for citizen engagement.

In a study conducted by Smith et al. (2022), the authors highlighted the importance of peace education in addressing structural violence and promoting democratic processes. The provision of peace education enables

individuals to acquire the essential competencies and understanding required to actively participate in peaceful protests, boycotts, and resist oppressive and inequitable systems using non-violent means. People can work towards achieving systemic change by utilising the analytical thinking and awareness of society that peace education provides (Smith et al., 2022). In a study by the United States Institute of Peace (2019), it was revealed that peace education programmes have demonstrated efficacy in reducing violence, promoting peaceful conflict resolution, and upholding democratic norms. Education in peace, within the social sciences can help promote the peaceful resolution of disputes and defend democratic principles by enhancing understanding of the underlying causes of disagreements and addressing the social, economic, and political issues that arise in society.

Jones and Kaur (2023), have also emphasised the significance of incorporating peace education into formal and informal education systems. According to the authors, peace education should be incorporated into school curricula and community-based programmes. This is because, it is through this that, individuals at diverse life phases can collectively comprehend strategies for preserving democracy and to advance a culture of peace throughout the various segments of society. The discussion so far has been establishing a synergy between social science and development. What role can social science play in the attainment of the objectives and attributes of democratic rule? The paper will now focus on the role of the social sciences in democratic consolidation in Ghana.

4.3. The role of social science in democratic consolidation in Ghana

Every person is entitled to live his or her life in dignity and free from fear, with a fair share of the country's resources and an equal say in how they are governed (United Nations, 1948). Democracy is an alternative form of government because its principles embrace these human needs and desires and can often deliver them in reality. And the more experience people have of living in a democracy, the more they support it. The democratic ideal in and of itself seeks to guarantee equality and basic freedoms to empower ordinary people to resolve disagreements through peaceful dialogue, respect differences and to bring about political and social renewal without convulsions. The principle of 'popular rule' or rule by popularly elected representatives is at the heart of this ideal (Sodaro, 2001).

In Ghana, it means popular control over elected rulers, equal rights and liberties, political freedom and freedom from want, the rule of law, justice and security. Quality outcomes and community rights are a significant aspect of what people want from democracy. Social science/scientists can help in the attainment of these ideals. First and foremost, social scientists through opinion polls and credible research can know what the people want in terms of development. In Ghana during the last elections, opinion polls were used to know the various developmental challenges of the people in order for policy makers to provide appropriate remedy. For example, as a result of the complaints by fishermen after debates on the national media, the government acquired naval boats to check the pair-trawling that was going on (IDEA, 2008). Polls on the concerns were done by the social scientists and this in a way has contributed to the deepening of our democracy, by responding appropriately to the citizenry's needs.

In line with Standing Order numbers 151 and 152, Parliament during each session constitutes the various committees of the House. These are Subsidiary legislation, Special budget, Public Accounts and Privileges Committees. Others include the Government Assurance Committee, Committee on Gender and Children, Judiciary, Finance and Business Committee among others (Republic of Ghana, 2017). These various committees are filled by mostly people from the social sciences who contribute to policy making and governance of the country and invariably help entrench democratic rule. In addition to these, the Select Committees of Local Government, Works and Housing, Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, health, Communication, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Interior, Education, Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises and Trade, Industry and Tourism are also filled by people with Political Science, Economics, Law, Psychology, Education, Sociology, and Development Studies which are all in the field of Social Science. This exemplifies the role of the Social Sciences in democratic consolidation.

Moreover, Policy makers and administrators use data from social science research for development purposes (Lollo, 2012). Opinion polls carried out in various regions, districts, towns and villages brought out the problems in these areas to the fore, so that they could be addressed by policy makers on ascending to political office. As a

result of economic research, we are able to calculate per capita income and gross national income. This is used for planning purposes and for overall national development. The annual reports published by Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) and the research from social scientists all over the country enable the state to know the development gap and to bring the attention of policy makers to priority areas that calls for urgent attention. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became abundantly clear that the country needed more health facilities. The sitting president then took the opportunity to commence the building of additional one hundred and eleven hospitals dubbed “Agenda 111” to cater for the health needs of the people. Through research and policy reforms, government is able to address pressing national issues.

Economics is a social science that seeks to analyze and describe the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. Economics seeks to understand how individuals interact within the social structure, to address key questions about the production and exchange of goods and services. Outreach programmes by the various Economic departments are aimed at interacting with industrial and business concerns in the country for development purposes. It deals with the study of how people seek to satisfy needs and wants” and “the study of the financial aspects of human behaviour” (Seibert et.al., 2001). According to Robbins (1932), economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relation between scarce means of having alternative uses. “Without scarcity and alternative uses, there is no economic problem”. By knowing how much resources are available, and which of the areas in the nation are pressing, policy makers would be able to channel scarce resources to these areas to promote development. This will result in efficient use of resources which at the end of the day will benefit the populace. This invariably can contribute to the stability of the state to enhance democratic consolidation. Economic and social history looks at the past events to learn from history and better understand the processes of contemporary society in the various geographical regions.

The field of geography is split into physical and human. The human geography focuses on fields as diverse as cultural geography, transportation, health, military operations and cities. Other branches of geography include social geography, regional geography, geometrics and environmental geography. The geographer as a statesman has the fore knowledge to assist the government to demarcate regions for districts and constituencies when it comes to ensuring fair representation and participation of the people in governance. His expertise contributes to the judicious use of the natural resources for sustainable development. Through their consultancies, environmental policies are formulated and implemented for environmental sustainability.

Another field of social science is Demography. This is the study of populations and population changes and trends, using resources such as statistics of births, deaths and disease. Information from demographic studies can be used for planning purposes. The number of births in a year, may enable governments to plan on how many schools to be built, the number of people who will attain the age of eighteen who will be voting in an election, and how much resources will be needed by the Electoral Commission in registering them and how much will be required for voter education by the National Commission for Civic education of these new voters are crucial for democratic consolidation. During the 2016 elections in Ghana, various stakeholders and political parties deliberated extensively on the pros and cons of having a new register. By providing this vital information for planning and budgeting and reforms in the country, demographic studies help in contributing to democratic consolidation.

Psychology studies the human mind and tries to understand how people and groups experience the world through various emotions, ideas, and conscious states. Psychology is an academic and applied field involving the study of behaviour and mental processes. It also refers to the application of such knowledge to various spheres of human activity, including problems in individual’s daily lives and the treatment of mental illness (Lahey, 1995). Under Psychology, is social psychology that examines how contemporary society molds individuals to its image. Topics include human instinct, values and needs, attitudes, the process of socialisation, suggestion and propaganda, rumour, prejudice, social conflicts, conformity, social values and interaction (Santrock, 2000). By understanding how people and groups experience the world through values, needs and socialisation, governments are able to set out its priority right and eventually carry the people along in development projects. This will at the end of the day contribute to the socio-political stability in the state thereby enhancing and contributing to the consolidation of the country’s democracy.

Law crosses the boundaries between the social sciences and humanities, depending on one's view of research into its objectives and effects. Law is a system of rules to achieve justice, and as authority to mediate people's interests and even as "the common of a sovereign, backed by the threat of a sanction (Freeman, 2014). Legal policy incorporates the practical manifestation of thinking from almost every social science and humanity. Law focuses on the rules created by governments and people to ensure a more orderly society. Laws are politics, because politicians create them (Raz, 1979). Law is philosophy, because moral and ethical persuasions shape their ideas. Law is also about history because statutes, case law and codifications build up over time. Law is also economics since any rule about contract, tort, property law, labour law, company law and many other areas of the law have long lasting effects on the distribution of wealth (Dworkin, 1986). Ghana's democracy hinges on the rule of law as emphasised by the constitutional and legal framework (Republic of Ghana, 1992).

Lawyers will thus be needed in the formulation of policy through law-making, and interpretation of these by the judiciary who are also knowledgeable in the law (Freeman, 2014). By undertaking this crucial national assignment, they will be helping in entrenching the ideals of democracy such as respect for the rule of law, fundamental human rights and protection of vulnerable groups in society which are crucial in democratic consolidation.

Social work is concerned with social problems, (poverty, discrimination against minorities, crime and delinquency) their causes, their solutions and their human impacts. Social work is the profession committed to the pursuit of social justice, to the enhancement of the quality of life, and to the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society. Social policy is an interdisciplinary and applied subject concerned with the analysis of society's responses to social needs, focusing on aspects of society, economy and policy that are necessary to human existence, and how these can be provided people in detail. Social statistics, methods and computing which involve the collection and analysis of quantitative social science data (Serena & Warm, 2008) can be used to provide important data for policy making in a democratic society. This information can help in planning purposes which invariably can contribute to democratic governance and political decision-making in the country.

Political Science is an academic and research discipline that deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political system and political behaviour. Under this discipline, courses are offered in political system and political behaviour (Heywood, 2000). Under these disciplines, courses are offered in political economy, political theory and philosophy, civics and comparative politics, theory of direct democracy, governance, participatory democracy, national system, cross-national analysis, political development, international relations, foreign policy and international law. Others include public administration, administrative behaviour, public law, judicial behaviour, public policy and governance (Leftwich, 2004). In local governance, there is a sound understanding of local democracy at the regional and grass root levels, dissemination of values of local democracy, financial and administrative autonomy of local governments (Lazlo & Krippner, 1998). Public Administration is aimed at the pursuit of public good by enhancing civil society and social justice (Sodaro, 2001). Political science as an academic and research discipline, also deals with the theory and practice of politics and the description and analysis of political systems and political behaviour. Politics focuses on democracy and the relationship between people and policy, at all levels up from the individual to a national and international level. Proponents of the new institutionalist school in political science emphasise that political institutions not only mirror, but affect society. Political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions which are structures that define and defend interests (Montecines, 1993). This is crucial in any democratic consolidation.

Public policy analyses how social problems become public problems and how the government develops public policies (Leftwich, 2004). The study of Ghanaian politics and government from both historical and contemporary perspectives place emphasis on changes that have significantly shaped the direction of Ghanaian politics. Special attention is devoted to social class, ethnicity, city, race, and ideology as factors that have influenced the democratic political machine and its opposition (Oquaye, 2004). Women studies deals with political empowerment of women, gender justice and the role of women in participatory democracy. Professionals with requisite knowledge from these fields can contribute to policy debate in both society and in the governance of the country.

Sociology is the study of society and human social action. Sociology is the systematic study of society and human social action. The meaning of the word comes from the suffix “-ology”, which means study of derived from Greek, and the stem “socio”, which is from the latin word of socius meaning companion or society in general (Schaefer, 2005). It concerns itself with the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups, communities and institutions and includes the examination of the organisation and development of human social life. Since the 1970s many sociologists have tried to make the discipline useful for non-academic purposes. The results of sociological research aid educators, lawmakers, administrators, developers and others in solving social problems and formulating public theory in the various sub-discipline such as evaluation research, methodological assessment and public sociology.

Sociology involves groups of people, rather than individuals, and attempts to understand the way people relate to each other and function as a society or social subgroups (Habermas, 1990). Scholars from this field can play a crucial role in democratic consolidation by fostering a spirit of nationalism, civic consciousness and political socialisation in democratic ideals which at the end of the day will enhance democratic consolidation. Sociology evolved as an academic response to the challenges of modernity, such as industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation and a perceived process of enveloping rationalisation (Serena & Warm, 2008). More broadly, sociologists argue that, the legitimating ground for the attempts made by the state elites to create institutional arrangements is provided by societal and cultural environments.

Social science research and knowledge contributes to the development of policy and practice. It considers how academics in general and social scientists in particular can collaborate with policy-makers and practitioners to enrich development work, and thereby promote overall national knowledge. Social work focuses on social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance social justice (Economic and Social Research Council, 2017). Social anthropology is the study of how human societies and social structures are organised and understood. All of these contribute significantly to political education which is vital to the survival of any democracy.

United Nations (1998), reported that Forty-five of Africa's fifty-three countries in that year were listed among the world's least developed, with very high levels of illiteracy. The United Nations estimates that Africa accounts for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide, resulting in over 8 million refugees and displaced persons (United Nations, 1998; Gertzel, 1995). We in the social sciences have human culture and society as our main objects of study and by definition ought to be in the forefront of the quest for devising appropriate means by which human misery, squalor and poverty will be tackled. This will invariably bring stability in society and by that we will be helping in consolidating our infant democracy.

Traditionally, Universities and other tertiary institutions act as the guardians of public conscience and as independent critics of government policies and of society in general. This means economists, psychologists, sociologists, social geographers, planners, history practitioners, political scientists, lawyers, policy analyst and students in the field of development studies should be able to call politicians to order through their research findings and publications and thereby help to cure society of some evils. In doing this we will be helping our democratic dispensation to mature. Parliament is made up of 33 percent lawyers, 13 percent educationists with the remaining being geographers, planners and architects who are in the majority (Parliament of Ghana, 2012). Currently, the ninth Parliament is made up of law makers with diverse backgrounds such as law, political science, economics, sociology, education, management, psychology and planning. If these people are from the field of social science, then they are contributing to consolidate the country's democracy.

Education enlightens people and changes their social consciousness. By this, they are better able to articulate ills in society and to participate in issues concerning national development. Undergraduate and post-graduate programmes are offered in almost all the departments in social science which aim to train students at different levels in the labour environment. It provides training to the needs of employers and all who engage in studying any of the subjects. The result is the consultancy and advisory services to local and international agencies, private as well as public organisations. Researches are conducted to meet the needs of clients. Education is one of the most important social sciences, exploring how people learn and develop. Education encompasses teaching and

learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound – the imparting of knowledge. Education has one of its fundamental aspects the imparting of culture from generation to generation. The education of an individual human begins at birth and continues throughout life.

This brings about employment for the youth, and also contributes to research into the national dialogue in the development process through the consultancies offered which invariably leads to a matured democracy. Levison (2011) explore the relationships between educational processes and citizenship education from anthropological perspective. He indicated that virtually all education in and out of school, construct identities and orients moral conduct of group life. This aids democratic citizenship which eventually helps in democratic consolidation. Education in its various expressions (formal, non-formal and informal) is understood to be fundamental to the establishment and formation of a citizenry which recognises and values the importance of participatory engagement in the process of governance and institutions of government that would be relevant to particular societal arrangements (Abdi et al., 2005).

Anthropology is the holistic “science of man,” a science of the totality of human existence. The discipline deals with the integration of different aspects of the social sciences. The goal of anthropology is to provide a holistic account of humans and human nature (Freeman, 2014). This means that, though anthropologists generally specialise in only one sub-field, they always keep in mind the biological, linguistic, historic and cultural aspects of any problem (Levinson, 2011). The quest for holism leads most anthropologists to study a people in detail, using biogenic, archaeological and linguistic data alongside direct observation of contemporary customs (Raz, 1979). This is important for citizenship education which is also important for democratic development.

Other social science disciplines such as development studies, environmental planning and management studies are all crucial for democratic consolidation. Development studies is a multidisciplinary branch of the social sciences which addresses a range of social and economic issues related to developing low-income countries such as Ghana. Environmental planning explores the decision-making processes for managing relationships within and between human systems and natural systems, in order to manage these processes in an effective, transparent and equitable manner. Management and business studies explores a wide range of aspects relating to the activities and management of business, such as strategic and operational management, organisational psychology, employment relations, marketing, accounting, finance and logistics. Academics and students from these fields play a crucial role in the current democratic dispensation as advisors, legislators and development workers in both the public service and also as policy makers.

Science and technology studies are concerned with what scientists do, what their role is in our society, the history and culture of science, and the policies and debates that shape our modern scientific and technological world. Knowledge in this area is needed to inform policy and to create a synergy between the sciences and the social science. Communication studies deals with processes of human communication, commonly defined as the sharing of symbols to create meaning. Communication studies also examine how messages are interpreted through the political, cultural, economic and social dimensions of their contexts. This is important in the socialisation process and citizenship education which are critical in democratic consolidation.

5. Conclusion

It could be seen from the discussion *supra* that, the social sciences are in the forefront of the consolidation of the present democratic dispensation in Ghana. They not only align themselves and their programmes with national development, but also press for a greater role in the policy making process, and also take a more active interest in the implementation of their research which is usually used by industry. Again, citizenship education, socialisation of new members on societal norms, values and civics consequently aids the democratic consolidation process in the country. From the foregoing it could be stated categorically and emphatically that, without the social scientist it will be impossible to consolidate our fledgling democracy which was started on 7th January, 1993, since they play a crucial role in policy making, reforms and the whole development process. It is recommended among others that, institutions of higher learning that offer courses under the Social Sciences should have introductory courses that cover civic culture, democratic norms and respect for the rule of law to build the capacity of learners on

democratic values. This will invariably enhance the performance of graduates after school in their future roles of ensuring transparency, accountability and participation in decision-making to aid the consolidation of democracy.

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The Political Relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

The political relationship between China and Afghanistan has undergone profound transformations from 1950 to 2021, culminating in a significant shift following the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 2021. As a neighboring state and a global power, China aims to leverage its diplomatic presence to expand its influence in Afghanistan. Adopting a cautious yet strategic approach, China considers its engagement with the Islamic Emirate indispensable for advancing its geopolitical, security, and economic priorities. This study examines the trajectory of political relations between China and Afghanistan through a descriptive-analytical lens, identifying strategic objectives in their respective foreign policies. It explores the opportunities presented by these bilateral relations and analyzes the challenges that impede their full potential. The research underscores that regional stability, counterterrorism cooperation, the mitigation of international isolation, and the enhancement of mutual security and economic partnerships constitute the core pillars of their engagement. The findings reveal that the evolving relationship holds substantial strategic and economic significance for both nations. China's policy of non-intervention, Afghanistan's economic-centric foreign policy post-U.S. withdrawal, and the imperative for investment in Afghanistan's abundant natural resources present pivotal opportunities. Nevertheless, critical challenges, including the absence of international recognition, regional geopolitical rivalries, and external pressures, require meticulous management to ensure sustainable collaboration. The article advocates for robust and proactive diplomacy, emphasizing the necessity for joint initiatives to fortify bilateral ties and optimize shared interests. Enhanced cooperation in economic development, security measures, and regional stability will serve as a cornerstone for mutually beneficial outcomes.

Keywords: Regional Stability, Belt and Road Initiative, Natural Resource Exploitation, Uyghur Issue, East Turkistan Islamic Movement

1. Preface

Afghanistan and China, with their rich cultures and ancient histories, occupy a distinctive position in the annals of human civilization. These two nations, witnesses to various historical epochs and civilizations, were connected as

early as 2,000 years ago by the legendary Silk Road. Initially designed as a trade route for goods, the Silk Road evolved into a cultural and linguistic bridge, facilitating exchanges among traders and civilizations from the region and beyond. Despite sharing only a 92-kilometer border, Afghanistan and China have historically demonstrated mutual friendship and cooperation. Their earliest documented relations date back to the 7th century CE, when interactions between the two nations began to take shape. Historical accounts suggest that "Zhang Qian," an envoy of the (Han) Dynasty, was appointed to the Kushan Empire of Afghanistan in 128 BCE, symbolizing the early diplomatic exchanges. Additionally, Xuanzang, a prominent Chinese monk and scholar, traversed Afghanistan during his journey to India, visiting Bamiyan and documenting the grandeur of the two colossal Buddha statues. His observations later proved instrumental in exploring the region's historical and cultural heritage. From ancient civilizations such as Babylon, Sumer, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and India to the Islamic Caliphates and European empires of the Middle Ages, societies have engaged in relations governed by defined principles to achieve mutual goals. Historically, war has not been a sustainable means of resolving international disputes, leading nations to adopt diplomacy as a more constructive and enduring solution. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the world has been divided into distinct political entities. Today, nearly 200 sovereign states exist, each interdependent in fulfilling its citizens' needs, necessitating peaceful and active international relations.

Afghanistan is no exception. As a sovereign nation, Afghanistan has consistently sought to uphold its historical, cultural, and religious values, safeguard its national sovereignty, and promote economic development. By adhering to international standards and principles, Afghanistan has endeavored to foster active relations with regional and global actors. Among these is China, a neighboring country with which Afghanistan shares a history of fluctuating relations—at times warm and cooperative, and at other times marked by distance and challenges. Following the political transformation in Afghanistan in 2021 and the subsequent establishment of the Islamic Emirate, Afghanistan's foreign policy has witnessed significant changes. In this context, China, as a major regional and global power, has adopted a cautious yet opportunity-driven approach toward Afghanistan. While recognizing Afghanistan's complex and volatile environment—characterized by instability and prolonged internal conflicts—China has sought to balance its engagement through measured actions in security and diplomatic domains. China views Afghanistan's strategic location and vast natural resources as critical to its security and economic interests. Conversely, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan seeks to expand its ties with countries like China to gain international recognition, secure financial aid, and attract foreign investment. However, these relations are fraught with significant challenges, including Afghanistan's precarious security situation, global concerns over human rights, and the influence of extremist groups such as ISIS and TTP. Managing these dynamics remains essential for realizing the full potential of the Afghanistan-China partnership.

1.1. Significance of the Study

The political and diplomatic landscape of Afghanistan underwent substantial transformations following the establishment of the Islamic Emirate in 2021. Assessing the political relations of the new government with major powers like China is of critical importance for understanding Afghanistan's evolving foreign policy and the potential for new diplomatic and economic partnerships. China, as a dominant power in Central and South Asia, is actively seeking to expand its influence in the region. Understanding China's objectives and motivations in fostering relations with the Islamic Emirate provides valuable insights for Afghan policymakers and political analysts.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to analyze China's strategic goals in developing relations with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and to examine Afghanistan's objectives in fostering strong ties with China. Additionally, the research seeks to identify opportunities inherent in the political relationship between China and the Islamic Emirate. Furthermore, the study endeavors to highlight the challenges that could hinder the sustainability of these bilateral relations.

1.3. Research Question

How does the political framework of relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China contribute to achieving the strategic interests of both nations, and what challenges are associated with these relations?

1.4. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed descriptive-analytical research methodology. The data collection process is bibliographic, utilizing a diverse range of sources, including books, scholarly articles, research reports, joint declarations, and media interviews. By synthesizing these resources, the study offers a comprehensive analysis of the evolving dynamics between the two nations.

2. The Historical Background of China-Afghanistan Political Relations

Although formal diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China date back to the late 20th century (1950–1960s), their trade connections can be traced as far back as the era of the Silk Road. Historically, relations between China and Afghanistan have been dynamic, evolving from ancient trade routes to modern political and economic collaborations. The two nations share a long-standing cultural and economic bond that predates modern diplomacy. Afghans have been familiar with China since antiquity. Political relations between the two countries began as early as 130 BCE when an envoy from the Chinese empire visited Afghanistan. Economically, the two nations became interconnected during the prominence of the famous Silk Road, which originated in China, passed through Afghanistan, and extended to Central Asia, Europe, and Africa. Religiously, during the Kushan Empire, Buddhism was propagated to China through Afghanistan, while Islam later reached Chinese Turkestan via Afghanistan. These historical interactions underscore the deep-rooted ties between the two nations (Khalil, 2017: 48–50).

During the late 19th century, Afghanistan became a battleground for the strategic rivalry between Britain and Russia, which sidelined its relations with China. At the same time, China was grappling with internal political turmoil, which limited Afghanistan's significance in its foreign policy. After the establishment of the new Chinese government in 1949, formal diplomatic ties between Afghanistan and China were initiated on January 20, 1955. Over time, these diplomatic relations witnessed numerous transformations, shaped by Afghanistan's internal political developments and external interventions. Unfortunately, the Soviet invasion in 1979 disrupted these relations, and during the Taliban's first rule (1996–2001), China refrained from recognizing the Islamic Emirate. However, following the establishment of a transitional government in December 2001, China recognized the new administration and reopened its diplomatic mission in Kabul. This marked the beginning of a renewed chapter in the bilateral relationship.

President Hamid Karzai made his first official visit to China in June 2006, during which he signed agreements to enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. In June 2012, President Karzai visited China again, leading to a declaration of strategic cooperation that emphasized cultural exchange, education, healthcare, and media collaboration. His third official visit in September 2013 resulted in the signing of an economic and technical cooperation agreement (Sajadi, 2020: 301). On October 20, 2014, following the establishment of the National Unity Government, President Ashraf Ghani made his first official visit to China. Prioritizing strategic relations with Beijing, Ghani chose China as the destination for his first official foreign visit. During his discussions with senior Chinese officials, he emphasized expanding strategic ties, combating terrorism, organized crime, and narcotics, and strengthening economic cooperation. Four agreements were signed during this visit, including visa exemptions for political passport holders, humanitarian assistance from China, expanded technical and economic aid, and enhanced cooperation between Afghanistan's chambers of commerce and China's Federation of Industry and Commerce. In 2015, Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao led a high-ranking delegation to Kabul. During his visit, three memoranda of understanding were signed with the Afghan National Unity Government, focusing on security, infrastructure, and education. Additionally, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the Chief Executive of the National Unity Government, visited China from May 15 to 18, 2016. During this visit, both sides stressed the importance of sustained cooperation, cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and strengthening friendly relations between the peoples of the two countries (Fazli, 2021: 64). This historical overview highlights

the evolving nature of Sino-Afghan relations, shaped by shared history, strategic interests, and mutual aspirations for economic and political collaboration.

3. Political Relations Between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China

With the return of the Islamic Emirate to power in 2021, China emerged as a key regional player in Afghanistan. Although China maintained relations with the Islamic Emirate, it has not yet officially recognized it. China's strategy in Afghanistan focuses on political, economic, and security aspects, which are central to this study's exploration of the bilateral relationship, its objectives, opportunities, and challenges during this period. China has consistently aimed to expand its global relations, particularly in the economic sphere. A review of China's historical transformations in the 20th and 21st centuries reveals that its foreign policy is predominantly economy-driven. While the Chinese government has repeatedly stated that economic cooperation is separate from political relations, in practice, the two are deeply intertwined. To foster trade and economic ties, China often resorts to political initiatives. From China's perspective, regional instability is a significant barrier to economic cooperation, with Afghanistan being one of the primary examples. China is particularly concerned about potential security threats emanating from Afghanistan and views the growth of Islamist movements in Central, South, and West Asia as a direct threat to its internal security, particularly in Xinjiang. After the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2021, China expressed a willingness to cooperate with the Taliban-led Islamic Emirate (Zakeria, 2024: 6–7).

In 2022, Afghanistan experienced a devastating earthquake, and China responded by providing \$7.5 million in humanitarian aid to the affected communities. The Taliban publicly appreciated and acknowledged China's assistance during a press conference. In 2023, China became the first country to appoint a new ambassador, Zhao Sheng, to Kabul following the establishment of the Islamic Emirate. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs described this appointment as a testament to China's commitment to strengthening ties with Afghanistan. Ambassador Zhao received a warm welcome from Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, Acting Prime Minister of Afghanistan, and Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs (BBC, 2023). Zhao Sheng also expressed his enthusiasm on his "X" account for building strong and deep political relations between China and Afghanistan, describing these ties as beneficial for both nations and their people. He commended the Islamic Emirate's successful campaign against ISIS, highlighting Afghanistan's capability as a responsible government to address regional threats. He reiterated China's interest in forging closer political and economic relations with Afghanistan. The ambassador also met with Sirajuddin Haqqani, Acting Minister of Interior, and emphasized China's policy of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs and respect for Afghan values. Zhao acknowledged Afghanistan's notable progress over the past two years and pledged China's genuine cooperation for further development (RTA, 2023).

On September 21, Ambassador Zhao Sheng met with Abdul Salam Hanafi, Afghanistan's Acting First Deputy Prime Minister, to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and expanding practical cooperation (RTA, 2024). In his "X" post, Zhao highlighted that Afghanistan is not a hub for terrorism, lauding the Taliban's efforts to neutralize significant threats like ISIS—achievements NATO forces failed to accomplish. He criticized misinformation campaigns by some regional and global actors regarding Afghanistan's security and called for support rather than undue pressure on Afghanistan. China, as a powerful neighboring country, not only maintained its diplomatic mission in Kabul after the withdrawal of foreign forces but also took three significant steps to strengthen bilateral ties, ensure political engagement, and provide humanitarian assistance. Sending its senior official (Foreign Minister Wang Yi) to Afghanistan, the Chinese Foreign Minister visited Kabul on March 24, 2022. This visit, under the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, was a significant diplomatic achievement for the Islamic Emirate, marking the visit of a representative from a powerful nation. The spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang Wenbin, described this visit as an important step toward maintaining regional peace and stability during a press conference on March 25.

In addition to the Foreign Minister's visit to Kabul, China hosted the third meeting of neighboring countries concerning Afghanistan's developments. This meeting took place on March 3, 2022, in Tunxi, eastern China, with the participation of representatives from the Islamic Emirate, China, Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan,

Tajikistan, Russia, Indonesia, Qatar, and the United Nations. The conference emphasized sustainable peace in Afghanistan, the formation of an inclusive government, and the continuation of humanitarian assistance to the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). The third milestone was the acceptance of the Islamic Emirate's diplomats. Wang Yi's visit to Kabul signaled greater diplomatic interaction and political relations between the two countries. On April 4, 2022, China agreed to accept the Islamic Emirate's diplomats in Beijing, becoming the first country to recognize Mr. Asadullah Bilal Karimi as the Extraordinary Representative and Senior Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate on January 30, 2024 (Azadi, 2023).

As mentioned earlier, in the modern era, no country can pursue and achieve its goals in isolation or seclusion. It is essential to establish formal relations with other nations. The priority of every country's foreign policy and diplomatic relations is fostering excellent ties and engagement with regional neighbors. Countries strive to interact with their neighbors in foreign relations to create opportunities for further cooperation. In global relations and the international system, nations in the same geographical region are affected by one another's developments and conditions. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China are situated in a shared historical and geographical zone, and since 2021, their relations have been progressing positively. Despite the international sanctions and pressures on the Islamic Emirate, the reasons behind the strengthening of these ties are discussed below:

1. *China's Strategic Goals as a Regional and Global Power:*

As a regional and global power, China aims to ensure stability and security in its neighborhood, which is crucial for protecting its economic and political interests. China seeks to expand its major projects, such as the "Belt and Road Initiative," in a stable region. Afghanistan lies along the route of this strategic plan, making its stability and security vital for China. Being Afghanistan's neighbor, China is concerned about potential insecurity and instability in the country. If instability and security problems arise in Afghanistan, they could also threaten the security of China's western provinces (Xinjiang). Maintaining good relations with the Islamic Emirate reassures China that this government will help prevent security threats and instability. China believes that fostering relations with the Islamic Emirate can control potential threats (terrorist activities, drug trafficking, and organized crimes) that could arise from Afghanistan in case of instability (Wishnick, 2012: 86).

2. *The Islamic Emirate's Foreign Policy:*

The Islamic Emirate's foreign policy, based on principles of economic relations and focused cooperation, has significantly contributed to the expansion of relations between Afghanistan and neighboring countries, particularly China. This policy shifts away from political complexities, focusing solely on economic interests, offering two fundamental benefits for the Islamic Emirate:

- Strengthening relations with China, a strong economic power in the region, without political sensitivities and complex global issues.
- Enhancing Afghanistan's economy under the shadow of Chinese projects and benefiting from various economic opportunities. Through these economic relations, the Islamic Emirate has managed to create a positive and trustworthy environment for Afghanistan, especially in trade and investment. Increased trade relations have generated economic growth opportunities, improving the country's overall economy (Tasleem, 1403).

3. *China's Non-Interference Principle in Foreign Policy:*

China's foreign policy emphasizes non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. This principle allows China to stay away from political and military disputes, focusing on economic and trade cooperation instead (Institute, 2021). China's relations with the Islamic Emirate also expand under this strategic principle, emphasizing mutual economic interests and cooperation over direct involvement in Afghanistan's internal matters. This approach enables China to establish itself as a vital economic and trade partner with Afghanistan while avoiding sensitivities and political issues that may arise from interference.

China's approach has two main advantages:

- Strengthening its influence as a long-term economic partner with Afghanistan, as the Islamic Emirate benefits from China's support and investment in various sectors.
- Avoiding international criticisms and sensitivities arising from direct intervention in Afghanistan, enhancing China's regional credibility regarding Afghanistan and the region.

China formally enshrined this principle of "non-interference in internal affairs" in 1945 under the "Five Principles." These principles, introduced jointly with India, include respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence. China reiterated this principle in the United Nations, advocating for international peace and order through non-interference. For instance, China refrained from intervening in Libya and Syria's internal crises in 2011, emphasizing that each country should determine its political future. Regarding Afghanistan, China has consistently supported the notion that the country should control its affairs independently, avoiding interference in the Islamic Emirate's internal matters while focusing on economic cooperation. This approach makes China's policy credible and reliable for the region's countries (Institute 2021 Weatherhead East Asian).

4. *Afghanistan's Strategic Location:*

Afghanistan's geographical position forms its fundamental strategic significance, as it lies at the crossroads of Central, South, and West Asia, connecting the three major economic markets of Asia. Afghanistan is located along several critical trade routes (Belt and Road Initiative, and the South and Central Asia energy corridor), which China aims to utilize for transit, trade, and energy transportation. This unique location allows Afghanistan to play a vital role in economic, political, and security interests of various international and regional nations. Afghanistan's position has made it a focal point for security challenges like terrorism and drug trafficking, affecting neighboring countries (China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan). Therefore, these nations, particularly China, seek a presence in Afghanistan (Khan, 2015: 5-6).

All nations pursue objectives in their foreign relations and policies based on their national interests. The political relations between China and the Islamic Emirate are no exception. This discussion explores the strategic goals pursued by these two countries in their political relations.

4. The Role of China in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

Due to its regional and global influence and substantial economic potential, China holds a special and key position in the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. With the rise of the Islamic Emirate, Afghanistan's foreign policy has shifted, emphasizing national security within the country, ensuring that Afghan territory is not used against other nations, maintaining relations and positive interactions with all countries, cooperating with international organizations and institutions to achieve global peace and security, utilizing regional economic capacities for the development of Afghanistan and the region, leveraging Afghanistan's geopolitical capacity to connect regional and international economic plans and projects, and aligning its foreign policy with the principles of neutrality and independence (Mohammadi, 1402: 134) (Dolatzai, 1401: 24). Considering these principles, Afghanistan has made efforts to maintain strong relations with China. In the new relationship, Afghanistan and China have developed close cooperation in several areas of foreign policy, which are outlined as follows: expanding and strengthening bilateral relations, combating drug trafficking, enhancing cultural ties, expanding economic cooperation, playing a constructive role in regional economic opportunities, and ensuring coordination in these areas (Liaqat, 2023).

4.1. The Goals and Benefits of The Islamic Emirate from the Political Relations of The Two Countries

The benefits and objectives of political relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and China are based on several important factors, largely shaped by the political, economic, and security needs of the Islamic Emirate. As a major power, China can offer various advantages to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Here, we examine the goals of the Islamic Emirate and the benefits of political relations with China:

1. *International Legitimacy and Reducing Political Isolation:*

Although China has not yet officially recognized the Islamic Emirate, relations with this country provide a path toward gaining legitimacy. As a global power, China holds significant influence in international economic and political organizations. Support from China could send a message to other countries, encouraging them to recognize Afghanistan as a legitimate and recognized government. China's position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council allows it to veto decisions, and its support in

international organizations may play a key role in reducing the Islamic Emirate's political isolation. For example, China has previously used its veto power to block international sanctions against countries like Syria, Iran, and Myanmar, to maintain its economic and political ties with them. The Islamic Emirate hopes that China will use its veto power to prevent additional sanctions in the future, such as those imposed on the travel bans of certain officials (e.g., Acting Minister of the Interior Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, Political Deputy Mullah Abdul Kabir, Head of Intelligence Mullah Abdul Haq Wathiq, Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs Sheikh Noor Mohammad Thaqib, etc.) (BBC, 2022). Moreover, China's broader influence in Central, South, and East Asia could encourage other nations in these regions to establish official relations with the Islamic Emirate if China recognizes it. China could also help lobby for Afghanistan's membership in international organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which the Islamic Emirate is eager to join (Liaqat, 2023).

2. *Economic Support and Investment:*

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan faces a challenging economic situation, exacerbated by international sanctions. Expanding political relations with China offers a significant opportunity to benefit from Chinese investments and financial support. China has shown interest in Afghanistan's mining and natural resource sectors, and the Islamic Emirate could leverage this to extract its natural resources. However, to prevent China from exploiting these resources unfairly, the Islamic Emirate would need to establish a strong legal framework, improve monitoring and transparency, and create specialized teams and institutions. Encouraging the participation of various stakeholders and preventing monopolies would be crucial. Furthermore, supporting private domestic sectors in mineral investments and ensuring transparency in international contracts would help improve Afghanistan's economic situation. Joining China's "Belt and Road Initiative" could provide another economic opportunity, potentially generating income through trade and transit routes (Amin, 2017).

3. *Security Cooperation and Counterterrorism:*

The Islamic Emirate seeks security and military cooperation, aiming to attract China's assistance in providing military equipment and training programs. Although no formal security agreement or treaty exists between China and the Islamic Emirate, both countries have held informal bilateral discussions and meetings on security cooperation (International Crisis Group, 2022: 29). These efforts focus on enhancing Afghanistan's military capabilities and preparing for potential threats. Under this cooperation framework, Afghanistan seeks to acquire various security equipment, participate in training programs for Afghan forces, and explore further military cooperation possibilities, which would improve Afghanistan's ability to counter security challenges effectively.

4. *Humanitarian Assistance:*

Afghanistan is grappling with a severe economic crisis and humanitarian disaster due to political and economic changes. The Islamic Emirate is working to secure international aid through expanding political and economic relations. China's increasing support through humanitarian assistance over the past three years has been a notable sign of deepening relations. Receiving humanitarian aid can improve the economic and social conditions of the people, in turn strengthening the internal legitimacy of the government. While such aid is vital for short-term stability, long-term reliance on external assistance can have negative consequences. Therefore, focusing on domestic production and economic growth is essential for sustainable development, reducing dependency on foreign aid and strengthening the national economy (Umami, 2023: 68).

5. The Place of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in China's Foreign Policy

As we mentioned the place of China in the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate, it is essential to examine the place of the Islamic Emirate from the perspective of China's foreign policy and consider the depth of the relations between the two countries. Afghanistan holds strategic importance for China. As a neighboring country in Central Asia, Afghanistan acts as a bridge between China and the region (Central Asia and Pakistan), providing transportation links due to its central location in the global transit routes (Wakhan, CPEC, Afghanistan-Central Asia route, East-West, and international trade networks). Additionally, Afghanistan, due to its unique geographical location, can assist China in achieving its political-security goals in the region (regional cooperation, combating terrorism, trade and transit security, regional stability, the creation of security agreements) and its economic

objectives (investment opportunities, trade development, transit and logistics opportunities, and the implementation of infrastructure projects). Afghanistan, with its rich natural resources and strategic geographic location, can play an important role in the development of industry and trade in the region. The place of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in China's foreign policy is primarily concerned with the security of Xinjiang, economic issues, the exploitation of natural resources, and transit benefits (Sharan, 2021: 2-3). China is concerned about the security of Xinjiang and the activities of extremist groups, and thus the maintenance of stability in Afghanistan is very important for China. Important indicators of Afghanistan's place in China's foreign policy can be identified in the principles of China's foreign policy, which are as follows: realistic neighborhood based on traditional values, historical commonalities, geographic location, and mutual support; support for Afghanistan's unity; support for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Afghanistan; the need for regional agreements to solve Afghanistan's problems; combating drugs and terrorism in Afghanistan; prioritizing Afghanistan's social reconstruction through humanitarian aid and the transfer of China's experiences; considering Afghanistan as the gateway to South and Central Asia; ensuring regional stability; economic projects, investment, and competition with the West. Based on these principles, the relations between the two countries can be assessed in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term (Weatherhead East Asian Institute, 2021). Due to its strategic and geo-economic importance, Afghanistan occupies a special place in China's foreign policy.

5.1. The Goals and Interests of China in Political Relations with Both Countries

China's objectives in its political relations with the Islamic Emirate have several aspects, considering China's national interests at economic, security, regional, and international levels. Due to Afghanistan's strategic location and the political changes in the region, China seeks to achieve the following goals in managing its political relations with the Islamic Emirate:

1. *Regional Stability and Security Interests:* Within its strategic framework, China views regional stability as a critical and vital necessity. Stability in the region is a strategic and security requirement for China. As the world's second-largest economy, China needs regional stability to maintain and advance its economic growth. Instability in the region negatively impacts investment, trade, and the implementation of infrastructure projects. The country relies on energy imports, particularly oil and gas resources from the Middle East and Central Asia, for its economic development and strengthening. Instability in these regions threatens China's energy security and safety. Therefore, China aims to have economic cooperation and partnership projects to maintain its energy security. Additionally, China needs regional stability to reduce security risks along its borders, particularly in the Xinjiang region, where preventing terrorism and extremist groups' activities is crucial. An unstable Afghanistan or neighboring countries could create safe havens for these groups, posing a serious threat to China's internal security. China's active role in ensuring regional stability enhances its global status and influence. It also seeks to present itself as a positive global player, cooperating in solving regional issues and facilitating economic progress. Through these efforts, China aims to counter its international competitors (such as the United States) and build a strong and reliable partnership for its deepening economic and security influence (Khan, 2015: 5). These are the primary goals China focuses on for regional stability, and thus it strives to ensure security and stability in its neighboring areas to safeguard its national interests and strengthen its position regionally and globally.

China aims to increase its influence in the region and the world based on a global strategy (such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the development and establishment of international financial institutions). The stability of the region provides China with the opportunity to play an active role in global affairs. If regional countries are relatively stable, China can further focus on global leadership. Stability in the region allows China to center its foreign policy efforts on global issues like climate change, the global economy, and cooperation within the UN Security Council. With a stable region, China expands its strategic influence and emerges as an effective player in making key global decisions. Regional stability also enables China to strengthen its contribution to international security issues. In a stable region, China can actively participate in peacekeeping and conflict resolution processes, establishing its global standing as a credible and peaceful power. Stability provides China with the opportunity to compete with its rivals (such as the United States) and other Western countries on the international stage. In a stable region, China can rapidly expand its economic and political influence and stand as a key player in shaping the

global order (Du, 2016: 36-37). Through the development of cultural and diplomatic relations, China also increases its soft power, using stability in the region as an opportunity to project a positive image through humanitarian aid, cultural exchanges, and educational programs (Qanit, 2024: 661).

Instability in the region is an obstacle to China's increasing global influence, especially terrorism, extremism, and chaos. The Chinese state has a political strategy to influence the region that includes (security cooperation, economic investment, diplomatic relationship development, support for humanitarian and developmental projects, resolving existing conflicts, and maintaining global influence). A key part of China's strategy is ensuring regional security and expanding its influence in neighboring countries, which is essential for safeguarding and expanding China's economic, political, and strategic interests. In this context, Afghanistan plays a central role as it is located between Central, South, and Western Asia and is a critical transit route for the region. The stability and security of this country can help China safeguard its economic routes and transport networks from risks (CLARKE, 2008: 273-274). Due to its unique geographical position and complex security situation, Afghanistan has always been a competitive field for global and regional powers. The insecurity and instability in Afghanistan pose a significant challenge for regional and global powers, making efforts to combat extremism, terrorism, and the spread of drugs essential. For China, this situation is not only vital for safeguarding internal security but also crucial for protecting its international economic and strategic interests. To address these phenomena, achieve its fundamental goals, and ensure regional stability, China is taking significant steps to establish strong relations with the Islamic Emirate (Alves, 2016: 14)

2. *Security of Xinjiang and the Uighur Muslim Issue:* The Uighur Muslims are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group residing in the autonomous Xinjiang region in western China. The Uighur Muslim population is estimated to be nearly 14 million, with the majority following Sunni Islam. This group has historical, cultural, and linguistic ties with Central Asia, and they have been settled in the Xinjiang region of China for centuries. The Chinese government is deeply concerned about terrorism, extremism, and separatism in this region and claims that certain extremists and terrorist groups, particularly the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), are active in Xinjiang, posing a threat to China's security. In response, China has set up re-education camps in Xinjiang, which it asserts are centers for combating extremism and providing vocational training. However, international human rights organizations and Western media argue that these camps are, in fact, detention centers for the forced imprisonment of Uighur Muslims, severely restricting their religious and cultural freedoms. China is also worried that Uighur armed groups, like the Islamic Movement of Turkistan, might use Afghanistan as a base for their operations (BBC, 2022). As a result, China seeks to use political and security cooperation to ensure that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan prevents any links between Uighur jihadist groups and Afghanistan, taking serious measures against such groups. The development of political and security cooperation between China and the Islamic Emirate can effectively address these issues, ensuring the protection of China's security interests in Afghanistan (Surosh, 1402).
3. *Economic Benefits and Afghanistan's Natural Resources:* A key goal of China's political relations with the Islamic Emirate is to invest in the extraction of minerals in Afghanistan and benefit from these resources to meet its economic needs. Afghanistan has vast deposits of various minerals, including copper, coal, iron, niobium, cobalt, gold, molybdenum, silver, aluminum, fluorite, uranium, beryllium, talc, and lithium. The country also holds significant oil and gas reserves, mostly in the north, which are vital for China's industrial growth. Afghanistan offers China an accessible, affordable, and secure market for these essential resources. China has a strong interest in investing in these resources, and for achieving these goals and gaining control over Afghanistan's mineral markets, it is crucial for China to maintain a political presence in Afghanistan and develop close relations with the Islamic Emirate (Amin, 2017).
4. *Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Development:* The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by China in 2013, is a massive infrastructure and economic development project designed to enhance global trade and connectivity. This initiative has wide-ranging impacts on international commerce and relationships, covering Asia, Europe, Africa, parts of the Americas, and Afghanistan. The goal of BRI is to revive the ancient Silk Road and strengthen connectivity and economic growth. China aims to use Afghanistan's strategic location to advance this project. Afghanistan, due to its unique geopolitical position, is recognized as a key transit hub for regional trade. Although Afghanistan is landlocked and has no direct

access to the sea, its location connects the economic circles of Central, South, Western, and Eastern Asia. Afghanistan played a significant role in the ancient Silk Road, with two major branches passing through the region, linking China to Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Afghanistan can regain its historical importance and position in the new Silk Road (BRI). Given that Afghanistan is situated along two of the three key routes of BRI, its role in this project is crucial. One route connects China through Central Asia (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) to Russia, Europe, and North Africa, while another connects through Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to Iran and the Gulf, linking the region to Persia, Turkey, and the Mediterranean. China aims to develop Afghanistan as a key transit hub under the BRI framework. To achieve this, political relations and security cooperation with the Islamic Emirate are essential, allowing China to secure its trade routes through Afghanistan, expand its projects in Central and South Asia, and enhance its economic influence (Wei, 2018: 361-362; Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2023).

6. Opportunities and Challenges in the Political Relations between China and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

The political relations between China and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan present significant opportunities and challenges based on the national interests and strategic goals of both countries. China, as a major political and economic power in the region and the world, and the Islamic Emirate, as a new government in the region, both have unique opportunities and challenges in developing their relations. The following outlines the key opportunities and challenges in their political relations:

6.1. Opportunities in the Political Relations between the Two Countries

1. *Political Support:* China is making significant efforts in line with its strategic policy to recognize the Islamic Emirate. This support is crucial for the development of Afghanistan's international relations and for altering the political and economic situation in the region. By seeking formal recognition of the Islamic Emirate, China aims to aid in strengthening its ties with other countries, using its support as an example to encourage recognition from other states. China could work to gain support for the recognition of the Islamic Emirate from international organizations, such as the United Nations. This would be an important step toward strengthening Afghanistan's international relations and enhancing its cooperation with the global community. China also plays an important role in strengthening Afghanistan's regional relations, as improved China-Afghanistan ties could benefit Afghanistan's relations with neighboring countries (Umami, 2023: 70-71).
2. *Economic Cooperation:* The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers a significant opportunity for both countries, focusing on infrastructure development, strengthening trade relations, and increasing investment opportunities to drive Afghanistan's economic growth. Through this initiative, China can invest in the construction and development of roads, railways, and airports in Afghanistan. These projects are crucial for strengthening trade links and expanding markets. Afghanistan can become a vital part of the transit route between China, Central Asia, and Europe. This will facilitate the export and import of goods, enabling Afghan products such as agricultural products and mineral resources to access markets in China and beyond. The BRI project not only strengthens relations between China and Afghanistan but also helps expand ties with neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Turkmenistan (Wei, 2018: 363).
3. *Security Cooperation:* Security cooperation between China and Afghanistan is of significant importance in the development of their political relations, as it directly impacts the national interests of both countries and the improvement of their security situations. The fight against terrorism and extremism is a key component of this cooperation. Afghanistan serves as a critical region for terrorist groups (such as ISIS and other extremist factions), and China is particularly concerned about the security of its border regions in the face of these groups' activities. China and Afghanistan could enhance their security capabilities through information sharing in the fight against terrorism. This cooperation would help in identifying and mitigating security risks. To strengthen border security, China could invest in the training and equipping of border patrols and military forces. This would be an essential aspect of both countries' collaboration

to secure their borders. Furthermore, through enhanced security cooperation, China and Afghanistan can develop joint strategies to prevent narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, and other criminal activities. China could also seek support from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional security organizations to bolster Afghanistan's security efforts. These organizations could help strengthen cooperation between regional countries in combating terrorism, extremism, and security challenges (Qanbarloo, 2013: pp. 133-140).

6.2. Challenges in the Political Relations between the Two Countries

1. *Presence of Security Risks:* Terrorism and extremism are serious threats in Afghanistan and the region, which not only concern the Afghan government but also the global community and China. The presence of these threats creates challenges and precautions for the safety of China's investments and projects. ISIS and other terrorist groups play a significant role in the deterioration of Afghanistan's security situation. The activities of these groups, which pose a threat to Afghanistan's internal stability, represent a grave danger to China's security interests and investments. Extremist ideologies, which provide fertile ground for recruiting terrorist groups, are also considered a threat to China, as the spread of extremism and terrorism could endanger China's borders and security. The existence of these security risks may hinder China's investments, and China may be reluctant to invest in certain areas of Afghanistan, which could negatively impact the country's economic development. Due to these security threats, China may make urgent decisions regarding its long-term projects, which could lead to obstacles in investments and economic cooperation (CLARKE, 2008: 281).
2. *International Pressures:* The Islamic Emirate is not recognized by the international community, which is a significant obstacle in the cooperation processes between China and Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate faces severe criticism from the international community, particularly regarding human rights, women's rights, and restrictions on freedoms. These criticisms create barriers in international relations and narrow the scope for enhancing China's cooperation. The restrictions on women's rights imposed by the Islamic Emirate have raised widespread concerns within the international community. China is one of the countries that acts cautiously in response to international pressure on human rights. The lack of formal recognition of the Islamic Emirate not only creates obstacles for economic and security cooperation but also for humanitarian assistance and other forms of cooperation. Due to international pressure, China may be reluctant to engage in direct cooperation with the Islamic Emirate. The Islamic Emirate faces difficulties in gaining support from the United Nations and other international organizations, which complicates China's cooperation processes, as China must align with the international community (Veretilnyk, 2022: 205-206).
3. *Impact of Regional Rivalries:* Relations between Afghanistan and China are influenced by regional rivalries, particularly the competition between India and Pakistan, which has significant implications for Afghanistan's stability and the safety of China's investments. India has a long-standing history, culture, and political ties with Afghanistan, while Pakistan is a major player in Afghanistan's wars and security issues. The rivalry between these two countries creates obstacles for Afghanistan's national interests and challenges China's influence. India seeks to strengthen its historical ties with Afghanistan and expand its influence against China's presence. The expansion of India's influence could create barriers to China's cooperation, particularly in establishing and securing projects. If India seeks to increase its influence in Afghanistan, China may take precautionary measures to safeguard its investments, which could disrupt economic cooperation and developmental projects. In the case of India's increased influence, China may also have concerns regarding border security. Furthermore, deteriorating relations between India and China could create further barriers to addressing Afghanistan's situation (Akhtar, 2023: 111-112).

7. Conclusion

In the past three years, political relations between China and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have made unprecedented progress, creating a new environment of trust and cooperation. This research indicates that the primary factors driving the development of these strong relations is China's interest in expanding its political and economic influence in Central and South Asia, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China aims

to strengthen its diplomatic ties with neighboring countries and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to increase its global influence. Afghanistan's strategic geographical location and its role in regional stability have led China to focus on fostering strong political ties with the Islamic Emirate. China is particularly concerned with the security of its western borders, especially the Xinjiang region, which shares borders with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Due to security concerns related to terrorism and extremism in Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, China perceives serious threats to its internal stability. Strengthening relations with the Islamic Emirate offers China an opportunity to reduce the influence of extremist groups like ISIS and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, paving the way for enhanced security cooperation and support.

Additionally, Afghanistan's natural resources, especially minerals, oil, and gas, are another reason for strengthening these relations. Afghanistan, due to its rich and underutilized natural resources, presents a lucrative opportunity for significant Chinese investment. After years of conflict, Afghanistan needs international support and foreign investment to rebuild its economy. Attracting financial and technical support from China is part of this need, as Chinese investments can help Afghanistan's development and reconstruction in various sectors. These investments not only boost Afghanistan's domestic economy but also create broad job opportunities and contribute to improving the social situation. For the Islamic Emirate, reducing international isolation and gaining global legitimacy is a key strategy, which it can achieve by strengthening its political relations with neighboring countries, global powers, and China, thereby solidifying its position on the global stage. The Islamic Emirate's moderate stance on human rights and its adherence to international standards play a vital role in the development of these relations. The Islamic Emirate must take advantage of China's political, economic, and security opportunities to become part of the BRI and other major projects, which will help develop the country's resources and reduce unemployment. In this context, the Islamic Emirate needs to address China's security concerns, increase security cooperation and monitoring along border areas, and employ professional and specialized diplomats to enhance bilateral relations. Caution is required in dealing with China on mining and contract issues, ensuring transparency and a robust legal framework for mining activities. Afghanistan remains a strategically competitive region for both global and regional powers. Therefore, it is crucial for the Islamic Emirate to adopt a balanced foreign policy centered on economic development, paying careful attention to relations with regional and global powers, and positioning itself strategically in alignment with the country's national interests.

8. Suggestions

1. The Islamic Emirate should prioritize and develop positive bilateral relations with China through active state-to-state diplomacy.
2. The Islamic Emirate should initiate efforts in informal diplomacy and work towards creating a positive image of Afghanistan within Chinese society.
3. Instead of fully relying on China for economic and political support, the Islamic Emirate should pursue a strategy of multilateral relations in its foreign policy.
4. The Islamic Emirate should aim to strengthen its position in various international and regional organizations with China's support.
5. The Islamic Emirate should establish a clear framework for intelligence cooperation with China, enabling both countries to address concerns regarding terrorism, trafficking, and organized crime, while positioning Afghanistan as a responsible and collaborative nation in the region.

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Nine is Not Prime: Court Size as Both Weaponization and Solution for Supreme Court Political Polarization, Inefficiency and Bias

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Abstract

Since the creation of the judicial branch, the nation's highest court has displayed vulnerabilities to politicization, biases and inefficiency. More specifically, the number of justices on the Supreme Court is a culprit in exacerbating these challenges. The Supreme Court has fluctuated its size six times, excluding unsuccessful attempts to change it, with the number of justices as low as five and as high as ten. Though the 155-year stasis in the number of Supreme Court justices has provided relative stability, the history of the institution reveals that previous and current sizes of the Supreme Court leave it vulnerable to not only political polarity and gender biases, but also inefficacy in hearing an adequate number of cases presented to the Court. The paper argues that while the size of the High Court has been a hurdle, it can also be a solution to ensure an independent, fair and productive government branch as the Founders intended.

Keywords: Court Size, Weaponization, Supreme Court, Political Polarization

"Presidents come and go, but the Supreme Court goes on forever."

~ William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States of America and 10th Chief Supreme Court Justice

In *Alice in Wonderland*, the protagonist Alice traverses a challenging world while changing her physical size, becoming larger or smaller upon ingesting certain foods and potions. Her miniature stature becomes a hurdle when she is too small to grab a key out of reach on an elevated table. Like Alice, the Supreme Court has fluctuated its size, a demonstrated hurdle in its functioning throughout its existence. Since the creation of the judicial branch, the nation's highest court has displayed vulnerabilities to polarization, biases and inefficiency. More specifically, the number of justices on the Supreme Court is a culprit in exacerbating these challenges. From President John Adams' attempt to stave off his political opponent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's court-packing proposal and, more recently, the conservative justices voting to overthrow the precedent for womens' rights that *Roe v. Wade* set, the size of the Court allowed political weaponization, unconscious bias and lacking productivity to flourish. Its size, however, can also be the solution to mitigate these challenges.

In 1789, the Judiciary Act, signed by the first President of the United States, George Washington, created the very first Supreme Court. The statute was enacted by a newly formed Congress during its very first session (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). It established the Supreme Court, which originated with only six justices – one chief justice and five associate justices – along with a system of lower federal courts. John Jay of New York was the first Supreme Court Chief Justice; he remained on the High Court for five years (Legal Information Institute, n.d.). The United States Constitution, however, does not mandate a specific number of justices that should serve on the Supreme Court, as the Judiciary Act did not designate a minimum or maximum number of justices on the High Court (Jacobi & Sag, 2021). Although the highest court in the judicial branch was structured for independence, the Executive and Legislative branches have utilized the size of the High Court to weaponize against their political opponents throughout history.

Since its establishment in 1789, the number of Supreme Court Justices fluctuated six times throughout history, with the number being as low as five and as high as ten. Most of the changes were made in order to utilize the Court's size as a political weapon. President John Adams and the then-Federalist-led Congress lowered the number of Supreme Court Justices to five through the Judiciary Act of 1801 (Judiciary Act of 1801, 2018). The Judiciary Act was an effort to keep Adams' political opponent and successor, Thomas Jefferson, from appointing a new justice (Roos, 2023). However, Jefferson and his Republican-led Congress repealed the act, raised the number of justices to seven by 1807, and appointed three new justices in the duration of his presidency. The number of justices remained at six for only twelve years after the inaugural six-justice court; the first President established the Supreme Court and the second and third Presidents changed it.

The number of Justices fluctuated yet again during the Presidency of Andrew Jackson. President Jackson expanded the number of justices by two in 1837 after Congress expanded the lower federal courts (Roos, 2021). This was necessary for the Supreme Court to keep up with the workload that percolates from the lower courts. After President Lincoln's death, Congress, which disapproved of Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, decreased the number to seven so President Johnson could not appoint any new justices (Jacobsen, 2004). In 1869, a Judiciary Act signed by President Ulysses S. Grant increased the number of Supreme Court justices to nine to favor his and the Congressional majority's own party. Justices William Strong and Joseph Bradley were added to the Court after the Judiciary Act of 1869 (Roos, 2021). Both these Justices politically aligned with many of Grant's policies.

Aside from political weaponization, the number of federal circuit courts highly influenced the number of Supreme Court justices. When the Judiciary Act of 1789 created the first Supreme Court, it also created the lower federal circuit and district courts. District courts reviewed new cases, while circuit courts acted as the middle bridge between the local district courts and the Supreme Court. Each circuit consisted of district courts that took lawsuits that fed up to circuit courts (Benesh, 2002). The circuit courts were composed of a circuit justice paired with a district justice who could not hear an appealed case they had seen before. The Supreme Court justices acted as ambassadors of the federal government to circuit and district courts in addition to deciding cases in those courts (Cameron et al., 2000). They traveled to the circuits to oversee more "local" cases, which spread the importance of federalism and showed the citizens that all courts were unified (Cameron et al., 2000). After all, the Supreme Court justices were likely the only federal officers many communities would ever meet. The justices' duty was called "circuit riding" because the Supreme Court justices hopped from circuit court to circuit court, "riding" the track of circuits. However, circuit riding meant that Supreme Court justices spent less time seeing cases on the Supreme Court, as they spent a considerable amount of time traveling to the lower circuit courts (Benesh, 2002). As the United States expanded in territory and population, the number of circuit courts rose, as did the amount of circuits the Supreme Court justices had to visit. This placed a higher burden on the justices to ride more circuits. Justice William Paterson, who served the Supreme Court from 1793 to 1806, perished in a carriage accident while journeying to New Jersey to oversee a circuit court case. As a result, the Judiciary Act of 1869 increased the number of Supreme Court justices from six to nine, one justice for each circuit. The act was meant to lessen the amount of circuit court cases each justice had to preside over so they could focus on taking more Supreme Court cases (Roos, 2021). As the nation grew, the sheer number of cases submitted to the Supreme Court swelled exponentially. Thus, the act also enabled the nine-member Supreme Court to meet the representative needs of a rapidly growing nation.

Since 1869, the number of Supreme Court justices has remained constant at nine, making up a cadre of the selected few making breakthrough decisions that change the direction of America for the past 155 years (Roos, 2021). The decision on the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 desegregated schools, marking the turning point of the Civil Rights Movement. The *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 made abortions constitutional, which gave women's rights a tremendous leap forward (Epps & Sitaraman, 2019). Most recently, the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Womens' Health Organization* case overturned the *Roe v. Wade* decision, making most abortions after fifteen weeks unconstitutional and regressing womens' reproductive rights nationwide (Mendoza, 2022). The Supreme Court has an undeniably great deal of power and influence on American citizens. With a "majority rule" final decision of the Supreme Court, where only five individuals can pivot the direction of our nation, the number of justices thus play a critical role in making ground-breaking decisions that can move America toward either progress or regression.

Political weaponization also presents the largest motivator for attempted changes to the number of Supreme Court Justices. One of the most famous examples is Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1937 court-packing proposal. The proposal was regarded as a tactic to put more justices on the High Court who would vote according to the President's agenda, ruling his New Deal policies constitutional (National Constitution Center, 2022). It is widely considered to be the most progressive attempt to increase the number of Supreme Court Justices. In the years preceding President Roosevelt's proposal, the four conservative justices serving at the time continually ruled policies in his New Deal as unconstitutional (National Constitution Center, 2022). President Roosevelt's New Deal policies enacted sweeping legislation and programs to reinvigorate the shattered economy following the Great Depression. After winning his 1936 re-election by a landslide, Roosevelt proposed increasing the number of justices to 15 and replacing all members of the Court over the age of 70 (Roos, 2021). Roosevelt proposed the plan to solve his issue of justices on the opposite ideological spectrum dictating his policies unconstitutional. The proposal included a generous retirement plan for Supreme Court members over the age of 70. The proposal was meant to incentivize serving justices to retire. If the serving justices refused to retire, Roosevelt would simply appoint a new "assistant" justice, whose political ideology aligned with his (Roos, 2021). Six members of the Court, including the Conservative justices, were over the age of 70 at the time of Roosevelt's proposal, which meant he would have added another six justices to the Supreme Court, but Congress shot down the plan in a 70-20 vote (Roos, 2021). If Roosevelt's court-packing plan had been passed by Congress, he would have appointed twelve new Supreme Court justices.

Dating as far back as 1801, the number of Supreme Court justices has fluctuated as Congress and each President's battles with opposing political ideologies and party lines developed. In the past century, political polarization has significantly spiked, with justices determining landmark decisions along politically ideological lines. According to a 2022 report from ABC News, around 21% of the case decisions that the Supreme Court made were along political lines, whereas only a decade ago, only approximately 5% of cases were polarized (Thomson-DeVeaux & Bronner, 2021). However, discussions in the media surrounding the Supreme Court are dramatically sparser than other branches of government. Though the 155-year stasis in the number of Supreme Court justices has provided relative stability, the history of the institution reveals that the current number of Supreme Court justices leaves it vulnerable to not only political polarity and gendered biases, but also inefficacy in hearing an adequate number cases presented to the Court.

Most Americans today lean toward one political party or the other in the two-party system, and the current nine justices are no exception. Presently, Justices John Roberts, Clarence Thomas, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Samuel Alito Jr., Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett are the serving members of the Supreme Court (Supreme Court of the United States, n.d.). Justice Stephen Breyer retired at the end of the 2022 term, and was replaced by Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first female African American Supreme Court Justice (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Since justices are nominated by the President, it is no surprise that modern-day presidents selectively nominate those whose ideologies align with their party's. Liberal judges tend to be nominated by Democratic presidents, while conservative judges are favored by Republican presidents (Georgetown Law Library, n.d.). Further, the Senate confirms the nominees, giving the majority party the power to ensure that only their party's preferred candidates are put on the Supreme Court. Even if the President puts forth a nominee, the Senate can derail the nomination process (Georgetown Law Library, n.d.). For example, President

Obama in 2016 nominated Merrick Garland, a liberal judge, to replace Justice Scalia (Elving, 2018). The Republican-controlled Senate at the time, however, refused to allow the nomination to get on the voting agenda (Elving, 2018). Despite having a Democratic President when Scalia's seat was open, the vacancy was subsequently filled by a Trump-nominated conservative, Republican-approved Neil Gorsuch (Borensen, 2017). As the nomination and confirmation process is fraught with partisanship, political polarity in the Supreme Court then becomes a consequence. The partisanship in the White House and Congress bleeds into the Supreme Court, resulting in the escalation of political polarity.

Furthermore, justices in recent years are becoming more emboldened than ever to vote along personal party lines, resulting in greater political polarity within the Court (Thomson-DeVeaux & Bronner, 2022). Justices appointed a few decades ago often broke with party lines when making decisions. For example, Justice Kennedy, a swing judge appointed in 1975 by the Republican President Ford and leaned toward conservative, voted to legalize same-sex marriage in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision in 2015, along with the liberal justices at the time (Dwyer, 2022). The retirements of Supreme Court Justices Kennedy and O'Connor shifted the Court down the path towards the end of swing justices voting against their party's ideology in the Court (Epps & Sitaraman, 2019). Justices in recent years tend to vote primarily along party lines, as shown in the 2022 landmark case *Dobbs v. Jackson Womens' Health Organization*. The conservative justices Alito, Kavanaugh, Gorsuch, Thomas, and Barrett voted for *Dobbs*, signaling that abortions were not protected by the Constitution. All of the conservative justices were nominated and confirmed by Republican presidents. The anti-abortion sentiment was shared by Republican lawmakers specifically in Mississippi, who created the laws banning pre-viability abortions that the Supreme Court ruled Constitutional (Hassan, 2022). The liberal leaning Justices predictably voted against *Dobbs* in order to protect abortion rights. The lack of swing votes leaves the Supreme Court with judges whose votes are based on politically-endorsed positions rather than constitutional philosophy. The status quo promotes an absence of swing votes, allowing politicization in the Court to surge.

In the modern Supreme Court, opposition to a decision to come from judges representing only one political party has become alarmingly common. Before the 21st century, the standard was for Supreme Court justices to interpret the law based on legal precedents and relevant facts even if it meant defying their own political ideologies. One of the most pivotal Supreme Court decisions, *Roe v. Wade*, which ruled abortions constitutional, was written by Harry Blackmun, a Republican-nominated justice (Epps & Sitaraman, 2019). In the aftermath of the decision, disapproval came from many different groups, particularly the Justice's own Republican party (Epps & Sitaraman, 2019). Today, when a Supreme Court justice votes aligning with his or her own political ideology, the justices from the opposite ideology make up the vast majority of the dissension. For example, in *Bush v. Gore* in 2000, the 5 conservative Supreme Court justices all voted to elect Republican George W. Bush the President of the United States, despite Al Gore, the Democrat candidate, winning the popular vote (Toobin, 2008). The *Bush v. Gore* case established that the Supreme Court can decide who leads the nation, shrinking citizens' right to democracy where it counts the most. The implication is jarring: over 300 million registered voters live in America, but the political ideology of only 5 individuals can determine the presidency (Singh, 2021). Moreover, the one-sided opposition to decisions made by the Supreme Court speaks to the bias that is currently running rampant.

The landmark Supreme Court case *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* challenged the legality of race-based college admissions. In June 2023, the Supreme Court ruled affirmative action in college admissions unconstitutional in a 6-3 vote (Totenberg, 2023). The decision meant that colleges are no longer constitutionally allowed to consider race as an admissions criterion. Justice Clarence Thomas, who voted in favor of ending affirmative action, argued in his concurring opinion that affirmative action imposes the inaccurate stereotype that minority communities are in need of the extra boost for admissions instead of letting their hard work reap the rewards: "While I am painfully aware of the social and economic ravages which have befallen my race and all who suffer discrimination, I hold our enduring hope that this country will live up to its principles that ... all men are created equal, are equal citizens, and must be treated equally before the law" (Totenberg, 2023). However, the decrease in the number of African American applicants in states where affirmative action was already banned means that the complete elimination of affirmative action programs will result in a wider decline of African American applicants across the nation. When the University of California Berkeley banned race consideration in their admission policy in 2016, the number of African Americans who

applied decreased significantly because of “African American students not wanting to go [to Berkeley] under those conditions” (Totenberg, 2023). The Supreme Court’s decision impacts the futures of millions of youths. The case led to fewer people of color choosing to attend educational institutions where race is not a considered factor for admission. The decisions of six people ended a policy intended to propel justice and fairness toward marginalized communities.

Contemporary political controversies signify that the Court may be headed toward more egregious politicization. On March 24, 2022, twenty-nine text messages between Justice Clarence Thomas’s wife, Ginni Thomas, and Donald Trump’s former Chief of Staff, Mark Meadows were released (Jenkins, 2022). Despite collusion being strictly illegal between the Supreme Court and the White house, Ginni Thomas texted Meadows, telling him to overturn the 2020 Presidential election results in favor of President Trump, arguing that election fraud undermined the legitimacy of the election results. Upon learning about the text messages, the Women’s March Movement called for the impeachment of Justice Clarence Thomas, suspecting his involvement in the January 6 insurrection, which saw Pro-Trump supporters attacking the Capitol (Jenkins, 2022). Ginni Thomas wrote in one text, referring to Donald Trump, ““Help This Great President stand firm, Mark!!!” (Jenkins, 2022). Ginni Thomas, wife to a supposedly non-biased Supreme Court justice, implored Mark Meadows to keep Donald Trump in power, signaling that she supports keeping a Republican president in power, despite the citizens voting for a Democrat (Hakim, et al., 2022). A Supreme Court Justice’s wife participating in political lobbying demonstrates deep politicization within the judicial branch. This incident upends the independence of the judicial branch, compromising the checks and balances of governmental power.

Moreover, the Supreme Court’s underlying gender biases influence the way the Court operates by giving certain lawyers unequal chances of their cases being seen. The Supreme Court has a shortlist of lawyers whose cases are more likely to be heard (Russell, 2018). According to a report from Reuters, sixty-six lawyers are six times more likely to have their cases heard by the Supreme Court. Of those sixty-six lawyers, sixty-three are white, and fifty-eight are male (Russell, 2018). The Court gives an unfair advantage to certain white, male lawyers by being more likely to hear their cases.

The Supreme Court has displayed gender norms since its inception. Men dominated the Court for the first eighty years of its existence, with women barred from representing Supreme Court cases as lawyers or sitting on the Court itself until the late 1800s and early 1900s. Arabella Mansfield became the first woman to practice law in 1869, but in the 1872 *Bradwell v. Illinois* case, the Supreme Court voted to prohibit Myra Blackwell from becoming a lawyer despite passing the Illinois bar exam (Lewis, 2019). The nine Justices at the time ruled that Blackwell was not constitutionally allowed to practice law because she was married. The Supreme Court’s decision set the precedent that the right to practice law in front of the Supreme Court was not reserved for all women. The right for all women to be admitted to the bar was deemed unconstitutional until 1919 with the 19th Amendment, which accorded women the right to vote. The first female Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O’Connor was not confirmed until 1981, almost 200 years after the creation of the Supreme Court. Justice O’Connor, after her Supreme Court confirmation, reflects on her experience as a female state lawyer, highlighting the hiring inequality she faced, even after graduating from Stanford Law School, one of the foremost law schools in America:

“I graduated from Stanford Law School a year ahead of my husband and I got a job in California as a deputy county attorney in San Mateo County, California, which is just north of Stanford. I did civil work for the county attorney’s office. Incidentally, I had interviewed when I had got out of Stanford Law School with various law firms in California, among them Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher in Los Angeles, a distinguished firm. I had graduated high in my law school class, and had been on the board of editors of the Stanford Law Review and had done all the things that today would qualify one for a very good position in a law firm. And, it did in those days too, if you were a man. And I did not receive an offer from one of the good law firms with whom I had interviewed because not one of them at that time had ever or expected to ever hire a woman. Gibson, Dunham and Cratcher offered me a position as a legal secretary and I declined that” (O’Connor, 1981).

Despite significant progress on gender inclusivity, today's court only consists of three women, and only two are women of color.

Another challenge for the Supreme Court is its inability to hear a sufficient case volume. The Supreme Court only takes a small fraction of the cases presented to the Court, and the number of cases taken has decreased over time. In 2020, 300,000 petitions were filed to the Supreme Court in 2020. The Court heard only seventy-three of those cases (Jacobi & Sag, 2021). In the 1980s, the Supreme Court saw 180 cases on average (Jacobi & Sag, 2021). Fewer cases mean fewer opportunities to move America forward and create change. The low case volume can lead to a delay in laws reflecting the views of the American masses. Additionally, the Supreme Court has been operating with the same, unchanging number of justices for 155 years (Jacobi & Sag, 2021). Dr. Jacob Hale Russell of Rutgers Law School remarks on the influx in the population of the United States over time, "The U.S. was roughly a tenth of its current size, laws and government institutions were far smaller and less complex, and the volume of cases was vastly lower." The Court at its current headcount is unable to adequately address today's society. The system with nine justices was not built for hundreds of millions of people. More people live in California alone today than in the entire country in 1869, when the number of Supreme Court justices was first changed to nine (Russell, 2018). The most effective way to bring the Supreme Court up to meet productivity demands and tackle case complexity seems to be to increase the number of justices. As the population of the United States grew, the number of Supreme Court justices also grew. The era of circuit riding decreased the efficacy of the six justices serving, which resulted in an increase in the number of Supreme Court justices to nine. Efficacious Courts can manage the complexities of cases that reflect the intricacies of the evolving society. Increasing the number of justices solves the currently inadequate performance of the Supreme Court.

While the size of the Supreme Court has exacerbated the challenges that the Court faces, it also presents an effective solution. Increasing the size of the Supreme Court is one way to minimize politicization, curb gender biases, and expand the case load. Modern radical suggestions by scholars studying the Supreme Court have been made for the number of Supreme Court justices to be increased to twenty-seven (Russell, 2018). Increasing the number of Supreme Court justices must be for the welfare of the American citizen, not political incentive. President Roosevelt's 1937 court-packing proposal is an example of motivating changes based on political "wants," not what is best for democracy and the people (Wheeler, 2020). The conservative justices were ruling his policies unconstitutional, prompting the proposal to have things "FDR's way" (Wheeler, 2020). Raising the number of justices to twenty-seven would increase the number of cases taken for the good of the people, not for checking off a President's agenda (Russell, 2018). The new justices would be phased in slowly, with two being appointed each year (Russell, 2018). Thus, scholars argue, no single President can appoint all new justices, which avoids the dilemma of court-packing. With twenty-seven justices, the Supreme Court can split into panels of three to five justices to hear smaller cases, but also gather to hear more important cases (Russell, 2018). Therefore, more justices effectuates less dependence on swing votes. However, having twenty-seven justices in the Court transforms the Court into an institution similar to Congress. In an interview with a Supreme Court scholar, they argued, "[with 27 justices] that's just a very different institution that you're creating. That's not really one Court." The Supreme Court was not built to function with twenty-seven justices. In fact, one of the defining traits of the Supreme Court is the small group format. While an increase in the number of Supreme Court is necessary, it is clear that such a drastic change to twenty-seven justices is not the ideal tactic to increase Court efficacy. Creating a twenty-seven justice Court would make its operation more similar to the Legislative Branch than the Supreme Court itself.

Hence, increasing the number of justices to fifteen can maximize its efficiency and efficacy while maintaining and forwarding the institution's apolitical identity. A fifteen-justice Court is able to split into three panels of five justices, which can increase its overall case load (Jacobi & Sag, 2021). Panels boost efficiency by allowing more cases to be heard through a divide and conquer tactic. Currently, the Supreme Court is only "taking about less than seventy cases a year, and there are nine of them, and so they each write on average only about twelve majority opinions a year... there are so many big, important questions that the Court isn't addressing" (Anonymous, 2022). Enacting a quota requirement for the number of cases seen through Congress can guarantee greater efficiency in the Court (Wheeler, 2020). A Supreme Court of fifteen justices is large enough to split into sub-panels yet small enough to gather en banc, where all justices preside over a case (Anonymous, 2022). The key to finding the optimal number of Supreme Court justices is "having enough justices to have panels ... but also not too many that they

couldn't really all get together” (Anonymous, 2022). The evidence and data strongly show that fifteen is the optimal number of justices to increase efficacy and resist biases and politicization while retaining the foundational ideals and independence of the highest judicial branch.

A possible argument against raising the number of justices to fifteen is that the increase may lead to a cycle of justice implementation. That is, if one party succeeds in appointing new justices, the opposing party may increase the number of justices to above fifteen in an effort to balance out majorities. However, this scenario is unlikely. Increasing the number of justices does not equate to increasing politicization. “We've seen [politicization] happen already,” the Supreme Court scholar states. “We've seen the Court change in the number of justices. But not just that, we've seen, even with nine justices, raw political move ... this idea that we can't change the number of justices because that will make the Court political is ridiculous because the Court is already very political” (Anonymous, 2022). That is, focusing on unlikely “what if” scenarios rather than implementing solutions will not resolve the myriad of issues barraging the status quo. Emphasis on future reform can.

Ultimately, though the Supreme Court upholds the foundational checks and balances of our democracy, the current size of the Court enables inefficiency, politicization and personal biases. Justices predictably vote along their own political ideology, stemming from the fraught nomination and confirmation process. The number of cases heard has decreased over the years, unable to keep up with demand and unable to address legal and social issues that require timely resolve. Further, the Court favors a handful of white, male lawyers above others in their accepted cases, which biases the cases that are rendered decisions. To rectify these challenges while staying true to the wishes of the Founding Fathers, fifteen justices can be the optimal number of Supreme Court. President and Chief Justice William Taft once declared, “Presidents come and go, but the Supreme Court goes on forever.” The decisions made by the Supreme Court affect every single person living in the United States of America, from the Patriots of the newly formed America to future generations in years to come. The phrase “We The People” is the most easily recognizable phrase from the United States Constitution because our Founding Fathers valued the representation of everyday citizens. The United States was built on the idea that the government was made to serve the people. To do so, fifteen may be the prime number for the Supreme Court.

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Towards Sustainable Adoption: Investigating QR Codes Mobile Payment Continuance in Tanzania

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Abstract

The adoption of QR codes in the payment of various services has grown and deepened financial inclusion in Tanzania. Despite its initial acceptance, the sustainability of using QR codes for payment is unknown. Based on that, this study examines the continuance intention of using QR codes for payment in Tanzania by extending the Technology Continuance Theory (TCT) to assess the moderating effects of perceived risks and perceived service trust. A convenient sampling technique was employed to identify respondents. Online and paper-and-pencil techniques were used to distribute the questionnaire. Among the received responses, 271 responses were considered to be valid and reliable for data analyses. Partial List Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to evaluate the hypothesised relationships. Findings from this study show that perceived usefulness, confirmation, and ease of use significantly influence attitude and satisfaction. Moreover, satisfaction, attitude, perceived risk, perceived usefulness, and perceived service trust significantly influence the continuance of QR codes for mobile payments in Tanzania. The study also found that perceived risk and perceived service trust moderate the relationships between attitude and continuance usage of QR codes. The implications from this study have been provided to enable financial service providers and policymakers to enhance how QR code services and infrastructures should be implemented and enhanced for sustainability in Tanzania.

Keywords: QR Code, Mobile Payments, Financial Inclusion, Tanzania

1. Background

Recently, there has been an increase in the use of Quick Response (QR) codes globally. QR code is a two-dimensional digital image readable by a smartphone, allowing high-speed access to mobile services (Barrera et al., 2013). Initially, it was used in the Japanese automotive industry for tracking inventory (Bamoriya, 2014; Pandya & Galiyawala, 2014), and currently, it is widely used for various mobile-related transactions such as mobile payment, marketing and library (Jiang et al., 2021; Kadli, 2020; Vuksanović et al., 2020) to mention a few uses. QR codes are preferred in mobile transactions because of their high speed and security features compared to traditional bar codes (Focardi et al., 2018; Wahsheh & Luccio, 2020). The technology offers customers an easy, secure, and convenient way to settle payments (Rafferty & Fajar, 2022). Moreover, it can be scanned quickly and

does not require costly hardware; therefore, it is an economically viable payment method (Hamzah et al., 2023). As such, the QR code payment system gained popularity in China, spreading worldwide (Rafferty & Fajar, 2022). Its prominence and wider acceptance were also witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Asian countries and elsewhere (Hamzah, 2023; Koay & Ang, 2023).

However, the technology is not very popular in sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania, where mobile money transfers and payment through mobile money operators are popular (Ledi et al., 2023). In Tanzania, for instance, the mobile payment method using a QR code was introduced in 2018 when several financial firms and telecommunication companies partnered with Mastercard to offer payment services. Despite this initial stage, the QR code payment services were provided without a standardised framework. Reasonably, the Bank of Tanzania, to promote interoperability between multiple independent and potentially heterogeneous systems containing risks, developed the Tanzania Quick Response Codes (TANQR) standard to enhance security in transactions (Bank of Tanzania, 2022). Subsequently, all banks, mobile money service providers, and other payment service providers wishing to use the QR code to offer payment services were compelled to use the standard (BOT, 2022). The established standard enhanced customers' confidence and increased the acceptance of QR code payment services. The QR codes add to the already-existing mobile payment culture using smartphones. Hence, its continuance usage among customers is expected to be high. However, there is scarce literature documenting the extent of QR code acceptance and continuance usage for payment among customers in Tanzania (Ledi et al., 2023). Moreover, the intention to continue using QR codes for payments among users has not been investigated. This research gap necessitates the current study to examine factors behind the continuance usage of QR codes for mobile payments in Tanzania.

Previous studies confirm that the success of any information system depends on its continuance usage and not on its initial adoption (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Hence, understanding factors contributing to sustainable adoption is imperative for the success of QR codes in mobile payment services in Tanzania. Prior studies on sustainable adoption of mobile payment employed the Expectation- Confirmation Model (ECM), a dominant model in studying mobile payment adoption (Franque et al., 2021a; Humbani & Wiese, 2020; Ifada & Abidin, 2022; Singh, 2020; Sleiman et al., 2022; Sreelakshmi & Prathap, 2020; Zhao & Bacao, 2020). However, other studies have confirmed that ECM has lower explanatory power than the Technology Continuance Theory (TCT). Moreover, EMC heavily relies on satisfaction as the sole determinant of continuance intention (Liao et al., 2009; Rahi et al., 2021). Accordingly, the current study uses the Technology Continuance Theory (TCT) as a theoretical lens to investigate the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payment services. Reasonably, TCT is a specialized theory on technology continuance adoption which addresses the weaknesses of the traditional theory for technology continuance adoption, ECM. Similar to other theories' limitations in studying every aspect of technology continuance intention, the current study extends TCT by integrating it with perceived service trust and security risks.

Trust is an ongoing concern for users in financial transactions. Previous studies indicate that perceived service trust and security risks play a crucial part in motivating and de-motivating users to use and continue using financial services (Al-Okaily et al., 2022; Chin et al., 2022; Liébana-Cabanillas et al., 2022; Medlin & Cazier, 2007; Shankar et al., 2023). Nevertheless, perceived service trust and security risks have received little attention in studies investigating the adoption of QR codes in mobile payment services.

Further, while previous studies on financial transactions have indicated the potentiality of perceived service trust as a moderating factor (Kaur & Arora, 2021; Riemenschneider et al., 2009; Tian et al., 2023), its moderation impact on the continuance usage of QR code has been under-researched. Therefore, the current study integrates perceived service trust and security risks as moderating variables and the direct predictors of continuance use of QR codes for mobile payments. The study's novelty is the integration of TCT with two constructs, perceived risks and perceived service trust, and modelling their direct and moderating impact on the continuance use of QR codes in mobile payments. The rest of the paper is organized: a literature review, methodology, data analysis and findings, discussions, implications and limitations, and future studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cashless Payment System

The popularity and usage of cashless payment systems have increased worldwide as financial technology speeds up the payment processes (Rahman et al., 2020). As such, cashless payment systems allow service consumers to conduct financial transactions without physical cash (Rahman et al., 2020), and the trend of using cashless services enables consumers to transact anywhere and anytime (Tee & Ong, 2016). For instance, electronic payment increased tremendously during the COVID-19 pandemic due to directives on social distancing and contactless (Eren, 2024). As people were obliged to stay home, cashless payment systems were considered the best option (Tripathi & Dave, 2022). Despite the many cashless payment system such as mobile payment, credit and debit card payment, bank transfer, and online payment, the QR code payment method was highly recommended during the pandemic (Eren, 2024), as most service providers considered QR codes to simplify the payment process. Literature has pointed out the primary factors driving the use of cashless payment systems: digitization, financial inclusion, and changes in the retail business model from offline to online (Raya & Vargas, 2022). Moreover, the advantages of using cashless payment are highlighted as discouraging tax evasion and enabling central banks to monitor and control financial transactions (Raya & Vargas, 2022).

2.2. QR Payment System in Tanzania

Financial service providers such as banks have recently adopted the QR-code payment option as an alternative to cash payments to allow consumers to pay for various services (Bank of Tanzania, 2022). Similarly, mobile service providers have introduced QR codes (*Scan QR code to pay service*) to enable users to conduct payments. Furthermore, the Bank of Tanzania (BoT) introduced a QR code payment system called TANQR code to initiate and accept payments from customers and merchants. Introducing the TANQR code is expected to increase the use of non-cash payments in the retail ecosystem and enable Such an initiative to strengthen financial inclusion.

Moreover, TANQR will enhance the connectivity of various financial systems and enable the Bank of Tanzania to monitor and regulate risks from using QR codes in payments. A study from the Bank of Tanzania (2022) has shown that QR code option payment is currently considered an option in Tanzania. Despite adopting a QR code payment system, the sustainability of QR codes in Tanzania has not been researched in detail.

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The current study proposes a theoretical framework that guides the main objective and hypotheses to investigate the continuance intention to use QR codes for payment. The proposed theoretical framework comprises six (6) constructs emanating from the TCT theory: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, confirmation, attitude, satisfaction, and continuance intention to use QR code for making payment, and two (2) additional constructs which are perceived risks and perceived service trust. TCT was coined by Liao et al. (2009) to address the weakness of the ECM- a traditional theory used to study post-adoption behaviours. TCT integrates three theories: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Cognitive Model (COG) and ECM. TAM posits that the intention to use technology is determined by the user's attitude (Davis, 1989), which is shaped by two key variables: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the technology. TAM is primarily used to investigate the acceptance of technology in different contexts. However, the theory has rarely been used to investigate technology's continuous adoption behaviour when integrated with other theories (Mustafa & Garcia, 2021; Wu & Chen, 2017). On the other hand, COG suggests that user satisfaction is the function of expectations and disconfirmation (Oliver, 1981). As such, a user cognitively evaluates prior expectations to confirm or disconfirm satisfaction.

Regarding ECM, the model postulates that continuance usage of the technology is mainly influenced by user satisfaction (Liao et al., 2009). This theoretical framework emulates the perceived risks and perceived service trust as direct predictors and moderators. Perceived risks moderate the relationships between attitude and continuance intention, and perceived service trust moderates the relationships between attitude, perceived usefulness,

satisfaction, and continuance intention. The current theoretical framework and its associated hypothetical relationships are indicated in Fig. 1. The hypothetical relationships between the constructs of the study are explained in the following paragraphs.

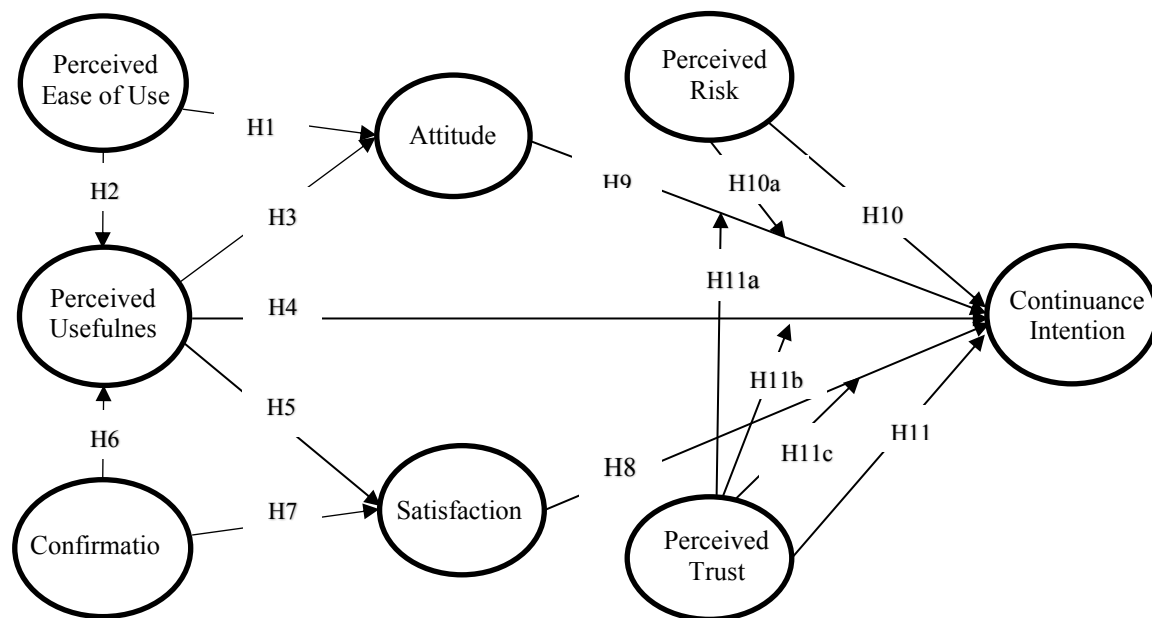


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Perceived ease of use is the extent to which an individual perceives that the technology or system requires less or no effort to accomplish specific functions. When users perceive the system as usable, easy to use, and requiring no effort to achieve a particular activity, such a system will be considered user-friendly in accomplishing tasks. Several empirical studies have concluded that perceived ease of use positively influences the usefulness of mobile payment (Franque et al., 2021a; Yan et al., 2021). Similarly, the QR code is considered one of the simplest payment methods; users are not required to key in a lot of information to make payments. Instead, users ought to scan, and automatically, they will be directed to payment options. Such an interface simplifies the payment process and reduces the chances of errors, making the QR code helpful among the available payment options (Yan et al., 2021). Additionally, Using a QR code in mobile payment makes it easier to achieve the payment process because it is quicker and faster than using cash and credit/debit cards (Yan et al., 2021). Therefore, based on this explanation, this study hypothesizes that:

H1: Perceived ease of use positively and significantly influences users' attitudes toward using QR codes in mobile payments.

H2: Perceived ease of use has a positive and significant influence on the usefulness of using QR codes in mobile payments.

Perceived usefulness is an individual belief in which a user perceives that using a particular system/technology will improve their job performance (Bolodeoku et al., 2022). When individuals perceive that using a specific technology/system tends to boost the outcome of a specific activity, their likelihood of continuing to use that system increases. Studies have shown that when users believe there is an increase in productivity, quick transactions, and individual effectiveness when using a specific technology or system, that technology or system is considered valuable (Bolodeoku et al., 2022). Besides, when users perceive the technology as helpful, they will be satisfied and continue using it (Sleiman et al., 2022). Additionally, when users perceive the information system as helpful, their attitude toward it becomes positive (Alhassan et al., 2020). Several past studies have shown that perceived usefulness has a positive and significant effect on attitude, satisfaction, and continued usage of mobile

payments (Alhassan et al., 2020; Sleiman et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2021). Similar to using QR codes in mobile payments, when savvy mobile users perceive that using QR codes in conducting financial transaction payments will enhance convenience and simplify the payment process, they will likely be satisfied and continue using QR codes in mobile payments. Based on the above explanation, this study postulates that:

H3: Perceived usefulness has a positive and significant influence on the attitude of using QR codes in mobile payments.

H4: Perceived usefulness positively influences the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

H5: Perceived usefulness positively and significantly influences satisfaction with using QR codes in mobile payments.

Confirmation is the extent to which an individual realizes the expected benefits after using the technology or system (Tam et al., 2020). The Expectation-Conformation Model (ECM) posits that when an individual confirms the expected benefits during the usage of the technology/systems, it leads to a positive influence on the perceived usefulness and satisfaction of using such technology or system, hence building the willingness to continue using the technology (Bhattacharjee, 2001). At the pre-adoption stage, users tend to have expectations of the usefulness of the technology. After usage, they build more robust experiences on the actual usefulness, confirming or disconfirming their prior expectations (Hariguna et al., 2023). Several studies have empirically concluded that confirmation positively and significantly influences satisfaction and perceived usefulness (Hariguna et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2020; Tung, 2022). Likewise, users expect many benefits (quick response, error-free, effectiveness) when using QR codes in mobile payments. When such expected benefits are apprehended during the actual usage, the likelihood of confirmation to influence satisfaction and perceived usefulness tends to be very high. Based on the above explanations, this study postulates that:

H6: Confirmation positively and significantly influences the perceived usefulness of using QR codes in mobile payments.

H7: Confirmation positively and significantly influences the satisfaction of using QR codes in mobile payments.

Satisfaction is considered an individual feeling related to usage experience performance outcome and is acquired after users have started using the information technology (Franque et al., 2021). Satisfaction is one of the leading, most decisive factors defining the continuance of information systems use (Bhattacharjee, 2001). When users are satisfied with the information system, the likelihood of using such technology tends to be very high (Chen & Li, 2017). This means that as the expected benefits are confirmed, the level of satisfaction also goes up, influencing the continuance of using the technology. It has been empirically proved that satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on the continuance of the use of information technology (Chen & Li, 2017; Franque et al., 2021; Sleiman et al., 2022). Likewise, when users are satisfied with how QR codes simplify payments, the likelihood of continuing to use QR codes will be very high. These arguments enable the authors to hypothesize that:

H8: Satisfaction positively and significantly influences the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

Attitude is defined as an individual perception of information technology. Attitude captures dimensions such as sound, harmful, beneficial, pleasant, or unpleasant (Alhassan et al., 2020). When users of information technology have any of the attitude dimensions against the information system, the decision to keep using that information system will depend on that particular dimension (Alhassan et al., 2020). Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) categorised attitude into three dimensions: attitude toward success, failure, and learning new technology. Once a user forms an attitude to learn how to use new technology, the attitude of success in using the technology becomes high (Kejela & Porath, 2022). Several studies have empirically confirmed that positive attitudes significantly influence mobile payment use (Alhassan et al., 2020; Handoko, 2022; Kejela & Porath, 2022). Similar to the QR code, when

individuals form a positive attitude toward using QR codes to simplify the payment process, the likelihood of continuing to use the QR codes increases. Based on this explanation, this study hypothesises that:

H9: Attitude positively and significantly influences the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

Perceived risk is an individual perception of loss that can be incurred when using information technology/systems (Mutahar et al., 2022). Yang et al. (2015) described perceived risk into five major categories: financial risk, time risk, privacy risk, psychological risk, and performance risk. Corresponding to the risks, studies have also identified fear associated with monetary loss, fear of personal data being exposed or accessible by the wrong person, fear of non-performance of the information technology as expected, fear of time loss, and fear of psychological frustration and pressure which tend to reduce the possibility of users to continue using the information technology (Hossain, 2019; Yang et al., 2015). Empirical evidence from previous studies has shown that perceived risk negatively influences the continuance of technology usage (Akhtar et al., 2023; Hossain, 2019).

Additionally, using QR codes in mobile payments has several risks, such as tempered QR codes, fake QR codes generated from malicious websites, and data privacy issues. When users perceive that using QR codes in mobile payments exposes them to potential risks, the possibility of continuing to use QR codes in mobile payments becomes very low. Correspondingly, the risk perceptions suppress users' attitudes toward using or continuing to use an information system or e-service (Sadiq et al., 2022). Therefore, based on this explanation, this study assumes that:

H10: Perceived risk negatively and significantly influences the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

H10a: Perceived risk negatively and significantly moderates the relationships between users' attitudes and the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

Trust is among the main factors for the success of any electronic business because it sets up the foundation of the relationship between two parties that are transacting (Hossain, 2019). As trust is extended to other platforms used to conduct transactions, consumers must trust the systems used for electronic transactions in electronic payments. Users need to believe that the systems are secure and safe for transactions. This means that the lower the level of trust, the lower the probability of using such technology in electronic payments (Hossain, 2019). Several prior empirical studies have examined the influence of perceived service trust and concluded that it has a positive and significant influence (Hossain, 2019; Nandru et al., 2023).

Further, trust enhances users' attitudes towards an information system or an e-service (Lavuri et al., 2022), thus boosting their likelihood to continue using the same. Also, the perception of trust moderates users' satisfaction and the usefulness of intention to use an information system or e-service (Baidoun & Salem, 2024; Venkatakrishnan et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2018). In QR code payments, when users trust that using a QR code mechanism will not reroute payment to a wrong destination, or the QR code used is not a fake generated code, the likelihood of adopting a QR code payment channel tends to be high. Based on this explanation, this study hypothesises that:

H11: Perceived service trust positively and significantly influences the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

H11a: Perceived service trust positively and significantly moderates the relationships between users' attitudes and the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

H11b: Perceived service trust positively and significantly moderates the relationships between perceived usefulness and the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

H11c: Perceived service trust positively and significantly moderates the relationships between satisfaction and the intention to continue using QR codes in mobile payments.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Instrument Development

This study adopted a quantitative technique to examine the intention of using QR codes in mobile payments. The research instrument contained three sections; the first section introduced the research area to respondents and explained anonymity issues in the study. The second section was the demographic details, which captured the characteristics of respondents, and the last section was for the measurement items to measure the constructs used in the proposed conceptual framework. Measurement items were adopted from several past empirical studies; items for continuance intention from Bhattacharjee (2001) and Koloseni and Mandari (2017); items for perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were adopted from Davis (1989); items for confirmation were adopted from Bhattacharjee (2001), and items for measuring attitude from Davis (1989). Items for measuring satisfaction were adopted from Bhattacharjee (2001) and Kumar et al. (2018); items for perceived risk from Bauer (1960), Chen (2012), and Kumar et al. (2018), and items for perceived service trust were adopted from Koloseni and Mandari (2024). All adapted measurement items were slightly modified to suit the context of the current study. All Measurement items were measured using a 5-Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, to 5= Strongly Agree). A skipping question was introduced to disqualify respondents who had never used mobile to make payments through QR codes.

The developed questionnaire was pre-tested for content validity using a group of experts from mobile service companies and academicians to have a quality data collection tool. The instrument's contents were verified by seven experts, which is within two to twenty as recommended by Hadi et al. (2020). A face-to-face meeting was conducted with experts, and they were required to rate the measurement items using a relevance rating scale (1=Not Relevant, 2=Relevant but Need Revision, 3=Very Relevant). Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) value was calculated for each measurement item to establish relevance (Elangovan & Sundaravel, 2021). Hadi et al. (2020) proposed that any item with an I-CVI value greater than 0.79 is considered relevant. As such, the content validity analysis for this study found that two (2) items had I-CVI below 0.70 and were, therefore, deleted.

Furthermore, a group of language experts were consulted to provide recommendations regarding grammar and correct wording of measurement items; their suggestions were incorporated accordingly. Moreover, the improved research instrument was pre-tested by 20 people from expected respondents to make sure the instrument was clearly understood, as recommended by Ruel et al. (2015). The findings of the pre-testing were further incorporated to improve the instrument. The improved questionnaire was further translated into Swahili to enable respondents who are not conversant in the English language to respond to the questionnaire. A back-translation technique was employed by asking linguistic experts to translate the English Version into a Swahili Version (Bulmer & Warwick, 1993). Additionally, an independent linguist expert, unaware of the English Version, was requested to translate the Swahili Version back to an English Version; the two English versions were further compared and found to be similar with minor issues. This assured the researchers that the Swahili Version of the instrument was correct and could be used for data collection from Swahili conversant respondents.

4.2. Sample Size and Sampling

The population of this study was customers conducting payments through QR codes in Tanzania; since the population size is unknown, a formula for calculating sample size for an unknown population size was adopted with a 5% marginal error, producing a sample size of 385 (Israel, 1992). Online and paper-and-pencil techniques were employed to collect the data. The online questionnaire with a filter question targeting only customers using QR code payment was sent via WhatsApp, and respondents were requested to fill out and share the link with others. The paper-and-pencil questionnaires were distributed using a Convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling was used because the targeted samples, who can pay using QR codes, were easily found in specific locations, such as restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores, and shopping malls (Edgar & Manz,

2017). Similarly, the research assistants visited restaurants, supermarkets, convenience stores, and shopping malls and requested shoppers to fill in the questionnaire.

4.3. Sample Characteristics

The total number of respondents who returned questionnaires was three hundred and seven (307). However, thirty-six (36) responses were dropped due to the non-completion of many parts of the questions. Therefore, the final sample size for the subsequent analysis was two hundred and seventy-one (271). The findings indicate that most respondents were dominantly male (63.6%). Regarding income levels, the majority falls in the above one million (1,000,000 TZS/\$400 per month) income level band. Further, most respondents use QR codes to pay for goods and services once (1) to twenty (20) times per month. The detailed sample characteristics of the respondents are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	172	63.5
	Female	99	36.5
Age	18-24	35	12.9
	25-34	102	37.6
	35-44	100	36.9
	45 and Above	34	12.5
Income Level	100,000-300,000	33	12.2
	300,001-500,000	22	8.1
	500,001-1,000,000	60	22.1
	Above 1,000,000	156	57.6
QR Usage Frequency /Months	1-20 times	213	78.6
	21-40 times	31	11.4
	Above 40 times	27	10

4.4. Assessment of the Quality of the Measurement Model

The proposed model was assessed for reliability and validity. The study used the standard threshold values to ascertain the reliability and validity of the proposed research model. The results of the reliability analysis indicate that all constructs of the study are reliable. Mainly, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are above the recommended threshold of equal or greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021), as reported in Table 2. Both convergent and discriminant were used to assess the validity of the measurement model. Convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. The study found that the AVE values for all constructs were well above the threshold of equal or greater than 0.5, signifying that each construct explains 50% of its item's variance (Guenther et al., 2023); hence, convergent validity was achieved. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used for the discriminant validity because its performance surpasses the Fornell – Lacker criterion and cross-loadings approach (Voorhees et al., 2016). The results of the HTMT ratio are below 0.90, suggesting discriminant validity had been achieved (Henseler et al., 2015). The results of discriminant validity are reported in Table 3.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment Results

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	AVE
ATT	0.952	0.953	0.969	0.913
CI	0.904	0.905	0.954	0.913
CON	0.885	0.895	0.929	0.815
PEOU	0.935	0.941	0.954	0.838
PR	0.871	0.993	0.917	0.788
PU	0.910	0.916	0.936	0.786
SAT	0.966	0.967	0.978	0.937

STR	0.882	0.909	0.928	0.812
				0.913

Notes:
 ATT = Attitude CI = Continuance Intention CON = confirmation STR = Perceived service trust
 PR = Perceived Risk PU = Perceived Usefulness SAT = satisfaction PEOU = Perceived Ease of Use

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Results: HTMT

Constructs	HTMT Criterion								AVE
	ATT	CI	CON	P	PR	PU	SAT	STR	
ATT									0.913
CI	0.871								0.913
CON	0.834	0.888							0.815
PEOU	0.761	0.832	0.780						0.838
PR	0.197	0.247	0.173	0.917					0.788
PU	0.832	0.884	0.843	0.707	0.185				0.786
SAT	0.886	0.857	0.838	0.719	0.129	0.833			0.937
STR	0.863	0.723	0.789	0.729	0.195	0.862	0.844		0.812
									0.913

4.5. Structural Model Analysis

The quality of the structural model was evaluated using the variance inflation factor (VIF), the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the in-sample model prediction, predictive relevance (Q^2) for the out-of-sample prediction, effect size (f^2), and path analysis. The study found that the VIFs were within the acceptable thresholds of less or equal to five (≤ 5) (Guenther et al., 2023). Hence, the data had no multicollinearity issues. Figure 2 indicates the models' in-sample prediction capability. The study found that the model explained 92% ($R^2 = 0.92$) of the variance in the continuance intention, which was explained by attitude, perceived usefulness, perceived service trust, satisfaction, and perceived risks. The analysis indicates that 68.4% ($R^2 = 0.684$) of the variance in attitude was explained by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, 61.7% ($R^2 = 0.617$) of perceived usefulness was explained by confirmation and perceived ease of use and 76.8% ($R^2 = 0.768$) of Satisfaction was explained by perceived usefulness and confirmation. The higher the R^2 implies that the model's in-sample predictive capability is substantial for $R^2 = 92\%$, 68.4%, and 76.8% and moderate for $R^2 = 61.7\%$ (Chin, 1998) as reported in Table 4. The analysis of the out-of-sample prediction capability indicates that the Q^2 values are positive, suggesting that the model had good predictive capability (Chin, 1998). The study applied the Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT), an improved version of Q^2 which estimates the model's prediction error to determine the average loss value to confirm the model's predictive capability. The PLS–SEM's average loss values were compared to the average loss value of prediction using indicator averages (IA) as a naïve benchmark, and the average loss values of a linear model (LM) as conservative benchmark (Sharma et al. 2023) to determine the model prediction capability. The results indicate that the PLS–SEM average loss values are significantly below zero, indicating that the study's model's prediction capabilities were good concerning the indicator average benchmark. However, our model had insufficient predictive power compared to the linear model (LM) benchmark. The results of the CVPAT are indicated in Table 5.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination Results (R^2)

Constructs	R^2	R^2_{adjusted}
ATT	0.684	0.682
CI	0.920	0.918
PU	0.617	0.614
SAT	0.768	0.766

Table 5: Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) Results

Indicator Average (IA) Benchmark

Endogenous Construct	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	t-value	p-value
ATT	0.668	1.582	-0.914	7.711	0.000
CI	0.358	1.616	-1.259	14.005	0.000
PU	0.727	1.405	-0.678	7.717	0.000
SAT	0.458	1.444	-0.986	9.747	0.000
Overall	0.583	1.494	-0.911	11.314	0.000

Linear Model (LM) Benchmark

Endogenous Construct	PLS loss	LM loss	Average loss difference	t-value	p-value
ATT	0.668	0.271	0.397	7.520	0.000
CI	0.358	0.253	0.104	4.528	0.000
PU	0.727	0.555	0.173	3.861	0.000
SAT	0.458	0.258	0.199	3.929	0.000
Overall	0.583	0.359	0.224	7.177	0.000

The results of the structural model analysis are presented in Tables 6 and 7 and in Fig. 2 and 3. Table 6 and Fig. 2 show the structure model analysis results before introducing the moderating constructs. The study found that eleven (11) direct hypothesized relationships were supported.

Table 6: Hypotheses Testing Results – Direct Effects

Hypotheses	Path	Coefficients	t-values	p-values	Remarks	f ²
H1	PEOU → ATT	0.365	5.697	0.000	Supported	0.234
H2	PEOU → PU	0.251	3.502	0.000	Supported	0.082
H3	PU → ATT	0.537	8.670	0.000	Supported	0.507
H4	PU → CI	0.102	3.215	0.001	Supported	0.041
H5	PU → SAT	0.326	5.065	0.000	Supported	0.189
H6	CON → PU	0.588	9.201	0.000	Supported	0.449
H7	CON → SAT	0.601	8.536	0.000	Supported	0.645
H8	SAT → CI	0.386	9.129	0.000	Supported	0.440
H9	ATT → CI	0.135	3.010	0.003	Supported	0.034
H10	PR → CI	-0.085	5.375	0.000	Supported	0.087
H11	STR → CI	0.386	9.594	0.000	Supported	0.362

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.00$.

Moreover, Table 7 and Fig 3 show the moderation results. The findings of the moderation effects indicate that perceived risk has a negative and significant impact on the relationship between attitude and continuance intention; thus, H10a was supported. Perceived service trust has positive and significant moderating effects on the relationships between attitude and continuance intention; consequently, H11a was supported. However, the moderation relationships between perceived usefulness and continuance intention, H11b, and satisfaction and continuance intention, H11c, with perceived service trust as moderators were not supported.

Table 7: Hypotheses Testing Results Moderation Effects

Hypotheses	Paths	Coefficients	t-values	p-values	Remarks	f ²
H10a	PR x ATT → CI	-0.066	2.483	0.013	Supported	0.026
H11a	STR x ATT → CI	0.241	3.182	0.001	Supported	0.088

H11b	STR x PU	CI	0.031	1.248	0.212	Not Supported	0.005
H11c	STR x SAT	CI	-0.251	3.657	0.000	Not Supported	0.132

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

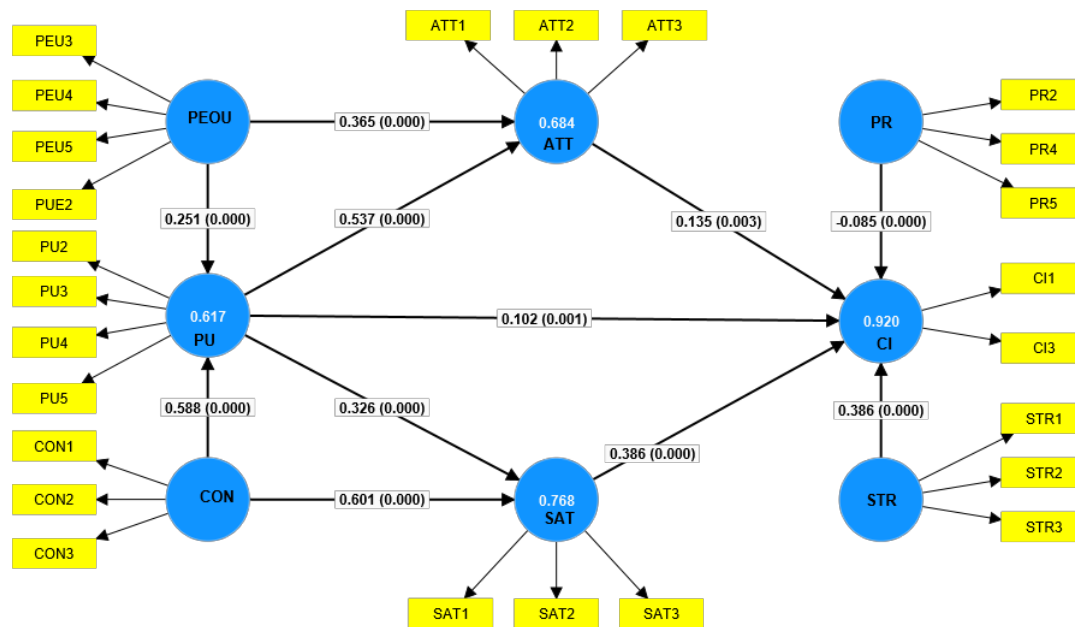


Figure 2: Structural Model Results for the Direct Effects

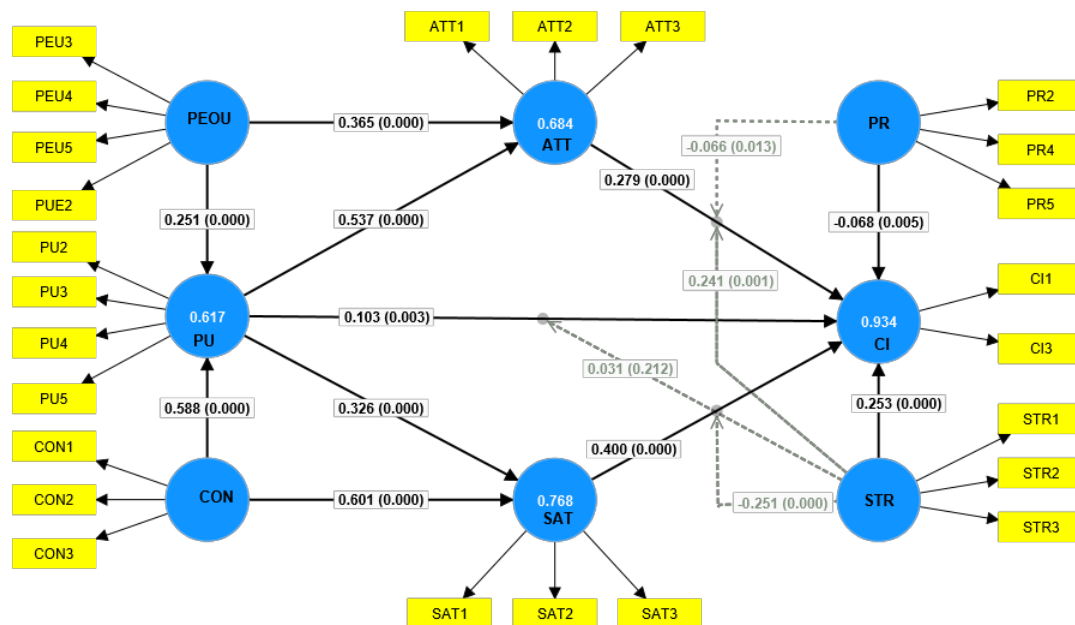


Figure 3: Structural Model Results for the Moderation Effects

The moderating analysis shows that perceived risk moderates the relationship between attitude and continuance intention (see Fig.4). Furthermore, Fig. 5 and 6 depict that perceived service trust moderates the relationship between attitude and continuance intention as well as satisfaction and continuance intention, respectively.

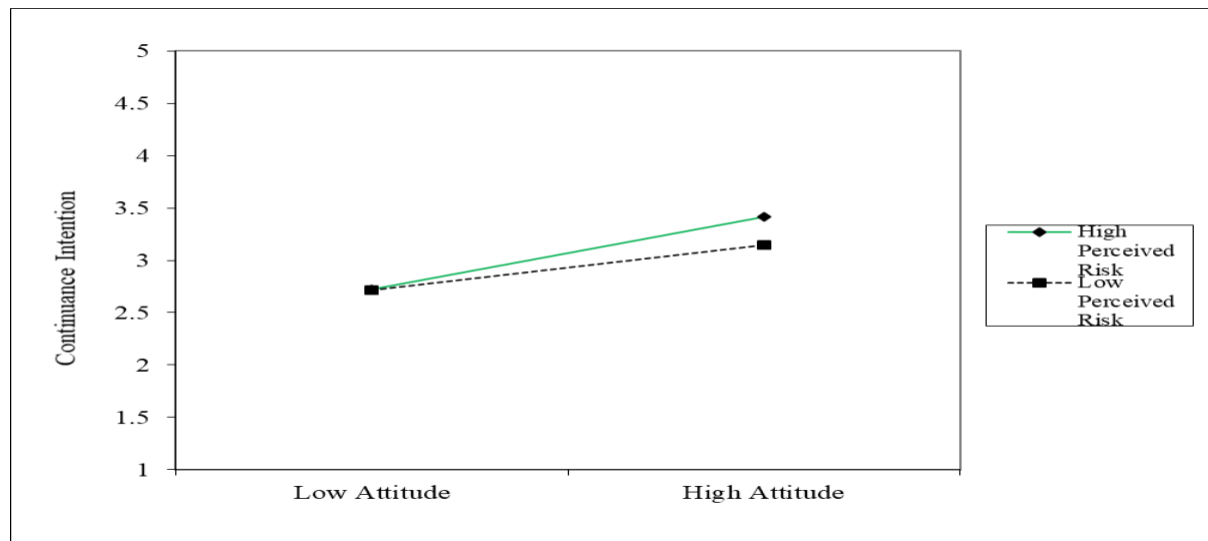


Figure 4: Moderation effects for Perceive Risks and Attitude on Continuance Intention

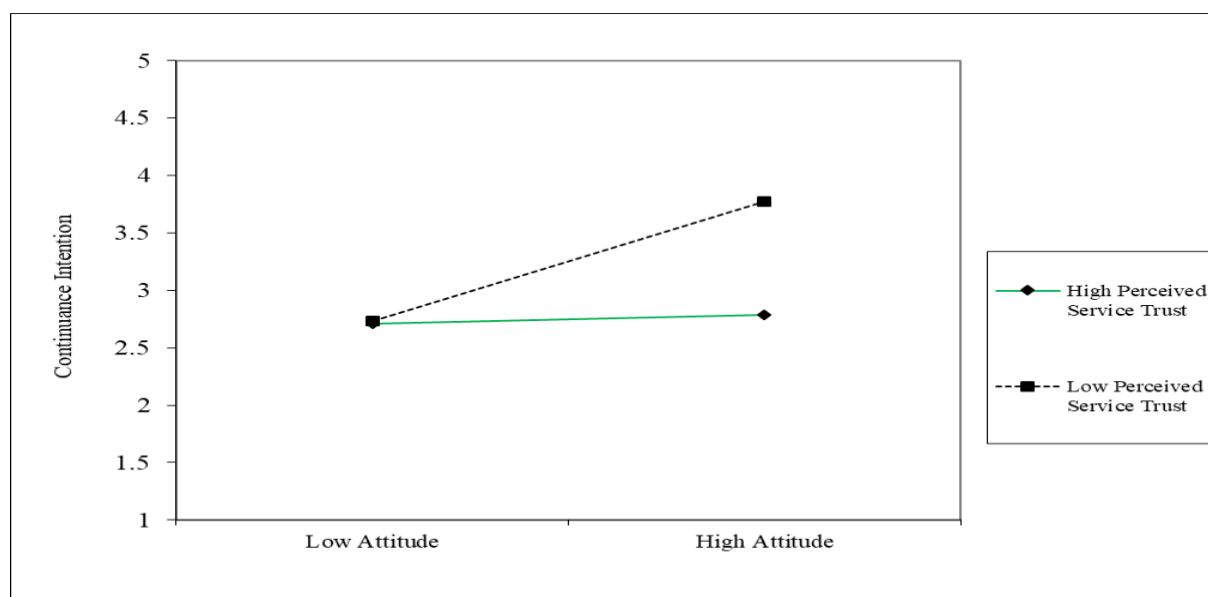


Figure 5: Moderation effects for Perceived service trust and Attitude on Continuance Intention

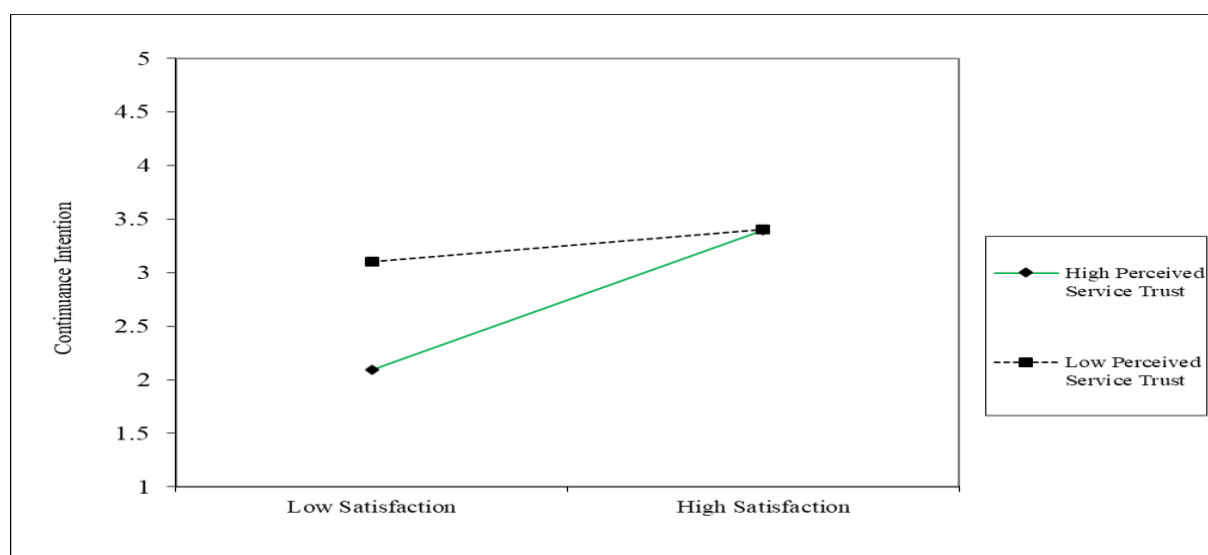


Figure 6: Moderation Effects for Perceived Service Trust and Satisfaction on Continuance Intention

4.6. Importance-Performance Map Analysis Results (IPMA)

The IPMA is a graphical tool used to inform management about which constructs of the study are most important and which have the lowest performance. In doing so, managers should strategise to improve constructs' performance. The IPMA results indicate that satisfaction and perceived usefulness are the most critical constructs if the service providers, retailing, managers, and merchants want to keep customers using the QR codes for payments (see Table 8 and Fig. 7). A unit increase in satisfaction from 69.163 to 70.163 will increase the performance by 0.381 (total effects). Also, a unit increase in perceived usefulness from 66.247 to 67.247 will improve the performance by 0.379 (total effects).

Table 8: IPMA Results

	Importance	Performance
ATT	0.238	72.827
SAT	0.381	69.163
PR	-0.059	47.625
PU	0.379	66.247
STR	0.255	69.133

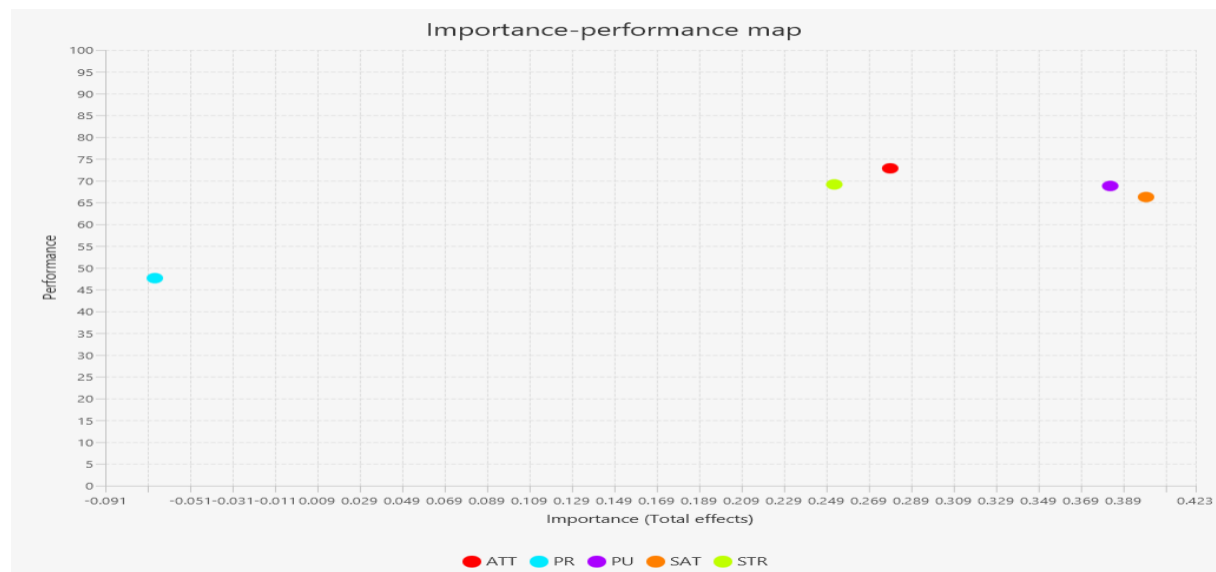


Figure 7: Graphical Representation of the IPMA Results

5. Discussion

The focus of the study was to investigate factors influencing the continuance of the intention to use QR codes for mobile payments in Tanzania. The study examined the inter-relationships between eight (8) constructs: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, confirmation, satisfaction, attitude, perceived risks, perceived service trust, and continuance intention to use the QR codes. Also, the study examined the moderation impact of perceived service trust and perceived risks. The study found that perceived ease of use positively and significantly impacted attitude and perceived usefulness; hence, *H1* and *H2* were supported. This finding implies that the simplicity of the QR codes during payment of services and goods cultivates a positive attitude towards using them; similarly, as the QR codes become easy to use, their utility to consumers also increases. These findings complement previous studies, which found the same relationship pattern in tap-and-go payment, mobile learning, and chatbot reuse (Bailey et al., 2020; Habibi et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2023). As perceived usefulness is critical in technology adoption, acceptance, and post-adoption, the findings of this study confirmed its importance; that is, perceived usefulness was found to positively and significantly impact users' attitude, *H3*, continuance intention, *H4*, and satisfaction,

H5, respectively. This finding implies that the benefits accrued from using a QR code for payments drove users' attitudes and intentions to continue using the QR code for payments and satisfaction. The impact of perceived usefulness on users' attitudes supports a previous study conducted by Safari et al. (2022), and continuance intention corroborates previous studies (Safari et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2023), while its impact on satisfaction is congruent to other prior studies (Jangir et al., 2023; Zhong & Moon, 2022).

Moreover, the study found that confirmation positively and significantly influences perceived usefulness, *H6*, and satisfaction, *H7*. The results suggest that once users have confirmed their expectations of using QR codes for payments, their perception of the usefulness of technology and their levels of satisfaction increase. Previous studies support this finding in the context of mobile payment services (Franque et al., 2021; Park et al., 2017; Sreelakshmi & Prathap, 2020). Regarding the relationship between satisfaction and the intention to continue using QR codes for payments, *H8*, the study found that when users' levels of satisfaction increase, the urge to continue using QR codes for payment also increases. The findings imply that as satisfaction with using QR codes increases, users' intention to continue using the technology accelerates. The positive and significant relationship between satisfaction and continuance intention is cemented by previous findings (Inan et al., 2023; Zhong & Moon, 2022). In yet another finding, the study also found that attitude, *H9*, and perceived service trust in the QR code payment services, *H11*, positively and significantly impact the continuance of QR code payment usage. A QR code-enabled payment system is a relatively new way of settling payments. Therefore, users' trust and a positive attitude are essential to motivate them to keep using it. The fundamental role of attitude and perceived service trust in continuance usage is also confirmed in the literature (Poromatikul et al., 2020; Raman & Aashish, 2021). Nevertheless, the current study confirmed that the presence of risks could thwart the intention to continue using QR codes for payments, *H10*. Risks, such as financial and data loss, are common in mobile payments. Addressing these risks would increase users' confidence and strengthen their intention to continue using QR codes to settle payments. The findings support previous studies on mobile payment services (Poromatikul et al., 2020; Raman & Aashish, 2021; Sinha et al., 2024).

Regarding the moderation relationship of perceived risks on the relationship between attitude and the intention to continue using QR codes for payments, *H10a*, the study found that, indeed, the perception of risks significantly suppresses the impact of attitude on the continuance usage of QR codes. However, the effect size of perceived risks is small. The findings suggest that the likelihood of users' attitudes towards the technology diminishes as long as the perception of risks in using QR codes is significant. This result corroborates previous findings in mobile payments, indicating that perceived risk reduces users' attitudes toward product recommendations (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). On the other hand, the study observed that perceived service trust significantly moderates the relationship between attitude and continuance intention, *H11a*, to use the QR code-enabled payments system to settle payments; thus, perceived service trust accelerates the user's attitude to continue using the QR codes for mobile payments. This finding coincides with (Lavuri et al., 2022), who found that trust strengthens the relationship between attitude and online shopping. Also, the moderation effects of *H11a* caused a minimal increase in effect size (f^2) from 0.026 to 0.088.

On the contrary, the study's results indicated that perceived service trust does not moderate the relationship between perceived usefulness and continuance intention to use QR codes for payment, *H11b*. The reason could be as perceptions of the usefulness of the QR codes for payments become more significant, trust also becomes minimally insignificant. However, this finding is congruent with (Le et al., 2024), who found that the moderating impact of perceived service trust on the relationship between perceived usefulness and intention to use self-payment services was insignificant. The current study found that the moderating effect of perceived service trust between satisfaction and continuance intention to use QR codes for payments, *H11c*, was negative and significant, contrary to the expectations. Previous studies have pointed out that excessive trust may lead to complacency and passivity in the face of inadequate outcomes (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006), thus diminishing user satisfaction. As such, the current finding suggests that excessive trust in using QR codes to make payments significantly weakens the relationship between user satisfaction and intention to continue using QR codes for payment.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The primary contribution of this study is the inclusion of perceived risks and perceived service trust constructs in the TCT to investigate the continuance usage intention of QR codes for mobile payment services. The obtained R^2 (i.e., $R^2 = 0.93.4$) is reasonably strong compared to previous studies (Aisyah et al., 2023; Hamzah, 2023; Ifada & Abidin, 2022; Iskandar et al., 2023; Koay & Ang, 2023; Tu et al., 2022; Türker et al., 2022) investigated the initial adoption and post-adoption behaviours of QR codes. Also, the inclusion of these two constructs in the TCT forms a novel post-adoption model that provides a nuanced understanding of the factors motivating the continuance of QR code usage for settling payments among customers.

Nevertheless, a few studies investigating the initial adoption of QR code payments have concentrated on the direct effects (Muchtar et al., 2024; Rosli & Ibrahim, 2020). Our study contributes to an understanding of the moderation effects of the perceived risks and perceived service trust in the context of QR code continuance usage in mobile payments, a phenomenon little understudied. To our knowledge, this study is the first to apply the TCT to study the continuance usage of QR codes in mobile payments, at least in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the study further validates and adds valuable knowledge on the applicability of this theory in studying post-adoption behaviour in the African context.

6.2. Practical implications

Practically, this research provides important insights for service providers, merchants, retailing, and managers in general about customers' driving factors for using QR codes for electronic payments. For instance, perceived service trust and satisfaction are critical for continuance intention to use QR codes to settle payments. Trust has been well-documented as a vital factor in financial service provision, internet shopping, and e-commerce (Alshehri et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2005). As such, service providers such as banks, mobile money service providers, and other FinTech service providers should ensure that trust in their services is established and maintained to keep the customers using the services. To build confidence, service providers should ensure the security of financial transactions and all-around customer support to resolve customers' complaints and offer assistance in using the services whenever needed.

Further, as pointed out in previous studies, quality of service plays an integral part in building trust (Alkraihi & Ameen, 2022; Qalati et al., 2021). Thus, the quality of services through QR code technology should be consistent and reliable to cultivate customers' trust in the services. As for satisfaction, perceived usefulness and attitude, service providers such as retailing managers and merchants should encourage customers to use the services by rationally informing them of its perceived benefits, such as fast, convenient, reliable, and secure to accomplish the non-cash transactions using QR code technology. Since customers are often attracted to the perceived usefulness of the technology, and when they have confirmed its utility, they become satisfied (Bhattacharjee, 2001), strategic dissemination of information on the usefulness of the technology will massively boost customers' intention towards continuing use of the QR code technology for payments.

Moreover, service providers should not only pay attention to the motivators for the continuance intention of using QR codes for payments but also work on the impediments, particularly reduction of the risks of losing money and privacy intrusion when using the QR code technology for payments. For instance, service providers could enhance the security of QR codes by integrating with blockchain (Purnomo et al., 2016). By doing so while improving privacy concerns, the fear of losing money will be reduced. To further facilitate the continued usage of the QR code, service providers could also ensure that transactions cover the financial risks. Knowing that the financial transactions are covered, the confidence to continue using the service will increase.

The IPMA results indicate that satisfaction is the most critical factor driving customers' intention to continue using QR codes for payments, followed by perceived usefulness. Accordingly, service providers, retailing managers, and merchants should deliberate efforts to improve the technology to ensure that customers are satisfied in all aspects when using the technology. Moreover, there is a need to inform potential customers of the benefits the technology could bring. As such, marketing strategies should keep informing and demonstrating to customers the usefulness of the technology to attract more customers to use the QR technology for payments and, at the same time, retain those currently using it.

6.3. Limitations and Future Studies

Although the study's findings provide insights into multiple dimensions of adopting the QR code for mobile payments, there are a few limitations worth noting; the limitations pave the way for future studies. Firstly, while limiting the data collection process to Tanzania to control data variability, this study did not consider other factors, such as cross-cultural differences across online communities. Previous studies confirmed notable variations in ICT adoption across countries and cultures (Khan et al., 2022). Future studies may consider cross-cultural factors such as national culture to understand better the continuance intention to use QR codes for payments. Secondly, the study focused on the continuance of the adoption of QR codes for mobile payments. Future studies should focus on examining the continuance of QR code usage in different fields, such as marketing, education, and healthcare records, which can provide new insight into QR code post-adoption aspects, leading to the most effective implementation of QR code technology in various fields. Thirdly, while the current study investigated the moderation role of perceived risks and perceived service trust, to gain more valuable insights, future studies may investigate the mediation role of the same on the continuance usage of QR codes for payment services.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated users' intention to continue using QR codes for mobile payments. It employed a novel approach by integrating TCT with perceived risk and perceived service trust constructs. The proposed model yielded substantial explanatory power and predictive capability to validate the extended TCT. Overall, the study's findings proved that the proposed model is relevant and appropriate for cultivating users' intention to continue using QR codes for mobile payment since all hypothesized direct relationships turned significant. However, the study's findings stressed that satisfaction and perceived usefulness are critical factors in enhancing users' intention to use QR codes for mobile payments; a unit increase yielded substantial performance on the intention to continue using the QR codes for payment compared to other factors (i.e., attitude, perceived service trust, and perceived risks). Hence, an investment in increasing users' satisfaction and awareness of the perceived usefulness of paying using QR codes will hugely motivate current users to continue using and encourage new users to use QR codes to make payments.

Furthermore, the findings cemented the significance of perceived service trust in strengthening (i.e., moderating) users' attitudes towards the continuance intention of QR codes for mobile payments. Thus, service providers should strengthen users' trust in the QR code payment services to keep them using it. Moreover, the perception of risks is a concern that needs immediate attention since it hinders users from continuing to use the payment services and suppresses their attitude towards using QR codes for mobile payments. The study's findings offer insightful practical and theoretical implications worth addressing by service providers, merchants, retailing, and managers to ensure the sustainable adoption of QR codes for payment.

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Mobile Money Taxation and Financial Inclusion Agenda in East Africa: Is it killing the Goose That Laid the Golden Egg?

“The art of designing a good tax regime is like finding a way of extracting the maximum volume of feathers from the goose with the minimum amount of hissing” (Colbert, 17th Century)

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Abstract

This is a critical review paper examining the consequence of mobile money taxation on financial inclusion in the selected East African region countries. The paper involved an in-depth assessment of related literature, and literature was gathered through the Google Scholar and Scopus databases using the “Publish or Perish” search tool. The paper revealed the following; that mobile money taxes questionably discourage both the consumers and service providers, especially considering the multiplicity of taxes facing the telecoms sector; that mobile money-specific taxes may halt consumptions and discourage investment in the mobile sector; that mobile money sector tax affects negatively the spillover effect of mobile money service to other production sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and education; that frequent tax increase could restrict and discourage future investment; that total revenue taxes on operators may discourage more investment on infrastructure and service quality; and taxes on mobile money directly hit poor communities disconnecting them from digital and financial inclusion. These have implications for the attainment of financial inclusion and wider development goals. The paper recommends the governments to consider reducing sector-specific taxation, and minimizing tax-induced obstacles to the affordability of mobile and mobile services, and therefore expanding the tax base with the intention to enhance efficiency. Furthermore, the governments and tax authorities are advised to ensure that mobile money taxes are well designed to ensure that taxation principles are observed, and to make the tax system more conducive and predictable to investment in the mobile sector.

Keywords: Mobile Money, Taxation Principles, Financial Inclusion

1. Introduction

Since their inception to-date, mobile money services have become a preferable formal financial service for many unbanked groups in developing countries. During 2022, more mobile money users held active accounts in Eastern Africa than in any African region, as the region reported 115 million active accounts out of approximately 390 million registered mobile money accounts, Petroc Taylor, (2023). The success of mobile money in East Africa may be attributed to a large population with no or limited access to traditional banking and financial services. For example, in Uganda, there are about 22 million people with mobile money accounts, which is nearly three times as many as those having bank accounts. Mobile money transactions in Uganda in 2022 are estimated to have been in excess of US\$ 54 trillion (US\$ 15.3 billion), which is more than half of the country’s GDP as clearly earmarked by Kamulegeya, (2018). Mobile money has become foundational to increasing financial inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa. East Africa was once the epicenter of mobile money, given the pioneering mobile network operators in

Kenya and Tanzania being the early adopter of mobile money in 2008, and that is why it is very crucial studying this region to realize the impact of recent emergence of mobile money taxation on the exceptionally reported financial inclusion success, World Bank, (2021). Also, the three countries are selected due to their level of engagement in digital technology and their incredible level of financial inclusion. These countries are among the emerging economies where the financial inclusion is believed to be the solution to poverty reduction which is the core agenda, N'dri, L. M., & Kakinaka, M. (2020).

The rapid acceptance and extensive use of mobile services have attracted most Governments in East Africa to take advantage of mobile money growth as a cheaper and easier opportunity to expand their tax base. After all, in developing countries formal economy forms a smaller slice of the population limiting their tax authorities to expand their revenue bases. Although many African countries tax to GDP ratio has been consistently low, the average tax to GDP ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa is 18 percent, while in the ratio vary between 12% and 16.6% (Kenya (16.6%), Uganda (12.3%), and Tanzania (12%), Ibrahim and Jairo, (2023). Mobile money first came into place in East Africa between 2007 and 2009, and many mobile money agents have spiraled up throughout the region acting as a channel for mobile money transaction such as payment of bills, salaries and school fees, purchase of goods and transfer of money to family and friends, Francesco Pasti, (2018). Recently, East Africa has experienced a mobile money revolution.

Mobile phone-enabled financial services have produced a celebrated economic outcome by significantly reducing cashless transactions across entire market segment of the economy, and the need to improve tax revenue collection has motivated Governments in the region to begin focusing on mobile transactions, Ngung'u (2021). This opportunity for growth has led to raising in various taxes in the mobile money space. While increasing taxes and expanding the tax- bases are paramount for economic development, Governments should also weigh up the impact of such decisions because a poorly designed tax policy may have a significant impact on the economy of the country in a long-run. According to Ngung'u (2021), as tax rates are raised beyond the most favorable rates, tax revenue falls and the potential for distortion in the market is inevitable. On the other hand, Delaporte and Bahia, (2020) reveals that taxes on mobile money impose a negative impact on profitability models of the mobile money service providers. Consequently, this may hamper their investment plans which will potentially end up reversing the financial inclusion trend which has proven to be the driving engine of the current business development in East African region.

Delaporte and Bahia, (2021) report that within the first three months of implementing daily levy on internet in Uganda an immediate drop of 2.5 million online users and a decline of 1.2 million users of tax payers of over-the-top (OTT) media were experienced which, consequently, amounted to tax revenue fall by USD 1.2 million. Furthermore, the introduction of 1% charge for mobile money transactions resulted into the decrease in the transaction value by UGSH 672m within the first two weeks before the decision was reversed later. Similarly, According to Delaporte and Bahia, (2021), a decrease of 1% of total cost of mobile phone ownership in Brazil, Mexico, Bangladesh, South Africa and Malaysia resulted into a corresponding increase in the revenues of the respective countries. Therefore, disproportionate taxation on mobile phone-based transactions may, consequently, reverse the benefits for financial inclusion already achieved and this may generate an incentive for service users to go back to cash transactions era.

Delaporte and Bahia, (2020) suggests that painful mobile money taxes may probably force low and middle-income population in the society reverting back to cash transaction because the mobile money costs may become higher for them. At the same time high-income earners may revert to lump sum transactions through other convenient and affordable forms of money transfer, and this may hurt the economy because most of low-income earners who are now digitally excluded are not even included in the formal banking sector, hence, they will be lost completely. Based on these facts, countries may face a double blow; *first* a loss of revenue on tax escape from mobile money transactions, and *secondly*, significant reduction of the benefits derived from financial inclusion whose effect trickles down to fall in corporate taxes from businesses since financial inclusion basically improves the profitability of companies.

It is clearly evident that mobile service consumers have already registered their frustrations and dissatisfactions in some of the East African countries concerning some mobile taxes introduced by their respective countries. For instance, in 2018 when the Ugandan government introduced a 1% tax on all mobile money transactions (for both money sending and withdrawal) there was an eruption of a public outcry and pressure which forced the government to reverse its decision by reducing the rate to 0.5% and charging this rate for only the withdrawals. A related public outcry occurred in Tanzania in July 2021 when the similar tax on all mobile transaction was introduced by the Government. Such an outcry caused the Government to agree reviewing the decision by reducing the imposed tax on money transfer by 30% and decreasing the charges to transfer money from one MNO to another by 10%, Delaporte and Bahia, (2021).

From the preceding discussions it is apparent that the mobile taxation policies in the East African region may be poorly designed and not in line with the principles and best practice of taxation. Weakly designed tax policy when put in use to mobile and bank transactions can suggestively put at risk economic inclusiveness. Following examples of documented public outcry, the author alleges that there is a possible weakness in the design of the mobile tax policies across the region, and this warrants the study. The paper, therefore, aimed at examining mobile taxation policies in selected East African countries, and their impact on driving financial inclusion agenda. The paper unpacks the role of mobile money and highlights possible negative externalities that may arise from taxation and strikes the balance between taxation of the mobile money transactions and the financial inclusion agenda. The study employs a critical review of the tax systems of the selected countries and assess how the mobile money taxation frustrates the financial inclusion agenda which has already shown a commendable pace in the selected East African countries. The recommendations on the best ways to balance the mobile money taxation and financial inclusion efforts will ultimately be proposed.

This paper contributes to advancing the fintech literature, particularly on mobile money, and while there is inadequate research on the impact of mobile taxation on fintech innovation, the study presents a fresh perspective to augment the extant literature. The article would help inform mobile money tax policy initiatives and amendments by unpacking the likely unintended consequences, such as the likelihood of market distortions, potential tax evasion, and overreliance on cash transactions, thus affecting revenue mobilization and financial inclusion.

2. Related Literature

The significant growth of mobile money usage has been observed in East Africa since around 2002 with Kenya pioneering the digital financial inclusion agenda. The growth of mobile money financial services in the region has permitted millions of people, who were financially excluded, to conduct financial transactions in a relatively affordable, safe, and reliable way, and the transformative power of mobile technology has heightened financial inclusion, Cull *et al*; (2012).

Before studying the nexus between mobile money and financial inclusion it is crucial to map the stakeholders involved in the industry. Theoretically, understanding varying stakeholder needs is important and that despite some differences between African countries there exists sufficient similarities to necessitate Africa-Africa learning, Osabutey, E. L., & Jackson, T. (2024).

Tan, (2022) considers financial inclusion as the delivery of affordable, accessible, reliable, and quality financial services to all population groups, including the vulnerable, such as the poor, low-income earners, girls and women, the youth, and the informal sector, as well as vendors. According to Tan, (2022) digital technologies such as mobile money literally simplifies processing of large volumes of small transactions and deliver a range of financial services in remote areas. The technology has now enabled businesses and individuals invest money, transfer, and receive money, make purchases and payments, check balances, and make savings in the comfort of their homes, even those in inaccessible areas. On the other hand, Senyo, P. K., & Osabutey, E. L. (2020) consider financial inclusion as access to useful and affordable financial products and services such as payment, deposits, insurance and loans by individuals and organizations. According to these authors, while in the traditional financial industry, access to monetary products and services is mostly obtained through banks and other financial firms, in the

contemporary setting, technology is enabling non-financial institutions such as telecommunication firms to provide financial services. In the same vein, mobile money services are now widely considered an integral component of the financial-inclusion program that was initiated in several developing and emerging countries in the last two decades as highlighted by Shaikh *et al.*, (2023).

Mobile money is a key factor in achieving social cohesion, fostering sustainable economic growth, increasing poverty reduction efforts, and achieving sustainable development goals. Conventionally, financial institutions are entrusted to offer financial products and services, but the emerging technological advances and digitalization has enabled non-financial institutions to provide financial services, a trend generally referred to as FinTech as advocated by Kowalewski & Pisany, (2023). Moreover, financial technology innovations have fueled the accessibility of financial services to those who could not formerly access them, World Bank, (2022). Mobile money is among number of innovations regularly considered vital for financial inclusion, and users may have access to financial services via mobile phones, in an ecosystem that includes banks, regulators, merchants, service providers, and agents, Odoom & Kosiba, (2020). According to Odoom & Kosiba, (2020), mobile money services allow users to complete transactions such as money transfers, bill payments, and loan acquisition.

In an attempt to promote more adoption and usage of mobile phones for financial services, Katz and Berry (2014) proposed tax exemption on mobile money transactions to be implemented, and conclude that tax legislation should exempt providers and users of financial services, especially those who offer digital financial services through mobile money platforms, from taxes to alleviate its effect on financial inclusion.

Glavee-Geo *et al.*, (2020) show that although mobile money was initially introduced to help consumers who hitherto had no access to formal banking services, this form of banking has become increasingly popular among various consumer segments as its usage and adoption has increased multifold largely in emerging and developing countries although introduction of tax on the service is becoming a threat. However, according to Delaporte and Bahia, (2022), tax exemptions from digital financial services are proven to enhance digital and financial inclusion to those who cannot afford the service.

Many African countries, including Ghana, have recently introduced e-levy on the transfer amount of electronic transactions to increase tax income by utilizing rapidly growing digital financial services, According to Ghana Revenue Authority of 2022, such transactions include; mobile money payments made across mobile money wallets with the same mobile money provider, transfer from a wallet from one electronic payment provider to a recipient on another, transfers from bank accounts to mobile money wallets, and transfer from mobile wallets to bank accounts.

Nevertheless, although provision of financial services via mobile money technology is associated with a reduced cost with adequate convenience, no one can strongly claim about the impact of e-levy on mobile money adoption in Africa as alleged by Odoom & Kosiba, (2020); Pobee & Ansong, (2022) who jointly leverage technological and behavioral models to validate or invalidate the factors influencing mobile money adoption neglecting studies on financial factors that could influence adoption.

Of recent, some scholars such as Narteh *et al.*, (2017) and Osei-Assibey, (2015) who are pioneers of financial inclusion agenda, have focused much of their attention on mobile money adoption. Their work has properly introduced this phenomenon in the broad mobile money literature. However, going through some existing literature on mobile money exposes more areas of research that deserve more attention. For example, Osei-Assibey, (2015) extracted the antecedents of mobile money adoption although their focus was exclusively on behavioral and technological drivers of the adoption of the innovation ignoring impact of taxation on the innovation. Furthermore, Narteh *et al.*, (2017) and Osei-Assibey, (2015) centered their study on technology factors, without considering the relationship between taxation and the adoption of mobile money.

In Kenya, according to Central Bank of Kenya report, (2021), the number of mobile phone transaction accounts has been steadily increasing, and the high volume but low average values of mobile phone transactions show that the platform is largely used by low-income earners who mostly transact in small values and are sensitive to

transaction costs. However, mobile phone payments are reported to actually be a very small proportion of total electronic payments, implying that they offer limited scope for significantly expanding the tax base. Instead, increasing the rate of taxation on retail transactions coming from low-income earners, who are sensitive to transaction costs, may result in less tax revenue in the future as these earners revert to cash transactions to avoid taxation

The study by Pobee, *et al.*, (2023), which draws inspiration from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology to assess the enablers of mobile money adoption, brings a new insight into mobile money adoption literature by moderating the relationship between intention to use the innovation and actual use. The authors studied the determinants of mobile money adoption and the moderating effect of taxation (e-levy) on mobile money adoption, and showed that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions significantly influence behavioral intention. According to the authors, behavioral intention shows a significant relationship with the actual use of mobile money, and the moderating effect of taxation is reported to negatively and significantly influence the actual use of mobile money.

3. Approach and Data

3.1 Data collection

This is a critical review article aimed at assessing the consequence of mobile money taxes on financial inclusion in selected East African countries- Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The critical review involves an in-depth assessment of related literature, and literature was gathered through the Google Scholar and Scopus databases. To undertake the data collection processes the following procedures were followed.

According to Cooper, (2009) before selecting and extracting data, the first step involves searching through the literature where a range of information sources was identified studies that require further analysis were singled out. In this paper the initial literature search started by searching through the databases (Google scholar and SCOPUS) for studies relevant to mobile money, mobile money taxes, and financial inclusion. The two databases were selected because they are among the reputable ones. The Google Scholar database is referred to by Xiao and Watson, (2019) as “a very powerful open access database that archives journal articles as well as ‘grey literature’ such as conference proceedings, thesis and reports”, and Xiao and Watson, (2019) consider SCOPUS as among the reputable indices which publishes high-quality journals. The search started by identifying key words which closely relate to the focus of the study. The search words that were used for the initial scoping search for literature included: “*Mobile money usage and Financial inclusion in East African countries,*,” “*Mobile money taxes in East African countries,*,” “*Mobile money taxes and financial inclusion in East African countries.* In this review the focus was on only peer-reviewed documents. All titles, key word abstracts and introductions were scanned through for the study outputs extracted from the initial papers. After doing this, using backward snowballing, the selected articles’ reference lists were as well scanned through to select those studies whose titles matched the focus of this study, and these were then searched for in SCOPUS database and evaluated for relevance using the keywords, abstract, and introduction, as previously done by Levy and Ellis, (2006). The literature was supplemented by websites such as GSMA (Global System for Mobile Communications, a non-profit industry organization that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide) that publishes articles on mobile technology issues. Following this approach, a total of 40 articles were reviewed. Wee and Banister, (2016) recommend between 50 and 100 papers for a comprehensive review. The final number of articles in this paper ultimately amounted to 45, with 5 articles considered after recommendation by the paper reviewer

3.2 Data Analysis

Data was collated, summarized, aggregated, organized from the primary studies derived from Google Scholar using the established key terms as narrated in previous section. The extracted cumulative information was interpreted and thematically discussed and conclusions derived from the data. The analysis was built on the major themes that had been inductively derived from the reviewed literature. The focus of the review was on three fundamental aspects, and these are *mobile money taxes, digital financial inclusion, and best practice principles of*

taxation with a special focus on selected countries. The findings are presented under themes for easier comprehension by readers as advocated by Sebele-Mpofu, (2020). The three countries are selected due to their level of engagement in digital technology and their incredible level of financial inclusion. These countries are among the emerging economies where the financial inclusion is believed to be the solution to poverty reduction which is the core agenda, N'dri, L. M., & Kakinaka, M. (2020). According to the Digital Money Index, (2018) published by CitiGroup, mobile money penetration rate in Tanzania is currently 70% followed by Uganda with the penetration rate between 40% and 72%. Along with Kenya, the three countries are ranked among the top 10 in terms of mobile money penetration with the penetration rate between 40% to 70%. Secondary data was obtained from regulators of respective selected countries using publicly available data and reports shared by revenue authorities and ministries of finance.

4. Findings and Discussions from Literature Reviewed

This section presents the findings of the paper. The summary of key findings is presented in table 1 and the detailed discussions are provided in subsection 4.1

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings

Key Findings	Source	Country
1. Status of Mobile Money Penetration and Financial Inclusion		
▪ Mobile internet penetration-18% against Sub-Saharan Africa average - 26%	Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)	Tanzania
▪ Mobile internet penetration- 27% against Sub-Saharan Africa average - 26%	Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)	Kenya
▪ Mobile internet penetration-23% against Sub-Saharan Africa average - 26%	Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)	Uganda
▪ More mobile money users held active accounts in 3 East African countries than in any African region during 2022, as the region reported 115 million active accounts out of approximately 390 million registered mobile money accounts.	Taylor, (2023)	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania
2. Mobile money tax across selected countries		
	Ndung'u (2021)	Kenya
▪ Introduction of internet data services and fixed-line telephone services tax of 15% in 2021, a rate increase from 12%.	Ndung'u (2021)	Kenya
▪ Increased excise duties on banks and mobile-phone based transactions to 12%, and a VAT at 16% were also charged in 2021	Ndung'u (2021)	Kenya
▪ Removal of exemption on mobile phones and introduction of a 15% levy on the same in 2021	Ndung'u (2021)	Uganda
▪ A levy of 0.5% is charged in cash withdrawal	Ugandan Excise Duty (Amendment) Act 2018	Uganda
▪ Introduction a 10% excise duty on mobile money transfer and withdrawals in 2021	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
▪ Introduction of 18% tax on bank fees and commissions in 2021	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
▪ VAT of (18%) and excise duty of 10% is charged on mobile money transfer and withdraw	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
▪ Introduction of a levy on cash sending and withdrawal via mobile phone which increased prices between \$0.0043 and \$4 on mobile money transactions, depending on the amount sent and withdrawn in 2021	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
3. Multiplicity of Taxes in the Telecoms Sector		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobile money taxes discourage both the consumers and service providers, especially considering the multiplicity of taxes facing the telecoms sector. ○ The burden is accompanied with other charges such as internet taxes and other digital service taxes in the form of corporate income taxes and VAT on digital taxes 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania
4. Immediate impact of Mobile Money Levies		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction of 21% in total transaction volumes and 29% in total value of transaction in 2022 	TCRA, (2021)	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of person-to-person (P2P) dropped by 38% in 2022 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cash-out transactions dropped by 25% in 2022 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2022),	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The tax's impact is estimated to be equivalent to a 30% reduction in P2P and 60% in cash-out transactions in March 2023 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2023),	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rising trend among business owners who have discontinued their mobile merchant payment accounts to cash transactions following increased compliance checks by the tax authority. 	KRA, (2022)	Kenya
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Following stringent measures taken by Kenya Revenue Authority businesses, previously using <i>Lipa Na M-PESA-a mobile money payment platform-started</i> requesting cash payments contrary to previous habit of transacting via mobile money 	KRA, (2022)	Kenya
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduction of a 10 percent excise duty on mobile money transaction fees in 2021 and a levy of 0.5% charged in cash withdrawal resulted in; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ a drastic decrease in average transaction value Moreover, high-income users, who were more likely to engage in higher-value transactions, and have other options for transacting, migrating away from mobile money transaction. ✓ Hampering the formalization of the economy and digitization initiatives. ✓ Migration of many users to agent banking, where no comparable taxes are applied to withdrawals 	UNCDF, (2021)	Uganda
5. Mobile Money Taxes in the Selected Countries contradicts with Principles of a Good Tax System		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Mobile money tax in selected countries is discriminatory and regressive in nature</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Applies to only mobile money transactions, and not to similar transactions through bank account. ✓ Likewise, it does not apply to other alternative money transfer services such as Western Union or MoneyGram. ✓ It is also a form of double and in some cases triple taxation as the money being subjected to the mobile money tax was already taxed at the time of being earned. 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Tax changes uncertainty and unpredictability in Selected Countries</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Taxes proposed on mobile money transactions have been marked by frequent and unpredictable changes to the tax regime: mobile money transaction taxes have been imposed, amended, or withdrawn ✓ Uncertainty and lack of transparency over taxation systems can have a direct impact on the operations of the tax authority, increasing enforcement costs, as well as discouraging investment. ✓ Consequently, given the badly designed tax policy, two outcomes have resulted: policy reversal as seen in Uganda in 2018 and Tanzania in 2021, and unintended negative consequences of the tax policy reversal not only has an impact on tax certainty and confidence for the whole tax system, it can also highlight weakness in government decision making. 	Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Mobile money tax in selected countries contradicts with the principle of neutrality and equity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ East Africa, the telecom sector is taxed heavily as compared to most other sectors of economy, which is not compliant with principles of equity and neutrality. ✓ The tax appears to be penalizing users who opt to use mobile money services as opposed to the traditional commercial banking services. ✓ It also appears to be designed to discourage users from using mobile money services. This is because if you were to deposit, make a payment, withdraw or transfer money using your bank account, this tax would not apply to you 	Pushkareva, (2021)	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Complexity and Inconvenience of Mobile Money Tax</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The mobile industry is the highest taxed in East Africa ✓ In Uganda, mobile money users have recently had to contend with a 1% tax levied by government starting in July 2018. ✓ Uganda already taxes fees charged from mobile money transactions by both agents and mobile money providers at 10%. ✓ In Kenya, mobile money users have started paying higher transaction fees following the increase in mobile money excise tax from 10% to 12%. 	Muthiora & Raithatha, (2017)	Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In Tanzania, there is a 10% excise duty for sending and withdrawing money through mobile money transfer. ✓ The corporate tax burden on mobile operators (28%) in Kenya is above the SSA average (20%). This can be explained, in part, by a high corporate tax rate (30%) which is above the average headline rate in Africa (27.1%). ✓ While mobile operators in Tanzania and Uganda can deduct the cost of telecommunication and spectrum license fees for corporate tax purposes, Kenyan operators do not have this tax deduction. This increases the costs of Kenyan mobile operators who already incur high levels of upfront and ongoing investments in network equipment and infrastructure. 		
6. Specific Consequence of Mobile Money Taxation on Financial Inclusion in East Africa			
Tax Element	Consequence of Financial Inclusion	Source	
Excise tax on beer	In Kenya, rich beer drinkers switched to other alcoholic beverages when the tax on beer was increased beyond the optimal tax rate. While the rich consumers had options to advance to alternative beverages, the poor consumers reduced a drinking habits and created a market for illicit alcoholic beverages without government controls. In so doing mobile money taxes force low-income earners to revert back to cash transaction due to their inability to cater the transaction expenses associated with the transaction, while high-income earners may opt lump sum transactions through alternative forms of money transfer.	Ndung'u, (2020)	
Mobile money usage levy	The imposition of taxes on mobile money implies that the cost of utilities such as water and electricity swiftly rise. Where physical payments may be unfeasible or unbearable, predominantly in the rural settings, there stands to be significant drop-outs in the use of these services, to the detriment of both consumers and service providers. Therefore, the increase in the costs of utilities by introducing mobile money tax, which leads to the loss of the rural clientele base, can reduce the usage of mobile money, thus affecting both financial and social inclusion	Shinyekwa, (2018), Shapshak, (2021),	
Mobile money usage levy	in Kenya, between July 2019 and October 2020, when the National Transport Safety Authority payment was digitized, government revenue increased from USD 1.1 million to USD 2 million although one had to pay more because of the mobile transaction tax, and this is probably because the people had no option to pay transport. On the other hand, person-to-person remittances reduced from 30 million to 18 million, reflecting a 38% reduction in usage in 2021 after increasing mobile money tax. As mobile money transactions became more expensive due to the new levy, many Tanzanians, looking to avoid additional costs, immediately reduced their usage of mobile money in favor of alternative payment methods such as cash.	Muthiora and Raitthatha, (2020), Tan, (2022)	

Sources: Summary from Literature

4.1 Discussions

4.1.1 Status of Mobile Money Penetration and Financial Inclusion

Mobile money was introduced in East Africa between 2007 and 2009, and many mobile money agents have spread over in all parts of the region, taking an important role in facilitating for transactions such as payment of bills, salaries and school fees, purchase of goods and transfer of money to family and friends, Mbiti and Weil, (2023). Since then mobile money transactions have significantly improved the accessibility of financial services across the region, especially to the previously financially excluded population. Data from selected East African countries' central banks and communications authorities show the impact of mobile money, with millions of active mobile money subscribers each conducting between 12 and 15 transactions per month as revealed in Table 1. According to Delaporte and Bahia, (2021), on average, the mobile broadband usage gap defined as the percentage of the population covered by mobile broadband networks but not using mobile internet stood at 48% in East Africa. While 34% of the Tanzanian population is not covered by mobile broadband services the average coverage gap converges to 25% across Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Petroc Taylor, (2023), more mobile money users held active accounts in East Africa than in any African region during 2022, as the region reported 115 million active accounts out of approximately 390 million registered mobile money accounts. The mobile operators maintain their leading position amidst competition with traditional banks and fintech startups. According to McKinsey, (2017) M-Pesa, Airtel Money and MTN Money, are among the most successful MNOs offering digital financial services in East Africa. These platforms have over three times as many customers as largest bank-led initiatives. The strength of distributional networks is MNO's main advantage.

Based on Delaporte and Bahia, (2021) on the GSMA report, the penetration of mobile internet (18%) in Tanzania is low compared to Kenya (27%), Uganda (23%) and the Sub-Saharan Africa average of (26%). While the coverage gap (34%) in Tanzania has narrowed in recent years, it is still larger than in Kenya (4%), Uganda (15%) and the Sub-Saharan Africa average of (25%). By providing connectivity, the mobile sector enables life-enhancing benefits such as financial services via mobile money, access to educational resources and access to connected businesses. However, affordability is one of the key barriers to connectivity across the regions, something which endangers the digital financial inclusion agenda. Emerging markets are a hive of activity for mobile money. Most of the underserved population in East Africa, and, elsewhere across Africa, use mobile money services due to their convenience, simplicity, and ease of use. The use of mobile money by previously unbanked population has properly closed the gap left open by traditional banking as earmarked by Onuoha and Gillward, (2022). This amounts to significant expansion of financial inclusion. Considering revenue mobilization, leaving out money exchanging hands through mobile transactions untaxed would have a considerable effect on unexploited tax revenues, consequently affecting the propensity of the governments in the region to deliver on their revenue collection objectives. It is therefore apparent that mobile money taxes provide an opportunity to broaden the tax base by taxing this huge informal economic activity.

According to Muthiora, (2015), mobile money is an enabler of financial inclusion and the development of the digital ecosystem. Despite these positive implications, mobile money taxes could reduce the gains. Muthiora, (2015) submits that the introduction of mobile money technology after 2000 improved substantially the access to financial services in Kenya, and that the use of mobile money for different activities has increased the use of mobile money to purchase airtime and to transfer money to over 55% and 45% respectively. Demirgüç-Kunt, *et al*; (2018) consider digital transformation, the increased use of digital financial platforms, and the rollout of mobile money platforms in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as the drivers of financial inclusion. According to Demirgüç-Kunt, *et al*; (2018) the use of banking services and mobile money services increases transparency, reduces corruption, and leaves an audit trail, which also enhances accountability and tax revenue generation.

In Kenya, the use of M-Pesa mobile money platform impacted lives of communities differently including positive gains in savings, household consumption, and poverty reduction levels. The platform transformed significantly money transfer service by easing the process of sending and receiving money through business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) services as well as between individuals, Demirgüç-Kunt and Singer, (2017) According to Demirgüç-Kunt and Singer, (2017) apart from growth of business and access to financing by SMEs financial inclusion enhances access to credit, savings, and insurance to large population in the society, which

definitely improve economic growth, productivity, and taxable income in the economy. Table 2 below shows rapid growth of financial inclusion and the contribution of mobile money to financial access.

Table 2: Mobile money statistics as at December 2021.

	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania
Active subscribers (millions)	32.46	22.52	23.96
MM agents	264,390	235,790	560,063
Transactions per active subscriber per month	13 transactions per month (Safaricom, 2021)	15 transactions per month (Uganda Communications Commission (2021))	12 transactions per month (Bank of Tanzania (2021))

Sources: Communications Authority of Kenya, Uganda Communications Commission

4.1.2. Dynamics of Mobile Money Taxation

4.1.2.1 Mobile Money and Tax Revenue Mobilization

East African countries have progressively embarked on mobile money taxes to collect revenue from both the informal and formal sectors as the usage of mobile money has cut across all social divides. Individuals, small businesses, and large corporations all use it. The growth of mobile money usage in East Africa has heavily attracted and influenced revenue authorities across the region to introduce mobile money taxes. Several factors have been put forward to motivate the introduction of mobile money taxes in East Africa, including the pervasiveness of the issue of informality, low tax-to-GDP ratios in most East African countries, and the need to widen the tax base and reduce budget deficits, Munoz et al., (2022). The mobile money services are associated with three types of taxation: general taxation such as Value Added Tax (VAT), mobile sector specific taxation which includes excise duties on airtime usage and direct mobile money tax on transfer fees charged by telecommunication companies. Muthiora & Raithatha, (2017) consider the mobile industry among the highest taxed in East Africa, and that the member countries started taxing mobile money transactions since 2013.

According to Ndung'u (2021), most recently, Kenya introduced a new 15% tax on internet data services and fixed-line telephone services to expand the tax base; increased excise duties on banks and mobile-phone based transactions to 12%, and had a VAT at 16%. To make the matter worse the country removed and lifted the exemption on mobile phones and introduced a 15% levy on the same in 2021. In the similar year Uganda introduced a 10 percent excise duty on mobile money transaction fees. On the other hand, the levy on cash withdrawal stands at 0.5% as clearly stipulated in Ugandan Excise Duty (Amendment) Act 2018. When this was happening, Uganda was already taxing fees charged from mobile money transactions by both agents and mobile money providers at 10%. On the other hand, Tanzania also introduced a 10% excise duty on mobile money transfers and withdrawals, and an 18% tax on bank fees and commissions. On top of that Tanzania introduced a new levy on mobile money transfer and withdrawal transactions, excluding merchant, business and government payment transactions in 2021. This levy, additionally, applies to existing VAT (18%) and excise duty on mobile money transfer and withdrawal fees (10%). Moreover, during the same year Tanzania introduced a levy on cash sending and withdrawal via mobile phone which increased prices between \$0.0043 and \$4 on mobile money transactions, depending on the amount sent and withdrawn.

In their report on the Mobile Tax Policy and Digital Development Delaporte and Bahia, (2022), show that Kenya and Tanzania have the highest proportion of tax at 26%, followed by Uganda at 24%. The report revealed that taxes on consumers and mobile operators are directly affecting the affordability of mobile devices and services and reducing state revenues. It is apparent from the report that taxes presently make up 21% of the cost of a basic internet-enabled handset on average, and that taxes such as the excise duty, have in turn slowed the uptake of mobile devices and related services. For instance, the excise duty levied on mobile services in Kenya has consistently shown an upward trajectory, resulting in Kenya's tax rates ranking among the highest in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region. According to Delaporte and Bahia, (2022), in Kenya, the excise duty on mobile

services is one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, having increased from 10% to 20% in the last five years, and the increase contributed to higher prices, decreased usage, and eventually lower-than-expected revenues for the government.

In all the three countries the introduction of the mobile levies faced stiff resistance from various stakeholders. For instance, in 2018 Uganda introduced a 1% tax on all withdrawals transaction before it was reduced to 0.5% following an outcry from public. According to a study by the UNCDF, the lowest income groups in Uganda were unduly affected by the introduction of withdrawal tax compared to higher income groups who could access alternative means of payment. UNCDF, (2021) reflects a drastic decrease in average transaction value after the tax was introduced. Moreover, high-income users, who were more likely to engage in higher-value transactions, and have other options for transacting, seem to have migrated away from mobile money transaction. The report further argued that the tax hampered the formalization of the economy and digitisation initiatives. It is further noted from UNCDF report that the introduction of the tax led to migration of many users to agent banking, where no comparable taxes are applied to withdrawals. Unfortunately, individuals with lower incomes are believed to have less access to agent banking, indicating that the burden of this tax falls disproportionately on the poor.

Like in Uganda, in 2021 the Tanzania government's proposal to impose a tax on mobile money transactions invited a similar outcry from the public, which finally resulted in the reduction of the levy in a similar fashion with Uganda. It is apparent that, in Tanzania, mobile-based transactions are indeed more heavily taxed as stipulated in Tanzania's National Payment Systems (Electronic Money Transaction Levy) Regulations 2022. The said regulation lay down the scope of electronic mobile money. According to Tanzania's National Payment Systems (Electronic Money Transaction Levy) Regulations 2022 the scope of electronic mobile money includes "*the transfer of electronic money from a user's mobile money account to a user's bank account, a user's bank account to a user's bank account, or a user's bank account to a user's mobile money account*". This extension to electronic money accessed by banking applications apparently sought to level the playing field between banks and telecoms. Earlier before passing this regulation, non-mobile based transfers transacted through banks were exempted, as were bank-to-mobile money wallet transfers. The summary of the information on mobile money taxes for the selected East Africa countries is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Transaction of Mobile Money and Telecom Services in Selected EA Countries

Country	Transaction of Mobile Money			Telecom Services	
	VAT	Excise Duties	Specific Taxes of Actual Value of Transfer of Mobile Money	VAT	Excise Duties
Tanzania	18%	10%	USD 0.0043-USD 4 on Electronic money transfer and withdrawal	18%	17%
Kenya	0%	12%	Nil	16%	20%
Uganda	0%	15%	0.5% on withdrawal	18%	12%

Sources: Various Literatures

4.1.2.3. Multiplicity of Taxes in the Telecoms Sector

Mobile money taxes questionably discourage both the consumers and service providers, especially considering the multiplicity of taxes facing the telecoms sector. The burden is accompanied with other charges such as internet taxes and other digital service taxes in the form of corporate income taxes and VAT on digital taxes that have been recently introduced in East African countries. This, therefore, raises concerns about the current design or structure of mobile money tax frameworks. Delaporte and Bahia, (2022) suggest that African tax systems are poorly formulated due to capacity weaknesses, lack of in-depth and appropriate evaluation, and research, and more so due to the political economy factors that drive tax policy. Table 4 provides a summary of the different taxes charged on the telecoms sector in the selected East African countries to give insight into the true nature of the tax burden arising from the sector-specific taxes in addition to other general taxes such as VAT and corporate income tax.

Table 4. Taxes on the telecoms sector in selected countries.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Tax Corporate</i>	<i>VAT</i>	<i>Tax on Phone, airtime</i>	<i>Tax on MNOs' Revenue</i>	<i>Tax on MM transactions</i>
Kenya	30%	16%	10%	-	12%
Uganda	30%	18%	12%	10%	0.5%
Tanzania	30%	18%	17%	-	10%

Sources: Various Literatures

4.1.2.4. Immediate impact of Mobile Money Levies

Implementing the aforementioned levies, in Table 3, had a severe and immediate impact on mobile money transaction volumes and the growth of mobile money subscribers before and after the introduction of the fees in the three selected countries. For instance, in Tanzania, according to TCCRA, (2022)-a communication regulatory authority in Tanzania, from March to September 2021 a reduction of 21% in total transaction volumes and 29% in total value of transaction was observed. When the tax came into force in July 2021, transaction volumes and values decreased by 8 and 12%, respectively. In August, the reduction in transaction volumes and values was more significant. From July to August, transaction volumes and values decreased by 17 and 28% respectively, while these percentages are estimated at 23 and 37% from June (when the tax announcement was first made) to August 2021. The reduction in transaction values and volumes became progressively acute as the value of transactions increased. The decrease in volume was more significant for high-value transactions, which decreased by an average of 42% in September compared to June. Medium-value transactions declined by an average of 30%, whereas lower-value transactions decreased by an average of 21%.

After a loud outcry from the stakeholders, in August 2021, on the newly introduced levies, the Government of Tanzania made a of reduction 30% in the levies a slight improvement in customer activity was noted, but the industry as a whole could not immediately recover to its previous levels of performance. A year later, in July 2022, the government of Tanzania, through the Finance Act 2022, introduced a further 43% reduction to the mobile money levy in Tanzania, which represents a combined reduction of 40% since the introduction of the levies. The regulation also expanded the scope of the levy to apply to bank transfers. Again, this was contested on the basis of double taxation for users sending money to their own accounts, and in September 2022, a new regulation was issued which eliminates levy charges on transfers from users' bank accounts to same user bank account, as well as transfers from a user's bank account to the same user's mobile money account, and vice versa.

Apparently, as of 2023, 72% of Tanzanians use mobile money services, up from 60% five years ago while 22% of the population uses commercial banks. Amidst this, the Tanzanian government recognized mobile money as a driver of financial inclusion, contributing to economic growth and social development, especially among women and rural populations, Delaporte and Bahia, (2023). However, the number of person-to-person (P2P) and cash-out transactions dropped by 38% and 25%, respectively, from June to September 2021. The tax's impact is estimated to be equivalent to a 30% reduction in P2P and 60% in cash-out transactions in March 2023 if it had not been introduced. Lower-value P2P transactions have, to a small extent, recovered to levels above those before the tax, while mid and higher-value transactions are still 31% and 58% lower, respectively. This indicates users' appreciation for lower transaction costs. Per the GSMA report, "The reduction in affordability of mobile money, therefore, threatens to reverse the commendable financial inclusion gains as Tanzanians revert to cash, particularly amongst the vulnerable and the poorest segments of the population. The situation is similar in Kenya where Kenya's tax authority raised concerns over a rising trend among business owners who have discontinued their mobile merchant payment accounts to cash transactions following increased compliance checks by the tax authority. According to KRA, (2022) businesses, previously using *Lipa Na M-PESA-a mobile money payment platform*-are currently requesting cash payments contrary to previous habit of transacting via mobile money. This shift comes after Kenya Revenue Authority deployed revenue service assistants to boost tax compliance efforts, which also included facilitating online business registrations.

4.1.3 Mobile Money Taxes and the Principles of a Good Tax System

What constitutes a good fiscal policy is still debatable by both policy practitioners and academic community. However, a general compromise on principles underlying such policy is well discussed in literature. Adam Smith, (1776) broadly understands the principles of fairness, certainty, convenience and efficiency as a requirement to take taxpayer's ability to pay and personal circumstances into account when defining their tax burden. In as far as *fairness principle* is concerned, the responsibility to pay taxes should never burden one group of taxpayers being clearly disproportionately better- or worse-off than the other due to tax system design. "*Certainty*" means that the taxpayers should be informed an appropriate time in advance about the cause and size of any tax levied, and that the rules of taxation should not be subject to a frequent change. According to a principle of "*convenience*", collection and payment of taxes should be as simple and cheap as possible, not presenting a significant burden to either taxpayers or tax administrations. Finally, "*efficiency*" means that we should aim to maximize economic benefits of taxation by minimizing costs of collecting taxes and economic distortions associated with Digital Financial Services taxes in general, and mobile money taxation in particular, have been criticized for going against the principles of a good tax system.

According to Pushkareva, (2021) tax policies applied to digital financial services, in most of African countries, are hardly consistent with the principles of good tax policy, and unfortunately, mobile money taxation is the cheapest and easiest tax to collect, although it is discriminative in nature as it is not broad-based. It does not extend to other similar services like banking services. This brings complaints from tax payers about its fairness and equity. Table 5 below summarizes how the principles of a good tax system are observed in setting and designing mobile money tax policy in the selected East African countries in this study.

Table 5: Summary of Principles of Good Tax System and their implication to mobile money taxation

Principle	Explanations	How the principle holds and its implication	Source
Equity, Fairness and Neutrality	Tax payers whose incomes are closely equal have to pay equal tax, and this is <i>horizontal equity</i> . On the other hand, <i>vertical equity</i> requires those who earn more income to pay more tax than those earn less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The principle is violated as it does not consider the varying circumstances of taxpayers, especially the fact that mobile money platforms are largely used by the underrepresented or underserved segments of the population. ✓ More specifically, Mobile money tax applies to only mobile money transactions, and not to similar transactions through bank account. ✓ Likewise, it does not apply to other alternative money transfer services such as Western Union or MoneyGram. ✓ On the face of it, the tax appears to be discriminatory as it only applies to mobile money transactions. ✓ It is also a form of double and in some cases triple taxation as the money being subjected to the mobile money tax was already taxed at the time of being earned <p><i>Impact:</i> Violation of equity/fairness/neutrality lowers tax morale as well as trust in the government and tax morale.</p> <p><i>Recommendations:</i> To create fairness and observe neutrality, governments of the selected countries should create an equilibrium by reducing the levies on mobile money and spreading it over to other sectors. That way equilibrium is created and fairness established</p>	Mpofu, (2020), Delaporte and Bahia, (2020), OECD (2014)

		and restored while maintaining the speed of financial inclusion progress.	
Certainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Taxpayers must be certain of their tax liability and how to honor their tax liability. ✓ Tax policy must have some consistency and stability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mobile money tax policy construction in East Africa is fragmented and unstable to a great extent <p><i>Evidence of Violation:</i> The policy is characterized by proposals, introduction of the taxes, withdrawals of the tax policy, outright repealing, re-implementations, and constant amendments. Given the badly designed tax policy in the selected East African countries two outcomes have resulted: policy reversal as seen in Uganda in 2018 and Tanzania in 2021,</p> <p><i>Impact:</i> Uncertainty and lack of transparency over taxation systems can have a direct impact on the operations of the tax authority, increasing enforcement costs, as well as discouraging investment. Also, unintended negative consequences of the tax policy reversal not only have an impact on tax certainty and confidence for the whole tax system, it can also highlight weaknesses in government decision making.</p> <p><i>Recommendations:</i> Governments and policymakers must work towards bringing more stability, consistency, and certainty to the mobile money taxation frameworks and certainty.</p>	Clifford, (2020), Delaporte and Bahia, (2021)
Convenience and Efficiency	<p>The convenient and efficient taxation principle states that “<i>A stable and transparent tax system in line with international standards is a strategy that would deliver sustained investment.</i>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Convenience within a tax system reflects the ease with which taxpayers can comply with the rules and mechanisms of the system. ✓ Tax assessment and payment should present the smallest burden possible on a taxpayer. ✓ Economic efficiency within a tax system reflects the need to balance revenue mobilization with economic development and functionality. ✓ Administrative efficiency, on the other hand, reflects the need for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The analysis of documents shows that regardless of the positive contribution mobile sector to economic growth, East African countries studied do not always align their sector-specific taxes with best-practice principles of taxation, thereby distorting the industry’s continued development. ✓ Faced with short-term revenue needs, some governments in selected countries have been driven to apply additional sector-specific taxes on mobile operators. ✓ Sector-specific taxes and fees often drive the high tax burden: for instance, governments levy sector specific consumer taxes, excluding customs duties, in selected countries ✓ Strengthening convenience has the added benefit of reducing the cost of tax administration, as well as compliance. <p><i>Impact:</i> According to the analyzed documents and literature, the selected East African countries have experienced weaknesses in the way to formulate and administer tax policies. Additionally, according to Delaporte and Bahia, (2020), capacity limitations within policy research units and the lack of national policy frameworks have, in the selected countries, led to insufficient assessments of the full impact of mobile money taxes.</p>	Delaporte and Bahia, (2020)

	execution of a tax system to be inexpensive and easy to administer.	<i>Recommendations:</i> Policymakers must uphold the two principles by appropriately designing mobile money tax frameworks; otherwise, their inappropriate design could affect other tax heads, financial inclusion, digital transformation, digital financial inclusion, and the usage of digital financial services as well as the fruition of economic plans. There is a need for tax policy to strike an equilibrium between the revenue generation and economic development as well as other functions of tax policy.	
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Sources: Summary of Literature

4.2 The Economic Consequence of Mobile Money Taxation on Financial Inclusion

There is limited empirical work to determine the potential impact of mobile money taxation on digital financial inclusion. However, most recently, Delaporte and Bahia, (2020) pointed out that many mobile money users belong to marginalized societal groups, and that the negative impact on financial inclusion and broader development goals is significant. According to Delaporte and Bahia, (2020), this user profile - and the fact that these taxes don't extend to the banking sector - strongly suggests that they are regressive in nature, undermining the fundamental concept of tax equity. Putting it differently, this tax would increase income inequality, and as the economy is integrated, an increase in tax, or an introduction of a new tax in one area will, inevitably, have an impact on other sources of tax revenues. However, while high taxes on mobile money transactions may be a convenient tax window, it may lead to a slowdown in economic activities - and aggravate inequality in the region and in individual countries in the region.

According Delaporte and Bahia, (2021), mobile money taxes imposed in selected East African countries have been troublesome for the industry's development and mobile money users, having raised the transaction cost for low-income customers. Unfortunately, Governments' desire to impose mobile money taxes is mainly influenced by the need to broaden the tax base and raise revenue which fosters economic growth. It is also worth understanding that digitalization of financial services is apparently the game changer towards achieving the sustainable development goals as stipulated in SDGs via universal financial inclusion, particularly in developing countries like Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania where this innovation is relatively evolving.

Delaporte and Bahia, (2021), reports that in the three selected countries the current tax system has a high incidence on the mobile sector, limiting the positive externalities generated by the industry. As shown in report, the mobile tax contribution is high in Kenya at 37% of the total market revenue. Consumers pay 57% of this tax contribution, primarily because they are subject to excise duties on mobile services and mobile money. This high tax contribution can challenge the affordability of mobile services, thereby limiting the wider benefits of increased mobile connectivity, productivity, and digital inclusion across the whole regional economy.

In Tanzania according to the most recent statistics from Delaporte and Bahia, (2022), taxes on mobile money fees represented 23% of total transfer cost, including VAT (18%) and excise duty (10%). The taxes on mobile money fees represented 60% of total transfer cost, on average, due to the introduction of new mobile money levy in June 2021. Fortunately, from September 2021, the proportion of tax slightly reduced to 56% of mobile money fees following the public outcry which forced government to reduce the levy. In particular, those taxes that are mobile-specific have the highest negative impact and lack of alignment with the established principles of taxation. These taxes are not broad-based, as they are specific to mobile services and as such may create distortions. By increasing the final price of mobile they create a barrier to affordability and to mobile access. This barrier is greater for low income consumers and therefore risks excluding them from the benefits of mobile and the internet.

Related work by Katz, (2015) suggests that government decisions concerning implementing electronic transaction taxes are premised on public policies guided by established goals and the cost-benefit analysis to meet stated objectives. Furthermore, economic theories show that taxation affects market equilibrium by shifting the demand

and supply curves due to rising prices with the substantial reduction in the number of products, and, therefore, one may say taxes affect consumer behavior. While governments rely on the argument that increased revenue mobilization could produce funds to improve social services such as education, security, health, and security, such tax collection initiative may lead to the possible effects on the consumers, the SMEs and mobile service providers, and the government itself.

4.2.1 The Consequence of Mobile Money Taxation to Consumers

Mobile money taxes are more likely to have a negative and regressive impact on consumers. They could unfairly and disproportionately burden the poor if not appropriately constructed, and their multiplicity could compound the situation. In their current structure and rates, mobile money taxes threaten financial integration, financial inclusion, and poverty reduction initiatives.

According to Ndung'u, (2020), the common problem with most governments is that while tax revenues from digital transactions may increase in the short run, some more rise in the taxes above the optimal tax rate may end up reducing the tax collection. Regrettably, mobile money taxes regularly force low-income earners to revert back to cash transaction due to their inability to cater the transaction expenses associated with the transaction, while high-income earners may opt lump sum transactions through alternative forms of money transfer. As put forward by Ndung'u, (2020) the typical example is the excise tax on beer in Kenya where the rich beer drinkers switched to other alcoholic beverages when the tax on beer was increased beyond the optimal tax rate. While the rich consumers had options to advance to alternative beverages, the poor consumers reduced a drinking habits and created a market for illicit alcoholic beverages without government controls. This has remained a serious problem in Kenya for almost 20 years now years which has affected the youth and rural populations who consume such drinks, and may be taken as a lesson that poorly designed tax policy can not only bring unpleasant outcomes for tax revenues, but can also introduce market distortions that can drive consumption behavior on undesired manner. It should be emphasized that, poorly designed tax policy may actually reverse the economic gains from mobile banking, especially for low-income earners who rely solely on these services. Therefore, if tax policies are not properly implemented, the incentive to use cash, when mobile phone transactions seem costlier, will reverse the efforts of driving financial inclusion agenda in the region.

4.2.2 The Consequence of Mobile Money Taxation on Businesses, SMEs, and MNOs

Mobile money is an integral means through which citizens access utilities such as water and electricity. The imposition of taxes on mobile money implies that the cost of these utilities swiftly rises. Where physical payments may be unfeasible or unbearable, predominantly in the rural settings, there stands to be significant drop-outs in the use of these services, to the detriment of both consumers and service providers, Shinyekwa, (2018).

On the other hand, when mobile money tax is unstable and regularly changed mobile money operators find themselves in hard time and under considerable cost pressure to expand networks, improve service quality and address new regulatory requirements. Mobile money taxes have a serious impact on investment in mobile money and digital platforms, digital transformation, the growth of digital financial services, and the expansion of the digital economy. This, therefore, may signal the need for mobile money operators to expand their networks, improve the quality, and contend with new regulatory requirements.

Shapshak, (2021), opines that mobile money taxes affect both Person-2-Person and Business-2-Business transactions, lowering the usage of mobile money and leading to the closure of small businesses that heavily relied on mobile money transactions. This could be due to the increase in the costs of utilities and the loss of the rural clientele base where payments are difficult to make through traditional financial institutions or it is impracticable to access these financial institutions. This has a negative effect on both consumers and service providers. Additionally, According to Shapshak, (2021), mobile money taxes can reduce the usage of mobile money, thus affecting both financial and social inclusion. Albeit the taxes herald a promising emergence of tax revenue mobilization simplification, tax administration efficiency improvement, and increased tax compliance, they can contrastingly result in low tax revenues due to decreased usage, reduced profitability for businesses due to

reduction in customers, and the loss of the rural customer base for businesses that are highly dependent on mobile money transactions (loss of VAT and corporate taxes). This might have implications far greater than the simplicity of the tax system benefits for governments.

4.2.3 The Consequence of Mobile Money Taxation on the Government

Since its inception, in East Africa, mobile money has been preferred by governments and revenue authorities not essentially to expand tax base and improve the efficiency of tax collection, but also as a direct source of taxation revenue. Although mobile money levies offer additional revenue for governments, there is a risk that they may undesirably affect the underserved groups that typically use mobile money services. This may end up reversing the current gains achieved in financial inclusion and increasing inequality and discouraging the realization of development goals. Technically, mobile money taxes offer a more simplified, convenient, and easy way to collect and boost tax compliance as revenue is collected at the source of the funds. The relationship is undistinguishable from the withholding tax relationship where the payer deducts the tax before paying the payee. In this case, the mobile money networks offering the mobile money accounts or the banks offering mobile banking services deduct tax each time a person sends money, transfers money, withdraws money, or makes purchases, money transfers, or swipes. This simplifies taxation and improves tax compliance as the revenue authority focuses on fewer taxpayers as compared to millions of money account holders and bank account holders. This is not to trivialize the possible cumbersomeness of the tax audits and verification of the completeness of tax remittances that would be experienced by both revenue authorities and agents (banks and mobile money networks). There is a trade-off between simplicity, enhanced tax compliance, and the chilling implications of the surveillance, vulnerabilities, and implications of mobile usage and taxation with respect to customers' personal information.

Mobile money taxes could lead to loss of employment and retrenchments (loss of income tax or pay as you earn), thus perpetuating poverty and inequality. Mobile money taxes could also possibly lead to further fracturing of the implicit social contract between a government and its citizens. The implicit social contract presupposes that as citizens pay their fair share of taxes, the government should in turn deliver quality public goods and services to justify the investment in taxes, Sebele-Mpofu, (2021). The tax levied must be fair, transparent, equitable, economic, and convenient. Mobile money taxes in their current form could hurt the fiscal objectives of African governments. The taxes can fail to mobilize the much- anticipated revenues but conversely affect the other possible advantages that could boost public finances. For example, through digitization of taxes, rates, water and electricity bill payments, levies, and other fees such as license fees, the government can easily and conveniently collect public revenue. This is upheld by Muthiora and Raitthatha, (2020) that in Kenya, digitization of the National Transport Safety Authority payment resulted in the monthly generated revenue increasing from USD 1.1 million to USD 2 million between July 2019 and October 2020. Tan (2022) showing the possible negative impact, submits that in Tanzania, person-to-person remittances reduced from 30 million to 18 million, reflecting a 38% reduction in usage in 2021.

4.2.4 Implications of Mobile Money Taxes and Customer Privacy and Confidentiality

Usage of mobile money as well as mobile banking applications literally aims at linking the telecommunication services- using a sim card for communication purposes- and the financial services connected with mobile money and mobile banking accounts. According to De Kober, (2013), although the selected East African countries have made the registration of the sim card compulsory to enhance the government's propensity for surveillance to reduce financial crimes and illegal money flowing into the system, this, on the other hand, heightens customer vulnerabilities. For example, through the registration details, authorities can follow the social and digital footprints of customers. According to De Koker, L. (2012) in the face of these possible privacy invasion implications, customers wanting to have access to their mobile banking services, mobile money accounts, and their telecommunications services have no choice but to provide these personal details. Both, mobile money accounts and mobile money usage offer a rich information on customers' social networks, personal preferences, behavior patterns, and financial transactions, De Koker, L, (2022). This information presents considerable vulnerabilities and risks in terms of abuse of the information not only by the private sector and criminals but also by authorities. More so from the angle of taxation, the personal data, and financial data from mobile money networks and banks,

can be used to collect taxes on behalf of the revenue authorities and remit them accordingly. The scrutiny of customer information during tax compliance assessments and tax audits increases the risks and vulnerabilities and potential abuse of information even further. Martin, (2019) raises these concerns and possible implications for tax revenue reduction and financial inclusion gains reversal when citizens revert to cash-driven economies and keep money at home due to perceived surveillance concerns.

5. Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for Further Research

5.1. Conclusions

The paper examined the consequence of mobile money taxation on financial inclusion in the selected East African region countries. The paper found that political economy is a very powerful driving force for the taxation policies, with stakeholders on either side seeking to influence its design and outcomes. The result is often badly-designed taxes that fail to take into consideration the externalities that negatively impact the users of mobile money who are often drawn from marginalized communities. These have implications for the attainment of financial inclusion and wider development goals. The paper further found that, regardless of the varying impact of mobile money taxation across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania unintended consequences of the digital levy on financial inclusion have common potential impacts as follows; *First*, mobile money taxes may discourage people from using mobile money services due to increased transaction costs, and this may principally affect rural low-income individuals who chiefly rely on mobile money for financial transactions. Subsequently, mobile money usage rates may decrease, limiting financial inclusion efforts. *Secondly*, mobile money taxes may also slow down the adoption of mobile money services among the unbanked population., in which case high taxes may discourage individuals from opening mobile money accounts and exploring the benefits of digital financial services, slowing down financial inclusion progress.

Thirdly, increased mobile money taxes may unintentionally drive people towards financial transactions informal channels such as cash-based transactions or unregulated money transfer services which could possibly destabilize the formal banking sector's efforts to promote financial inclusion and enhance transparency. *Fourthly*, mobile money taxes may have an inconsistent impact on the economically vulnerable segments of society, such as small-scale traders, farmers, and low-income earners, the burden of the which could limit their ability to access formal financial services, hampering efforts to reduce poverty and achieve inclusive economic growth. *Finally*, imposing heavy taxes on mobile money transactions may discourage innovation and investment in the mobile money ecosystem, and therefore, fintech companies may be discouraged from developing new products and services that could enhance financial inclusion due to the potential negative impact of taxes on their profitability.

This paper contributes to advancing the fintech literature, particularly on mobile money, and while there is inadequate research on the impact of mobile taxation on fintech innovation, the study presents a fresh perspective to augment the extant literature. The paper would help inform mobile money tax policy initiatives and amendments by unpacking the likely unintended consequences, such as the likelihood of market distortions, potential tax evasion, and overreliance on cash transactions, thus affecting revenue mobilization and financial inclusion.

Conclusively, taxation remains an ongoing area of interest to the mobile money industry at large. Governments have more to gain by supporting the growth of the mobile money sector than by taxing it without understanding the impact of these taxes. For instance, mobile money taxes may affect providers' business models and profitability. Lower profitability may lead to diminished investment and delayed expansion plans. Given mobile money's influential role in driving financial inclusion, national financial targets risk being hit by a double blow: reduced demand for mobile money services and lower infrastructural availability for digital financial services. Lower profitability may also shrink the tax base and lower tax collections, frustrating government revenue projections. Overall, inadequate taxes can prevent individuals, businesses, and economies from realizing the benefits of mobile money services and limit progress towards achieving development goals

5.2 Managerial and Policy/Practical Implications & Recommendations

While taxation forms a considerable source of revenue, policymakers of the governments of selected countries are urged to weigh their potential repercussion on broader socio-economic objectives, particularly in advancing financial inclusion as narrated in the preceding subsection. In order to balance fiscal policy and digital development, while promoting fair and effective domestic revenue mobilization, this paper recommends the following;

Minimizing or removing sector-specific levies on mobile transactions: Sector-specific taxes are discriminatory because while they apply to mobile money transactions, they do not apply to similar payment services and over the counter cash transaction services offered by other financial services providers. Reducing or removing sector-specific levies will make the tax regime for mobile money more broad-based, improve the financial sustainability of the industry, enhance investment in mobile financial infrastructure, and increase the adoption and use of mobile financial services.

Tax Rationalization: Rationalization of taxes on the mobile sector is not a choice if one wants to account for positive externalities of the sector; Therefore, to get best out of the mobile sector government must rationalize taxes.

Ensuring Tax policy predictability and certainty: The governments and tax authorities are advised to ensure predictability and certainty of tax policy to increase certainty and make the tax system more conducive to investment in the mobile sector.

Reformation of Tax Policy: While keeping in line with best practice principles of taxation the reformation of taxation policy is very crucial so as to accelerate financial inclusion in East Africa's transition to a digital economy,

Simplifying and stabilizing taxes and fees in the mobile money sector: To minimize compliance costs, a tax regime should be simple (involving a reduced number of taxes that are easily understandable), and enforceable. Tax stability requires that governments limit unpredictable tax and fee changes as they create an uncertain taxation environment that negatively affects investment levels, ultimately decreasing competition within the mobile money sector.

Transparent Communication of taxes and their intended purposes: While educating users about the importance of tax payment is very vital to reduce perceptions and maintain trust in the system, ensuring transparent communication regarding taxes and their intended purposes can empower users to make informed decisions.

Reducing the overall tax burden on mobile money users to improving affordability and raise demand for mobile money services: The burden of taxation should not fall disproportionately on the poorer members of society. Governments should consider the implications of imposing new taxes on the usage and affordability of mobile money, particularly among low-income users. The reason is that this consumer segment tends to be more price-sensitive, avoiding the extra cost and erosion of their disposable income by shifting away from mobile money towards cash transactions when taxes are increased.

5.3. Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This paper was a critical review, and this could have affected the findings as they are based on few studies, though supported by relevant statistics from different sources. However, more further studies may explore the relationship between mobile money and financial inclusion to check whether and how mobile money taxes affect financial inclusion. Future researchers could also further investigate the effect mobile money taxes have on revenue mobilization, tax compliance, and simplification in all East African countries using empirical data and revenue statistics.

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Political Representation of Women in the 2019 Elections in the South Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council

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Abstract

The representation of women in politics is an intriguing issue within the realms of politics and democracy. According to the 1945 Constitution, every citizen has equal standing under the law and in governance, and every citizen, including women, must participate and engage in a fair decision-making process. Therefore, the representation of women in parliament is crucial, especially in advocating for women's interests. In the 2019 elections, South Sumatra was one of six provinces where the representation of women increased, making it an interesting subject for research. This study aims to: 1) Explain the political representation of women in the 2019 elections; 2) Provide an overview of the dynamics and political processes that occurred; 3) Explore the theory of social capital and its relation to the electoral success of women in becoming legislative members. This paper utilizes Samuel Huntington's theory of political participation, Hanna Pitkin's theory of representation, the quota policy from Dahlerup, and Robert Putnam's concept of social capital. The research method employed is a critical and in-depth analysis of relevant literature. The findings indicate an increase in the representation of women in the 2019 elections for the South Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD); the recruitment conducted by political parties was based on organizational experience, educational background, and skills; and the primary factor for the electoral success of female candidates was social capital, which included support from family (husbands, parents) and relatives, as well as the professions of female candidates as advocates, entrepreneurs, activists, and professionals who are indeed closely engaged with the community.

Keywords: Representation, Women, 2019 Elections, Regional People's of Representatives Council, South Sumatera

1. Introduction

In the history of elections in Indonesia, the representation of women in legislative institutions at the central level (DPR RI) during the 2019 elections reached the highest number, which is 20.5 percent, or a total of 118 individuals. Although this number still falls short of the affirmative policy of a 30 percent quota for women's representation in parliament, the presence of women is a positive development as it increases the number of female candidates

participating in the electoral contest. The representation of women at the central level (DPR RI) varies, with some increasing, some remaining the same, some decreasing, and others having no female representation at all.

The 2019 elections were held in 34 provinces to elect legislative members, but only six provinces saw an increase in women's representation of more than 100 percent. These provinces are South Sumatra, East Java, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), South Sulawesi, North Maluku, and West Papua. Previous research has been conducted by researchers in two provinces: in the NTT Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in 2022 (Sirait & Jovani, 2022) and in the East Java DPRD in 2023 (Jovani, Mendrofa, Mukhtar, Ketaren, & Lawolo, 2023) to examine women's representation in parliament and how the success and victories of female candidates leveraged social and moral capital in the 2019 elections. This study is conducted in South Sumatra, where the number of female representatives increased from five in the 2014 elections to 15 in the 2019 elections. Although this representation does not yet meet the 30 percent quota, it is a positive sign regarding the increase in women's representation in South Sumatra.

Research on women's representation in parliament has been extensively conducted in Indonesia. For instance, Muhammad Rizki et al. found that the representation of women in the legislative membership of the South Sumatra DPRD for the 2019-2024 period has performed well in legislative policymaking. This is further supported by the increasing number of female legislative members, where women hold strategic positions as chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the South Sumatra DPRD and as heads of commissions. The presence of women in these strategic positions has impacted gender-responsive policies (local regulations) (Rizki, Kariem, & Febriyanti, 2023).

Subsequent research analyzes the reasons for the unmet quota for women's representation in legislative institutions, which stem from issues in political party recruitment, negative political stigma in society, and the absence of clear legal substance and strict sanctions related to laws governing women's representation quotas. The obstacles to achieving a 30 percent quota for women's representation in legislative bodies arise from the still strong patriarchal culture in society, political parties' lack of regard for women's representation, and minimal socialization from both the government and political parties regarding women's representation (Banjarnahor, 2020).

Further research found that the political role of women in the Southeast Sulawesi DPRD is still quantitatively low. This is due to the dominance of patriarchal political culture, which is reflected in regulations with a starting point of 30 percent for women's political representation; there is a zipper system that mandates at least one woman for every three candidates; and while women's roles in public policymaking are quite good, they are not yet maximized. This is because the number of female personnel or their quantity remains a minority, placing men in dominant positions in various public policy decision-making processes in parliament (Kasim, 2022).

Previous researchers have conducted studies in NTT that found that the social and moral capital possessed by female candidates is both an asset and a strategy for them to gain votes in elections (Sirait & Jovani, 2022). Similarly, researchers in East Java found that in an egalitarian societal culture, female candidates are more easily accepted and supported (Jovani, Mendrofa, Mukhtar, Ketaren, & Lawolo, 2023).

Therefore, this study explains the strategies employed by four female candidates in achieving victory as representatives of the people. By utilizing the theories of social and moral capital, this research will demonstrate how social capital—through trust, norms, and networks possessed by female candidates—fully encourages and enables their election, along with moral capital—through good character traits (women/mothers: care), professional backgrounds, and family status, which are the main factors contributing to the success of female candidates.

2. Method

To address the main issue mentioned above, which is the strategies employed by female candidates in achieving victory as representatives of the people, this study utilizes a qualitative model. The arguments presented in this paper are built upon literature review and descriptive analysis. The literature review is conducted using a variety of references to analyze the representation of women in parliament and the strategies employed by female

candidates for their success as representatives. The data collected pertains to the social and moral capital of four female candidates and is analyzed using descriptive analysis methods (Creswell, 2014).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Dynamics of Women's Representation in the South Sumatra Regional People's Representative Council in 2019

There are parties that have seen an increase in women's political representation, such as PDIP, Nasdem Party, PKB, Golkar Party, Democratic Party, PAN, and Hanura Party. Meanwhile, PAN and Gerindra Party experienced a decrease in the number of female candidates, and PKS faced stagnation as there was no increase. The increase in women's representation is a positive indication; however, the percentage of female candidates has decreased in parties like PKS, PAN, and PPP due to the rising number of male candidates. This may be because these three parties, which have religious ideologies, are often viewed as barriers to women entering the political arena. Although there is a slight increase in the number of female candidates by 0.42 percent, this is still low considering the total number of candidates increased by 171 and the number of participating parties rose by three.

The number of elected legislative candidates increased by four, or 5.3 percent, from the 2014 elections to the 2019 elections. The trend of women's electability improved in several parties, such as PKB, Golkar Party, and PDIP. PDIP is particularly noteworthy, as the electability of women doubled from three to six individuals. Conversely, there was a decrease in elected candidates from the Gerindra Party, which lost one seat for women in the 2019 elections. Other parties, such as the Democratic Party and Nasdem Party, experienced stagnation in electability.

Out of eleven parties that secured seats in the East Java Provincial DPRD for 2019-2024, five parties had no elected female representation: PKS, PAN, Hanura Party, Perindo Party, and PPP. In contrast, female representation was found in Golkar Party, PDIP, Gerindra Party, Democratic Party, PKB, and Nasdem Party. Among the ten electoral districts, the South Sumatra 2 district in Palembang poses a challenge for women, as it is a district with many political party leaders contesting (RA Anita Noeringhati, a female candidate from Golkar Party). Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra Province, has become a "bloody district" for candidates, both male and female, where all party leaders are running as candidates. This is supported by data showing that the elected members of the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD with the most votes did not come from the Palembang district but from the county district in South Sumatra 4, specifically Ogan Komerling Ulu Timur (OKUT).

Research findings by Kellogg et al. (2017) in the United States indicate that women tend to occupy more political positions in cities that are more liberal, while in cities with high levels of religiosity, women tend to hold fewer positions on city councils. Furthermore, research by Reingold and Owen (2012) found that women are more likely to be elected in larger cities, as women in these urban areas tend to have higher education, own businesses, and earn higher incomes. However, this is not the case in the South Sumatra 2 electoral district, where women do not attain political positions despite having the ideal skills and capacities.

This study takes a case study approach focusing on four elected female candidates in the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD for 2019-2024, with one representative each from PDIP, Golkar Party, Democratic Party, and PKB.

In the profiles of the four female legislative members mentioned above, there is a tendency for the open proportional electoral system to influence the recruitment and selection of candidate placement numbers by political parties. The vote acquisition of these four women is generally very significant, as they are placed in the number one position, indicating that they have highly potential for the party to secure seats.

Furthermore, the experiences of these four women entering politics, their motivations, professions, backgrounds in politics, and the support they receive from their husbands, parents (fathers), and extended families are examined. Additionally, it explores how these four women leverage their social capital to advance and be elected as members of the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD for the 2019-2024 term. The focus on social capital emphasizes trust, as defined by Putnam, and is supported by moral capital from Derichs, Fleschenberg, and Hustebeck.

R.A. Anita Noeringhati, a candidate from the Golkar Party in the South Sumatra 1 electoral district of Palembang with the number one position, received 16,801 votes. Her profession as a lawyer, her role as the Chair of the Golkar Faction in the South Sumatra DPRD, her active involvement in the Golkar Party Women's Unity/*Kesatuan Perempuan Partai Golkar* (KPPG) women's organization, and her participation in the Indonesian Advocate Association/*Ikatan Advokat Indonesia* (IKADIN) organization are her main assets for entering the elections. Additionally, her extensive political network with Golkar Party elites, including the Governor of South Sumatra from 2008 to 2018, who also served as the Chair of the Golkar DPD in South Sumatra, further supports her candidacy. R.A. Anita Noeringhati comes from a Javanese family, descended from the Mangkunegaran Palace in Solo. Her husband, a former Head of the Forestry Department of South Sumatra Province, often brings her into contact with the community and various organizations in South Sumatra. Furthermore, during her childhood, she had a stepfather who was a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI), which gave her some insight into politics related to society, including gender issues. After being elected as a legislative member, she faced challenges such as: women still being seen as merely fulfilling the 30 percent quota; internal party competition; and a patriarchal culture. She further stated that the biggest challenge faced by women in carrying out their duties in parliament is the rigid and strict political interests of the factions; even female legislative members do not show solidarity due to differing political interests in advocating for women's and children's rights in various development programs.

Ike Mayasari, a candidate from PDIP in the South Sumatra 3 electoral district of Ogan Komering Ilir (OKI) and Ogan Ilir with the number one position, received 30,831 votes. Initially, she was a housewife with three children and the daughter of a senior politician and member of the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD. She then joined PDIP and became the Vice Chair of the PDIP DPD in South Sumatra, and from 2019 to the present, she has served as the Chair of Indonesian Young Entrepreneur Association/*Himpunan Pengusaha Muda Indonesia* (HIPMI) in OKI. Ike Mayasari stated that her initial entry into politics was to continue her father's political legacy, as he already had constituents. Therefore, her father, a senior PDIP politician, registered her as a party cadre to participate in the 2014 elections for the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD, aiming to fulfill the 30 percent quota for women's representation from the Ogan Ilir and OKI electoral districts, where she received the number nine position. Although she was not elected, in the 2019 elections, she was elected as a legislative member by leveraging her father's prominent name and following in his political footsteps. The issues she campaigned on included education, welfare, health, and combating drug abuse in the community. She is the youngest candidate with the most votes, and as a mother, she faces challenges within her family, such as reduced time with her children, as there are no fixed working hours in politics, and sometimes emergency calls require her to leave her children.

Linda Wati Syaropi, a candidate from the Golkar Party in the South Sumatra 4 electoral district of Ogan Komering Ulu Timur with the number one position, received 23,484 votes. Her profession is that of an entrepreneur, and she is the daughter of a senior politician and member of the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD. In the Golkar Party, she served as the Deputy Treasurer of the Golkar Party in Palembang from 2009 to 2013, as a member of the South Sumatra Provincial Golkar management from 2016 to the present, and as a member of Golkar Party Women's Unity/*Kesatuan Perempuan Partai Golkar* (KPPG) in South Sumatra from 2016 to 2021. Her interest in politics is influenced by her father, H. Syaropi RM, who has been involved in politics since his youth and has consistently been a politician in the Golkar Party, where she was socialized about political science, society, and welfare. She has been a legislative member for three terms and was re-elected in the 2019 elections. The challenges she faces are not much different from those of the two previous female legislative members; however, with her knowledge and experience working in the community as a legislative member, she is able to overcome them.

Kartika Sandra Desi, a candidate from the Gerindra Party in the South Sumatra 9 electoral district of Musi Banyuasin (Muba) with the number one position, received 16,337 votes. She is a private sector employee, the Chair of the Gerindra DPD in South Sumatra, actively involved in organizations such as Indonesian Red Cross/*Palang Merah Indonesia* (PMI) and National Committee of Indonesian Youth/*Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia* (KNPI) in Muba and was elected as the Vice Chair of the South Sumatra DPRD for the 2019-2024 term. As a party cadre, despite failing in the 2009 elections, she is committed to realizing her aspirations and helping to advocate for the rights of the community in Muba, particularly regarding land issues and the expansion of the

Muba Timur district. She noted that many land issues remain unresolved, including community settlements in forest areas. Furthermore, she stated that the goal of land liberation is to enable the community to utilize and obtain legal clarity for their residences. This is her motivation for entering politics: to advocate for the interests of the community in her area. In addition to the community, her family is an important factor that encourages her to enter politics. Her extended family, especially her father, advised her to help many people, and to do so effectively, she needed to enter politics to create policies that would assist many, especially the underprivileged. In 2024, she was appointed by the Chairman of the Gerindra Party, Prabowo Subianto, as the Chair of the Golkar DPD in South Sumatra, to strengthen the party in the region. Like the other three female legislative members, she also faces challenges in parliament, particularly in relation to other parties; however, due to her commitment to the community, she perseveres and fights, which has resulted in her position as the Vice Chair of the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD for the 2019-2024 term.

3.2. Recruitment of Female Candidates by Political Parties

The Golkar Party prioritizes party cadres, especially from the KPPG women's organization, in the recruitment of female candidates to meet the 30 percent quota for women's representation. The focus is on women's and youth issues, as women are accepted by the South Sumatra community due to their commitment to society. Women are deemed suitable because they possess strategies trained in the party's political school, have good public communication skills, and the determination of candidate numbers is based on internal party weighting, with the selection of electoral districts left to the female candidates based on their bases.

In contrast, PDIP prioritizes female party cadres in its political recruitment, focusing on fulfilling the 30 percent quota for women's representation. Women are increasingly accepted by the South Sumatra community due to gender balance and openness. Female candidates have good communication skills, and the determination of candidate numbers is also based on internal party weighting. Female candidates are given the freedom to choose their electoral districts, which are usually their home regions or those of their husbands or extended families.

On the other hand, the process of recruiting female candidates in electoral contests tends to be pragmatic, involving two stages that female candidates must face: family support and electoral potential. Family support is key to the success of female candidates in elections, where women must seek permission from their families to enter the public sphere. Furthermore, electoral potential is crucial; female candidates who possess political, social, and moral capital are better positioned to become candidates. Women with a background of having a mass base are prioritized, as this is key to increasing party votes and the party's electability. Women with social capital become targets for political parties to nominate as candidates in elections.

3.3. Strategies and Utilization of Social Capital by Female Candidates in the 2019 Elections

The elected female candidates in the 2019 elections from PDIP, such as Rita Suryani and Susi Imelda, who have backgrounds as Chairpersons of the Family Welfare and Empowerment Organization/*Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK) (wives of district heads), leverage their husbands' prominent names to gain votes from the community by visiting and listening to community aspirations in their electoral districts. In their roles as the number one woman in their districts, they form communities focusing on health issues, the economy, especially the creative industry through Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises/*Usaha Mikro, Kecil, Menengah* (UMKM). Additionally, with the good reputation of their husbands, they also utilize their personal names as the wives of regional heads in their campaigns. This aligns with Campbell's (1989) assertion that "the personal is political," as they bring issues close to women to attract attention and votes from the community. The issues raised include health, education, the economy, women's empowerment, and domestic violence.

In the 2019 elections, 15 women were elected, dominated by PDIP with five, Golkar Party with three, PKB with two, Gerindra Party with two, Democratic Party with two, and Nasdem Party with one. Social capital is the key to the success of these 15 female candidates in becoming legislative members. Tina Malinda from PDIP has served in the county DPRD for three terms and was elected again for the provincial DPRD. Ike Mayasari comes from a

political background. Susy Imelda and Rita Suryani, also from PDIP, were Chairpersons of the PKK and wives of regional heads (politicians) before being elected to the South Sumatra Provincial DPRD.

From the Golkar Party, there are three female candidates: R.A. Anita Noeringhati, who has served two terms in the provincial DPRD; Linda Wati Syaropi; and Nadia Basyir, who are incumbents and children of senior party politicians. This research found that the success of female candidates from the Golkar Party is significantly influenced by the role of the KPPG women's organization in affirming women's involvement in politics by becoming candidates.

The Golkar Party, PDIP, PKB, Nasdem Party, Gerindra Party, and the Democratic Party assigned the number one position to female candidates, as these political parties have developed an awareness of gender equality. Political parties also provide opportunities for incumbent female candidates to run in the 2019 elections, and these female candidates were re-elected. The assignment of candidate numbers is a decision made by party leadership, considering the positions held by female candidates, their experience as party cadres, and their loyalty to the party. This can be seen from the performance and implementation of programs created by the political parties.

When looking at organizational experience, female candidates in South Sumatra hold important positions such as party administrators, party cadres, organization leaders, wives of district heads, religious leaders, community leaders, activists, academics, professionals, and even housewives with backgrounds in political families. This political experience is undoubtedly an individual asset for female candidates that correlates with their electability. Their victory in the elections stems from social capital through trust, norms, and networks that female candidates possess in their respective electoral districts.

In addition to social capital, the personal capabilities of the four female candidates as political actors play an important role, as they are "close" to the community through their professions as lawyers, entrepreneurs, professionals, and even housewives. This leads the community to consciously and voluntarily support them. These four female candidates build emotional and social bonds, thus gaining support from the community as their constituents. Regarding the utilization of social capital, which includes relationships or social networks as valuable resources in determining an individual's standing in their electoral district, these social organizations can be formed through social interactions (both formal and informal), which serve as the starting point for the social networks of the four female candidates.

Below is a diagram that illustrates the social capital of female candidates:

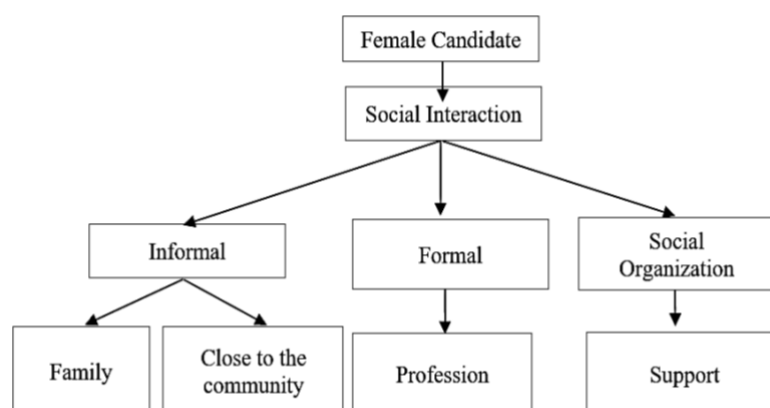


Figure 1: Social Capital of Four Female Candidates

The victory of female candidates in electoral contests is indeed difficult to achieve without the strength of social capital. Based on field findings, there are at least four factors that influence the success of these four female candidates:

1. Individual Abilities: This includes personality, public communication, leadership, and focus on political

issues. The personalities of the four female candidates are reflected in their professions, which directly influence their public communication with their respective constituents. Additionally, their leadership experience in professions or organizations prior to entering politics plays a significant role.

2. **Social and Humanitarian Values:** This emphasizes issues related to community welfare, health, education, infrastructure, drug abuse, and gender equality (access and benefits received by the community, especially women and children).
3. **Family Support:** This includes support from husbands, parents, extended family, social organizations, and the community.
4. **Political Experience:** This encompasses experience as party cadres, commitment to their electoral districts, popularity, mass support, and involvement in community organizations.

The reality of women's representation in the South Sumatra DPRD is still below the 30 percent quota (underrepresentation); however, there has been a significant increase from five women in the 2014 elections to 15 women in the 2019 elections. Affirmative efforts through regulations have been issued to encourage women's representation in parliament, starting from Election Law No. 12 of 2003, Election Law No. 10 of 2008, Election Law No. 8 of 2012, and PKPU No. 7 of 2013, yet it still remains below 30 percent.

To address this issue, the General Election Commission/Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) as the election organizer plays a crucial role in "requiring" political parties to conduct serious recruitment and encourage female candidates, as well as to engage in political education with various parties to build political awareness about the importance of women's presence in politics. Similarly, political parties must take the lead in recruiting female candidates, considering organizational experience, educational background, and the importance of cadre training or organizational skills.

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Worst Case Scenario: Analyzing Big Data in Disaster Crisis

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Abstract

The industrial and information age has brought significant changes in the way we manage risk and response to disasters. In this context, Big Data analysis is becoming an important tool in improving the effectiveness of crisis communication. This approach enables faster and more informed decision-making in worst-case scenarios, which can ultimately minimize damage and loss of life. However, challenges such as data overload, misinterpretation, and the spread of disinformation remain obstacles that need to be overcome. By analyzing 14,083 tweets using Natural Language Processing (NLP), this study found that negative sentiment dominated public responses to the crisis (12,947 tweets), while positive sentiment was relatively small (1,136 tweets). Frequently occurring words, such as "gempa," "korban," "bencana," indicate that the public's attention is mostly focused on the consequences of the disaster, while the words "kecepatan," "informasi," and "pengolahan data" reflect high expectations of a fast and accurate response. The results of this study confirm that effective crisis communication should be data-driven and integrate big data analysis to understand communication trends during a crisis. The use of NLP enables real-time sentiment monitoring, misinformation detection, and the development of more adaptive communication strategies. From a crisis management perspective, this approach can help government agencies to reduce public uncertainty, quell panic, and rebuild public trust. The study also recommends the need for stricter regulations related to disaster communication to address disinformation that has the potential to worsen the situation. With technology-based approaches and data analysis, crisis communication strategies can be more effective in dealing with the dynamics of public opinion during emergency situations.

Keywords: Big Data, Crisis Communication, Natural Language Processing (NLP), Sentiment Analysis, Social Media

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the frequency of disasters in Indonesia, from the tsunami cases of Aceh (2004), Palu-Lombok (2018), Cianjur (2022), initiated a variety of crisis communication studies that developed in a relatively short time, social media has forced academics and practitioners to reconsider their assumptions about how to best reach the public in times of crisis and emergency. The information and industrial age has spawned new risks, a more informed public, new technologies, and new strategies for dialog, decision-making, and risk assessment (Palenchar, 2009). This has forced crisis communication theory and practice to evolve rapidly since the turn of the century (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

Electronic resources such as Twitter allow users to create and disseminate content, and facilitate shared understanding of content and topics among users and communities (O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009; Westerman, Spence, & Van Der Heide, 2014). The popularity, efficiency and ease of use of social media have led to its widespread use in disaster management (Denis et al., 2014; Hiltz et al., 2014; Hughes, 2014; Ngamassi et al., 2016; Yates & Paquette, 2011). Social media helps and enables the public and government to collaborate in a mutually beneficial way at the crisis response stage (Velve and Zlateva, 2012).

Social media is used as a major source of news during natural disasters and emergency situations. It provides information on pre- and post-disaster scenarios through the internet or messaging. It also raises awareness among affected communities, and helps in mobilizing volunteers and donors for emergency services. In addition, social media provided information on assistance and resource centers available to the affected areas. According to the research review, there are four main ways the public uses social media technologies: communication with family and friends; situation updates; situational awareness/enhancement; and service access assistance. Before a disaster, social media helps communities to prepare, during a disaster social media aids communication, and after a disaster, social media helps communities to reunite and improve capabilities in recovery efforts and aid distribution.

Social media becomes the link between the affected public, family and friends. This, in turn, has expanded the predictive capabilities of crisis communication theory. Research has revealed the causal impact of various aspects of crisis communication, such as message content, communication channels, tone, as well as nonverbal behavior, on post-crisis reputation (Claeys et al., 2010; Coombs and Holladay, 2009; De Waele et al., 2018; van der Meer and Verhoeven, 2014). In virtual public spaces, these aspects do not stand alone, but rather are integrated into the actual crisis response.

Crisis communication is a field of study that focuses on how organizations, governments, or other entities manage, respond to, and mitigate the impact of crises through effective communication strategies. When a crisis occurs, organizations must take immediate and appropriate action to control the situation and ensure that the correct information is conveyed to the public. At this stage, the speed and accuracy of communication become a key factor in preventing confusion and panic in the public. By utilizing big data, organizations can access real-time information about the development of the crisis, including information dissemination patterns, public reactions on social media, and public perceptions of the ongoing situation.

This data analysis allows organizations to determine the most effective communication strategy, whether through social media, press conferences, or other official communication channels. In addition to the technical aspects, the success of a crisis response also depends on how the organization demonstrates empathy, transparency, and credibility in every statement delivered. Using clear language, providing accurate information, and acknowledging problems can help maintain public trust and ensure that the public remains well-informed in emergency situations. Effective communication must follow several key principles to ensure that information is well received by the public and avoid panic. Openness and transparency are important aspects, where any information provided must be clear, accurate and timely to prevent the spread of misinformation that can worsen the situation. In addition, speed of response is also crucial, especially by utilizing real-time data from social media that allows organizations to respond more quickly to public perception and address the various narratives that develop. In every crisis communication, organizations must show empathy and care, use humane language and pay attention to the conditions of the victims and the affected public so that the message is better received.

Consistency of information must also be maintained, avoiding contradictions in message delivery so as not to cause confusion or distrust from the public. for example, in the event of an emergency, the government must consider the words "siaga," "awas" and "waspada". In addition, effective crisis communication must be supported by big data analysis, which helps in understanding communication trends and adjusting communication strategies to evolving conditions. In addition, effective crisis communication should be supported by big data analysis, which helps in understanding communication trends and adapting communication strategies to evolving conditions. By following these principles, organizations can better manage crises, maintain public trust, and minimize the negative impact of the situation.

By adopting big data in crisis communication, this research seeks to improve the effectiveness of information management in disaster situations. The integration of big data analytics and social media-based communication can accelerate crisis response, increase public engagement, and reduce information uncertainty. Thus, a data-driven crisis communication approach can be a solution to overcome communication challenges in modern disaster response.

These findings will add a more qualitative and in-depth understanding of the existing body of knowledge on crisis communication. When all the elements that have previously received significant research attention are combined in a real crisis response, which elements do the public pay the most attention to and why?

Many studies, after years of focusing on the impact of discrete strategies, are now taking a broader view of how the public actually understands and assesses the crisis response as a whole?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Big Data of Social Media for Disaster Management

Utilizing big data from social media can be used to improve communication before, during, and after a disaster (Houston et al., 2014). The development of Big Data systems to assist disaster management efforts began to grow significantly. The United States and Japan started joint research in this area, especially focusing on earthquake and tsunami mitigation. Social media also acts as a peer-to-peer or backchannel communication tool, where users not only receive but can also share information, thus increasing the social capacity to generate and disseminate information (Xiao et al., 2015).

Studies on the utilization of data from social media in disaster management have only begun to be reported in recent years, especially after the emergence of real-time information services such as Twitter (Vieweg et al., 2010). According to Lindsay (2010), social media ranks as the fourth most popular source of emergency information. Efficient integration, aggregation and visualization of big data, especially from social media, are important elements in accelerating responses to disaster situations.

One of the main benefits of Big Data in crisis communication is its ability to monitor public sentiment and public perception of a crisis. Through Natural Language Processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis, organizations can identify the level of public anxiety, distrust or satisfaction with the actions taken (Xiao et al., 2015). In addition, Big Data enables more accurate and rapid information dissemination, thereby reducing the impact of hoaxes or disinformation that often appear during a crisis.

Data processing algorithms can be used to detect fake news circulating on social media and prevent its further spread (van Atteveldt & Peng, 2018). By analyzing public communication patterns, organizations can also identify key actors influential in information dissemination and ensure that valid information reaches the wider public more effectively (Coombs & Tachkova, 2019).

Furthermore, the use of Big Data in crisis communication enables the optimization of crisis response strategies. By collecting and analyzing real-time data, organizations can evaluate the effectiveness of their communications and adjust their strategies to deal with evolving crisis dynamics (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). The use of predictive analytics also helps in estimating the potential escalation of a crisis based on historical patterns, so that mitigation steps can be taken earlier to reduce the wider negative impact (van der Meer, 2016).

Once the crisis has subsided, the data that has been collected during the response phase can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication that has been carried out. Through retrospective analysis, organizations can learn about public interaction patterns, the impact of the communication strategies implemented, and identify areas for improvement in future crisis responses (Wallach, 2016). Thus, the use of Big Data in crisis communication not only helps in responding to emergency situations, but also contributes to organizational learning in improving preparedness for future crises.

2.2. Response Phase

In the disaster response phase, quick and appropriate action is crucial to the success of rescue and mitigation of disaster impacts. In recent years, social media (SM) has become an important source of communication in disseminating information related to disaster management. One example of the successful utilization of social media in emergency communication is the Code Maroon system developed by Texas A&M University through Twitter. This system allows the dissemination of alerts to thousands of people in a short time after an emergency occurs (Villarreal & Sigman, 2010).

Humanitarian organizations and authorities are increasingly encouraged to use social media to disseminate information about needs and developments in disaster situations. In addition, Big Data analysis of social media plays an important role in building passive and active situational awareness, which is a major factor in the effectiveness of crisis response.

Real-time data analysis from various social media platforms can improve various aspects of disaster management, such as helping emergency responders identify the areas most in need of assistance, determine the most crucial resources, and choose the most effective treatment methods. Thus, the integration of Big Data in the disaster response phase not only improves communication efficiency, but also supports more informed decision-making in dealing with emergency situations.

In crisis management, the response phase is a critical phase where organizations or governments must act immediately to control the situation and deliver accurate information to the public. The utilization of Big Data in crisis communication is growing, enabling real-time analysis of communication and assisting in the formulation of more effective communication strategies (Houston et al., 2014). With the amount of data generated from various digital platforms, such as social media, online news, and public reports, Big Data can be used to monitor public sentiment, detect the spread of misinformation, and adjust communication strategies based on the dynamics of the crisis (Vieweg et al., 2010).

2.3. Crisis Situation Assessment

A conceptual approach in crisis management studies that focuses on how a crisis is assessed based on the level of responsibility assigned to the affected organization. This concept has been widely developed in crisis communication research, especially within the framework of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) proposed by W. Timothy Coombs (2004, 2007). In his theory, Coombs explains that crisis assessment depends on the extent to which the public attributes responsibility to the organization experiencing the crisis.

This evaluation is based on three main factors, namely locus of control, which determines whether the cause of the crisis comes from inside or outside the organization, stability, which measures whether the crisis is incidental or recurring, and controllability, which assesses the extent to which the organization can overcome and prevent further crisis impacts. By understanding these factors, organizations can design appropriate crisis communication strategies to mitigate negative impacts and maintain public trust.

Crises often have broad and significant social impacts, making them events of great interest to the media and the public. Therefore, various actors intensively communicate about the ongoing crisis situation (Thelwall & Stuart, 2007). As most people do not directly experience the event, they tend to rely on social media and online news to understand the situation, find out the causes of the crisis, and explore its impact and possible solutions (van der Meer, 2018).

Due to their complex nature, crises are often difficult to understand immediately, so the need for accurate and credible information remains high over a longer period of time. As a result, large amounts of both text-based and visual communications become widely available, especially through social media platforms (van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2013; Ott & Theunissen, 2015; Madden et al., 2016). With the availability of large amounts of digital data, computational approaches have become a highly effective method of analysis for understanding

communication dynamics during crises. These analyses enable large-scale studies of actual social behavior in emergency situations (van der Meer, 2016; van Atteveldt & Peng, 2018).

3. Method

In the context of digital communication, the infinite flow of information creates great opportunities for researchers to analyze big data using computational methods. Especially in natural disaster situations, communication patterns become very complex, where information spreads rapidly through various networks. Previous studies (Dong et al., 2018; Pourebrahim et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020) show that in emergency conditions, information can spread through social media, news platforms, and other communication channels with dynamics that are difficult to predict. This shows that it is important to understand how official and unofficial information is spread, how social media algorithms affect its spread, and how public sentiment develops towards policies implemented by authorities.

This research utilizes big data from the distribution of information that occurs on Twitter social media to analyze communication patterns in crisis situations. The data collection process was carried out during the period June 2022 - June 2023, with the results showing that there were 14,083 tweets related to the topic under study. This data reflects the intensity of public conversations, the dynamics of information dissemination, as well as the potential for the spread of misinformation and disinformation in certain contexts.

Through big data analysis, researchers identified patterns of information dissemination, how public sentiment evolves over time. The use of computational methods, such as automated text analysis, natural language processing (NLP) enabled this research to uncover key trends and relationships between various entities in discussions on social media. The results of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, as well as related parties in designing more effective communication strategies in handling crisis situations.

Through computational methods such as sentiment analysis, predictive modeling, and machine learning, researchers are gaining deeper insights into how the public responds to crises, as well as the effectiveness of communication strategies used by governments and related organizations. Thus, the application of big data and computational methods is a very important tool in understanding the dynamics of communication in various types of crises, including natural disasters, in order to improve the effectiveness of response and mitigation in the future.

4. Results

4.1. Worst-Case Scenario in Crisis Communication

In a worst-case scenario, failure to utilize big data and social media in crisis communication can worsen the social impact of a disaster. One of the main threats is the uncontrolled spread of misinformation and disinformation, especially in situations where official information is unavailable or delivered late. When the public is deprived of accurate and timely information, they tend to seek alternative sources on social media, which are often filled with speculation, hoaxes and narratives that can exacerbate panic (Lazer et al., 2018).

In natural disaster situations such as earthquakes or tsunamis, delays in data processing and analysis can cause government agencies and humanitarian organizations to fail to identify the most affected areas. This can result in delays in aid delivery, increase the number of casualties, and fuel public distrust of responsible authorities (Vieweg et al., 2010). Without a big data-based detection system capable of analyzing communication patterns on social media in real-time, governments and relevant organizations may lose control of the crisis narrative, allowing rumors to spread faster than official information (Cinelli et al., 2020).

Communicators in these crisis situations often have a tendency to exaggerate danger scenarios in order to scare the public into action. While this approach can sometimes work, there is a risk that the public will overreact. When they eventually find out that things are not as bad as they were portrayed, this can lead to distrust of the information

provided. A more appropriate approach to dealing with emergency situations, especially in worst-case scenarios (Sandman, 2004).

Ineffective responses in an earthquake disaster crisis can worsen the impact of the disaster, especially if there are delays in information dissemination, lack of coordination between actors, and failure in timely mitigation and evacuation. Disinformation and the spread of fake news through social media in earthquake situations can exacerbate public panic, trigger impulsive actions, and increase the risk of casualties due to chaos and errors in decision-making.

Failure to coordinate between government agencies, humanitarian organizations and volunteers in the distribution of aid and evacuation of victims, exacerbated by communication and logistics disruptions due to infrastructure damage, can hamper effective disaster response and increase the risk of a humanitarian crisis. Preparedness, accurate information dissemination and effective coordination between actors are crucial factors in the response to an earthquake disaster crisis to prevent public distrust, minimize casualties and avoid a widespread humanitarian crisis.

Therefore, in a worst-case scenario, failures in the integration of big data and crisis communications not only risk exacerbating the impact of a disaster, but can also lead to social instability, decrease the effectiveness of emergency response, and prolong the recovery period. To prevent this, more responsive, data-driven communication strategies and effective real-time monitoring systems are needed to ensure that information circulating in the community actually supports crisis mitigation and recovery efforts (van der Meer, 2018).

4.2. Disaster Crisis Response Sentiment

Twitter in particular becomes an extremely useful resource during crises and disasters, given its ability to provide real-time updates to a wide public. This research also explores the possibility that the Twitter medium has not been optimally utilized by first responders, i.e. disaster stakeholders and provides recommendations for using the medium to mitigate the impact of crises and disasters.

The results of the response content data analysis during the period June 2022 - June 2023 show that there were 14,083 tweets discussing the crisis that occurred. This data reflects the high intensity of public discussion on social media related to issues that developed during the crisis. Through big data analysis, it is possible to identify communication patterns, public sentiment, and the main topics of public concern. In addition, this data also helps in understanding how public perception evolves over time and how crisis communication strategies that have been implemented by various parties impact public opinion.

The following word cloud visualization was generated from a Natural Language Processing (NLP) analysis of 14,083 tweets collected during the period June 2022 - June 2023. The results of this analysis illustrate the pattern of public communication on social media related to crises, especially earthquake disasters can be seen in Figure 1, as follows:

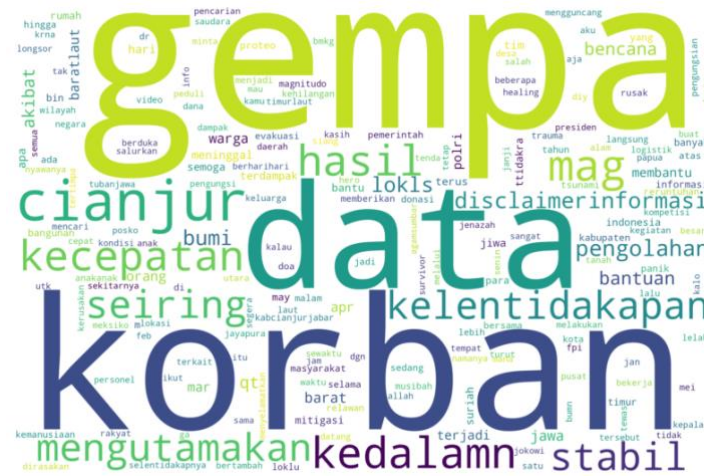


Figure 1: Visualization of Public Response Wordcloud

Source: Researcher processing, using Natural Learning Processing

The analysis of 14,083 tweets collected during the period June 2022 - June 2023 shows that crisis-related conversations, especially natural disasters, have complex communication patterns. Based on the word cloud generated, dominant words such as "gempa," "korban," "data," "Cianjur," and "bencana" confirm that the main focus of discussion on social media revolves around the earthquake event and its impact on the public.

The words “korban” and “bencana” indicate that the public is very concerned about the number of victims and their condition after the incident. Meanwhile, the words "data," "pengolahan," and "disclaimer informasi" highlight the importance of transparency and data accuracy in crisis reporting. This is in line with the emergence of the terms "kecepatan" dan "stabil" which indicate that the public is concerned with the speed of information dissemination as well as the unpredictability in the development of reports.

In addition, the words "mengutamakan" and "kedalaman" indicate an expectation of prioritization of disaster management and attention to technical factors such as the depth of the earthquake. Locations such as "Cianjur" were mentioned a lot, indicating that disasters in the area were one of the dominant topics of conversation.

The Cianjur 2022 earthquake disaster highlights the urgency of improving big data-based crisis management and digital communication in disaster mitigation and response in Indonesia. By leveraging real-time data analysis from social media and disaster monitoring systems, the government and relevant agencies can optimize faster, more transparent and effective crisis communication strategies to reduce social impact and build public trust in disaster management efforts.

Analysis showed that the majority of responses had negative sentiment (12,947 tweets) compared to positive sentiment (1,136 tweets). This predominance of negative sentiment is most likely triggered by factors such as information uncertainty, the magnitude of the impact felt by the public, and expectations of the government and related institutions in responding to the crisis quickly and accurately.

The results of the analysis, which showed 1,136 positive tweets and 12,947 negative tweets, indicate that public sentiment towards the crisis was dominated by negative reactions. This predominance of negative responses could indicate several things:

1. **Public Dissatisfaction** - The majority of the public is dissatisfied with the way the crisis was handled, both in terms of the government's response, the organization, and the communication delivered.
2. **Lack of Trust** - A high level of negative sentiment can be an indication that the public is experiencing a crisis of trust in those responsible for handling the situation. This can be caused by a lack of transparency, delays in information, or inconsistencies in statements.
3. **Spread of Misinformation** - It could be that much of the information circulating on social media is inaccurate or has been twisted, worsening public perception of the crisis.

4. High Emotional Impact - Crises often trigger strong emotional reactions, especially if they directly affect the public. High negative reactions can indicate that the public feels threatened, disappointed, or angry about the situation.

With this dominance of negative sentiment, it is imperative for relevant parties to immediately implement more effective communication strategies, such as increasing information disclosure, responding more quickly to public criticism, and educating the public to counteract misinformation. If not addressed immediately, protracted negative sentiment could exacerbate the crisis and prolong the social impact.

5. Discussion

An approach in crisis communication research that looks at crisis response strategies as a whole allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of each strategy than a unidimensional approach. By examining each strategy separately, researchers can analyze how they affect public perceptions of organizational responsibility, crisis severity, and the reduction of negative emotions such as anger (Fediuk et al., 2010). The results of this study emphasize that each crisis communication strategy has a specific function and can be applied according to the needs of the situation at hand.

Based on the various theoretical concepts that have been reviewed, it can be concluded that communication responses in crisis situations must be strategically designed by considering various factors, including transparency, speed, and effectiveness in managing public perception. Disaster crisis management emphasizes the importance of preparedness and rapid response in dealing with crises, while the Crisis Situation Assessment approach shows that each communication strategy has a different impact on public reception and reaction.

A big data and natural language processing (NLP) analysis of 14,083 tweets over the period June 2022 - June 2023 revealed that most public responses to the crisis were negative (12,947 tweets), with only a small proportion showing positive sentiment (1,136 tweets). This suggests that public perceptions of crisis management are still dominated by dissatisfaction, distrust or concern about the steps taken by relevant parties.

From the results of the word cloud analysis, it was found that the words that appeared most frequently in crisis discussions were "gempa," "korban," "bencana," and "dampak," indicating that public attention was mostly focused on the consequences of the disaster and the condition of the victims. In addition, words such as "kecepatan," "informasi," and "pengolahan data" indicate a high expectation from the public for a quick and accurate response from the responsible parties.

In an academic context, this research reinforces the argument that effective crisis communication should be data-driven and consider the psychological and emotional factors of the public. By applying big data and NLP-based approaches, organizations can better understand communication trends during a crisis, identify public sentiment, and adjust communication strategies to mitigate negative impacts and rebuild public trust.

Further research is needed to understand how these various strategies contribute to dealing effectively with crises, with all the more complex aspects of disaster crisis communication, including: Mitigation, Planning, or Recovery or maximizing the application of crisis management.

6. Conclusion

Big data and social media have become key elements in crisis communications, enabling faster, more transparent and data-driven responses in emergency situations. Big data analytics, especially through social media, plays an important role in real-time monitoring, misinformation detection and the formulation of adaptive communication strategies, supporting more accurate decision-making during the crisis response phase. The research findings show that negative sentiment dominates public communication during crises, often fueled by dissatisfaction with disaster management and a lack of trust in authorities.

Data-driven, responsive communication strategies that take into account the psychological and emotional factors of the public are crucial in managing public opinion, easing panic, and rebuilding trust. With a more strategic and technology-based approach, the effectiveness of crisis management can be improved, ensuring accurate and timely information is delivered to the public.

These worst-case scenarios emphasize the importance of a balanced approach to utilizing big data for crisis response. While technology offers useful tools in disaster management, over-reliance without backup plans for system failure, control of misinformation, ethical considerations, and fairness in algorithms can lead to serious consequences.

Therefore, integrating conventional crisis management practices, improving people's digital literacy, and ensuring robust validation mechanisms in big data analysis are crucial steps in mitigating risks and increasing resilience in the face of disasters.

7. Implication

The results of this study have far-reaching implications for crisis communication management, especially in the face of the dominance of negative sentiment in public responses. From a crisis management perspective, the findings confirm the importance of responsive, transparent and empathy-based communication strategies to reduce public uncertainty. Organizations and governments must be more proactive in delivering accurate and fast information to reduce panic and build public trust. In terms of public policy, this research shows that social media plays a major role in shaping public opinion during a crisis. Therefore, regulations related to disaster communication need to be strengthened, including monitoring hoaxes and disinformation that can worsen the situation.

In the context of digital communication strategies, the utilization of NLP (Natural Language Processing) analysis becomes highly relevant to understand public sentiment in real-time. With this data, organizations can tailor communication messages to be more effective and in line with public needs. The dominant words in online discussions can be a guide in designing more relevant messages, so that the information conveyed is more easily received. In addition, from an academic perspective, this research contributes to the development of big data-based crisis communication studies, opening up opportunities for further research into the factors that influence public perception of crises as well as the effectiveness of various communication strategies in handling them.

Overall, this research confirms that in the face of a crisis, organizations and governments must not only act quickly but also ensure that the communication strategies implemented are able to build trust and ease public anxiety. With a data-driven approach and in-depth analysis of public sentiment, crisis response can be more targeted and effective in dealing with the dynamics of growing opinions, so as not to experience the worst scenario of a disaster crisis situation.

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The Importance of Presenting the Point of View of Stories on Heritage Tourist Destinations

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Abstract

The study aims to see the various perspectives of the presentation of the story of the heritage tourism area of Kotalama Semarang in Indonesia as a perspective of communication studies. This research uses qualitative methods with data from the storytelling of eight guides at the location from various backgrounds, interviews with stakeholders from government elements, organizational associations and supported by reference books. Data analysis was carried out using the narrative concept of Walter Fisher. The results are that there are four variations of the story: a heritage area with the advantages and technology of historic building construction; the success story of the sugar entrepreneur Oie Tiong Ham who is world-famous; a heritage area with a story of economic conditions in the 18th-20th centuries; Chronology of stories about the area before, during and after imperialism. There is a connection between the perspectives of the story as an exclusive area formed regarding foreign imperialism in Indonesia in the 17th century. The presentation of the story has a structural pattern like a storyteller, paying attention to the situation of the audience; the presentation of the story has coherence with history, interconnected with the stories of other guides. The rationality of the narrative in the story is determined by the coherence and fidelity of the narrative constructed by a group of entities such as historians, academics, government, archival sources. There is an awareness that presenting stories with varying points of view aims to create sustainability for destinations as cultural heritage tourism destinations.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Kotalama Semarang, Narrative Theory, Storytelling

1. Introduction

The focus of this study is on storytelling delivered by tour guides to tourists in the practice of communicating verbally in the heritage tourism area of Kotalama Semarang, Indonesia. Storytelling is the practice of sharing stories as a means of organizing experiences that may be disconnected into interrelated and meaningful episodes of a larger plot such as biography or general history (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). In storytelling, there is narrative material that has an impact on efforts to persuade the audience to organize and interpret collective and individual phenomena through the dialogue that occurs. The story is a series of tour guide experiences to make an interactive

story (Green; Jenkins; 2014, Slater et al. 2014) and tourists have more attention to the material that will be told later (Swensen & Nomeikaate. 2019; Coronel, Jason. C; Ott, Jared M; Lerner, Samuel et all. 2020).

Speaking in the storytelling process is interesting to be raised in this study because it has advantages in strengthening the competence of closeness with the interlocutor, reducing the distortion of the meaning of the message conveyed by the communicator to the audience and communicating directly can carry out a direct verification process if you do not understand the message conveyed like people discussing or having a dialogue. In addition, there has been a shift in demand from quantitative to qualitative in the type of cultural and historical heritage tourism visits, which focus on increasing the search for cultural experiences (Richards, 2018). The narrative of historical stories becomes a point of view that visitors want to look for to increase their preferences for past experiences and their current developments, especially in heritage tourism destinations (Li, Jiao & Zhou, 2024). Heritage tourism has a function in efforts to balance economic growth with efforts to preserve culture and environmental management (Rachmawati, Ardhanariswari, Hendariningrum; 2024).

The presentation of stories plays an important role in attracting audiences in an effort to prove the virtual journey that has been done previously through the consumption of content on digital media carried out by tourists themselves. With a visit, tourists can see direct evidence of existing artifacts, and the story from the guide is a symbolic action in the form of words and/or actions that have a sequence and meaning for those who experience, create, and interpret them. Research related to stories as a communication message has received extensive attention in various disciplines such as studies in the field of communication (Rusnakova, Lenka; Kopecka; Uzana. 2022), marketing strategy in the field of tourism (Kim & Yun, 2017; Lund, Cohen, & Scarles, 2018). Marketing, communication and tourism practitioners use the power of stories as a tool to interact, influence audiences, interlocutors. Previous research on stories and storytelling in relation to cultural heritage tourism destinations shows that tourism storytelling activities lead to topics related to several themes, namely: through stories as shared activities, interactivity between communication actors as a process of exchanging experiences related to the tourism trip they take. This is as in the article entitled Cultural heritage elements in tourism: A tier structure from a tripartite analytical framework (XiaojuanYu & HonggangXu, 2019) which develops a tripartite framework to gain a holistic and structural understanding of the elements of Cultural Heritage of tourism sites based on their position in cultural heritage, tourism production, and tourism consumption. The study was conducted at a tourist destination in Yueyang Tower, China. The results of the study show that there is an identified tier structure consisting of: the dominant element, the distinctive few, and the nebulous plenty. In this structure there is a process of assessing inherited values, transmission of national values and thematization of local values. Second, previous research has shown that Storytelling about the history of a place functions as a promotional medium for tourist destinations. This can be seen in the article Storytelling about place: Tourism Marketing in the digital age. (Bassano et al., 2019). This article explains that storytelling is a tool to improve the reputation of an area that can increase economic development in the digital era. And third, through storytelling, it shows the existence of a certain ethnic identity, an example (Maragh & Simson, 2021) entitled Heritage tourism and ethnic identity: A deductive thematic analysis of Jamaican Maroons which examines the exploration of heritage tourism by examining tourism as a tool to promote ethnic identity and Maroon traditions in Jamaica.

In the study of communication, there is a narrative theory presented by Walter Fisher (1984) explaining about narrative in storytelling. Every aspect of one's life and others is related to one's character, motives and actions in storytelling. Humans are storytellers and there are considerations of values, emotions and aesthetics that form the basis of beliefs and behavior. Narratives can be verbal or nonverbal to make someone believe or not in certain ways. Even in abstract messages because they are embedded in stories presented by the storyteller to invite listeners/audiences to interpret meaning and provide value for life (Griffin, 2020: 299). Narrative theory in some literature is also called the narrative paradigm. This concept is built on five assumptions: 1) Humans are basically storytellers. 2) Humans make decisions based on good reasons, depending on the existing communication situation, the media used and the genre. 3) History, biography, culture and character determine why certain reasons are conveyed. 4) Narrative rationality is determined by narrative coherence and fidelity which focuses on the truth of the story. 5) The world is a collection of selected stories that constantly recreate life.

Kotalama Semarang is a heritage tourism destination in the city of Semarang, Central Java province, Indonesia, which is being actively promoted by the local government as a leading tourist destination. Kotalama Semarang is one of Indonesia's cultural heritage destinations with number 682/P/2020 and has a long history as a destination that is closely related to stories about the history of the world's spice route since the 15th century with Chinese merchant voyages to Semarang in the 17th century and through the port of Semarang became a world spice trade route, thus attracting Europeans to explore the world and enter the era of European imperialism in the Indonesian region. The city of Semarang was once controlled by the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) around the 17th to early 20th centuries by the Dutch. Imperialism over Indonesia was continued by Japan for two years (1942-1945) until Indonesia declared its independence in 1945 (Yuliati, 2019; Adryamartanino & Ningsih, 2022). This long history makes Kotalama Semarang rich in past stories related to the cross-civilization of the world. The Kotalama Semarang area, with an area of 40 hectares, has a number of physical material remains in the form of ancient buildings with distinctive architecture, there are 245 cultural heritage buildings in this area even though it is in the tropics (Irawan & Finesso, 2020).

There are relics of modern civilization with the existence of banking office remains marking the existence of a modern banking system, consumer goods industry, railway transportation, telecommunications and others during the 18th-19th centuries. It is also told in several historical archive literature (Yuliati; Susilowati; Sulyati, 2020) that the Kotalama Semarang area is famous as an international trade area because it is close to Tanjung Mas Port which at that time was one of the 3 major ports on the island of Java (Tanjung Priok Port in Batavia, Jakarta), and Tanjung Perak Port in Surabaya (East Java) which is famous for its international trade cargo, because it was visited by traders from outside Indonesia, such as from Malay, Arab and Chinese and European in approximately the period 1500-1800 (Graaf, 1987).

Revitalization of the area was carried out by the Semarang city government in 2019, due to the revitalization of infrastructure improvements, the number of visits to the Kotalama Semarang destination has increased. In 2019 compared to 2018 there were 61 thousand tourists/year for foreign tourists, and 2.6 million for domestic tourists (Disporapar, Central Java Provincial Government, 2018-2019). In 2020, the number of tourist visits reached 1,191,682, in 2021 it decreased to 615,768 visitors (Final Report of Semarang City Tourism Market Analysis, 2023). Even in 2022-2024, the number of visits to Kotalama Semarang surpassed the Borobudur Area which is a super priority destination for the Indonesian Government, reaching more than 289 thousand (Wibisono, 2022; <https://pariwisata.semarangkota.go.id/frontend/web/index.php?r=site%2Fberita-details&id=47>).

2. Methods of Research

This study uses a qualitative method that views that reality is formed socially, based on a value-laden research process to find answers to problems related to social experience and the meaning of an action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Data collection from recordings of storytelling and interviews with 8 guides met at the destination location during the period 2023-2024 who have representation, namely local residents, guides with cultural backgrounds, tourism agencies, official guides from the government in museums and representatives of government tourism institutions, various regulators and heads of guide organizations. Data collection is also supported by relevant historical reference books. Researchers also conducted participant observation as tourist visitors. The units of analysis observed were the content of the story, the structure of the story, the angle of the story. Then an analysis was carried out based on the concept of Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm study (Fisher, 1984). Narrative analysis is carried out to understand the culture and social context surrounding a text, referring to an integrative analysis and conceptually used to find, identify, process and analyze documents to understand their meaning, significance and relevance (Bungin, 2001). Narrative analysis is included in the group of empirical methods aimed at qualitative analysis (Cresswell, 2019) of textual, visual, auditory and audiovisual communication (Rusnacova & Kopecka, 2022) followed by the process of drawing conclusions with source triangulation.

3. Results and Discussion

Description related to the background of the guide as a storyteller, first: representatives of local guides of Kotalama Semarang who are members of a community called Dutakola Semarang. This community consists of people who live and live in the Kotalama Semarang area and work in the Kotalama Semarang area every day and have a

concern for tourism. This group uses Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and provides tourism services with walking tours, using antique pedicabs or motorbikes to tell stories with tourists. The point of view of the story entitled "Kotalama Semarang is a Modern City in Its Time" briefly tells about the grandeur and uniqueness of the popular cultural heritage buildings in Kotalama Semarang, each of which has its own uniqueness, both in terms of architectural uniqueness, use of building materials, to the history of the function of the building in its time. It is said that there are various facilities and uniqueness about buildings in the 1800s, such as the availability of a three-story building with elevator facilities in the building which is now used as the Jiwasraya insurance office; then there is the RNI building, a building full of wide marble materials for walls and floors so that the building feels cool without having to have air conditioning even in the tropics. The restaurant building which used to be the former office of the NV Kian Gwan Sugar business, apparently already had a large Iron Safe for storing archives and money at that time.

The second group of informants are members of the cultural community in the old city of Semarang, taking the angle of storytelling about the old city of Semarang and the success story of the Asian Sugar King Oie Tiong Ham. This second story tells of a businessman named Oie Ting Ham who controlled his sugar business from the old city of Semarang until it was known internationally (the Asian continent and part of Europe). The old city of Semarang was initially used as a place of business and residence for Dutch citizens and European citizens who lived in the Semarang city area in the 17th-19th centuries (1866-1924), but the figure of Oie Tiong Ham who was of Chinese descent was able to penetrate that and occupy five buildings in the old city of Semarang which were used to control his business. The five buildings functioned as head offices, banking services, industrial machinery trading, and sugar brokerage companies. These buildings are located one block away on Jalan Kepodang or Hoogendorp Straat, such as the NV Handel Maatschappij Kian Gwan building which is now a restaurant called 'Pringsewu', the NV Kian Gwan building or now the PT Rajawali Nusindo building, the banking building which is now used for Heroes cafe, the Soesman Kantoor building for the employee or factory worker management office, the Monod Dephuis building as a warehouse office. This version of the story also tells the personal life of Oie Tiong Ham who was a descendant of a Chinese immigrant named Oie Tjie Sien who moved to Indonesia because he fled from China when there was domestic turmoil in China and then traded by establishing a sugar factory called Kian Gwan. Sugar was a leading commodity of the Archipelago (Indonesia) in the period 1800-1930 when the spice business from Banda Naira Island in Maluku declined. Sugar became the world's most important natural processed product at that time. After inheriting his father's business, the figure of Oie Ting Ham was able to spread his wings to be famous in the Asian region and even had representative offices in Hong Kong, London and New York with the head office in Semarang. Even by the newspaper *de locomotief* as the largest newspaper at that time in Semarang, this figure was known as "the richest person between Shanghai and Australia".

The third group of informants was tour guides from a commercial tourism agency called "Bersukaria." This agency focuses on tourist visitors who like walking tours with a travel time of approximately 2-3 hours walking around Kotalama Semarang. Every month this agency offers other routes through the media website, Instagram. The presentation of this group's story tells about Kotalama Semarang from the perspective of being the first residential and economic area of the Dutch VOC in the city of Semarang. According to information from the guide, an area before becoming large must have been preceded by a residential area. The Kotalama Semarang area was originally a settlement for European citizens (mostly Dutch citizens). In its development, Kotalama Semarang became densely populated, developed and residential areas moved out of the Kotalama Semarang area, expanding towards the southern and western parts of Semarang. Which then made Kotalama Semarang the center of the economy and government because of its strategic location close to the port. Many business buildings were found such as shipping offices (Pelni) for selling ship tickets, newspaper offices (*de locomotief*), banking offices, warehouses and so on. The last tour guide informant from the Semarang Old Town Museum group is a museum managed by the Semarang city government located in the area. The informant in this group carries a story about the history of Semarang Old Town which is divided into three terms related to the establishment of the fort that surrounds the area, namely the fort named Vijfhoek. The informant explained that the Semarang Old Town area is an exclusive area inhabited by Dutch and European citizens as immigrants and associated with the colonizers, so as a form of security a fort was built that surrounded the area. The fort is called the Vijfhoek fort in the shape of a pentagon. The construction of this fort was to distinguish the division of other areas/blocks that were deliberately built in the area around Semarang Old Town with other ethnic groups such as the Chinese ethnic group (Chinatown), Malay ethnic group,

Arab ethnic group (Pekojan) and the original Indonesian ethnic group (Pribumi). The selection of storytelling terminology by looking at the side of the Vijfhoek fort in Semarang Old Town is a provision that has been decided by the regional government of Semarang City Tourism, after conducting discussions, archive searches and experts in their fields.

3.1. Point of View of Story Presentation

Based on the results of the story presentation, it can be clustered that there are four types of story variations that emerge, namely: stories that take the point of view of Kotalama Semarang as a cultural heritage area with the advantages and technology of historic buildings; second about the success story of the world-famous sugar entrepreneur Oie Tiong Ham; third, areas that have stories in economic progress in the 18th-20th centuries, and fourth, story presentations with a focus on the chronology of stories about the area of control during the imperialist era. There is a red line of connection between the story's points of view, namely as a heritage tourism area, Kotalama Semarang is an exclusive area formed due to the role of the Dutch VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) in Indonesia in the past. The connection between stories so that they cannot be separated from the historical story of the area. Based on the processing of interview results with informants and stakeholders, it shows that: 1) There is evidence in the form of physical artifacts of buildings and site plans for the area, such as roads, blocks of historical heritage buildings with typical subtropical architecture like the European area in Kotalama. 2) The length of time when the VOC (Dutch East Indies Government) was in Kotalama Semarang. Recorded from 1705 to 1942 when Indonesia was controlled by Japan. The span of 237 years or more than 2 centuries, it is not surprising that the artifacts left behind by VOC imperialism (the Dutch East Indies government) are still quite numerous and quite attached. In addition to building structures, evidence of the development of civilization is also found such as the publication of the newspaper "de locomotief", notes - evidence of trade records, banking systems. The findings made by Balar Yogyakarta (National Research and Innovation Agency, Regional Archaeology Office) in the past, the storytelling by the guide can be seen in different time periods.

The span of time under foreign control is longer than the period when the city of Semarang was under the control of ancient Indonesian kingdoms in 1475-1704. There are limitations in the number of physical relics during the Indonesian kingdom period due to the limited understanding of reading and writing of the people in the past.

The variation of story perspectives according to the recognition of government stakeholders and area managers is used as part of the marketing strategy for the type of heritage tourism in organizing stories that can be clustered with the angle of the time period of the shooting, certain themes so that there are many variations in story presentation that can increase the sustainability of visits in this area without eliminating the existing historical value.

Table 1.1: Time Periods of the Story that Influence the Point of View of the Story

Point of View Story Presentation	Time period of the story	Message in Storytelling
Kotalama Semarang as a cultural heritage area with the excellence and technology of historic buildings	1916	-About the Nillmij van Office building (Nederlandsch Indische Levensverzekering en Lijfrente Maatschappij van) which is now known as the Jiwasraya building with elevator technology
	1862	- The history of the NV Handel Matschappij Kian Gwan Building, as the former office of the Sugar company owned by Oie Tiong Ham, which has now been converted into a restaurant "Pringsewu," has large rooms with large archive storage safes with a height of more than 2 meters.
	-1930	- The Vereeneging Concern Bank office as a bank for the sugar company owned by Oei Tiong Ham, which is now the Rajawali Nusindo building, is still maintained with natural lighting from the marble walls and windows with a certain design so that the air conditioning feels cool even though it is in a tropical area..

The success story of sugar entrepreneur Oei Tiong Ham	1863-1920	- The story of sugar entrepreneur Oei Tiong Ham, the origins of the family, buildings from the heyday of the sugar business in Kotalama Semarang - NV Kian Gwan office building, Vereneeging Bank building, Kontoor Soesman, Monod Dhepeuis building
Kotalama Semarang as Areas that experienced economic progress in the 18th-20th centuries	18th-20th century	- Kotalama Semarang has built several buildings for residential areas, entertainment buildings, office buildings, trade, commerce.
Chronology of stories about the area before, during and after imperialism	Before 1677-1741 1756 1824	- The period when the city of Semarang was still part of the ancient kingdom in Indonesia, before the De Vijfhoek fort stood as a symbol of being controlled by the VOC - The De Vijfhoek fort underwent renovation, expansion and began to be built as office, trade and commerce buildings. - The period when the De Vijfhoek fort was demolished and expanded outside the Kotalama Semarang area to the south of the city due to population growth.

Source: Processing research data from several sources

Based on table 1.1, it shows the different perspectives of presenting stories about Kotalama Semarang, based on the long historical span of its existence. So that the fragments of periodization give birth to their own stories. Tour guides, stakeholders, historians are aware of the existence of artifacts in the form of physical structures of historical buildings, supported by archives, so this becomes the capital source of stories that can be narrated from various perspectives by the storyteller. Through the stories presented, the storyteller wants to create an affective 'atmosphere of commemoration' about past phenomena to visitors as part of present-day learning and various interests.

3.2. Storytelling Structure Patterns and the Guide as a Storyteller

In practice, the presentation of stories about Kotalama Semarang carried out by guides is based on the concept of narrative, the guide uses a pattern like a storyteller who has a story structure. The structure technically includes the opening of the story (prologue), the main material of the story and the closing (epilogue). The prologue is useful for building the story and inviting the listener to enter the main door of the story before entering the core of the story. The prologue is the initial part of the narrative that can also be found in writing drama, music, theater or literary works. The prologue functions to provide context such as the background of the story to be revealed, historical information, a picture of the world to be told and relevant social context, introducing the main characters or themes, building enthusiasm and interest of the audience, making a strong first impression. The core of the story is the center of the material to be told, giving rise to the process of the story's turmoil, explaining the reasons behind a character in the story, conflicts that may arise and the part that tells about the main narrative that wants to be conveyed through the story and the epilogue is the end of the story which usually conveys the conclusion and closing of the story. (Katerynych, Petro; Goian, Vita; Goian, Oles (2023). This story structure is important to have because storytelling is an interactive art in using words and actions to express the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.

Table 1.2: Chronology of the Presentation Structure of the Story of the Kotalama Semarang

Story Structure	Point of view of the Story			
Variations of the story	Kotalama Semarang as a cultural heritage area with the excellence and technology of historic buildings	The success story of sugar entrepreneur Oei Tiong Ham	Kotalama Semarang as Area that experienced economic progress in the 18th-20th centuries	Chronology of stories about the area before, during and after imperialism
Prolog	The guide invites visitors to imagine the Kotalama	The guide invites tourists to see a park (Srigunting	The tour guide invites visitors to think back with the	Video visualization of the river "Kali Semarang"

	<p>Semarang that is now being stepped on in the past in 1600-1800. At that time, the Kotalama Semarang had become a modern city long before Indonesia declared its independence in 1945. Visitors are asked to see the surrounding buildings that are still standing strong until 2024 when the story is told.</p>	<p>Park) as the starting point for the walking tour. Tourist are asked to look around Srigunting Park. The vibes of the location look like the architecture of a city that is often found in Europe and the guide emphasizes that this area is specifically for residents of European/Dutch. However, it turns out that a person of Chinese ethnicity named Oie Tiong Ham can run his business in this area. Something extraordinary.</p>	<p>Sri Gunting park set up which became the initial focal point of tourist visits. The park which is surrounded by buildings for economic activities on each corner, there is an oudetrap building for a warehouse, Speigel as the first retail building, the Automobiel building as a car sales building, Marba as a building for the "Zikel" shop in 1902.</p>	<p>with small ships passing through the river. "Kali Semarang" as the entrance for foreign ship traffic into the Semarang area long before the VOC came to Semarang in January 1678. Around the 1820s, the city of Semarang was very busy and crowded because trading activities were already international level.</p>
The gist of the story	<p>Telling about technology, materials, architectural facades of cultural heritage building facilities</p>	<p>Explaining the figure of a Sugar entrepreneur named Oei Tiong Ham and his business which is famous throughout Asia. The guide shows the buildings of Oie Tiong Ham's former business and the story of the figure's success.</p>	<p>The guide tells stories and takes tourists around the buildings around Sri Gunting Park. Then head to the heritage buildings of Semarang's Old Town in the North and West which are still used as residential and commercial areas.</p>	<p>Sharing stories about Kotalama Semarang in the pre-fortress period, the fort and the period of the collapse of the Vijfhoek fort. The pre-fortress period before 1740. The story begins with the development of the City of Semarang. Then the heyday, explaining the period when Semarang was controlled by the Dutch VOC and the Vijfhoek fort. Post-Fortress is the restoration of the fort due to population growth, increasingly rapid trade, causing the need for expansion of the area outside of Kotalama Semarang.</p>
Epilog	<p>Providing an explanation of the history of buildings on the South side of Kotalama Semarang. Offering other routes of historical buildings in the Kotalama Semarang area that have not been explained by taking an additional package if tourists</p>	<p>Explaining about the buildings left behind by the glory of the figure Oei Tiong Ham in Kotalama Semarang. The guide reiterated that the figure Oie Ting Ham's assets were spread across several cities, not just Semarang.</p>	<p>Providing information that the story presented is only part of the long history of Kotalama Semarang. The guide offers other walking tour packages if you want to complete</p>	<p>The guide explains one of the proofs of the glory of Semarang Old Town in the field of transportation by showing the original site of the tram line in the museum, followed by experiencing riding a miniature duplicate of the tram/train in the museum.</p>

	want to explain the history of Kotalama Semarang on the east, north and west sides.		the story about the city.	
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Source: Processing research data from several sources

Based on the information in table 1.2 above, the storytelling process shows that the guide as a communicator, practices storytelling activities that try to build the listener's imagination through the structure of the storyline that is delivered starting from the prologue, core and end (epilogue). The story structure shows a forward flow pattern, based on time sequence. The informant uses supporting tools such as building photos and videos and sound to build the audience's imagination about Semarang's old town in the past. The choice of story words uses the official formal Indonesian language and interspersed informal or local languages adjusted to the audience being brought.

3.3. Presentation of Stories Based on Audience Situations

In the narrative paradigm theory, Walter Fisher said that humans make decisions based on good reasons, depending on the audience situation. Some basic considerations of storytellers in presenting stories are due to their background in mastering stories, experiences, audience situations and the use of storytelling media.

Consideration of story presentation with different points of view considers audience situations such as motivation, duration of visit, number of visitors (private or group). The presentation of the story becomes more detailed regarding the information and structure depending on the choice of tour package, regular or private tour. The average age of visitors influences the choice of language used. Formal language will be used by guides when bringing groups of government guests or official situations, while informal language is usually used for young visitors such as groups of school children to college students. The selection of contemporary urban legend stories that are developing in society is also often added for this age group to make the story more interesting.

3.4. The Story has Coherence with History, is Interconnected

The practice of telling stories about Kotalama Semarang, although it has different angles in the storytelling, there is a connection between one story and another, namely as a former area of Dutch and European VOC imperialism in Semarang and Indonesia in the 16th-20th centuries. This cannot be separated from the long history of the existence of the Indonesian state, which is based on historical archives and historians' accounts that for 3.5 centuries until Indonesia's independence in 1945 was a former imperialist country of other countries.

In the story production section, it was found that the story conveyed to tourists was the result of joint verification from various stakeholders such as the local government as the manager of the area, historians, tourism industry groups, and guide organizations. The existence of a certain level of certification exam as a guide is also important regarding the ability to present heritage stories in the context of oral communication. Trusted historical reference archives of the old city of Semarang, such as the use of the old city archives at KITLV, Leiden in the Netherlands, are also very helpful in the message production process (Budiman, 1973; Tio, 2007, Yuliati 2020).

The practice of telling stories about the existence of the old city of Semarang is closely related to the background atmosphere of the area formerly formed by the Dutch VOC, so it is not surprising that the background of the story reveals a lot from the side of the grandeur of the building, city planning, infrastructure, modern economic system during the Dutch VOC era. This data is based on information from historical archives that the VOC-Dutch was in Semarang since 1678 according to the agreement between King Amangkurat II and the Dutch (Heeres, Stapel (Ed, 1677-1680 in Yuliati 2020) until 1942 when Indonesia changed to the Japanese occupation. In a period of more than 3 centuries, it is not surprising that an area will experience many changes and developments. The results of government informants, historians, and literature evidence that written sources are mostly found in Dutch before being rewritten into Indonesian by several historical writers from the 1970s to 2020. During the Japanese occupation, the archives were limited only from 1943-1945. This is in line with the 3rd concept in Fisher's narrative paradigm which states that the formation of certain message productions with variations in storytelling shows how

the use of carefully thought-out considerations by tour guides is associated with historical, biographical, cultural and shared character factors (Fisher, 1984).

3.5. Presentation of Stories Requires Narrative Rationality Constructed by Stakeholders

The presentation of the story needs to pay attention to the suitability, truth and logic of the story from several reasonable sources. For stories related to Kotalama Semarang, the story is the result of construction from relevant stakeholders such as historians, academics, and the government based on available archival sources. This is related to preservation efforts as a cultural heritage destination. The local government of Semarang City initiated various meetings with related experts such as historians, cultural figures, academics who understand history, urban planning experts and tourism actors to hold discussions related to stories about the revitalization of the area in 2016-2019. The main story about Kotalama Semarang was made into a book. This book is a guidebook for tourist locations to be delivered to visitors.

Narrative rationality is a way to evaluate the value of a story based on two standards called narrative coherence and narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984). Narrative coherence is related to how likely the story is to be heard by the audience, whether the narrative supports each other, how the characters and events are related to each other to be told. Related to this, the data findings explain that the story about the history of Kotalama Semarang, although it has various points of view, has a story that is broadly the same and interrelated. The emergence of popular figures such as Oie Tiong Ham is part of the organic background of the story. This can be seen from the confirmation of the stories of historians, cultural figures, and through digital media on websites, reference books, the stories are more or less the same and there is a common thread.

Walter Fisher (1984) in narrative theory: how to test narrative coherence with steps: first, is there a contradiction in the story that is built (internal consistency of the story). The sense of narrative coherence is strengthened by the adaptation of the storyteller to the audience. For example, adjusting the use of language and the situation of the audience. The guide in the Kotalama Semarang area fulfills this. Second; in testing narrative coherence, the presentation of the story will be unified if the storyteller does not ignore important details of the story, does not falsify facts, or does not ignore other reasonable interpretations. To test this can be done by comparing it with other existing stories, themes that are almost the same. From the four points of view of the story, it shows that there is continuity between stories. Meanwhile, narrative validity is the quality of a story that causes the words brought to the story to touch a responsive tone for the audience, containing human values. In the four points of view, the story has values that present the glory of the economy and trade of Kotalama Semarang in its time. This is understandable considering the long history of the old city of Semarang, long before the era of imperialism, it had become a world spice trade route, so that the city of Semarang interacted with other nations to trade, such as descendants of Malays, Indians and Arabs who traded as far as the island of Java.

3.6. Presentation Awareness to Create Sustainability as a Cultural Heritage Tourism Destination

The story of Kotalama Semarang is a collection of experiences from various stakeholders such as historians, communities, government, tourism actors in preserving cultural heritage tourism destinations. The existence of the Kotalama Semarang Area will continue to exist if the stories about this area are always communicated and continue to exist to benefit from the existence of this area, so if it is maintained, the Kotalama Semarang Area will continue to exist.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that there were four story perspectives conveyed by tour guides in presenting stories about Kotalama Semarang. The four storytelling perspectives are the heritage area with the advantages and technology of historic building structures, the success story of the world-famous sugar entrepreneur Oie Tiong Ham, the area with stories about economic progress in the 18th-20th centuries, and the chronology of the story about the area of control during the imperialist era. From a number of storytelling perspectives that emerged, all four were related to the story about the Dutch VOC occupation of Indonesia. This finding resulted in the

presentation of messages in the realm of communication in the concept of the narrative paradigm, namely 1) Guides in practice carry out storytelling activities directly to visitors, this shows that humans are storytellers. 2) Humans make decisions based on reasons for consideration depending on the communication situation. Guides have reasons related to background, experience, audience and mastery of story sources in presenting stories. 3). Guides present the interconnectedness between stories. 4). Narrative Rationale is determined by the coherence and fidelity of the narrative constructed by a group of entities such as historians, academics, government and historical sources who have high concerns regarding the truth of the destination story. 5) The existence of stories about Kotalama Semarang in the field of tourism is a collection of stories that are deliberately created in order to recreate the sustainability of heritage tourism destinations in Kotalama Semarang.

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Examining Non-Western Perspectives in International Relations: A Case Study and Analysis of Afghanistan

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Abstract

This paper explores the dynamics of international relations beyond the Western paradigm, emphasizing a global perspective. It contends that the Western world has exerted significant influence over the field of international relations. It is frequently referred to as 'An American Social Science.' Nevertheless, scholarships, voices, discourse, and narratives are arising from the non-Western World (Global South) in opposition to the dominance and hegemony of the West within the discipline. This paper underscores the persistent neglect within IR scholarship to center non-Western thought, experiences, and contributions, resulting in the sidelining and marginalization of scholarship from the global south. Similarly, this paper illuminates the constraints and limitations of predominant international relations theories in the context of the non-Western world and Afghanistan. Afghanistan serves as a notable illustration of the prevalence of Western theories in international relations, resulting in the application of frameworks that engage with Afghanistan through a geopolitical lens while sidelining indigenous knowledge(s) and perspectives. Afghanistan stands as one of the most ancient civilizations endowed with the potential to enhance international relations theory (IRT). Therefore, within this framework, this scholarship argues that the 'Loya Jirga'—a time-honored method for resolving disputes among traditional communities—can significantly contribute to the advancement of an inclusive international relations theory, aiming not to supplant the existing paradigms but to enhance them. This paper emphasizes that for international relations to evolve into a truly universal and inclusive discipline, it must accommodate non-Western perspectives, particularly those originating from Afghanistan. It further offers recommendations to Afghan scholars and the IRT community on enhancing the prominence of Afghan knowledge(s) within the realm of IRT.

Keywords: International Relations Theory, Non-Western International Relations, Global International Relations, African IR, Asian IR, Afghanistan IR. Loya Jirga

1. Introduction

"Decolonizing knowledge should not put us in the position of only producing knowledge as a reaction to Western knowledge. Our existence should not become one in which everything we produce is to justify our intellectual existence vis-à-vis the West. It means to produce what we see as important, fit, and nurturing to our communities, countries, and cultures in separation from the West and its colonial and imperial agenda. This way, we will ensure

that we do not waste our energy simply reacting to the West to justify the value of our contribution to knowledge." (Yako, 2021). The West has established hegemony and dominance over the production, propagation, and absorption of knowledge. In the field of international relations, among many others, the Western nations have established their dominance (Acharya, 2016). International relations have been described as an 'American social science,' a 'colonial household,' and a 'disjunctive empire' (Hoffman, 1977; Yew, 2003; Agathangelou & Ling, 2004). The dissemination of knowledge in the discipline of International Relations is predominantly unidirectional, with non-Western perspectives often overlooked, dismissed, and marginalized. A cluster of scholars has emerged to challenge Western dominance in the discipline and to question the applicability of existing international relations theory to the non-Western world. These scholars and practitioners operate within the frameworks of 'critical,' 'Global,' and 'non-Western' International Relations.

The primary objective of non-Western international relations is to democratize the discipline by integrating the theories, concepts, ideas, experiences, narratives, and norms from the non-Western world. Additionally, non-Western international relations advocates for the IR community to transcend American and Western hegemony in the field and to diversify the disciplinary sources. This paper aims to illustrate the objective of non-Western international relations: to establish a global, universal, and inclusive discipline in the field of international relations. The same dominance of Western International Relations is evident in Afghanistan. The Afghan perspectives, knowledge, narratives, and discourse are frequently overlooked and marginalized. The Western theories, including mainstream International Relations theories such as Liberalism, Realism, and Constructivism, as well as state-centric geopolitical theories, are applied to Afghanistan, thereby marginalizing local Afghan knowledge.

This paper addresses non-Western international relations debates and case studies, representing a novel contribution in the context of Afghanistan. This paper's initial section addresses critiques of Western and American hegemony within the discipline and introduces non-Western International Relations. The next part of the paper examines various non-Western works, with a primary emphasis on African, Asian, and Latin American International Relations. The following portion provides an analysis of Afghanistan. This paper introduces the Afghani concept of 'Loya Jirga' and asserts that, if appropriately developed and articulated, it has the potential to enhance international relations theory. The concluding section provides insights into the potential contributions of Afghan scholars to the field of International Relations and its theoretical frameworks.

This study employs a qualitative methodology that integrates comparative analysis, case study examination, and critical discourse analysis. This work critically examines prevailing Western International Relations Theories (IRTs) and juxtaposes them with non-Western viewpoints, utilizing Afghanistan as a primary case study. The methodology involves a documentary analysis of scholarly literature, historical texts, and policy documents to highlight the limitations of mainstream International Relations theories—specifically Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—when applied to non-Western contexts. This inquiry is guided by the following research questions: To what extent has Western hegemony influenced International Relations Theory and marginalized non-Western perspectives? What are the limitations of mainstream International Relations theories in explaining Afghanistan's geopolitical and socio-political landscape? What is the role of the Loya Jirga in the context of International Relations, and how might it augment current IR theories? What strategies can be utilized to incorporate Afghan and Global South perspectives into mainstream International Relations theory?

This research aims to critique the predominance of Western perspectives in International Relations (IR), identify the limitations of applying Western theories to non-Western contexts such as Afghanistan, propose the Loya Jirga as a valuable framework for IR, and advocate for a decolonized and pluralistic discipline that incorporates diverse global viewpoints. This study focuses on Afghanistan while also referencing perspectives from the Global South, including Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It contrasts mainstream Western International Relations theories with non-Western alternatives, analyzes both historical and contemporary applications of these theories, and addresses the decolonization of knowledge, indigenous governance models, and the marginalization of Global South epistemologies. This study aims to expand the scope of International Relations theory to create a more inclusive, global, and interdisciplinary academic field.

2. International Relations as a hegemonic discipline

The global significance of international relations has been questioned and extensively scrutinized, with critiques highlighting its lack of genuine "international" scope (Tickner, 2003; Waever, 1998). Hoffmann (1977) and Smith (2002) characterize International Relations (IR) as an "American Social Science" and a "hegemonic discipline" predominantly influenced by Western ideologies. Critical researchers in International Relations question the applicability of mainstream theories, such as liberalism and realism, in non-Western contexts. The marginalization and exclusion of non-Western scholars from mainstream International Relations is apparent, even though Western International Relations does not publicly discriminate against them. Acharya claims that exclusion and marginalization arise from the production of International Relations (IR) and the concentration of journals, publishing houses, and academic institutions in the United States and other Western countries.

Moreover, the suppression of non-Western stories, thinking, experiences, and values happens all the time in mainstream IR. It may take in the form of language that the non-western scholarship's English is poor or does not adhere to the standard established methodology (Acharya, 2016, p. 7). Most publishing channels lack space for non-Western viewpoints. Peter Katzenstein inquires about the quantity of articles from postcolonial, feminist, or critical perspectives present in prominent journals and publications. Furthermore, non-American scholars are excluded from major international relations conventions and conferences, limiting their ability to contribute to international relations theory from a non-Western perspective (Katzenstein, 2010).

Moreover, the perspectives and experiences of non-Western societies remain ignored, mainly within the realm of international relations. Peter Vale argues that conventional international relations consistently overlook the perspectives, narratives, and concepts emerging from the global south (Acharya, 2016, p.8). An enduring characteristic of international relations studies is the marginalization of non-Western perspectives, which manifests in various ways, including the exclusion of these viewpoints from prominent publications and academic curricula in the field. Furthermore, realism, liberalism, and constructivism—the three predominant theories within Western international relations—have profoundly failed to understand and accurately reflect the complexities of the non-Western world. In Asia and Africa, numerous assumptions and forecasts derived from these theories fail to correspond with the actual circumstances. Within this framework, the pragmatic prediction regarding Asia's future proved to be erroneous (Kang, 2003). The discipline of international relations has been overwhelmingly dominated by scholars from Western and American academic circles (Acharya, 2014; 2016). For instance, numerous individuals, such as John Mearsheimer, contend that the ascent of non-American scholars in this field can be attributed to their capacity to expand upon the contributions of American academics. This exemplifies the extensive reach of its dominance. Furthermore, the TRIP report indicates a prevailing influence of Western methodologies, epistemologies, and scholarly outputs (Jordan et al., 2009), which consequently leads to the marginalization of non-Western viewpoints.

Numerous leading researchers in International Relations (IR) contest the notion that IR is exclusively a Western social science and express a reluctance to alter its established practices despite the evident and significant influence of Western thought within the discipline (Acharya, 2016). Mearsheimer is a prominent figure in international relations, and his publications are widely studied globally. He denies the claim that the international relations scholarly community is excessively American-centric. He asserts that American supremacy is "benign," indicating that the discipline does not require a "broadening of its horizons." (Acharya, 2016, p. 6). The Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) report asserts that self-interest drives Western domination. Opposition to non-Western international relations initiatives will likely come from scholars benefiting from Western dominance. Additionally, when inquired about Western dominance in the IRT, seventy-five percent of respondents concurred that international relations is a Western-dominated discipline, indicating that American preeminence in this field is not benign. Simultaneously, 62% of participants acknowledged the importance of countering hegemony (Acharya, 2016).

Many non-Western scholars view international relations as neither universal nor inclusive. As a result, numerous initiatives are emerging to move International Relations from its parochial focus to a more global and inclusive discipline. The purpose of these projects is to encourage the International Relations community to move beyond

Western dominance in the discipline and to acknowledge diversity by recognizing the roles and contributions of non-Western peoples and societies. Non-Western scholarship endeavors to incorporate its insights, narratives, experiences, values, and norms into international relations theory, potentially leading to the establishment of Global and non-Western IR (Acharya, 2014).

The issue of Western hegemony is central to the discourse and discussion surrounding non-Western and global international relations. Global and non-Western international relations argue that the field must broaden its scope by incorporating ideas, theories, and narratives from diverse nations and cultures to challenge Western supremacy (Acharya, 2016). Each state and its society exhibit distinct characteristics, indicating that the world is not homogeneous. Consequently, evaluating and interpreting all aspects of the world through the singular lens of prevailing International Relations theories—Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism—proves inadequate for producing practical answers, predictions, and solutions (Acharya, 2014; 2016; 2017). Place and position are significant in international relations (IR); each position provides distinct characteristics, narratives, and experiences that can contribute to the development of IR theory. The objective of global and non-Western International Relations is to enhance the diversity of IR sources and facilitate the inclusion of perspectives from various regions. Anyidoho observes that 'locations are, however, mobile because each person inhabits multiple locations within and across time. He suggests that 'what you stand for should be as important as where you stand' (Anyidoho, 1985).

The emergence of non-Western International Relations can be attributed to a rising discontent with the applicability of conventional IR theories to the Asian context. Its main aim is to promote inquiry into alternative foundations of IR theory. Indigenous histories, classical philosophy, the perspectives of national leaders, academic writing, and religious traditions have the potential to enhance IRT (Acharya, 2017). It is essential to recognize that global and non-Western international relations do not constitute a singular theory or methodology; instead, they seek to enhance and incorporate existing international relations theories by introducing a diverse array of concepts and frameworks. The objective of non-Western international relations is to transform the field into a genuinely inclusive and universal discipline rather than merely replacing one form of centrism with another. Acharya posits that non-Western international relations scholarship faces criticism for its critiques of Western concepts, which are deemed lacking in comprehensiveness (Acharya, 2014; 2016; 2017).

Odoom and Andrews (2017) assert that non-Western international relations broaden the scope of the discipline, suggesting that the inclusion of perspectives from non-Western nations allows the field to achieve a truly global and universal character. The foremost intellectual contributions and scholarly work must extend beyond North America and Europe for International Relations to evolve into a genuinely inclusive discipline; it is essential to incorporate the perspectives of scholars from Asia and Africa (Odoom & Andrews, 2017). Moreover, by shifting the discipline beyond the limiting confines of conventional international relations, the inclusion of non-Western perspectives and global frameworks disrupts the prevailing order. The contributions of non-Western scholars in the field have illuminated the predominance of Western perspectives in International Relations theory. Incorporating non-Western viewpoints will shift the discipline of international relations from a singular notion of universality towards a more diverse understanding known as "pluri-versality" (Mignolo, 2009). Ultimately, by exploring perspectives beyond the Western paradigm for an alternative understanding of international relations, the field engage with a field that transcends racial constructs through the decolonization of the subject and the careful management of concepts and methodologies. Engaging with the expanding body of ideas from diverse locations, rather than dismissing them, constitutes a crucial concern for IRT.

The objective of non-Western international relations is to gradually move the discipline away from Western hegemony towards a framework that is more inclusive and universally applicable. In non-Western international relations, understanding and knowledge are rooted and derived in non-Western practices and interactions alongside distinct epistemological concepts. The objective of global and non-western IR is to put forward an alternative perspective. A multitude of recognized publications, including Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations," conform to the traditional methodologies of International Relations. Instead of portraying Islam as fearful of the West, Huntington illustrates the West's apprehension towards Islam (see Huntington, 1993). As noted by Acharya (2016), an essential component of global international relations is the examination of regions or regional worlds.

A crucial expression of the agency of non-Western actors that Western international relations have overlooked is regionalism. The worldwide relevance of the EU is subject to debate within non-Western international relations. For the pursuit of a truly universal framework in international relations, global IR must engage with non-Western traditions and research methodologies. The development of non-Western and global international relations is profoundly shaped by distinct national schools of thought in the field.

Amitav Acharya offers a paradigm for evaluating theoretical breakthroughs or literature that has the potential to advance theory. A theoretical breakthrough should be evaluated based on two criteria, regardless of whether it originates in Asia or, more broadly, any other part of the world. The first role is to refute popular theories, particularly those that assert universality. Any non-Western IR and global endeavor should be able to question the applicability and relevance of the current ideas. This entails moving past the ethnocentrism of discussions across paradigms. In this regard, much effort has been made. For example, David Kang and Amitav Acharya use the realist/neorealist assumptions and forecasts for Asia and China. They outline the discrepancy between the region's reality and the presumptions and forecasts of the three fundamental IR theories—constructivism, liberalism, and realism. The second purpose of any theoretical innovation in international relations is to offer fresh or different ideas that enhance comprehension and elucidation of global phenomena and development. However, the idea should be universal and applicable outside of its original context. For example, Asian IR has produced numerous theoretical works, such as Yaging Qin's "Relational Theory of World Politics," that question the conventional theories that are now in use.

3. Exploring Perspectives Beyond Western International Relations and Progressing Towards Non-Western Approaches

This part of the paper critically and rigorously engages with the scholarship coming from Asia, Africa, and Latin America using the 'framework of judging' expounded by Amitav Acharya and the application of Western IR theories and simultaneously offers its critiques over and challenges the dominance IR theories and in turn uses it and applies in the case of Afghanistan.

Odoom and Andrews (2017), in their high-volume paper "What/who is still missing in International Relations scholarship? Situating Africa as an Agent of IR Theorizing," reveal the limitations of Western theories and concepts. It is posited that case studies, experiential insights, and a substantial corpus of work from African societies can significantly enrich the field of International Relations. Theorization in international relations often lacks substantial insight into Africa, and Africa's cultural, political, and economic knowledge must be integrated into the framework of international relations theory. Isaac and Andrews contend that IRT is afflicted by a representational deficiency, indicating that, aside from the perspectives of the West and America, the experiences, values, and norms of the non-Western world have been largely overlooked. If the field of international relations aspires to be truly global and inclusive, its leading scholars must extend beyond the confines of American and European representation. Moreover, it has been argued (2017) that narratives originating from Africa will illuminate facets of global politics that prevailing theories and perspectives overlook. African insights, narratives, and experiences possess a distinctiveness that sets them apart from those of the West. The authors argue that revealing alternative narratives within the dominant international relations scholarship poses difficulties but is still achievable (Smith, 2009).

The concept of the state has consistently held a position of prominence within the field of International Relations (Agnew, 1994; Odoom and Andrews, 2017). The understanding of the state during the 20th century was predominantly centered around European perspectives (Malaquias, 2001). International relations is a discipline that centers around the state, with sovereign political entities serving as the primary actors in this arena. The state-centric model of international relations proved to be highly effective for Europeans (Malaquias, 2001, p. 12), facilitating peace and stability and fostering consensus and cooperation, as evidenced by the Westphalia Accord. Nevertheless, the application of the Westphalian state system to African nations has resulted in warfare and discord rather than fostering peace, unity, and collaboration. The primary issue with prevailing theories of International Relations lies in their historical emphasis on the state, particularly the actions of dominant and great powers.

Consequently, this focus has led to the marginalization of sub-state levels and actors, as well as the intricate dynamics of human and cultural geography (Agnew, 1994; Odoom & Andrews, 2017, p. 48; Chaturvedi, 2017).

Thus, an important lesson can be obtained from African narratives, experiences, and academic contributions regarding the diverse array of participants that must be considered in cultivating a comprehension of international relations that transcends traditional state-centric frameworks. Malaquias suggests that African reinterpretations of international relations narratives must engage with the dominant state-centric paradigm and supplant it with more inclusive frameworks (Malaquias, 2001, p. 15). Furthermore, should we transcend the traditional state-centric framework of International Relations Theory. In the perspective articulated by John Agnew, if we liberate ourselves from the constraints of the 'Territorial Trap' and explore alternative units of analysis, we may uncover answers to the often-neglected yet crucial questions in international relations, which could address numerous challenges faced by African nations and the Global South.

For instance, to comprehend the tension in Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda, it is essential to focus on sub-state actors rather than solely examining the roles of the Sudanese and Ugandan states. This involves evaluating the history, background, and motivations of the rebel groups (Smith, 2009). This will enhance understanding of the situation in Africa and lead to a plausible and feasible solution to the issues at hand. Analyzing sub-state levels and actors offers the international relations community innovative analytical tools to elucidate the behavior of African states (p. 278). The imposition of the Westphalian state model has led to conflict, as the state is not inherently essential to political life, both in Africa and in Afghanistan and other South Asian nations. Other actors in Africa have appropriated state functions. Thus, the implementation of the Western state has significantly failed in Africa.

Moreover, liberalism is of significant importance and occupies an essential explanatory space in international relations (Odoom and Andrews, 2017, p. 50). Nkiwane asserts that the liberal tradition does not acknowledge the contributions of African society (Nkiwane, 2001). Fukuyama's concept of democracy includes several African nations, which, in reality, do not qualify as such. He defines democratic regimes as those that empower their citizens to choose their government via periodic secret ballots and multiparty elections grounded on universal adult suffrage (Fukuyama, 1989). The liberal proposition that the advancement of liberal democracy and human rights would resolve issues of political repression and economic stagnation has proved to be elusive in several regions of Africa (Saul, 1997). Liberal democracy in African societies has shown significant illiberal tendencies. The preservation of democratic rights cannot be confined just to election matters. Consequently, Western democracy is ineffective in the African environment. Suppose any Western philosophy, such as democracy, seeks to function inside a community without a liberal heritage. In that case, it should be integrated with the local customs rather than just imposing the Western notion. Boele van Hensbroek asserts that liberal democracy may be enhanced by integrating African ideals and institutional structures via the incorporation of local traditions (Boele van Hensbroek, 1999).

In this context, Africa presents a distinctive view of democracy, exemplified by Ujamaa, which, if articulated and developed thoughtfully, has the potential to enhance theories of international relations. "Ujamaa" represents an African interpretation of democracy that emphasizes communalism, engaging in deliberation, consensus building, and reconciling differing perspectives, thereby presenting a challenge to Western liberal democracy (Smith, 2009). Odoom and Andrews assert that the integration of African concepts such as "Ujamaa" into International Relations theory would enhance the discipline's inclusivity and overall quality. Ultimately, the prevailing theories within mainstream international relations are predominantly centered on an individualistic perspective rather than a collective understanding. A significant number of African nations demonstrate numerous characteristics indicative of collectivist cultures. Consequently, mainstream IR theories struggle to encapsulate the collective cultural essence of African societies when viewed through an individualistic perspective. The social, economic, and political realities of Africa provide significant perspectives on the subject matter and theories of international relations.

In addition, David C. Kang, in his paper "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Framework" (2003), argues that "the mainstream International Relations theories do not have the best application into the Asian

countries because the European-derived realist theories, in particular, have difficulty explaining the international relations of Asian countries." (Kang, 2003, p.1). When looking at these theories, one must bear in mind that they were initially designed to resolve the wars and conflicts that would materialize in Europe. This does not mean that the IR theories are, per se, not applicable because they are Euro-centric, but only that they merely cannot apply in the Asian states as functional as it does in Europe because of the differences between these diverse regions of the world. Kang defends this view by holding similar reasoning. He holds that if scholars of the past had to research the Asian side of the world, it would only be to "study subjects considered peripheral such as third-world security or the behavior of small states." However, from there, these Asian countries have altered – India and China in particular - significantly; their economies have surged immensely, and their militaries have grown powerful, all of which combined can outdo Europe with much ease. The differences among these regions should, at no cost, be compromised. It is for the same reason that the IR theory is a hollow scholarship. Consequently, it is imperative for the scholars of contemporary times to either amend or, at worst, not look at Asian international relations from an identical spectacle as issues of the European states.

Moreover, the IR theories of the past do not fit their application to the issues of Asian countries because, throughout history, the IR theories have failed in their predictions about post-Cold War Asia. As the Cold War ended in 1991, scholars in the West, through exerting the realist theory of the IR, thought that states in Asia would plunge into rivalry with one another. According to them, it was unlikely that the Asian countries would reach a peaceful consensus and thus deal with each other cordially. To support their predictions, Western scholars brought up the differences between "political systems, historical animosities, and lack of international institutions" in the region. Therefore, scholars predicted that a return of "power politics" and "arms racing" awaited the Asian states. Also, many scholars predicted that a war over the status of Taiwan and "terrorist attacks from rogue North Korea against South Korea, Japan, or even the United States." would take place. However, three decades later, we see that none of the predictions have taken a concrete form. The Western scholars, in lieu of acknowledging the shortcomings in their scholarship about Asia, evade criticisms and claim that the predictions they made will materialize in the future.

In short, as argued throughout this paper, the predominant traditional IR theories do not apply perfectly in the context of Asian relations. They might apply in European countries, but in Asia, taking into account the differences between the regions, the application of the IR theories has been wrong. This is because, initially, the theories were based on solving the conflicts and other issues in Europe. Along with that, the theories of IR also fail to apply in Asia because historically, the predictions made by the scholars using IR theories have been wrongful, of which the predictions on North and South Korea, power politics, and arms racing are a few examples. Accordingly, when observing Asian subjects, scholars should not use the current IR theories as their primary scholarship (See David C. Kang, 2003).

Amitav Acharya (2004) presents an argument for employing various theoretical tools to comprehend and assess Asia and its security issues. He has remarked that the pessimists are mistaken regarding the future of Asia being "ripe for rivalry" (Kang, 2003). He believes that Asia differs from the West and contends that theories and empirical records ought to be derived from the Asian experience (Acharya, 2004). Incorporating local knowledge and narratives is essential for developing theories related to Asian society. Asians ought to offer insights into the theory of international relations from their unique perspective. Additionally, Acharya asserts that Asian IR has posed a challenge to Western regional institutions by presenting an alternative model of regional institutions in Asia. Theoretical work on Asian IR has also questioned constructivism's 'up-down' narrative regarding the dissemination of ideas. Additionally, the study of Asian International Relations encounters the liberal viewpoint that rising powers globally can be integrated into the American-established global framework. The actions of China and India illustrate a contrasting perspective (Acharya, 2004).

A body of work from Latin America is emerging to critique and enhance Western International Relations Theory. Melisa Deciancio's work "Latin America in Global International Relations" (2021) offers valuable insights into the role of Latin American international relations studies. The author contends that Latin American International Relations has been marginalized within American and Western International Relations frameworks. Additionally, Latin America is regarded as a theory adopter rather than a theory exporter. Deciancio asserts that Latin America

possesses a broader foundation for the study of international relations than other regions outside of Europe. The individuals in the region, including both scholars and practitioners, can be regarded as pioneers in the theory and practice of regionalism. Latin American contributions to International Relations theory are often overlooked. Scholars from Latin America use regionalism to participate in theoretical discussions, contest dominant international relations theories, and formulate alternative frameworks (Acharya, Deciancio & Tussie, 2021).

Non-Western and global IR scholars have contributed to challenging the prevailing mainstream theories in the field. Criticism regarding the limitations of Western International Relations theory is emerging from non-Western regions globally, highlighting discrepancies between the predictions and assumptions of realism, liberalism, and constructivism and the realities of these regions. Despite presenting new and alternative concepts and theories, non-Western International Relations has not yet made significant contributions. This does not imply a lack of scholarly activity; numerous scholars from Asian International Relations and other non-Western regions have developed theories. For example, Yaqing Qin's 'relational theory of world politics' and Andrew Phillips's emphasis on the Indian Ocean are noteworthy contributions.

Yaqing Qin stands as a foundational figure in the Chinese School of International Relations, recognized for his pioneering contributions to the study of international relations within China (Qin, 2007; 2016). Qin's relational theory posits the fundamental importance of social context and actions (Qin, 2016; Acharya, 2017). He posits that "international relations scholars should look beyond rationality and embrace 'relationality' in explaining foreign policy and international behavior and outcomes in a more universal context" (Acharya, 2017, p. 823). Furthermore, he argues that the predominance of rationality in mainstream international relations theories has led to neglect or oversight of the relational aspect. The actors in international relations indeed exhibit relational behaviors. Moreover, he claims that rationality and relationality are not opposing forces but rather serve to enhance one another. State and non-state actors likewise ground their actions in relationships, and it is these relationships that drive the dynamics of the world. Therefore, for theories of international relations to expand their scope and achieve universality moving forward, it is essential to transcend mere rationality and adopt a relational perspective to clarify international behavior, foreign policy, and global outcomes. Qin's relational theory in global politics has originated within the Chinese framework, yet its implications extend far beyond both national and regional boundaries. He asserts that his theory is applicable in the Western context as well. Qin's endeavor seeks not to eliminate the rational dimension but to incorporate his theoretical framework within international relations, thereby enhancing it (Qin, 2016; Acharya, 2017).

A further breakthrough from non-Western international relations that interrogates and contests the overarching metanarratives of the West, presenting a novel analytical framework with broader significance (Buzan, 2007). Andrew Phillips critically examines Western International Relations theories and presents an alternative perspective on the universalization of Westphalian sovereignty, emphasizing the significance of the Indian Ocean (Buzan, 2007; Acharya, 2016). He challenges the idea that Western institutions and norms were disseminated in other parts of the world solely due to the West's superior military capabilities. He characterizes this as a simple exaggeration, contending instead that the Western Powers were compelled to engage in negotiations and adapt to local realities in order to solidify their role and empire. The dynamics of Western imperialism were significantly shaped by the strategic alliances formed by Europeans with indigenous partners, often driven by mutual convenience.

Furthermore, Western powers were compelled to engage in negotiations with local populations to perpetuate their imperial expansion, a process that Phillips referred to as "customization" in terms of negotiation and alliance formation. He asserts that the empire's reliance on indigenous alliances endured throughout the colonial period. Consequently, his analysis thoughtfully reexamines traditional narratives concerning the universalization of the sovereign state system while also presenting the innovative idea of 'customization,' which possesses an analytical value that extends beyond that particular region (Acharya, 2016, p. 4).

In her prolific paper "Heart and Soul for World Politics: Advaita Monism and Daoist Trialectics in IR," L.H.M. Ling discusses the concept of 'epistemic compassion' (Ling, 2018). She contends that five centuries of colonialism and imperialism have eradicated knowledge not only in the 'global south' but also in the 'global north' (p. 2). Ling

asserts that three epistemic limitations hinder International Relations. Firstly, it neglects to consider the extent to which individuals beyond the Westphalian framework grasp the complexities of power and politics. Furthermore, it is unable to draw upon the wisdom of ancient perspectives, including the foundational ideas and principles that have historically propelled those societies forward. Ultimately, it remains unaware of its nature, particularly the complicity of the disciplines with hegemony and the arrogance that accompanies it (Ling, 2017).

As a result, Ling advocates for the community to liberate International Relations through analytical, political, ethical, and spiritual means by embracing epistemic compassion to overcome the Westphalian impasse (Ling, 2018, p. 20). Epistemic compassion encourages us to embrace an open mind and heart when engaging with the diverse perspectives of others. Therefore, this paper, employing Ling's concept, contends that the field of international relations theory and its scholarly community must embrace a form of epistemic compassion when engaging with non-Western perspectives and Global IR. Rather than dismissing the burgeoning intellectual contributions, ideas, and frameworks from non-western areas, immerse yourself in them and integrate their insights. Everyone ought to engage in their manner and according to their own conditions.

4. Afghanistan and IR Theories

In this part of the paper, the flaws of Western International Relations (IR) theories like realism, liberalism, and constructivism are carefully examined by looking at how they apply to Afghanistan. These theories, which are firmly rooted in Western historical settings, frequently overlook Afghanistan's unique sociopolitical realities, which are shaped by tribal frameworks, cultural practices, and informal government institutions (Acharya, 2004; Kang, 2003; Barfield, 2012; Ling, 2018). This part uses studies of non-Western and global international relations to point out the problems with current theories and make the case for a broader and more culturally aware way of understanding world politics.

Realists assert that the state constitutes the primary actor within the structure of foreign and international relations (Morgenthau, 1973; Mearsheimer, 2003; Waltz, 1993; 2018; Heywood, 2014, pp. 53-83; Baylis, Smith, & Owens, Eds., 2020). This concept, originating from the Westphalian model, is incompatible with Afghanistan's decentralized governance structure. In Afghanistan, sub-state entities such as tribal councils, regional leaders, and informal networks wield significant power (Malaquias, 2001; Odoom and Andrews, 2017). As Odoom and Andrews (2017) argue that the effects of the Westphalian state system in Afghanistan mirror those observed in Africa. This model is said to have weakened government and exacerbated divisions among local communities in both places. Traditional methods for resolving disputes in Afghanistan, such as the Loya Jirga, overseen by tribal leaders and influential figures, remain significant (Barfield, 2012). Consequently, realism's emphasis on state autonomy neglects these factors, rendering it an insufficient framework for analyzing Afghan politics.

Furthermore, realism's emphasis on material power, such as military strength and economic resources, overlooks the significant influence of non-material factors in shaping Afghanistan's political climate (Qin, 2016; Acharya, 2017). The resistance of Afghan society to foreign invasions is rooted in its religious beliefs, social norms, and cultural traditions (Barfield, 2010). Yaqing Qin's relational theory emphasizes the significance of connections and social contexts in influencing political outcomes. The interactions among tribal elders, religious leaders, and local communities significantly influence political decisions in Afghanistan. This illustrates the necessity of transcending state-centric and materialist perspectives to comprehend the complexities of Afghan politics (Qin, 2007).

Liberalism is a prominent theory in international relations; however, it encounters similar challenges in elucidating the structural dynamics in Afghanistan (Heywood, 2014, pp. 53-83; Baylis, Smith, & Owens, Eds., 2020). Fukuyama (1989) asserts that liberalism endorses democracy, human rights, and free markets as fundamental principles that should gain universal consensus. Despite this, their use in Afghanistan has frequently resulted in negative consequences. Fukuyama's concept of democracy, emphasizing fair elections and individual rights, is incompatible with Afghanistan's collectivist society and political traditions that prioritize consensus-building (Boele van Hensbroek, 1999). Tribal and ethnic conflicts significantly influence Afghanistan's elections, which frequently suffer from fraud, violence, and questions of legitimacy (Barfield, 2012; Rubin, 2002). Nkiwane (2001)

argues that in Africa, liberal democracy could turn into illiberalism when imposed on societies lacking the historical or cultural foundations necessary to sustain it. In Afghanistan, elections are frequently perceived as instruments of foreign domination rather than genuine reflections of the populace's desires (Saikal, 2012).

Liberalism presents a broader perspective on governance; however, Afghanistan's traditional Loya Jirga exemplifies a governmental structure that is more sensitive to local cultural contexts. Members of this historical institution convene from various tribes and communities to discuss significant issues and reach consensus (Barfield, 2012). The Loya Jirga embodies Afghanistan's collectivist values and facilitates decision-making through consensus. This contrasts significantly with the confrontational characteristics of free democracy in Western societies. Boele van Hensbroek (1999) presents a similar argument within the African context, asserting that the Ujamaa community principles provide an alternative to Western democracy. The Loya Jirga, similar to Ujamaa, rejects the notion that democracy must adhere to Western standards. Incorporating indigenous customs into the study of international relations would enhance the discipline and promote greater acceptance (Odoom and Andrews, 2017).

Constructivism emphasizes the significance of rules, ideas, and personalities in international relations, providing some insights into Afghanistan; however, its applicability is limited in certain contexts. (Wendt, 1999; Heywood, 2014, pp. 53-83; Baylis, Smith, & Owens, Eds, 2020; Acharya, 2004; Ling, 2018). Amitav Acharya (2004) argues that constructivism frequently adopts a "top-down" perspective, emphasizing the dissemination of Western ideals globally while neglecting local narratives. Traditional Afghan values, including *melmastia* (hospitality) and *Pashtunwali* (the tribal code of behavior), play a significant role in daily life and political dynamics in Afghanistan (Spain, 1962; Barfield, 2012; Jones, 2010; Malik, 2016; Devasher, 2022). Constructivist interpretations frequently overlook local values, prioritizing Western-imposed standards such as democracy and human rights.

L.H.M. Ling's concept of "epistemic compassion" emphasizes the significance of engaging with non-Western knowledge systems (Ling, 2018). In Afghanistan, this entails acknowledging and integrating local concepts rather than dismissing them as trivial or inferior. The West encounters challenges when attempting to enforce liberal values, such as equal rights for women and marginalized groups, in Afghanistan (Manchanda, 2020; Rubin, 2002). Constructivism posits that individuals adopt standards via persuasion and socialization; however, it overlooks the significant religious and cultural values that influence Afghan society. Ling's advocacy for "epistemic compassion" is particularly pertinent as it encourages scholars to approach differences with openness and understanding (Ling, 2018).

Nivi Manchanda (2020), critiques the prevalent Orientalist perspective found in Western theories of international relations (Said, 1978). These theories frequently characterize non-Western nations, such as Afghanistan, as underdeveloped or disordered (Manchanda, 2020). She argues that these concepts stem from a Eurocentric perspective that characterizes Afghanistan as a "failed state," neglecting its extensive political history and indigenous governance structures. This narrative endorses foreign intervention as a means to foster civilization, perpetuating a hierarchical relationship between the West and other regions, thereby positioning the West as the singular source of modernity and advancement. These models fail to consider Afghanistan's political motivations and its right to self-determination (Manchanda, 2020).

In addition, Manchanda (2020) examines the influence of colonial concepts on Western theories of international relations. These theories frequently neglect to consider the impact of empire or the historical perception of the "Global South" as a region characterized by conflict and instability (Acharya, 2004; Smith, 2009). Western concepts of governance, such as liberal democracy and centralized statehood, are being applied in Afghanistan due to colonial assumptions that generalize Western experiences while neglecting non-Western alternatives (Manchanda, 2020). This epistemic dominance marginalizes systems such as the Loya Jirga and disregards culturally acceptable alternatives. These omissions perpetuate a limited and prevailing perspective on world politics, rendering Western theories of international relations ineffective in addressing the intricate challenges encountered by postcolonial states such as Afghanistan (Rubin, 2002; Jones, 2010).

Afghanistan's history demonstrates that Western models of international relations are inadequate for predicting political changes in the region. Individuals who believed that centralized governance, democratic institutions, and intervention would ensure stability overlooked the complexities of Afghanistan's tribal politics, local power dynamics, and the resistance to external influence (Barfield, 2012; Kang, 2003). David Kang (2003) identifies comparable shortcomings in Asian contexts, where Western theories of international relations fail to consider local conditions. Andrew Phillips's concept of "customization" challenges Western methodologies by illustrating the collaboration between colonial officials and local groups in altering governance practices (Phillips, 2016). The experiences of Afghanistan challenge the emphasis on the state in realism, the individual in liberalism, and the inadequacy of constructivism in addressing local epistemologies. Incorporating Afghanistan's political customs and cultural practices into international relations theory can enhance the field's accessibility and applicability globally.

5. Locating Loya Jirga and International Relations

Afghanistan's experiences, especially its indigenous governance and conflict resolution methods, highlight the shortcomings of Western international relations theories. These theories exhibit fundamental limitations by neglecting or undervaluing non-Western perspectives, practices, and histories. This underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive, contextualized, decolonized, and pluralistic approach to the study of world politics and international relations (Acharya & Buzan, 2010; Tickner, 2003; Bilgin, 2008). This involves acknowledging and integrating Afghanistan's traditional governance methods, such as the Loya Jirga, which exemplifies decision-making through consensus and is grounded in collectivist traditions. This section of the paper focuses on the concept of 'Loya Jirga' and its potential contributions to IRT for enhancement purposes.

The history of civilization and culture in Afghanistan is rich. It has a rich culture, stories, and experiences that can contribute to and reshape the field of international relations and offer profound lessons (Hopkirk, 1992; Barfield, 2010; Dalrymple, 2013; Elliot, 1999; Crews, 2015; Michener, 1963; Hiebert & Cambon, 2008; Simpson, 2011; Ghobar, 2001; Katin, 1912-1923; Kakar, 1995; Habibi, 2003; Habibi, (N/A)). The idea of the "Loya Jirga" sticks out among these contributions as a crucial case study. The ideas of "Jirga" and "Loya Jirga" have the potential to improve international relations significantly. Jirga refers to a council, and Loya Jirga is a grand council that prioritizes consensus-building, community involvement, and group decision-making (Wardak, 2003; Barfield, 2010; Noelle, 1997). The Afghan people's problems have historically been resolved via the Jirga. Despite its lack of legal authority, it is more effective than Western judicial systems at settling the contradictory and conflicting problems in Afghan society. For example, the people of Afghanistan still choose to use Jirga to resolve their disputes and problems. Put differently, they give Jirga precedence over modern courts. Because the Jirga prioritizes social harmony and reconciliation over conflict and favors consensus, they contend that Western judicial systems are inflexible, rigid, and hostile (UNDP, 2006; Mason, 2011; Torabi, 2011).

Traditionally, Loya jirgas have served as a platform for deliberating and achieving consensus on significant political matters. Proper conceptualization and incorporation of Jirga and Loya Jirga within the discipline of International Relations can enhance their effectiveness. Not all states globally adhere to democratic principles; consequently, many make decisions through consensus and agreement (Wardak, 2003; Torabi, 2011; UNDP, 2006; Barfield, 2010; Mason, 2011; Maley, 2005; Rasanayagam, 2003; Roy, 1985; Sripati, 2020; Noelle, 1997). This paper contends that case studies, experiences, and extensive research from Afghanistan can contribute significantly to the field of International Relations. Theorization in international relations lacks substantial insight into Afghanistan, indicating that an understanding of its cultural, political, and economic contexts should contribute to the development of international relations theory.

Moreover, the idea of Loya Jirga, or 'Grand Council,' has the potential to enhance various theories and branches of international relations. To start, a significant contribution of Loya Jirga to International Relations Theory is its ability to transcend what John Agnew refers to as the 'Territorial Trap.' This concept highlights how mainstream IR theories tend to be overly focused on the state, frequently neglecting the influence of non-state actors and the importance of local customs and institutions (Agnew, 1994). The Loya Jirga incorporates non-state actors into governance and decision-making, facilitating the emergence of hybrid governance. It expands discussions

surrounding governance, state-building, and legitimacy by integrating traditional practices with formal political institutions. Furthermore, Loya Jirga demonstrates how local and ethnic groups can shed light on the ways regional actors impact national politics, contributing to theories regarding ethnic identity and inter-group relations in international relations. It also informs IRT about the influence of local norms, cultures, and practices on global issues like human rights, governance, and conflict resolution (Wardak, 2003).

Loya Jirga exemplifies the integration and promotion of local cultural perspectives in governance and conflict resolution, offering an opposing viewpoint to state-centric and Western-centric views on political structures. This Afghan approach to conflict resolution emphasizes the importance of community consensus in addressing and resolving political challenges and problems. At the same time, it offers perspectives on non-western approaches to mediation and conflict resolution (Wardak, 2003; Torabi, 2011; UNDP, 2006). Loya Jirga embodies a model of participatory governance. Additionally, the Loya Jirga can play a significant role in diplomacy and negotiation by involving and engaging local participants in these processes. Loya Jirga serves as a means of cultural diplomacy, shaping political discourse in significant ways. This can enhance theories concerning diplomacy and soft power, illustrating how cultural practices and identity influence international relations.

Furthermore, it challenges the prevailing concepts of sovereignty and the sources from which legitimacy is obtained. It demonstrates how local customs, institutions, and mechanisms provide authority and governance, as well as how legitimacy is derived in various contexts. In conclusion, Loya Jirga demonstrates the impact of local governance structures on national and international politics (Mason, 2011; Baig, NA).

The Loya Jirga has the potential to enhance significantly international relations theories by making sure that Afghan perspectives are acknowledged while being incorporated into broader geopolitical and global political discussions. The necessity of non-Western IR is apparent. Every location and role in the world holds significance, providing unique contributions that can enhance and deepen the field of International relations. As a result, it is essential to shift away from the prevailing influence of Western and American international relations. The aim of non-western and Global IR is to encourage the IR community to look beyond the dominance of American and Western perspectives in the discipline and to embrace greater diversity by acknowledging the places, roles, and contributions of "non-Western" individuals and societies. The endeavors of non-western scholarships create room for insights, narratives, experiences, values, and norms within the framework of international relations theory.

Additionally, non-Western international relations seek not to replace the current theories and approaches but aim to integrate the theories, experiences, and narratives of non-Western societies to enhance the inclusivity and universality of the discipline. The aim of non-Western perspectives is not to supplant the parochialism of Western International Relations with their own but rather to cultivate a relationship that is overlapping and intertwined between Western and non-Western approaches to International Relations. This paper contends that non-Western international relations provide a platform for those who have been marginalized.

6. Way Forward for the Afghan knowledge (s)

Non-Western international relations can both develop and thrive effectively. However, it is contingent upon specific criteria and factors (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). The non-Western community must evaluate several factors to influence the trajectory of IRT. The establishment of additional publication venues constitutes the initial component in the expansion of the non-Western International Relations project. The project on non-Western International Relations will advance as the publication of books and journals focused on Global and Asian International Relations increases (Acharya, 2014). Significant effort has been expended in this context. Various journals and book series are working to enhance non-Western international relations.

The elimination of methodological and linguistic barriers is a crucial factor in the progress of non-Western International Relations. Developing non-Western International Relations requires the identification or establishment of numerous distinct schools of thought beyond the Western paradigm. Consequently, the establishment of multiple national schools is essential to further the trajectory of non-Western International Relations (Acharya, 2011). It is essential to establish an Indian School of International Relations or a Japanese

School of International Relations, given that the Chinese School of International Relations is already contributing to the field (Behera, 2010; Suzuki, 2008).

Moreover, non-Western international relations experts should refrain from applying mainstream international relations theories to non-Western cases or limiting themselves to the traditional deductive methodology. Researchers should ground their work in local norms, narratives, and experiences (Qin, 2007). Additional cross-national, comparative research with a regional focus is essential for advancing the field of non-Western International Relations. According to Acharya (2014), "Engaging in more comparative, cross-regional work will provide a larger canvass for testing insights from different sub-regions and opportunities for theory development."

Scholarships and academic pursuits ought to remain free from political influence. This suggests that scholars ought to distance themselves from legislators and policymakers. Non-Western International Relations should pursue independent knowledge advancement instead of aligning with politicians and policymakers (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). Acharya (2014) asserts that the first generation of non-Western scholars has played a significant role in enhancing awareness. Second-generation scholars ought to incorporate non-Western or Global South concepts and theories into International Relations to advance the field. Non-western international relations studies ought to possess wide applicability. Efforts emerging in regional or national contexts should possess broader relevance. They should be relevant to other regions and globally, transcending national and regional boundaries. Concepts such as "international society" in Western Europe, "balance of power" in Europe, and "hegemonic stability" in the United States possess wider applicability. These concepts are employed and utilized by scholars globally. Consequently, the challenge facing non-Western International Relations is the formulation of ideas and theories that possess wider applicability.

Thus, in this context, advancing Afghan narratives, discourses, and knowledge in international relations requires more than mere criticism of American and Western hegemony, domination, and biases. Practical and institutional measures must be implemented by Afghan and global international relations scholars and institutions to effect change in the discipline. Acharya argues that Tang advocates for the inclusion of more scholars from the Global South on the editorial boards of ISA journals, a heightened focus on regional studies, encouragement of contributions from non-English speakers, and the acceptance of submissions in languages other than English (Acharya, 2016, p. 9). Editorial boards of reputable journals should incorporate Afghan members. Afghans ought to be allowed to write in their native languages. Furthermore, it is essential to organize specialized workshops aimed at training Afghan scholars alongside critical scholars and relevant platforms. The IR community and critical IR experts should focus on human relations and give greater consideration to local contexts.

Additionally, Afghan intellectuals should enhance their expertise to strengthen and enrich international relations. Afghan scholars should engage in discussions regarding contemporary foreign relations and international affairs. It is essential for them to consistently articulate and disseminate their perspectives on global and international matters and their consequences for Afghanistan. Furthermore, it is essential to establish universities and departments at the national level aimed at promoting Afghan indigenous knowledge and narratives. In India, South Asian University has advanced the objective of promoting knowledge from the global south to enhance international relations theory. Finally, to establish a position within the theory of international relations, Afghan researchers must familiarize themselves with Western genres, writing styles, and textual traditions (Canagarajah, 2002). Afghan scholars should engage in international conferences and conventions to advance Afghan knowledge, customs, narratives, and discourse.

On the theoretical level, Afghan scholars should critically engage with Western meta-narratives, including the US's "hegemonic theory" and Britain's "the expansion of international society," while exploring and articulating diverse interpretations and alternative perspectives (Acharya, 2016, p. 10). Afghan scholars should develop concepts and ideas that hold relevance beyond Afghanistan. The concept of "Loya Jirga," as presented in this work, should be considered generic and applicable beyond the context of Afghanistan. Furthermore, Afghan scholars should strive to create national schools similar to the Chinese model to promote a distinct Afghan perspective, as this could substantially impact the evolution of global International Relations. Barry Buzan asserts that "challenging Western dominance, generating enthusiasm and support for alternatives (as well as popularizing IR

in general as a subject of study), developing alternative and new concepts and approaches to solve problems, and supporting new publications" (Acharya, 2016).

To put it briefly, Afghan scholars should develop concepts and theories rooted in Afghanistan's history and practices to effectively contribute local knowledge to the enhancement of international relations. The development of Afghan conceptions of international relations aims to pluralize existing Western theories rather than replace them (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010). Acharya asserts that "Global IR should not displace but subsume existing IR theories and approaches" (Acharya, 2016, p. 11).

7. Conclusion

Throughout history, state-centric geopolitics has approached, implicated, and remembered Afghanistan. Afghan society, along with its narratives and experiences, has been overlooked and marginalized (Chaturvedi, 2017). Simultaneously, several extensively published studies on Afghanistan encompass all elements of traditional state-centric international relations, identifying the country's primary issues from a Western viewpoint (Manchanda, 2020). Much of the literature has concentrated on the Western perspective of Afghanistan, including Western fears regarding the country, rather than examining how Afghanistan perceives the West or the fears Afghans may have towards it (Embree, 2020). This state-centric and colonial trend persists in 21st-century global politics, with connectivity as the defining theme. Afghanistan is regarded as essential to this connectivity, and a significant body of literature has emerged regarding its geoeconomic benefits for major powers and the surrounding region. All work has been conducted from a Western perspective, integrating aspects of state-centric Western ideology (Gregory, 2004). The available information regarding the Afghan perspective on connectivity is limited. Consequently, numerous imposed theories, ideologies, and systems in Afghanistan have experienced significant failures. No efforts were made to comprehend the significance and aspirations of Afghan society or the potential contributions of Afghanistan to the global community. Afghanistan exemplifies the limitations of traditional international relations theories.

Afghanistan's experiences, particularly its use of the Loyal Jirga, illustrate the limitations of Western theories of international relations and highlight the necessity for a more comprehensive and contextualized approach to the study of world politics. The lessons from the Loya Jirga regarding governance, diplomacy, legitimacy, and conflict resolution challenge prevailing assumptions and provide alternative frameworks for comprehending global politics. Realist concepts prioritize the state and material objects. Non-material factors such as social conventions, cultural practices, and religious views, along with the significant roles of individuals outside the state, are often overlooked. The unique history and culture of non-Western nations are often neglected by the universalist viewpoint of liberalism. While constructivism highlights identities and standards, its Western viewpoint often disrupts and overlooks indigenous knowledge systems. Nivi Manchanda (2020) argues that the colonial and Orientalism frameworks embedded in international relations theories perpetuate a Eurocentric view of global politics, resulting in the misinterpretation and distortion of non-Western civilizations, including Afghanistan.

Therefore, international relations specialists must adopt a pluralistic and decolonized perspective in order to address these core issues. To make their field genuinely global, international relations scholars must embrace intellectual plurality and actively incorporate non-Western perspectives. This entails acknowledging and embracing Afghanistan's ancient systems of governance, such as the Loya Jirga, which demonstrates how choices are reached by consensus and have their roots in collectivist customs. Moreover, relational theories that emphasize the importance of social contexts, such as the relational theory of Yaqing Qin (2007; 2016), offer crucial analytical frameworks for comprehending the functioning of politics in non-Western nations. International relations can develop into a more comprehensive field that appropriately depicts how complex a world that is getting more multipolar and culturally diverse truly is by utilizing these new concepts.

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Balancing Government Influence and Editorial Independence: TVRI's Role in Shaping Media Agendas

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Abstract

Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI), as Indonesia's public broadcaster, plays a crucial role in setting media agendas at both national and regional levels. This study examines how the TVRI balances government influence, editorial independence, and regional priorities. Using a qualitative case study approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders at the TVRI Central Jakarta and regional stations. These findings indicate that TVRI's national agenda aligns with government policies when presidential staff and government ministries heavily influence editorial decisions. While regional TVRI stations hold some autonomy in shaping local narratives, they remain guided by Central Jakarta's national agenda. The relationship between central and regional stations is marked by harmonization, reflecting Indonesia's collectivist culture, yet limiting regional editorial independence. TVRI's agenda setting is shaped by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors, with government priorities often prevailing. This study highlights the challenges that public broadcasters face in maintaining journalistic integrity while adapting to regional contexts.

Keywords: Agenda Setting, Public Broadcaster, Government Influence, Editorial Independence, Regional Priorities, National Agenda, Media Landscape

1. Introduction

The evolution of agenda-setting in television broadcasts has intrigued scholars for decades. It reflects the interaction between media, public, and political agendas, with varying influences across politics, culture, health, economy, crisis communication, and ideology. In politics, strategic efforts by political actors shape the public agenda through issue selection and media relations (Esmark & Mayerhöffer, 2013), indicating that media priorities can influence political priorities (Bahador et al., 2019). In culture and economy, the political economy of the media suggests that content is shaped by economic interests and power structures, with media capitalizing on culture for profit (Imsar, 2022), consistent with the critical political economy approach (Budianto et al., 2023). In health, media coverage of healthcare reform campaigns influences public opinion (Perloff, 2008). In crisis communication, media portrayals of crises shape public perception and responses. Evidence suggests that while

ideology interacts with economic growth, it does not significantly affect economic development or policy choices (Kotzian, 2013).

Recent research has highlighted how politics and economics dominate the media agenda-setting process. Television agenda-setting studies reveal a complex interdependence between media, public, and political agendas, where strategic communication by political actors shapes the public discourse. Economic interests and power structures influence media content, particularly in cultural and ideological contexts. However, the impact of ideology on economic development and policy has been limited (Bahador et al., 2019; Budianto et al., 2023; Esmark & Mayerhöffer, 2013; Imsar, 2022; Kotzian, 2013; Perloff, 2008).

Beyond politics and economics, media agenda-setting extends to public health, where governments and public broadcasters play a crucial role in disseminating information. This was evident during the crisis when public broadcasters helped the public acquire essential health-related knowledge (Shah et al., 2012). Consequently, along with public broadcasting entities, the government must inform the public of national health policy. The government's role in shaping public health discourse goes beyond the mere dissemination of information (Njelesani, 2025). Government involvement in public health communication often intersects broader media policies, leading to varying degrees of media intervention and control.

The government is responsible for communicating public health issues such as COVID-19. Recommended communication strategies for the pandemic include crisis communication for public engagement, two-way communication between the public and government, cooperative approaches, fostering public trust, and promoting transparency and citizen involvement for sustainable behaviour (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). The relationship between the government as a policymaker and the media industry indicates cooptation in which government intervention in the media is expected. Policy transformations that lead to domination threaten journalism's institutional changes. The media frequently maintain harmony with the government, often through telephone communication that conveys governmental "pressure" to balance media agendas (Pawito, 2002). This harmonization forms the foundation for public broadcasting in government-media relations. This alignment between the government and media also extends to managing information crises, such as infodemics during the COVID-19 pandemic, where controlling misinformation becomes a strategic necessity.

Infodemic management has posed a major challenge in government-media relations during COVID-19, as disinformation undermines public trust and policy effectiveness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, media agencies have focused on the infodemic, often perceived as disinformation, posing risks if accepted by the public. Disinformation in infodemics reflects systemic issues within the media infrastructure, requiring decentralization and stricter regulations (Bechmann, 2020). Social media exacerbates disinformation through algorithms, human factors, and political incentives (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020). Public broadcasters must validate information through editorial gatekeeping to ensure transparency and combat misinformation. In light of these obstacles, public broadcasters need to improve their methods to provide the public with accurate and understandable health information, in addition to combating misinformation.

To address these concerns, media outlets have adapted their health communication strategies to ensure that public health narratives remain informative and credible during crises. Health information disseminated by the media through news stories and narratives aids public comprehension of health crises, such as pandemics (Davis et al., 2020). Germany's public broadcasting programs are unique because of institutional factors and the economic robustness of organizations (Meier, 2003). Public broadcasting is shaped by public information needs and television market demand; the public's need for health information is notably high, leading news media to transform messages into persuasive narratives. The 2009 pandemic news exemplifies a prompt response to public health issues (Davis & Lohm, 2020). The pandemic necessitated adjustments to program production, emotional content, and remote journalism technology (Túñez-López et al., 2020). However, despite adapting their health communication strategies, media outlets were also influenced by political and institutional agendas in shaping public perception during the pandemic.

Media framing and reporting align with the agendas of the government and the media to handle issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. To maintain control, those in power often adjust media narratives subtly (Masduki, 2021). Consequently, the media conveys public messages that align with governmental agendas, reinforcing a balanced relationship between government, media, and society. In this context, television broadcasts are crucial for shaping public opinion and perceptions of national and global issues. Its agenda-setting function is evident in prioritizing specific topics and influencing public views on what is essential. The impact of this role depends on the nature of the media coverage and the issues being reported. The cumulative media portrayal of public awareness and the stereotypical representation of issues further highlights the agenda-setting effects of television (Tran & Diep, 2024). This manipulation of media narratives further highlights the power of television in shaping public discourse, making it imperative to examine how agenda-setting in public broadcasters influences societal perception and policy direction.

Previous research has shown that television broadcasts can significantly affect the public's perception of important issues and events. Television broadcasts have a significant impact on shaping public perception of various topics and events. Existing knowledge indicates that television plays a crucial role as a medium in informing the public and influencing their views (Weissmann & Tyrrell, 2025). Examining media agenda-setting in public broadcasters is essential for shaping national discourse, guiding public perceptions, and influencing policy decisions (Happer & Philo, 2013). The role of public media, such as TVRI, becomes even more critical during crises, when the balance between independent journalism and government influence determines the quality of public information. Given the significant influence of public broadcasters in shaping national discourse, it is essential to examine how TVRI, Indonesia's state-owned television network, navigated different political eras while maintaining its role in media agenda-setting. However, as a public broadcaster, TVRI faces ongoing challenges in balancing its national mandate with regional diversity, which affects its ability to implement agenda-setting strategies effectively.

Building upon this discussion, TVRI must navigate the challenge of balancing national and regional broadcasting while addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in development communication. As a public broadcaster, TVRI serves both national and regional audiences, using Indonesian and local languages for development communication (Sen, 2003). The public television broadcasting institution of the Republic of Indonesia (TVRI) provides service information, entertainment, and social control, and preserves the nation's culture (Janah & Mayesti, 2020). Despite expectations of reform, little progress has been made in TVRI management. Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) experienced heavy broadcast management during an authoritarian regime that inhibited internal bureaucracy (Pradhana et al., 2024). Thus, researchers aim to examine TVRI's media agenda across multiple cases, focusing on the agenda-setting role of public television broadcasting at the national and regional levels.

Understanding these challenges requires an examination of TVRI's historical role and how its institutional structure evolved over time. This study explores TVRI's evolving role in media agenda-setting and its historical adherence to developmental ideology (Hollander et al., 2009). In Indonesia, TVRI has a long history as a public broadcasting institution that has evolved under various political systems. Since its establishment in 1962, TVRI has transformed from a state propaganda tool to a government-owned enterprise with the status of a public broadcaster (Kitley, 2003). Despite its transformation, TVRI continues to face challenges in maintaining editorial independence, while balancing national and regional interests.

While many studies have examined media agenda-setting, limited research has explored how TVRI balances national and regional agendas in Indonesia's public broadcasting system. Thus, this study aims to analyze TVRI's role in agenda-setting and how it accommodates both the government and public interests in shaping national and regional discourse. Building on this research gap, this study sought to address the following key questions:

- (1) How does TVRI navigate its agenda-setting function in Indonesia's public media landscape?
- (2) To what extent does the TVRI reconcile national and regional priorities in public broadcasting?

2. Method

2.1. Study Design

This study employs an explanatory qualitative case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Yin, 2014) to examine how TVRI, as a public broadcaster, sets the media agenda at both national and regional levels. TVRI was selected as the research subject because of its strategic role as Indonesia's public broadcaster and mandated to serve both national and regional audiences, making it a crucial case for understanding agenda-setting dynamics in public media institutions.

This study investigated two distinct levels within TVRI broadcasting systems:

1. National Level: Media agenda-setting process at TVRI Central Jakarta.
2. Regional Level: The agenda-setting strategies of the TVRI Regional Stations.

To explore these cases, data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at TVRI Central Jakarta, TVRI Regional West Java, TVRI Regional Central Java, and TVRI Regional North Sumatra. A literature review of media agenda-setting in public broadcasting institutions was also conducted to provide a theoretical framework for this research.

2.2. Participant

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that informants had direct experience in setting the media agenda at TVRI. The interviews aimed to gain insights into the decision-making process in setting the media agenda. Only participants directly involved in agenda-setting were included in this study. The key informants for this study are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: List of Informant

Key Informant	TVRI Station Location	Position Title
Informant-1	TVRI Central Jakarta	Director of News
Informant-2	TVRI Central Jakarta	Editor-in-Chief
Informant-3	TVRI Central Jakarta	News Coverage Coordinator
Informant-4	TVRI Regional Central Java	Regional News Director
Informant-5	TVRI Regional West Java	Regional News Director
Informant-6	TVRI Regional North Sumatra	Regional News Director

Interviews were guided by an unstructured questionnaire to provide flexibility while ensuring that key editorial decisions and agenda-setting strategies were thoroughly explored. The interview questions were designed to uncover the rationale behind content selections, prioritization, and the broader impact of these choices on public perception.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Data collection for this study was conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at TVRI Central Jakarta, TVRI Regional West Java, TVRI Regional Central Java, and TVRI Regional North Sumatra. The interviews were designed to explore agenda-setting strategies and decision-making processes in TVRI's national and regional media. Additionally, a literature review on media agenda-setting in public broadcasting institutions was conducted to establish a theoretical framework.

The collected interview data were analyzed using a qualitative approach to examine how TVRI sets agendas related to media, policy agendas, and public discourse. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022) was applied to identify key themes in the agenda-setting process, following these six structured phases:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Data triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the research. It involves cross-verifying the interview findings with other sources, such as internal documents, broadcast content, and external media coverage. The triangulation process helped to confirm the consistency and accuracy of the themes identified. No statistical analysis was performed in this research.

The appropriate ethics committee approved the research. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews. The confidentiality of the respondents was maintained by anonymizing their identities in published findings. The research followed the institution's ethical standards and relevant regulatory bodies.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses was assured. They were also told that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous.

3. Results and Discussion

TVRI, as a public broadcasting institution, sets agendas at both national and regional levels. The findings are categorized into three main themes: TVRI's National Agenda, TVRI's Regional Agenda, and the Dynamics of National-Regional Harmonization.

This study explores how TVRI aligns its national agenda with government policies, the degree of autonomy held by regional TVRI stations in shaping local media narratives, and the negotiation process between national and regional levels to maintain harmonization in public broadcasting. By analyzing these dimensions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how TVRI balances centralized control with regional adaptations in its media agenda-setting practices.

To begin with, this section examines TVRI's role in setting the national media agenda, focusing on how government institutions influence TVRI's editorial priorities and content strategies.

3.1. TVRI agenda-setting at National Levels

TVRI integrates media agencies from the government ministries and presidential institutions. The presidential staff determines the social, economic, cultural, health, and security policies that shape TVRI's media agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, presidential staff played a key role in managing public health communications, ensuring that TVRI actively disseminated government messages.

When the government introduced the COVID-19 vaccine, the TVRI was instrumental in amplifying its role in vaccine procurement, distribution, and public engagement. This top-down agenda-setting process originates from presidential staff directives, extends to TVRI's editorial leadership, and is executed through 30 regional stations. The integration of vaccination campaigns into the TVRI's media agenda is an example of how government institutions influence public broadcasting in Indonesia. This reflects a broader pattern of government intervention in shaping the media landscape, particularly in times of crises. Regarding the media agenda on handling the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly vaccine dissemination, the presidential staff exercised a significant influence over TVRI's coverage, ensuring the promotion of vaccination programs. This represents a form of government

intervention in media operations that affects how community organizations and stakeholders respond to policy adoption requests (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

Government-led media interventions during crises are not unique to Indonesia. Similar patterns have been observed in Canada, Australia, and England, where public broadcasters have played a key role in supporting governmental health campaigns (Meese, 2021). However, publishers of public television are generally advised to maintain editorial independence and resist political interference (Meier, 2003). In Indonesia, such resistance is rare, as government involvement in the media is perceived as essential for ensuring the dissemination of verified information and countering misinformation (Bechmann, 2020). Media narratives and storytelling serve as powerful tools for shaping public support for government action (Davis et al., 2020; Davis & Lohm, 2020). Thus, TVRI's alignment of TVRI with government directives in vaccine communication illustrates how public broadcasting functions within a media ecosystem that is shaped by state influence.

However, the government's strong influence on TVRI does not necessarily translate into balanced media coverage, particularly in scientific reporting. Despite the low representation of scientific sources in the media, the government leveraged TVRI's media agenda to garner public support for its health policies. This contrasts with Western media, in which health-related media agendas influence health policies (Tong et al., 2008). Media agendas that focus on health topics can deter harmful behaviors (Webb et al., 2021). The success of public television in promoting health issues relies on both government and societal support (Shah et al. 2012). Health-related media agendas significantly impact community engagement in healthy behaviors (Koivula et al., 2023). Thus, Indonesia's television media strategy reflects a global agenda adapted at the national level, with western media influence evident on Asian television (Shrikhande, 1999, 2001, 2004).

Since the government plays a significant role in shaping the TVRI's media agenda, the selection of news sources is also heavily influenced by state priorities. The primary sources include the President, Presidential Spokesperson, Ministers, Governors, and Mayors. Government sources are essential for clarifying National and Regional matters and preventing disinformation. Concerns arise when sources are observers or legislators. Thus, Central TVRI aligns with the government agenda by including it in the Agenda of TVRI Jakarta and regional stations.

" Public agendas and issues must be managed through media agendas. Therefore, government sources become a place to clarify national and regional issues", Informant 3.

This statement highlights the critical role of government sources not only in shaping news narratives but also in structuring internal editorial decisions within TVRI. The reliance on government sources extends beyond mere reporting; it directly influences how media agendas are developed, discussed, and implemented across the TVRI's national and regional networks. Supported by 30 regional stations, Central TVRI effectively manages the media agenda under close supervision. Every Friday, a meeting is convened in which 30 regional station heads discuss and set a media agenda for the upcoming week. Regional TVRIs align with the Central TVRI to adjust and harmonize their editorial priorities (although not necessarily through direct intervention). This collaborative process ensures a unified media agenda while allowing for some degree of regional adaptation.

The impact of editorial coordination extends beyond agenda-setting meetings, shaping the structure and thematic focus of media production at the regional level. Central TVRI establishes a content framework that guides the production of feature news programs, which regional stations are required to produce monthly. These programs include various formats, such as straight news, investigative reports, and human-interest stories, aligned with Central TVRI's strategic vision. Although regional stations have the opportunity to propose their own news agendas, particularly in response to crises or local issues, the final editorial direction remains subject to approval by the national editorial board. The consultation process between Central and Regional TVRI emphasizes coordination and negotiation; however, in practice, regional autonomy remains constrained by the overarching national media agenda.

This structured alignment between the Central and Regional TVRI reflects a broader effort to maintain national coherence in public broadcasting, ensuring that regional stations contribute to a unified media narrative. However,

this process is not merely administrative but also cultural. The coordination between Regional TVRIs and Central TVRI for broadcasting involves adjusting and harmonizing content, often with minimal negotiation, to align it with Central TVRI's national media agenda. This cooperation reflects deeply ingrained sociocultural values in Indonesian media governance. The practice of harmonization within TVRI's editorial structure aligns with Javanese cultural ethics, particularly the principles of *sepi ing pamrih and rame ing gawe* (Suseno, 1984), which emphasize collectivism, conflict avoidance, and mutual cooperation. These values shape editorial decision-making processes and reinforce the idea that regional editorial autonomy must be exercised within the boundaries of national unity.

While this editorial harmonization ensures national unity, it also imposes certain constraints on the autonomy of regional TVRI Stations. Consequently, the extent to which regional stations can develop independent programming remains limited under the directives of Central TVRI Jakarta. Regional TVRIs can broadcast regional information and entertainment, including local events, the arts, and cultural features. However, their policies are primarily guided by Central TVRI Jakarta's directives, allowing limited consultative involvement in setting media agendas at both central and regional levels.

"Well, for regional issues on routine broadcasts, I often hand them over to field heads in the regions. However, we ask for a national conditional alignment" (Informant 1, interview with the author).

This structured approach results in a clear division of roles between central and regional TVRI, where national and regional media agendas are distinctly managed under the overarching framework established by Central TVRI. The central TVRI sets the national agenda, whereas the Regional TVRI sets the regional agenda (agenda-setting autonomy). The regional media agenda emphasizes the daily activities of regional government heads. There appears to be a distinct division: Central TVRI focuses on the Head of State's agenda, and Regional TVRI on the Regional Head's agenda. Regional TVRI integrates cultural aspects based on local wisdom, such as Sundanese culture in West Java, by broadcasting features and documentaries on regional culture and wisdom.

While this structured division ensures coordination, it also raises concerns regarding the extent of editorial independence at both national and regional levels. The degree to which media agendas are influenced by external actors, such as government officials and corporate elites, is crucial for understanding the broader dynamics of agenda-setting. The agenda can be curtailed if sponsors, particularly elites, exert pressure to exclude specific issues (Vargo & Amazeen, 2021). However, researchers have identified central government officials, expert staff, and regional government officials as elites capable of influencing the media. Consequently, government officials often serve as primary sources of news.

This pattern of influence extends beyond Indonesia and is evident in global media practices where agenda-setting is often manipulated through agenda-cutting techniques to control public narratives. Agenda-cutting involves three stages: burying the issue, removing unfavorable topics, and ignoring the subject (Colistra, 2012). However, Colistra (2012) omitted the fourth stage, thus shifting the problem. This research complements it by adding a fourth step, namely shifting problems on the agenda-cutting. Agenda-cutting involves burying, solving, ignoring, and directing the issues. This practice is prevalent in global industrial media, such as the European media, promoting a halt in palm oil imports because of concerns about deforestation, wildlife threats, child labor exploitation, and environmental pollution (Enh et al., 2022). Global media often engage in agenda-cutting to safeguard global interest.

Similarly, in Indonesia, public broadcasting institutions, such as TVRI, play a crucial role in agenda-setting and are often influenced by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors. Table 2 summarizes the key elements influencing TVRI's agenda-setting process and their impact on national and regional media landscapes.

Table 2: TVRI Agenda Setting Influencing the Media Agenda at National and Regional Levels

Category	Aspect	Factors	Details
Influencing Media agenda	Cultural Influence	Javanese cultural values	particularly the hierarchical structure and authority of leader
	Political Influence	Government and elite agendas	Government and elites agendas shape the media agenda, especially through close relations with bureaucrats and government officials.
	Economic influence	Economic Interest	Promoting national economic policies and products, influence media content
	Technological influence	Uses of technology	Communication and coordination

Source: Processing the result of interviews with the informants in Indonesia.

As a public broadcasting institution, TVRI's media agenda is shaped by multiple interrelated factors including cultural, political, economic, and technological influences. These factors not only determine the content and framing of news but also influence the extent to which TVRI maintains editorial independence while aligning with national and regional priorities. Table 1 summarizes the primary aspects that influence TVRI's agenda-setting process in the Indonesian media landscape. Among these factors, cultural influences, particularly Javanese hierarchical structures, play a fundamental role in shaping editorial decision-making within TVRI.

Cultural values play a crucial role in shaping editorial decision-making within the TVRI. The Javanese hierarchical structure significantly impacts how leadership within TVRI determines and disseminates media content. In Javanese culture, obedience and respect for authority are embedded in governance structures (Suseno 1984). These cultural norms translate into a centralized media agenda, where regional stations defer Central TVRI in determining editorial priorities. This cultural framework influences not only organizational decision-making but also how TVRI navigates media-government relations, ensuring that harmonization is prioritized over editorial autonomy.

This hierarchical structure also align with the broader political framework in which TVRI operates, where state control plays a central role in shaping its media agenda. Given that TVRI operates as a state-owned entity, government priorities often influence its editorial policies. Bureaucratic structures and political elites maintain strong oversight of TVRI's content, particularly concerning issues of national development, public policy, and state-driven narratives. As a result, political actors, including government officials and bureaucrats, play a decisive role in agenda-setting. This aligns with previous studies indicating that state-owned broadcasters often function as vehicles for policy communication rather than as independent journalistic institutions (Meier, 2003; Vargo & Amazeen, 2021).

Beyond political influence, the state's control over TVRI extends into economic priorities, shaping its media agenda to align with the national development goals. The economic dimension of media agenda-setting within TVRI is closely linked to national economic policies and industry interests. Government-driven economic agendas such as infrastructure projects, national investment campaigns, and domestic industry promotions frequently dominate TVRI's content strategy. This dynamic is consistent with global patterns in which state-owned media promotes economic priorities aligned with national policy objectives (Enh et al., 2022). While this contributes to economic messaging, it also raises concerns regarding the limited representation of alternative economic perspectives, particularly from civil society groups and independent business actors.

In addition to economic priorities, technological advancements play a crucial role in shaping TVRI's agenda-setting process. Advancements in media technology significantly affect TVRI's coordination and broadcasting strategies at both national and regional levels. The integration of digital platforms, enhanced communication channels, and data-driven audience engagement has enabled better alignment between Central and Regional TVRI stations. However, disparities in technological infrastructure between urban and rural regions present challenges to maintaining consistent and equitable information dissemination. The role of technological mediation in agenda-setting is increasingly being recognized as a critical factor in determining the reach, accessibility, and content diversity of public broadcasting institutions (Koivula et al., 2023).

Beyond shaping agenda-setting strategies, these technological advancements have transformed daily journalism practices at TVRI. The TVRI Jakarta Center employs communication technologies, such as Zoom and YouTube live streaming, to gather information from central and regional government sources. The journalists shifted from direct interviews to the use of these technologies for broadcasting press conferences. Information management at TVRI involves program division, documentation, library division, and Information Technology division (Janah & Mayesti, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote journalism by utilizing communication technology (Túñez-López et al., 2020). However, some journalists criticize this shift for reducing personal interactions and the depth of relationships with sources.

"The impact of communication technology in finding and extracting information from sources has reduced the intensity of meetings between journalists and sources. So that personal closeness is reduced and sometimes between sources and journalists do not know each other", Informant 2.

While technological changes have reshaped journalistic practices, they have also reinforced centralized control over TVRI's editorial decisions. The findings highlight a critical tension between state influence and editorial independence within TVRI's agenda-setting framework. While harmonization between the national and regional levels facilitates a coherent public broadcasting strategy, it simultaneously limits the editorial autonomy of regional stations. The overarching control exercised by the Central TVRI ensures compliance with national directives but also restricts the capacity of regional stations to shape locally relevant narratives independently. This reflects broader concerns regarding the role of public broadcasters in balancing state priorities with journalistic integrity (Colistra, 2012; Webb et al. 2021).

In summary, TVRI's media agenda-setting is structured around five main influences: the government, politics, economy, culture, and technology. While government intervention remains the most dominant factor, economic and technological advancements also contribute to shaping the TVRI's content strategy. Figure 1 visually represents these interdependencies and demonstrates how each factor contributes to the overall agenda-setting process within the TVRI.

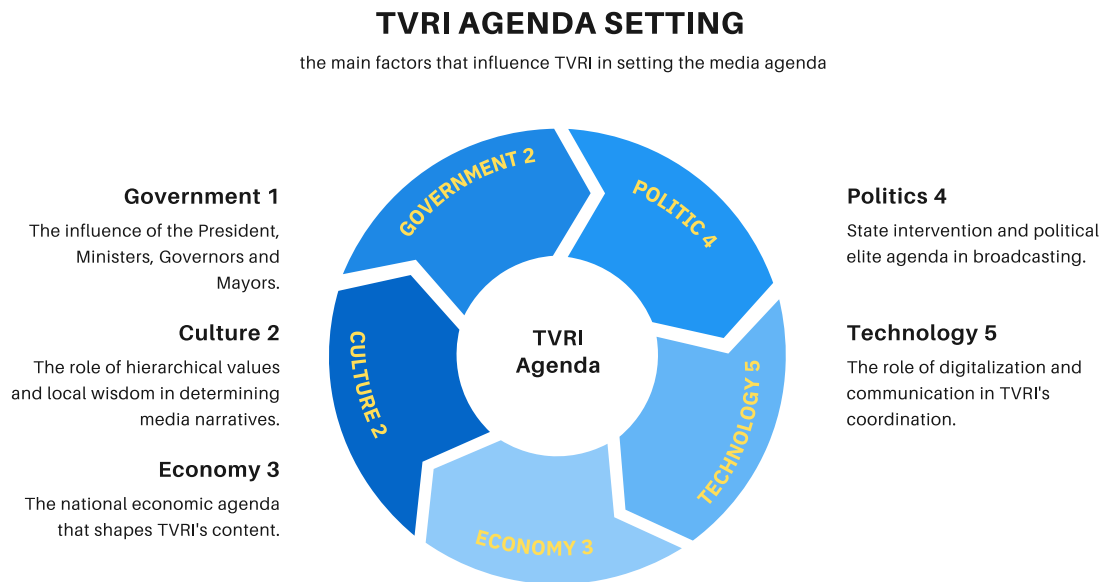


Figure 1: TVRI Agenda Setting: the main factors that influence TVRI in setting the media agenda

3.2. TVRI agenda-setting at regional levels

TVRI coordinates with governors, mayors, regents, and regional secretaries to shape the regional media agenda. Meetings with various regional officials provide the most recent information on the regional situation. The TVRI Director liaises with relevant regional officials, after which the central editorial team dispatches a team to the area. This top-down coordination with local governments determines news coverage. TVRI's advantage as a public television platform lies in the rapid collection of information and interviews with government sources. Central editorial staff prioritize swift access to information from news sources, facilitating faster news publication and communication between TVRI and regional governments across all leadership levels.

A notable example of this regional agenda-setting process can be observed in TVRI Central Java. TVRI Central Java sets the agenda at the regional level by facilitating government communication, explicitly focusing on the performance of the Central Java Province head, which directly affects the public. The Governor of Central Java can address the current issues of public interest in TVRI broadcasts. Important regional figures, such as the governor, feature as resource persons in news packages and talk show dialogues. TVRI's agenda setting for the region involves three steps: first, the Governor's team communicates the agenda to the Communication and Informatics Office of Central Java; second, this office relays the information to TVRI Central Java; third, the Communication and Informatics Office ensures that the Governor's agenda aligns with both Regional and Central TVRI agendas.

This structured process highlights the institutional mechanisms through which regional agenda setting occurs within TVRI. Official communication teams play a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of information between local governments and media institutions. As described by Informant 4:

"The governor has a communication team that provides information about the Central Java governor's agenda to TVRI Central Java through the Central Java Information Communication Office."

At a broader level, TVRI operates through two interconnected agenda-setting frameworks, one at the national level and the other at the regional level. National-level agenda-setting aligns with government policies and national priorities, such as managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, regional-level agenda-setting is more localized,

addressing region-specific issues such as floods and earthquakes. Despite these distinctions, both frameworks are closely integrated, ensuring regional coverage remains aligned with national broadcasting strategies.

A notable example of regional agenda-setting can be seen in TVRI Central Java, which demonstrates how local adaptation aligns with national broadcasting strategies. To establish regional agenda setting, TVRI Central Java gathered input from various stakeholders, including academics, bureaucrats, and cultural experts. By incorporating these perspectives, the station ensures that its content resonates with both government priorities and local cultural values.

The integration of bureaucratic and cultural elements is a distinctive feature of the TVRI Central Java broadcasting model. A practical example is the "patlikuran" broadcast packages via live streaming, which include a digital "kenduri." Kenduri, a traditional Javanese ceremony for communal prayers, exemplifies TVRI Central Java's strategy to blend public television broadcasting with popular culture.

This programme serves as a platform for direct engagement between government officials and the public, reinforcing TVRI's role as a mediator of national and regional discourse. As informant 4 explains:

"The Patlikuran television broadcast package is a digital broadcast with Digital Kenduri as one of its programs. Digital kenduri presents a dialogue with speakers such as governors, ministers of state, and public figures."

TVRI's role as a public broadcaster extends beyond Central Java with a structured digital broadcasting system consisting of four channels. Channel 1 is dedicated to national broadcasts, Channel 2 to regional broadcasts, Channel 3 to cultural programming, and Channel 4 to sports. TVRI Central Java uses Channel 2 to cover cultural, political, social, and security topics. This programming strategy ensures that regional content remains relevant while still aligning with the national broadcasting priorities.

Despite the significance of regional programming, challenges regarding airtime allocation remain. Channel 2 currently airs regional broadcasts for only four hours daily under the management of TVRI National. Researchers suggest increasing this duration to six hours to better serve the public interest, as TVRI Central Java requires more airtime to accommodate viewer demands. The continued use of local languages in regional broadcasts mirrors the practices of the New Order era (Sen, 2003), highlighting the persistence of localized broadcasting traditions within Indonesia's media landscape.

While Channel 2 operates under centralized control, the regional TVRI stations maintain a degree of autonomy in producing localized content. These stations are responsible for addressing region-specific issues and ensuring that programming resonates with the local audience. For instance, TVRI West Java has utilized regional news slots to focus on issues relevant to West Java, incorporating native languages to enhance viewer engagement.

"News broadcasts of West Java special issues on TVRI West Java use Sundanese language called kalawarta news package" (Informant 5, Interview with the author).

Beyond news programming, TVRI West Java integrates Sundanese cultural elements into its broadcasting strategy. Regional culture significantly influences the organization of entertainment broadcasts by incorporating Sundanese artists and cultural narratives. As the native culture of West Java Province in Indonesia, Sundanese traditions are prominently featured in TVRI's public forums and talk-show formats. These programs invited prominent West Java figures, Sundanese artists, and community leaders to discuss public issues and government policies in the province. To maintain cultural authenticity and ensure accessibility, these discussions were primarily conducted in Sundanese.

In addition to cultural programming, TVRI West Java serves as a crucial platform for regional news and national information dissemination. The station operates a daily 4-hour slot featuring West Java news, talk shows, and entertainment. Regional news covers current issues such as COVID-19 management and natural disasters, ensuring

that local perspectives are included in broader national discussions. TVRI West Java contributes to national news programs by providing regional content for TVRI National broadcasts and strengthening the integration of local and national narratives.

To maintain consistency across the network, TVRI National coordinates with Regional TVRI through weekly editorial meetings. These meetings determine the overarching agenda that Regional TVRI stations follow, particularly concerning national issues. While regional stations retain some autonomy in setting their local agenda, they must align with the TVRI National's perspective when covering overlapping topics. This balance between centralized and decentralized agenda-setting reflects TVRI's dual role as a national and regional public broadcaster.

One example of this agenda-setting process at the regional level is TVRI North Sumatra. The station prioritizes government-driven agendas at the local level, particularly those set by governors, mayors, and the COVID-19 task force units. In North Sumatra, 32 regional leaders from various regencies and cities play a role in shaping TVRI's regional media agenda. This reflects how TVRI North Sumatra integrated local administrative priorities into its broadcasting strategy.

Additionally, national-level agenda-setting, such as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, was adapted to the regional context. TVRI North Sumatra aligns its messaging with the central TVRI agenda to encourage public participation in the national vaccination program. Along with public health messaging, regional cultural content remains an integral part of North Sumatra's programming. The station incorporates local cultural elements and highlights influential regional figures to inspire the community and maintain its engagement with its audience.

"We TVRI North Sumatra, as Public Television, has a regional agenda setting, namely the government agenda at the regional level of North Sumatra Province with aspects of government administration, entertainment, education and culture" Informant 6.

This regional focus reflects TVRI's broader strategy of integrating cultural heritage into its broadcasting model. While TVRI has successfully incorporated regional and remote cultural narratives into its programming, there has been ongoing skepticism from the international community regarding the effectiveness of TVRI's role in promoting a local cultural identity (Hollander et al., 2009).

Public trust in government-affiliated television has fluctuated globally, particularly in nations in which state-owned broadcasters dominate news dissemination. In some cases, audience skepticism stems from limited educational outreach and a perceived political bias (Min et al., 2020). However, the credibility of the TVRI in Indonesia has been maintained by integrating local cultural themes and addressing regional priorities. This adaptability has helped TVRI sustain public trust, despite broader concerns about the reliability of government-affiliated media outlets.

In summary, TVRI's agenda-setting process operates through centralized coordination with regional flexibility. While TVRI Central Jakarta sets an overarching national media agenda, regional stations modify content to address local concerns while remaining aligned with national directives. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 2, which demonstrates the structured relationship between national and regional TVRI agenda-setting processes.



Figure 2: Regional Agenda Relationship between TVRI Central and TVRI Regional Agenda

4. Conclusion

TVRI, Indonesia's public broadcaster, plays a crucial role in setting media agendas at both national and regional levels. This study explores how TVRI navigates its agenda-setting function by balancing government influence, editorial independence, and regional priorities. At the national level, TVRI's agenda is closely aligned with government policies, particularly during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The presidential staff and government ministries significantly influenced the TVRI editorial decisions and content strategies. Regional TVRI stations have some autonomy in shaping local narratives but are ultimately guided by TVRI Central Jakarta's national agenda. The relationship between central and regional stations is characterized by a process of harmonization, reflecting Indonesia's cultural values of collectivism and cooperation. However, this centralized structure also limits the editorial independence of regional stations. TVRI's agenda-setting is influenced by cultural, political, economic, and technological factors, with government priorities often taking precedence over alternative perspectives. This study highlights the challenges faced by public broadcasters in maintaining journalistic integrity while navigating state influence and the need to adapt to regional contexts.

5. Limitations

While this study examines agenda-setting processes within the TVRI, it does not assess public reception and trust. Future research should incorporate audience perception studies to evaluate whether TVRI's media agenda influences public opinion and maintains its credibility, particularly in regions with diverse political and cultural landscapes.

To address these limitations, future research should conduct audience-perception studies to assess TVRI's credibility and the impact of its agenda-setting strategies on public trust.

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Searching for Charisma Authenticity in the Weberian Charisma: A Radical View

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Abstract

This article focuses on reinterpreting charisma as not solely an inherent trait of individuals, as Max Weber theorized, but rather as a dynamic and reciprocal relationship that emerges within specific social structures. It emphasizes the importance of social interaction and mutual complementarity in the emergence of charisma. This study adopts a literature review methodology to explore the concept of charisma. Using poststructuralist discourse perspective, this article challenges traditional understandings of charisma and aims to contribute to its further development within social construction. On the other hand, this also offers a radical perspective that interrogates established notions of charismatic authority and examines how authenticity influences the construction and maintenance of charismatic hegemony. This article seeks to uncover the nuances of charisma authenticity and advocates for a reevaluation of conventional paradigms within Weberian charisma hegemony. Consequently, this research hopes to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of charisma and its role in shaping power dynamics and social order.

Keywords: Weberians Charisma, Reciprocal, Authenticity, Poststructural Discourses, Root of Charisma, Hegemony

1. Introduction

Charisma, as theorized by Max Weber (1864-1920), is a term that has exerted influence far beyond the discipline in which the concept first appeared. The use of the term "charisma" has expanded not only in political studies, exploring the authority and legitimacy of power, but it has also found application in various other disciplines, including theology, sociology, anthropology, management, leadership, and even psychology. The widespread influence of the charisma concept spans all these disciplines, leading many scientists to conduct empirical and theoretical studies to study and interpret this concept. In Weber's work "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft," charisma is introduced as a central concept in the theory of domination within a power authority, where a person is obeyed based on a belief in the legitimacy of their right to influence (Joosse, 2017).

Political scientists and sociologists have spent decades researching this phenomenon. Since the 1960s, the term charisma has increasingly been used to refer to the contemporary understanding of charisma as a special innate personal quality that distinguishes certain individuals from others and attracts others to them. The articulation of the meaning of Weberian charisma seems to be considered normal and given when the concept is mentioned and used. Charisma is regularly accepted as the quality of an extraordinary individual, a superpowered individual, a superhuman with capacities not shared by others. The common usage in the second half of the twentieth century was directly caused by the spread of interest in Weber's theory.

Contemporary research in the last five years shows that the charisma phenomenon continues to develop with various study aspects, such as the study of non-verbal communication on charisma (Pauser, 2018; Keating, 2020), neuroscience of charisma (Schjoedt, 2011; Wang, 2019), gender and charisma (Chin, 2020; Joosse and Willey, 2020), the dark side of charisma (Fragouli, 2018; Zhang, et al., 2020; Masyhuri, 2022), charisma in sport (Delaney, 2020), charisma of fruit (Moubayed, 2023), and discourse of charisma (Wright, 2020) are studies of interest to researchers with many aspects being studied. Unfortunately, many theoretical approaches to charisma have failed in their efforts to provide an explanation of the new ontological meaning of the concept of charisma. In contrast, current approaches seek to uncover leader charisma and explain its essence in the form of concrete behavior and learnable skills (what a leader does and what a leader is like). Wright's (2020) research on charisma and democratic discourse provides a breakthrough by using a new approach to understanding charisma, namely by employing a rhetorical approach to the term.

Thus, apart from the work of Wright and a few previous researchers, most of the existing work on charisma to date still adheres to Weber's conception, emphasizing the aspect of special personal qualities inherent in individuals, such as individual magnetism, magnetic charm, or the ability to command followers, albeit with various modifications. Weber's perspective, which perceives charisma as fixed and final, tends to overlook the contingent nature of dynamic charisma. It fails to recognize charisma as something subject to change and partially fixed, especially within discursive practice.

As a result, many individuals remain confined to the understanding of charisma as an extraordinary personal quality, seen as the "correct" and "normal" meaning. Consequently, it appears that there is a gap that challenges Weber's assumption that charisma is an inherent personal quality, assuming consensus between the charismatic subject and followers regarding the structure forming the individual's personal quality. Researchers challenge the presupposition that individual quality standards are inherent, asserting that these standards are not given by the individual but are socially and discursively constructed. Employing the Poststructuralist Discourse theory approach of Laclau and Mouffe, it is argued that the construction of charisma discourse is dynamic across various spaces and times.

This article explores the concept of charisma within the framework of Weberian theory, particularly focusing on the dynamics of authenticity within charismatic leadership. It offers a radical perspective that interrogates established notions of charismatic authority and examines how authenticity influences the construction and maintenance of charismatic hegemony. This article seeks to uncover the nuances of charisma authenticity and advocates for a reevaluation of conventional paradigms within Weberian charisma hegemony. The article delves into how charisma is interpreted in a religious context, beginning with an examination of Paul's letters and extending to explanations in the New Testament. It explores the elements shaping the meaning of charisma in ancient Greece, Hebrew (Jewish) culture, early Christian times and Islamic concept of charisma. These elements, such as Grace, Graciousness, and Gratitude, contribute to a new approach to studying charisma within a reciprocal system, presenting a valuable perspective for examination.

2. Method

This study adopts a literature review methodology to explore the concept of charisma. A literature search was performed across multiple electronic databases, including, google scholar, scopus, jstor and other sources, to identify related articles both those published in the past and the most recent articles. Full-text articles of potentially relevant studies were retrieved and assessed for inclusion in the review.

The exploration of the term "charisma" in this article begins by tracing its origins in early sources, namely the ancient Greek and Roman traditions during the Hellenistic period. This investigation considers linguistic variations and specifications of the word's meaning, differences in articulation between meanings, and the influence of culture, mythology, and beliefs of that time.

3. Results

3.1. *Weber's Concept of Charisma and Weberian Hegemony*

Embarking on our exploration of charisma, we delve into the origins of the concept as shaped by Weber's profound insights into the dynamics of power. Weber, a pioneering figure in social sciences, introduced charisma as a distinctive quality within an individual's personality, setting them apart from ordinary individuals. This extraordinary quality is imbued with supernatural, superhuman, or uniquely exceptional powers, as expounded in his magnum opus, "The Theory of Social and Economic Organization" (Weber, 1968).

These powers were apparently inaccessible to ordinary people, but were considered to be of divine origin, and on their basis the individual in question was treated as a leader. In its development, the theory of charisma gave rise to a debate between two perspectives, namely the Weberian perspective, including neo-Weberian and the non-Weberian perspective, which then became the basis for the analysis in this research.

The debate regarding the conceptualization of charismatic authority often involves three different views, among Weberian theorists. The first view, represented by charisma studies such as Bass (1985); Bryman (1992); Kets de Vries (2004) This view explains that the personal qualities of charisma include having extraordinary power related to far-sighted vision, rhetorical and aesthetic skills. According to Ladkin (2006), leaders like this have a basic recognition of something that ordinary people cannot have, namely something that comes from a transcendent gift (given from god). But in its development, first-hand charisma theorists, such as Bryman (1992), expressed the theory that a leader's charisma is born, and not made." This type of leader displays strong physical strength and mental abilities and a positive personality. Leaders are strong in spirit, self-confidence, and in influencing and persuading others. Furthermore, Kets de Vries (2004) considers the idea of charisma to be a transformation of leadership, which suggests that effective leadership depends on personal charisma, consisting of certain skills or traits in leaders including moral vision, coupled with sensitivity to the demands of the context (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Steidlmeier 1999).

The second view is represented by the work of Deveraux (1955); Shills (1965); Kanter (1968); Tucker (1968); Dow (1969); Miyahara (1984); Trice and Beyer (1986); Hartog (1995); and Ladkin (2006). Strengthening Weber's (1947) concept which explains that a leader's charisma will depend greatly on the validation (legitimacy) of his followers. According to this view, charisma can occur in the practice of power relations between leaders and their followers, where leaders in particular can develop strong emotional attachments to their followers. for Shills, Weber places too much emphasis on the extraordinary aspect of charismatic individuals, as if this special quality naturally exists in individuals, even though charisma is something that is given, and requires recognition and legitimacy from its followers. The third view, represented by the works of Gerth and Mills (1946), Blau (1963); Friedland (1964); Wolpe (1968); Conger (1997); This view argues that the relationship between charismatic leaders and followers is based on how the leader can apply the power of this charisma in various situations faced by society and how the leader implements a set of ideas to become a solution to the crisis. Therefore, charismatic leadership occurs only when followers believe that they have found some individual solution to the problems they face. (Jones, 2001: 763)

The charisma debate, especially from Weberian circles, is always linked to the affirmation of an individual's extraordinary personal capacity, for something that is given. Although there are other classifications that include the last two views in the neo-weberian view, for example Jermier (1993), there is some irony in the phrase neo-Weberian, because one aspect of its meaning here involves a re-examination of Weber's main writings to enrich the concept about Charisma. Even though there is a diversity of analysis, Weberian and neo-Weberian works see charisma as always being linked to the rise and fall of personal qualities.

The next classification is non-Weberian charisma, the classification referred to here is how the attention of charisma researchers no longer focuses on the Weberian and Weberian conceptualization of charisma as previously explained, there are several very essential things that are different which constitute criticism of Weberian works. It would be very difficult to separate Charisma from Weber's conceptualization of Charisma, several studies have tried to distance themselves from this theorization by trying to criticize or use a different perspective from previous work. Of the works above that study charisma, very few studies have emerged that pay attention to non-Weberian perspectives, several works such as Deconstruction of charisma: Calas (1993); Discourse of charisma: Takala (2013); Dark Side of Charisma: Fragouli (2018) is one of the few works that uses a non-Weberian perspective in reading charisma. This article tries to elaborate on the search for the word charisma which has always been directly associated with the theory of Weber and his followers with all its modifications.

Table 1. Some Perspectives from Modern Charisma

Perspective	Definition of charisma	Researcher
Weberians	Outstanding personal capacity/personal qualities	Davies, J. C. (1954); Tucker (1968); Dow (1969); Ladkins (2006)
	The strong relationship between the Charismatic leader and his followers	Friedland (1964); Shils (1965); Wolpe (1968); Wilson (1973); Hartog (1995); Conger (1998); Coulmont (2013)
	Influence of external situations and conditions:	Blau (1963); Gerth and Mills (1946); Canter (1972)
Neo Weberian	The leader's mission influences the Charisma received by followers Charisma is institutionalized,	Jermier (1993); DiTomaso (1993); Samir (1993) Paul Joosse's Aristocracy of Charisma (1985); John Corso (2012)
Non-Weberian	Gender and Charisma	Chin, (2020); Joosse and Willey (2020)
	Discourse of Charisma	Keyes (1978); Wright, (2020)
	Deconstruction of the meaning of Charisma	Takala (2013); Calas (2019);
	Dark side of Charisma	Calas (1993); Fragouli (2018) Zhang, et al., (2020); Masyhuri (2022)

Source: Literature data processed

3.2. Tracing The Roots of Charisma: Back to the Original Sources

John Potts (2009) in his book History of a Charisma, traced the history of the roots of the word charisma and found information that charisma has historical links with Jewish culture, early Christian times and as far back as Greco-Roman culture during the Hellenistic era. The important thing in his search results, Potts found that charisma is related to the root word charis (χάρις), a word in Greek, which is widely interpreted and interpreted as a spiritual gift and in ancient Jewish culture is related to the word hen (hnn), with the same meaning. Although the meanings and uses of these two words operate in different cultural settings, they are united in the term charisma as developed by Paul in the mid-first century. According to Potts, charisma subsequently reappeared, much later, in a variety and emphasis in the use of different meanings of charisma in the twentieth century such as what was later popularized by Max Weber.

Misunderstandings often occur in understanding the meaning of charis, so it often causes preconceptions and prejudices in initial use to reach an idea of the basic meaning of the concept of charis, for this reason it is necessary to test examples and try to find what elements they have in common, what situations caused the Greeks to use one word to apply to a variety of situations. It is also important to explain some of the emphasized uses of the word charis in communication, namely the meaning that refers to the relationship of exchange of favors. (Scott, 1983). This study does not intend to explore the meaning of charisma by involving too much in the theological problems that occur, although it cannot be ignored, exploring the meaning of charisma in explaining the origins of charisma is more emphasized by elaborating and showing a historical perspective, namely involving the context of space and time in which the concept charis is used so that the meaning of charis can follow the development of changes.

3.2.1. Charis in the Hellenistic Tradition: Charis in the Reciprocity system

In the Greek tradition, the multifaceted meaning of "charis" encapsulates a rich tapestry of concepts, deeply intertwined with notions of grace, mercy, and reciprocity. Across various discourses, including mythology, philosophy, and literature, "charis" assumes different dimensions, each contributing to its profound significance. Homer (849-799 BC) and Hesiod (700 BC), ancient Greek poets, delve into the essence of "charis" through their epics, particularly in the portrayal of physical beauty. "Charis" encompasses not only outward attractiveness but also the notion that such beauty is bestowed by the favor of the gods, implying a divine grace. This idea of divine bestowal extends to acts of benevolence, such as Athena's granting of grace to humans, illustrating the interconnectedness between giver and receiver.

John Barclay's interpretation further elucidates the complexity of "charis," suggesting that "gift" might be a more apt translation. According to him the Greek word charis, which is often translated as "grace," has a plural meaning. It describes (1) the attitude of a giver, (2) the giving itself, and (3) the attitude of a recipient. For news, charis means fellowship and goodwill towards the person who receives the act of kindness. For the recipient, charis means the favor received and the gratitude resulting from this favor. A thank you note is an important social act, it can result in a return of a gift, or acknowledge that the recipient is bound to the giver (gift) (Pott, 2009).

The mythological context, as depicted by Hesiod, introduces the Charites goddesses, personifications of grace, beauty, and charm. Their symbolism embodies the virtues of joy and refinement, enriching both divine and mortal realms. On the other side, Seneca's philosophical discourse on benefits underscores the principle of reciprocity inherent in "charis." He elucidates the interconnectedness of giving and receiving, emphasizing the moral obligation to reciprocate kindness and maintain honor. Marcel Mauss further explores this concept, positing that all acts of giving entail implicit expectations of reciprocity, thereby cementing social bonds and reinforcing societal norms.

Through these diverse perspectives, "charis" emerges as more than a mere word; it embodies a profound philosophy of reciprocal relationships, where acts of grace and kindness form the bedrock of social cohesion and honor. This ancient concept continues to resonate, offering insights into the complexities of human interaction and the enduring importance of mutual respect and benevolence.

3.2.2. Charis According to Greek Philosophers

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Sophocles as well as several other Greek philosophers in this case agreed that charis, grace or grace is something that represents virtue and benefit to mankind. In his work *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (384-322 BC) explained that charis can be defined as helping someone who is in need, not for any reward, or for the helper's own benefit, but for the person helping others, in this context, the meaning of the word that is emphasized is firstly on the aspect of generosity and generosity of the giver (generosity), and secondly is on the aspect of the giver's feelings, namely how a benefactor feels happy about the gift. Charis, according to Aristotle, is a feeling possessed by the person who possesses it is said to provide a service to him who needs it not in return for something or another may provide some service to him but it is done for the sake of the recipient.

Like other philosophers, Sophocles (496-406 BC), in his work *Ajax* (522) stated: "Goodness (charis) always gives birth to goodness (charis)", according to Sophocles the core of the charis view is the idea of reciprocity. Sophocles describes the concept of how one person's kindness will give rise to the goodness of others. Sophocles explains that every person who accepts kindness and understands how to show acceptance of that kindness will become a friend who is better than anything else in this world. Since charis is proportional not to what a person deserves but to what he needs, this reciprocity is rooted not in retributive justice but generosity.

In general, Greek philosophers supported an honor system of appreciation and gratitude, while sometimes some of them questioned whether such a system articulated true virtue. Aristotle considers that charis as a pleasure (an act of favor or pleasure) has valuable status as an act worthy of gratitude, but only if the benefactor has the right

motive: that is, beyond self-interest. An ethos of reciprocity governs the relationship between the benefactor and his or her beneficiaries. Reciprocity or reciprocation for acts of generosity by benefactors, creates a network of obligations that is a matter of honor for both benefactor and beneficiary. By coining his terminology theology of grace, it appears that Paul deliberately chose to articulate his understanding of *charis* against the theological and social beliefs of the eastern Mediterranean city-states of benevolence.

3.2.3. The Concept of *Charis* in the Hebrew (Jewish) Religious Tradition

In the 3rd century BC, the word *charis* was recorded as starting to be translated into Greek from the Jewish cultural word *hen* (goodness, grace) which is widely used in the Hebrew Old Testament Bible (Potts, 2009). In the Greek Old Testament which is sometimes called the Septuagint or LXX (seventy) uses *cháris* to translate the Hebrew word *hen* which sometimes means grace in the sense of charm, attraction 61 times, but more often shows kindness, good intentions, especially in the phrase *masa' hen be'ene*, to gain favor in one's eyes, that is, to please one who thereby becomes benevolent. The Hebrew noun *hen* is connected with the Hebrew verb *hanan* (loving, kind, loving), used mainly with God as the subject, but according to Torrance (1948), the word *hen* in Hebrew does not contain the meaning of gratitude (gratitude) as stated in is in the meaning of the word *charis*.

The concept of *charis* in the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible includes a series of complex nuances described previously. meaning both giving favors or goodness and finding goodness in the eyes of God or superiors. If God responds to a request, then the generous act described as *charis* refers to God's mercy and compassionate disposition. In the Septuagint or LXX, *charis* is also sometimes used for other Hebrew words, for example, twice for *rahamim* (tender mercy, compassion), three times for *rason* (kind love), and twice for *hesed* (loyalty, filial love with which relatives or those bound by agreement must help each other, or actions arising from it). Younger Jewish religious traditions also affirm the idea of reciprocity in the gift-giving process. The word *hesed*, which is defined as loyal love, is a word used to express love that is built in a covenant (*berith*). translated as loyalty in the connotation of God being consistent (steadfast) is not just a feeling of warm affection towards others, but it is rooted in a covenant relationship with the expectation of loyalty for all parties involved in the agreement. *hesed* allows the person who has it to survive to keep the agreement. *Hesed* also shows the existence of a reciprocal relationship (Panjaitan, 2018).

In several studies, the Jewish concept of *charis* has differences between the Jewish concept of *charis* and the Greek concept of *charis*. This distinction is caused by differences in how words are used in different contexts, as well as differences in viewpoints, culture and traditions between Jews and Greeks. The differences in views of Greek culture and Hebrew culture often give rise to differences in the meaning of the word *charis*. Willian Barret (1958) explains that there are differences between the patterns and perspectives of the Greeks who were influenced by Hellenism and the patterns and viewpoints of the Jews with Ibrani culture. According to him, the most prominent difference in perspective between Greeks and Hebrews lies in the concepts of doing and knowing. Hebrews are more likely to carry out things through practical and concrete actions in life, while for Greeks, knowledge has a major role. Correct behavior was the primary goal of the Hebrews while correct thinking was the primary goal of the Greeks. The Hebrews elevated moral goodness as the meaning and essence of life while the Greeks placed it in a position below intellectual goodness, the striking difference being between practice and theory, between the moral man and the theoretical or intellectualist man (Barret, 1958; Hindarto, 2016).

3.2.4. The Concept of *Charis* in Paul's Notes: The Theological Meaning of the Word *Charisma*

If we explore the understanding of *charisma* as a gift in the sense of a particular individual's personal qualities with a strong theological meaning, this concept can be found to originate from Paul's New Testament writings. In his letters, written in Greek in the mid-first century AD (50-62 AD), Paul gives the word *charisma* a religious meaning. He uses *charisma* to mean grace given by God. The term is closely related to the older Greek word *charis*, which occupies an important role in Paul's theology as God's gift that offers salvation. Paul uses the word *charisma* to signify various gifts including spiritual and supernatural abilities resulting from this divine grace.

According to Paul, the definition of charisma is not just formulated and is influenced by many things. James Harrison (2003) in his work *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context* argues that the context of the goodness of the charis concept in Greco-Roman times was the background to Paul's understanding of divine and human grace. Paul wrote the word charis over 100 times in his letters to different individuals and congregations around the Roman Empire. Greek and Roman converts who read or heard this word would have understood it in a very different context than we do in the 21st century, and their understanding of what Paul and others meant by "the grace of God" could have been very different. Understanding this first century context helps explain what being under grace truly meant for a follower of Jesus Christ (Harrison, 2003).

In Paul's message, charis (grace) as a stand-alone word in the Bible can be used as a greeting with high meaning ("Grace and peace be upon you"), as a description of how God conveys powerful favors, as an expression of undeserved divine action obtained. kindness, and others. That may be familiar to us. But to the ears of a Greco-Roman citizen or a Greek-speaking Jew who would hear or read this word in a biblical context, its meaning would describe something we do not usually consider today, namely a strong relationship between the giver of a gift and the recipient of that gift. Paul and other New Testament writers often reflect this meaning when they mention the word charis (grace).

Despite the differences between the Old and New Testaments regarding the bestowal of spiritual gifts, Christian theologians including Paul considered spiritual powers to be the link between the ancient Jews and the contemporary Christian church. The Hebrew people especially the prophets, with their vision of a future outpouring of the spirit in the messianic age, were said to be vindicated in the person of Jesus, and in the spiritually empowered apostles. The only force that connects the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, the apostles and the institutional church is considered the Spirit. This idea was expressed in the earliest Christian literature, becoming a central feature of Christian theology.

3.2.5. Charisma in the Islamic Concept: *Barakah* and *Karamah*

The concept of charisma is not well known in Islamic terminology, in the Koran the term charisma does not appear with the word kharisma, although the Greek term charisma (charis/ χάρις) has been adopted in several languages, but in Arabic, this term is not found, in the Aramaic tradition which is the root of the Arabic language, the same term as the Greek charisma is not found. In translation, charisma in Arabic is interpreted as Jadibiah referring to the meaning of personality or attractive attitude, its use is greatly influenced by the context in which the term is used, and several words are used to show different meanings.

The closest analogy to Greek charisma in the Islamic concept is the term barakah, which mean the power that comes from God, which bestows physical abundance and prosperity, as well as psychological happiness. Etymologically, the word barakah comes from the Arabic word barakatun which means blessing, happiness and profit. Other terms for blessing in Arabic are mubarak and tabaruk. The term barakah means God's gift that brings goodness to human life, and if we translate it into English, it is combined with the word grace. In Islam, especially in the mainstream Sunni tradition, both charisma and barakah are concentrated in the Koran and in the person of the Prophet Muhammad. As Lindholm (2013) notes, "a sense of charismatic bond with the Prophet draws Muslims into the community of believers and simultaneously gives them a growing sense of spiritual self.

The meaning of Barakah between happiness and usefulness is of course very different, happiness is closely related to the soul and feelings of an individual, while usefulness is related to the influence of something else in all aspects. This kind of difference in interpretation is the same as the difference in interpretation of the verse on barakah. Within Muslims themselves, the interpretation of the concept of barakah is not single, it can be different and sometimes one interpretation and another are very contradictory. Some Muslims from traditional Sufism and Sunni circles consider blessings and blessings to be important concepts in life, although the main source of blessings is from the Al-Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet but blessings can also be obtained from selected people who have the privilege and advantage of knowledge and morals from the teachings of the saints and ulama.

Another analogy that is also close to the word charisma is the word karamah, this word can be interpreted as special grace, which linguistically means glory or honor. The word karamah comes from the Arabic word karama which means, among other things, honorable, noble, generous and virtuous. In the world of Sufism (Sufi) karamah is understood as a privilege given to selected people who see in them something strange and extraordinary. Karamah can also be understood in a contextual sense as an extraordinary event beyond logic or reasoning and ordinary human abilities, which will only happen to someone who has the position or rank of wali (someone who is loved by Allah). In the Sufism tradition, the concepts of karomah and kewalian are two main things that are very important, at a certain stage someone who is gifted with karamah at a certain level can be considered and get the title of waliyullah (guardian of Allah). The meaning of guardian in Sufism terminology means a guardian is a person whose obedience is continuous without being harmed.

Table 2: The Context of Charisma

Concept Charisma	Original Concept	Source	The Context of Charisma	Figure
Hellenisme Greeco Roman	Charis (Greek), Grace (Roman)	Greco Roman Culture : Epos, Poet, drama, art	Resiprocal system	Homer, Hesoid
Philosopher	Charis	the thoughts of philosophers	Benefatory system	Plato, Aristotles, Socrates
Jewish	Hesed	Old Testament (Torah); Hebrew Culture	Religious , resiprocal system	Ben Sira
Christian	Grace, Gift	New Testament (Bible)	Religious, Benefatory system	Paulus
Islam	Barakah, Karama (arabic)	Al Qur'an, Sufism and Pesantren value	Religious, resiprocal system, Benefatory system	<i>Kiai, Mursyid</i>
Weberian	Charisma	Weber's work	Personal Capacity (secular)	Max Weber and weberian

Source: Literature data processed

4. Discussion: Returning to the Authenticity of Reciprocal Charisma

In the previous section, it was explained at length how the social context in which the word charis was used and developed in the Hellenistic period continued until the early centuries AD. During this period, charis was associated with activities that marked a system of reciprocity, patron-client relationships, friendship, and public benefit (public benefaction). It was also discussed how philosophers explained that charis could mean both benefit and pleasure, with limited understanding in the Jewish religious tradition, while more theological concepts can be traced in Christian teachings, especially in Paul's teachings and the Islamic value of barakah and karamah.

The articulation of the meaning of charis in the genealogical discourse of the concept of charisma involves many elements that compete in the process of interpreting "charis." The early Greeks had an integrated understanding of these fragments as part of one experience. The meaning of charis formed from the events experienced by them, which are then constructed from each other as "charis," a story about moral or aesthetic beauty, a story about disarming weapons; it breaks down barriers of self and demands that beneficiaries reach out to others. This study combines a highly capable discussion of different sides of these important concepts with a grand vision of their integration into a coherent whole: charis serves as the moral glue of their societies, connecting other central moral ideas (Pots, 2009). Thus, charis becomes a kind of central marker (nodal point) connecting the elements of honor, justice, retribution of gifts and hospitality, respect, and admiration. Tracing the long history of the roots of the word and the original culture of charisma has given rise to various interpretations and articulations of the meaning of charisma.

The history of charisma can be read through its various linguistic transformations, providing some indication of the extraordinary journey undertaken by previous people, involving experiences of events that became constitutive factors in the emergence of the meaning of the word or social and political factors that contributed to the timing

of its semantic shifts. The meaning of charisma in historical records of this term does not always have the same understanding. Since the root word charisma first appeared, it turns out that charisma has experienced ontological dislocation several times, which in Laclau's theoretical view, charisma has always experienced conflict and struggle for identity. This dislocation allows charisma to experience changes in meaning that are diverse, dynamic and adapt to discourse in each place and time. This shows that even though the battle for the meaning of charisma is won by one particular source and experiences temporary fixation, in the end new markers will emerge that try to provide an articulation of the meaning of charisma.

Charisma is read from a poststructuralist perspective as contingent, not fixed and open to interpretation, charisma as reality and identity as mentioned by Derrida is always delayed and not final. According to Laclau charisma is a field of simple relational identities that never succeed in forming themselves completely, because relations do not form a closed system, on the contrary, on the other hand the inherent antagonism between the presence of whatever is given to a particular identity and the absence that prevents the full constitution of the identity it opposes and with thereby showing its contingency" (Laclau, 1990).

This reading of the structure that mediates the phenomenon of charisma is often overlooked because so far, when people analyze charisma, they focus more on the subject of charisma, and do not see the phenomenon of the operation of charisma as a social reality that is always a reciprocal relationship. Even though there is an explanation that charisma is a relationship between a charismatic subject and his followers, the explanation is less satisfactory, because it does not explain how the social context not only forms individuals/subjects who have charisma, but also prepares the formation of subjects who submit/obey that charisma.

The phenomenon of charisma is always present to us when there is a subject who is charismatic and there are other subjects who are or are not subject to that charisma. This shows that charisma does not only talk about individuals who we say are charismatic subjects, but we can also see the phenomenon of charisma in a reciprocal relationship between a charismatic subject and other subjects who are or are not subject to that charisma. The issue of charisma is understood not merely as an individual quality, but as an individual's quality in a certain specific structure, how this individual is placed in relation to the social context in which he is located, the individual is a social subject, the individual cannot be seen as his own individual, he is always part of larger context, he is always an individual social subject.

However, if we look further, the character of charisma is not always interpreted as an explanation of the concept of a charismatic individual on the one hand and the recognition of other individuals (followers) who believe in it on the other hand. Charisma also has a reciprocal character, namely reciprocity between the individual subject who has charisma and the subject who recognizes that charisma. the reciprocal character of the construction phenomenon becomes the reality of charisma. This reciprocal dimension operates before the phenomenon of charisma appears. For example, charisma is interpreted as something good, beautiful, etc. This is good and beautiful for the subject who receives it, not just because of the charisma of the subject.

Charisma only works within the same symbolic structure, it only works on people who have the same reference to charisma. Or even though it is in the same symbolic structure but the fantasy that supports it is different, this shows the operation of certain constructs that shape the quality of a person's charisma in a certain context. What is considered normal by one structure does not mean normal by another structure, in other words the meaning of charisma in one structure will be determined by a different logic. In essence, the discussion emphasizes the intricate interplay between historical, linguistic, and socio-political factors in shaping the concept of charisma, highlighting its dynamic and multifaceted nature within society.

5. Conclusion

This article has historically and empirically demonstrated the perspective that charisma is not solely interpreted as an inherent property of individuals (individual property), as theorized by Weber. Instead, it can also be viewed as a reciprocal relationship, generated situationally through the process of social interaction. Charisma is constructed within the dynamics of social relations, where exchanges occur due to mutual complementarity. Approaching this

from a poststructuralist discourse theory perspective allows for a different, more nuanced explanation of the charisma concept and seeks alternatives to the hegemony of Weberian charisma.

The exploration of the reciprocal element in the operation of charisma aims to unveil other possibilities within Weber's concept of charisma, particularly in terms of its social construction. This includes understanding the logical aspects underlying how charisma functions in power relations between leaders and followers. Consequently, this research hopes to contribute to the further development and study of charisma, not only within the realms of leadership and management but also as a valuable addition to the exploration of power relations. Specifically, it aims to enrich the fields of political sociology and political psychology in the future.

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Semi-Loyal Actors and Nepal's Democratic Breakdown of 2002

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Abstract

Nepal held three free and fair parliamentary elections, conducted several rounds of peaceful power transfer, and observed partly free civil and political rights after it returned to democracy in 1990. Despite the notable democratic exercises, King Gyanendra terminated Nepal's second electoral democracy in 2002. What led to the democratic breakdown? This article finds that kings in Nepal acted as semi-loyal actors from 1990 to 2002 and then argues that the inability of weak political parties as loyal actors to put semi-loyal actors under check through political pressure motivated King Gyanendra to terminate democracy. Loyal actors became weak due to disunity, unmanaged party factionalism, governmental instability, ethnic exclusion from state structures and corruption.

Keywords: Nepal, Democracy, Democratic Breakdown, Political Actors, Ethnic Exclusion

1. Introduction

Nepal embarked on the second democratic journey in 1990. Nepal first transitioned to democracy on 18 February 1991 by dismantling the family autocracy of the Ranas, which was founded on 18 May 1846 by Jang Bahadur Rana, a junior courtier at the Royal Palace. However, King Mahendra ended Nepal's first democratic journey on 15 February 1960 with the charges that the government undermined the interests of the country, engaged in corruption, paralyzed public administration, disrupted ethnic harmony, and encouraged anti-social elements (Shah, 1967). He then installed the absolute royal regime called Partyless Panchayat, which not only concentrated "power in the monarchy" (Gray, 2015, 204), but also outlawed political parties, and brutally suppressed opposition voices (Kantha, 2010; Parajulee, 2000; Shah, 1990). A movement, also known as the People's Movement I, launched by the Nepali Congress Party (NC) and the United Left Front of five communist parties ended the royal regime and restored democracy to Nepal on 8 April 1990 (Becker, 2015; Bhusal, 1990; Parajulee, 2000).

Democracy broke down in Nepal in 2002 for a second time. Nepal promulgated a constitution in a year after the restoration of democracy in 1990. Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy were the central characteristics of the constitution (Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990). Three relatively free and fair elections were held in 1991, 1994 and 1999. Peaceful transfer of power took place several times, which exceeded what Huntington (1991) argues that two peaceful government turnovers may set a democratic system on the path of consolidation. Civil and political rights remained partly free throughout the period (Freedom House, 2024).

This status of civil and political rights is considered normal in a transitional democracy. The indicators clearly demonstrate that Nepal practiced a minimal, electoral, procedural, or formal democracy in its second democratic experiment. However, Nepal's second democratic experiment stopped when King Gyanendra unconstitutionally dismissed the elected government and assumed executive power on 2 October 2002 by charging the government with being incompetent to hold parliamentary elections on time (Shah, 2005). What led to the breakdown of democracy in Nepal in 2002? Specifically, what motivated the King to dismantle democracy in Nepal in 2002? This article seeks to answer these questions by using the political actor model of democratization.

The structural model posits that the chances of a democratic breakdown increase in a society which is poor and lacks political tolerance. Democracy is likely to collapse in a poor society due to the small size of middle-class people (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Lipset, 1959; Przeworski et al., 2000). Middle-class people, who receive "at least secondary education" and rank neither low nor high in a society "in terms of income" (Fukuyama, 2012, p. 54), believe in "secular reformist gradualism" so that they elect "moderate and democratic parties" to preserve democracy (Lipset, 1959, p. 83). Therefore, a democratic breakdown is likely in a poor society due to the higher likelihood of the victory of extreme and authoritarian political parties. The political culture aspect of the structural model of democratization argues that democracy is more likely to break down in a society in which the mass publics do not tolerate opposing views (Almond & Verba, 1963; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Seligson, 2000). Political intolerance generates social unrest and paves the grounds for a democratic breakdown.

The other model of democratization is actor-centric. The political actor model argues that the prospects of democratization lie more with political actors rather than structural conditions (Capoccia, 2005; Diamond et al., 1999; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018; Linz & Stepan, 1978; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013; Schmitter, 2017). More precisely, strength, actions, strategies and choices of political actors such as political parties and leaders determine democratic longevity even in a society that lacks sufficient middle-class people and political tolerance. The success story in dozens of cases from neither rich nor politically tolerant society, including India, Botswana Mongolia, and Benin is a testimony to the relevance of the actor model to explain democratization. Democratic backsliding, which is the erosion of democratic qualities (Burmeo, 2016; Carothers & Hartnett, 2024; Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Walden & Lust, 2018), is occurring in democracies even in developed societies following the election of authoritarian leaders by taking advantage of the inability of political parties to gatekeep them (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). This is another testimony to the continued usefulness of the political actor model in explaining the fate of democracy.

This article uses the political actor model to explain why democracy broke down in Nepal in 2002. In doing so, it follows Linz and Stephan (1978), and classifies political actors as loyal, semi-loyal and disloyal. Linz and Stephan (1978) also argue that semi-loyal actors play the decisive role in the process of a democratic breakdown. The findings suggest that kings in Nepal acted as semi-loyal actors from 1990 to 2002 and that the inability of weak loyal actors to put them under check through political pressure led to Nepal's democratic collapse in 2002.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section classifies Nepali political actors as loyal, semi-loyal and disloyal. The following section explains the argument used in this article. The penultimate section investigates what made Nepali loyal actors weak so that they were unable to put semi-system actors under control through political pressure. The final section concludes by synthesizing the findings.

2. Classification of Political Actors

Linz and Stephan (1978) classify political actors as loyal, disloyal, and semi-loyal.¹ Loyal actors are ideologically committed to democracy so that they never oppose it. Loyal actors attempt to gain a majority of votes either in parliament or in the elections to form a government rather than resorting to any form of violence. Disloyal actors, on the other hand, are deeply committed to non-democratic ideologies, and use violence to change the democratic system. They sometimes participate in democratic elections with an aim of dismantling democracy from within the democratic institutions. Semi-system actors are opportunistic because they agree to abide by the existing

¹ Linz and Stephan use the word "opposition" but using "actors" does not change the meaning fundamentally; it rather covers all loyal actors either in the opposition or in the government.

democratic system despite a non-democratic system being their true ideology. Other main characteristics of semi-loyal actors include “justification of non-legitimate actions, political violence, assassination, conspiracies, failed military coups and unsuccessful revolutionary attempts” (Linz & Stephan, 1978, p. 32).

The Nepali Congress Party (NC) was one of the main loyal actors from 1990 to 2002 for its commitment to democracy. After the breakdown of democracy in 1960, it fought for democracy and led the movement for the restoration of democracy in 1990 (Brown, 1996; Hachhethu, 2002; Joshi & Rose, 1966; Parajulee, 2000; Whelpton, 2005). The party not only formed the government when it gained a majority seats in the House of Representatives, it also honored peaceful transfer of power when it lost the majority. It did not use violence to overthrow the elected government because of its commitment to peaceful transfer of power. While the NC reaffirmed its commitment to democracy through its national conventions of 1992, 1997, and 2002 (Nepali Congress, 1992/2006; 1997/2006; 2002/2006), it again led the democratic movement after the breakdown of democracy in 2002 (Baral, 2023).

The Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist (CPN-UML) was another loyal actor from 1990 to 2002. The party was established in 1990 through a merger of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist and Leninist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist). The CPN-UML not only participated in the democratic process of the 1990s, but it also accepted democracy ideologically from its fourth convention held in 1993 and reiterated its commitment to democracy in the national conventions held in 1998 and 2003 (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist, 1993, 1998, 2002). The CPN-UML accepted electoral outcomes as well. It formed the government when it became the largest party in 1994 or partnered with other parties to form coalition governments. The CPN-UML also accepted peaceful transfer of power. The party played an exceptional role in the democratic movement of 1990 (Whelpton, 2005), and its role in the movement of 2006 was also praiseworthy (KC, 2008). The CPN-UML, thus, was a system party after 1990 despite being communist.

The other loyal actor after 1990 was the National Democratic Party of Nepal (NDPN). The party was formed by the leaders from the outgoing authoritarian regime. Despite the leaders' prior involvement with the outgoing authoritarian regime, the party continuously demonstrated its commitment to democracy through its national conventions (National Democratic Party of Nepal, 1993, 1998). The party accepted electoral outcomes and peaceful transfer of power. Neither did it use violence to get to power. Although two leaders from the NDPN headed the government formed by King Gyanendra after he took executive power in 2002, there is no evidence that the party and its major leaders were involved in activities against democracy between 1990 and 2002.

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) was the disloyal actor in Nepal after 1990, as it consistently attempted to do away with democracy until the termination of its insurgency in 2006. The party took part in the parliament in 1991 not to enrich democracy but to expose its 'reactionary characteristics' to the people through the parliament (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1990). In other words, the CPN-Maoist played “the democratic game with the objective to destroy democracy itself” (Capoccia, 2005, p. 13). At the same time, it secretly prepared an armed insurgency to replace democracy with communism (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 1996). The CPN-Maoist formally started the armed insurgency against democracy in 1996. When King Gyanendra ended democracy in 2002, the party welcomed it and asked the people to support its People's War to establish communism in Nepal, arguing that neither monarchy nor democracy solved the problems of Nepalis (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, 2003).

King Birendra was one of the semi-system actors between 1990 and 2002. Although the King tried his best to share executive power with the cabinet during the constitution-making process (Adhikari, 2018), he finally consented to be the head of the state without such power. The role of the king was in line with a parliamentary democracy as in the United Kingdom. However, several instances reveal that he acted as a semi-loyal actor in the 1990s. First, he threatened to take executive power at a meeting on 9 June 1991 with Man Mohan Adhikari, the opposition leader in the House of Representatives (Dangol, 1999). Second, he nominated ten members to the National Assembly after 1991 without the recommendation of the government.² It was against the spirit of the

² The National Assembly was the Upper House of the parliament of Nepal. According to the constitution of Nepal, the king was to nominate

constitution and the norms of a parliamentary system. Third, he did not cooperate with the government to mobilize the army against the Maoist insurgency (Adhikari, 2015; KC, 2024; Riaz & Basu, 2007, 2010). He, in fact, wanted to use the Maoist insurgency as an opportunity to end democracy. However, he could not complete the mission, as he was killed by his own son Crown Prince Dipendra on 1 June 2001.³

King Gyanendra had promised to be the constitutional monarch as provisioned by Nepal's 1990 constitution when he ascended the throne, following the massacre of 1 June 2002 at the Royal Palace.⁴ But his commitment to the democratic system with the constitutional monarchy was opportunistic given his conspiracy against democracy. Following in the footsteps of King Birendra, Gyanendra also wanted to use the Maoist insurgency to end democracy. Therefore, he denied deploying the Nepal Army to rescue 72 police personnel taken hostage by the Maoist guerrillas at Holeri of Rolpa district on 12 July 2001 (Kumar, 2006, 2010). His ambivalent and opportunist commitment to democracy transpired even more clearly when he assumed executive power on 2 October 2002, by terminating the elected government. In this way, King Gyanendra was another semi-loyal actor in Nepal's second democratic experiment.

3. The Argument

Disloyal actors certainly have a role in determining the fate of democracy; however, this article focuses on what Linz and Stepan (1978) claim that semi-system actors act decisively in the process of a democratic breakdown and become the immediate beneficiary of the regime change through assuming executive power. This article further argues that semi-system can do so only when anti-system actors are able to check them through political pressure. System actors assume a key role for the survival of democracy, as they not only have to design appropriate institutions to support the operation of democracy and make a minimum accord among themselves to save democracy amidst the competition for people's vote, but also democratize the undemocratic forces, and prevent undemocratic forces from winning over the loyalty of neutral people (Linz & Stepan, 1978; O'Donnell, 1992). In addition, loyal actors are obliged to work with semi-loyal actors, as they often assume high positions in the state such as the kings, military leadership and even elected officials. Yet, semi-loyal actors are not able to end democracy so long as loyal actors are strong enough to put them under control through political pressure.

The concept of "political pressure" is borrowed from Stepan et al. (2014), who investigate why monarchies and parliamentary democracies co-exist in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Japan. Monarchies in these countries have now converted to parliamentary monarchies and do not pose threats to democracy. However, the conversion has been possible only after political pressure put on them by "societies and parliaments" for a long time (Stepan et al., 2014 p. 38). Thus, the study concludes that monarchies do not embrace democracy voluntarily, but only through political pressure. Stepan and his coauthors deserve praises for the conceptualization of political pressure, as it clearly demonstrates that the inability of society and parliaments motivates semi-loyal actors to eliminate a democratic system. However, the authors fail to see the role of political parties in checking semi-system actors. The operation of a democratic system now is unthinkable without political parties. In fact, well-functioning political parties are the key vehicle of democratization (Maurice, 1954; Schattschneider, 1964) and strong democratic political parties are able to keep semi-loyal actors under check through political pressure and ensure the longevity of a democratic system. This article demonstrates that political parties as loyal actors have the central role to play in putting semi-system actors under check.

ten members to it. Since the king had no executive power, the nomination had to be made on the recommendation of the government. King Birendra nominated ten members to the National Assembly only in 1991 on the recommendation of the government.

³ The Investigation Commission with two members, Chief Justice (Kedar Nath Upadhaya), and Speaker (Tara Nath Rana Bhat) concluded that Crown Prince Birendra killed King Birendra and others. For details, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jun/14/nepal>.

⁴ Dipendra shot himself after killing King Birendra and other members of the royal family. As he was still conscious, he was made new king following the 1990 constitution. Gyanendra was made king only after the death of Dipendra.

4. Political Pressure of Loyal Actors upon Semi-loyal Actors and Nepal's Democratic Breakdown of 2002

Semi-loyal actors can terminate democracy only when weak loyal actors are unable to put them under political pressure. Disunity, unmanaged party factionalism, governmental instability, ethnic exclusion and corruption are likely to make loyal actors weak.

4.1. *Disunity of Loyal Actors*

The disunity of loyal actors was a central feature of Nepali politics between 1990 and 2002. As the main loyal actors in the period, the NC and the CPN-UML were responsible for such disunity. While the CPN-UML became hostile to the governments of the NC, the governments of the NC failed to gain the confidence of the CPN-UML. As a result, Nepali politics became polarized.

The CPN-UML, which remained the main opposition party in the parliament most of the time between 1990 and 2002, adopted the strategy to oppose the government using parliamentary and non-parliamentary means. After becoming the main opposition in the general elections of 1991, the CPN-UML pledged to play a cooperative role as the main opposition (Upadhya, 2002; Whelpton, 2005). However, the party took to the streets to bring down the new government of the NC soon after its formation in 1991 (Upadhyaya, 2002). The CPN-UML not only supported the demands of civil servants for pay increases, but also called several general strikes across the country. In a parliamentary democracy, opposition parties are not expected to criticize a new government in the first hundred days called honeymoon, let alone call general strikes. However, the CPN-UML did not respect this unwritten parliamentary norm, proving that the main opposition party was not serious about offering constructive opposition to the government.

Street protests launched by the CPN-UML after the death of Mandan Bhandari further questioned its constructive role as the main opposition. Madhan Bhandari was the main leader of the CPN-UML and died in an accident in June 1992. The government formed a judicial commission to investigate the accident. The commission concluded that the accident was purely a human error of the driver. But the CPN-UML did not accept the finding and alleged that the accident occurred through the involvement of 'national and international enemies' who wanted to destroy the popular communist movement in Nepal (Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist and Leninist, 1999). The party then took to the streets for months calling for one strike after another. Its leader, Khadga Prasad Oli, even claimed that he had proof of the involvement of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in the accident and promised to prosecute him when the CPN-UML formed the government in the future (Chamlagai, 2005). It was a false claim, as the governments consisting of the CPN-UML could not prosecute him.

Democracy is a learning process, and political actors should gain maturity over time. The hostile opposition the CPN-UML adopted toward the government between 1991 and 1994 was widely attributed to its lack of experience in the parliamentary practices. As the CPN-UML had participated in the government several times after 1994, it was expected to play a constructive role when it again became the main opposition in 1999. The party neither organized strikes nor stalled the parliament during the government of the NC led by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, demonstrating that it was adapted to parliamentary democracy. But when Girija Prasad Koirala became Prime Minister, it disrupted the government for 57 days, asking for the resignation of the Prime Minister alleging that he was involved in corruption while leasing aircrafts (Thapa, 2002). It also organized several general strikes. It is common in democracies for opposition parties to ask the elected officials to resign; however, they cannot dictate their departures through excessive parliamentary disruptions and street protests. Such non-parliamentary acts hinder the functioning of parliament and weaken democracy.

While the CPN-UML was the hostile main opposition, most of the governments of the NC formed in the 1990s took tough attitudes toward the CPN-UML and used every opportunity to weaken it. The NC government formed after the general elections of 1991 used the movement of the civil servants to weaken the CPN-UML, as the government sacked the civil servants associated with the CPN-UML (KC, 2008). By defeating the Prime Minister of the interim government, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and with outstanding oratorical skills, Madan Bhandari had earned the recognition of being the most charismatic leader in the country. Even the Newsweek had called him

the Karl Marx of Nepal (cited in Khadka, 1995). Shellshocked by his death, the CPN-UML asked the government to form a judicial investigation commission under the leadership of a sitting justice of the Supreme Court (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist, 1993). The government, however, formed a commission under a retired justice of the Supreme Court. By rejecting the demand, the government of the NC missed an opportunity to improve the sour relationship it had with the main opposition party since its formation in 1991.

As mentioned above, both Kings Birendra and Gyanendra used the Maoist insurgency to restore the power of the monarchy lost in 1990. The NC knew it well. Yet, the NC did not attempt to seek the support of the CPN-UML to forge a unity among loyal actors to defend democracy from non-loyal actors. The uneven distribution of the land was one of the main reasons behind the rapid expansion of the Maoist insurgency (Joshi & Manson, 2007). The CPN-UML asked the NC to carry out land reforms to distribute land to land poor and landless peasants. The NC was reluctant to do so because it had accommodated “landed elements in order to consolidate anti-communist forces” (Riaz & Basu, 2010, p. 56).

Disunity of loyal actors, thus, was a reality between 1990 and 2002. Both the NC and the CPN-UML were responsible for the disunity. Both Kings used the disunity to weaken democratic institutions. The disunity, in fact, was a factor that weakened loyal actors in the 1990s, and thus contributed to the breakdown of democracy in 2002.

4.2. Unmanaged Party Factionalism

Political parties without factions are not possible. In fact, factions, which are groups or cliques within political parties organized for common goals (Zariski, 1960), are capable of shaping the behavior of their parties (Borz & de Miguel, 2017; Boucek, 2012; Ceron, 2013). Managing factions is essential in the absence of which democracy is likely to delegitimize (Köllner & Basedau, 2005). The inability of political parties to manage factionalism was a factor in delaying democratic consolidation in Portugal and Greece (Magone, 1995). Democracy backslid in India (1975) and Indonesia (1957) and one of the reasons behind the backslide was the failure of the Indian National Congress Party and the Indonesian Nationalist Party to manage factionalism (Tudor & Slater, 2016). Therefore, democratic political parties become weak if they are not able to manage factionalism.

Party factionalism was another characteristic of Nepali politics in the 1990s. The NC, the major loyal actor, remained factionalized since the first general elections held after 1990 (Hachhethu, 2002; Whelpton, 2005). Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, party president and Prime Minister of the interim government, was defeated by Madan Bhandari, the General Secretary of the CPN-UML. As he was able to frame the constitution in less than a year, he was perceived to be the most popular leader in Nepal and his defeat was less expected. One of the reasons behind the defeat was Madan Bhandari who was superbly charismatic with his excellent oratory skills. The other reason was the conspiracy hatched by the faction of the NC associated with its other leader Girija Prasad Koirala. The faction not only secretly campaigned against Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, but also voted for Madan Bhandari (Chamlagai, 2022).

Despite the efforts of the NC leaders to manage the factionalism in the party by unanimously electing Girija Prasad Koirala for the post of Prime Minister, it could not last long. After becoming the Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala totally ignored other leaders to increase his grip on the party by distributing patronage to his supporters. In doing so, he not only reshuffled the cabinet unilaterally, but he also removed ministers associated with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Ganesh Man Singh (Hachhethu, 2000). Both leaders were senior to Girija Prasad Koirala.

Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, in fact, were in doubt about the capacity of Girija Prasad Koirala to lead the government, but they accepted him to become Prime Minister out of compulsion. Moreover, both Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Ganesh Man Singh were not happy with the way Koirala was leading the government. So, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai contested the by-election of Kathmandu Constituency 1 held in April 1994. The constituency was vacant due to the death of Madan Bhandari, the General Secretary of the CPN-UML.

As Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala was against his candidacy, he did his best to defeat Bhattarai (Maharjan, 1999). As a result, Bhattarai lost the elections.

The reshuffle of the cabinet and the defeat of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai divided the NC vertically into factions. Therefore, thirty-six parliament members of the NC associated with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Ganesh Man Singh did not attend the the parliament when the annual policy of the government was put to vote (Hachhethu, 2000; Maharjan, 1999; Mahat, 2005). The policy was not passed, and the government faced the legitimacy crisis. Prime Minister Koirala was to either step down on moral grounds or dissolve the House to seek a new mandate through fresh elections. He chose the second option and recommended the dissolution of the House of Representatives to King Birendra who accepted the recommendation. Thus, the factional rivalry of the NC led to the collapse of the first House without completing its tenure of five years after restoration of democracy in 1990.

The factionalism in the NC continued even after the elections of 1994 in which the party came second. As mentioned above, the CPN-UML formed a minority government after the mid-term elections of 1994 and the Supreme Court reinstated the House of Representatives dissolved by King Birendra on the recommendation of Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari, leading to the emergence of coalition politics in Nepal until the next mid-term election of 1999. Sher Bahadur Deupa of the NC headed the first coalition government. But the government collapsed as it failed to demonstrate a majority at a meeting of the House of Representatives due to the absence of two parliamentarians associated with the faction opposed to Sher Bahadur Deupa (Hachhethu, 2000). The NC gained a majority of sets in the House of Representatives in the mid-term elections of 1999 and its leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai became the Prime Minister. But he stepped down in just seven months due to the non-cooperation of the party president, Girija Prasad Koirala (Hachhethu, 2000; Maharjan, 1999).

The CPN-UML, the other major loyal actors, was also full of factionalism after 1990. The factionalism became intense after the death of its General Secretary, Mandan Bhandari. The parliamentarians associated with the factions led by Chandra Prakash Mainali did not vote for the official candidate of the party in the elections for the National assembly (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist, 1998; Khadka, 1995). The factionalism in the party became even more intense after the fall of its minority government with the removal of Bam Dev Gautam from his position of Deputy General Secretary. Bam Dev Gautam had taken his removal from the position as an offense (Adhikari, 2018). He was, in fact, looking for an opportunity to take revenge for it. The Mahakali Treaty gave him such an opportunity. The treaty was about the allocation of water and electricity from the Mahakali River, which is a border river in the west between Nepal and India. The treaty was initiated by the minority government of the CPN-UML. No leaders of the CPN-UML were against it at its initiation (Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist, 1998). After the collapse of the government, Bam Dev Gautam and his faction called it unequal and unpatriotic. When the treaty was put in the parliament for an endorsement in July 1996, the parliamentarians associated with his faction voted against it by violating the whip of the party. The faction broke away from the CPN-UML in April 1998 and formed the Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist and Leninist. As a result of the split, a significant section of cadres and leaders from both parties joined the Maoist party. One of the reasons for the spread of the Maoist insurgency was the split of the CPN-UML (KC, 2008).

Authoritarian successor parties are the parties of the past authoritarian regime or organized by the leaders from the past authoritarian regime (Loxton & Mainwaring, 2018). Some of such parties have contributed to the consolidation of democracy as in Taiwan, Korea, and Malaysia (Chen & Huang, 2018; Slater & Wong, 2018). The National Democratic Party, the only authoritarian successor party of Nepal after 1990, failed to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Nepal due to its inability to manage factionalism. The party was the key player during the era of the coalition politics of Nepal between the fall of the CPN-UML minority government in 1995 and the 1999 mid-term elections as neither the CPN-UML nor the NC, formed the government without its support.

But the party missed the opportunity due to factionalism and rather became a cause of governmental instability as explained below.

4.3. Governmental Instability

The second episode of democracy in Nepal chronically suffered from the instability of the governments, as there were eleven governments in twelve years (Table 1). The only government that completed its full tenure was the interim government formed in 1990 after the restoration of democracy to write a constitution and conduct the elections for the parliament. Since the CPN-UML government was the minority government, its death just in nine months can be considered natural. As shown below, the falls of the other governments were the result of factionalism within the political parties.

Table 1: Governments between 1990 and 2002

Government	Prime Minister
Interim government, 1990	Krishna Prasad Bhattarai
Nepali Congress, 1991	Girija Prasad Koirala
CPN-UML, 1994	Man Mohan Adhikari
Coalition Government, 1995 (Nepali Congress, Nepal National Democratic Party, Nepal Goodwill Party)	Sher Bahadur Deuba
Coalition Government, 1997 (Nepal National Democratic, Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist and Leninist, Nepal Goodwill Party)	Lokendra Bahadur Chand
Nepali Congress Minority Government, 1998	Girija Prasad Koirala
Coalition Government, 1998 (Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist and Leninist, Nepal National Democratic Party, Nepal Goodwill Party)	Girija Prasad Koirala
Coalition Government 1999 (Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist and Leninist, Nepal National Democratic Party, Nepal Goodwill Party)	Girija Prasad Koirala
Nepali Congress, 1999	Krishna Prasad Koirala
Nepali Congress, 2000	Girija Prasad Koirala
Nepali Congress, 2001	Sher Bahadur Deuba

Source: Shimkhada, 2017

While peaceful transfer of power is indicative of good health of democratization (Huntington, 1991), frequent changes of government pose a challenge to the existence of democracy itself (Diksin et al., 2005; Powell, 1981). Governmental instability hinders policy implementation (Buber, 1998; Fortunato & Loftis, 2018). People can excuse even poor performance and stay loyal to the democratic system so long as they find “democracy working democratically” (Diamond et al., 1999, p. 5). However, frequent changes of government purely motivated by power grabs not only lead to the loss of popular trust in politicians and the democratic system, but also overshadows good performance done in the democratic periods. Therefore, governmental instability is likely to make loyal actors weak.

Nepal's performance indicators, including development and social safety nets, improved significantly after the restoration of democracy in 1990. Compared to the 1980s during the royal regime, gross domestic product, road networks, population with access to electricity and drinking water, health service, life expectancy, and alleviation of poverty scored better in the 1990s (Mahat, 2005). With regard to social safety nets, the elderly and widowers were granted pensions. Furthermore, the Dalits (untouchables) got allowance for studies. Yet, there was very little opposition from the citizens when King Gyanendra suspended democracy in October 2002 (Whelton, 2005). It shows that people had lost trust in loyal actors.

4.4. Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic exclusion occurs when certain ethnic groups continuously monopolize political power through their exclusive representation in state structures, (Kymlicka, 1996; Lawoti, 2005; Young, 2000). Permanently excluded groups from the state power become alienated from the system and resort to violence and strife, leading to the instability of democracy. Therefore, inclusive institutions such as proportional electoral systems are required to avoid permanent winners and losers along ethnic lines (Lijphart, 1977, 1999).

The constitution of 1990 formally declared Nepal as a multi-cultural society, which was a drastic departure from the past (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008) and a positive direction toward the pluralist national building (Gellner, 2008).

However, non-Khas groups were severely underrepresented within various state bodies, including the government and parliament between 1990 and 2002. All the governments formed from 1990 to 2002 were predominated by the Khas-Arya group (Hachhethu, 2023; Lawoti, 2005; Neupane, 1999; Parajulee, 2010; Shrestha, 2017; Simkhada, 2017).⁵ Nepal held three elections for the House of Representatives (Lower House) in 1991, 1994, and 1999 on the basis of the first-past-the-post electoral system. The representation of the non-Khas Arya groups in the House of Representatives was very low in proportion to their population (Hachhethu, 2023; Lawoti, 2005; Neupane, 1999; Shrestha, 2017; Simkhada, 2017). According to the constitution of Nepal of 1990, members of the House of Representatives elected the members of the National assembly in 1991, 1994, and 1999 using the single transferable vote rule of the proportional representation electoral system. Despite a slightly better performance as compared to the House of Representatives, the representation of non-Khas Arya Groups in the National Assembly was still low (Shimkhada 2017).

After the takeover in October 2002, King Gyanendra included ethnic leaders in the government. Yet, there is no evidence that both Kings, Birendra and Gyanendra, used ethnic exclusion to dismantle democracy. However, the CPN-Maoist, the disloyal actor, used ethnic exclusion to become a political force to be reckoned with (Chamlagai, 2022; Subba, 2006). In this sense, it can be argued that the ethnic exclusion was one of the factors that made loyal actors weak and could not put political pressure on semi-system actors.

4.5. Corruption

While launching the democratic movement of 1990, democratic leaders had promised to root out corruption nurtured by the royal regime between 1960 and 1990 (Baral, 1993; Kumar, 1999). The promise, however, did not materialize when they came to power. Instead, Nepal became increasingly corrupt. According to World Governance Indicators, its score on control of corruption declined from -0.64 to -0.36 in this period.⁶

Corruption data from World Governance Indicators are the opinions from experts, citizens, and entrepreneurs. Given it, one may argue that perception data are less reliable. But in the 1990s, real corruption cases were pervasive. Putting aside bureaucrats, democratic leaders themselves were found to be involved in the corruption as the Supreme Court indicted Khum Bahadur Khadka, Govinda Raj Joshi, and Jaya Prakash Gupta of the NC who were Ministers after 1990. Girija Prasad Koirala, who became Prime Minister thrice after the restoration of democracy, suffered from corruption scandals all through the 1990s (Thapa, 2002). The other two leaders, who patronized corruption in the 1990s, were Sher Bahadur Deupa of the Nepali Congress and Bam Dev Gautam of the CPN-UML (Thapa, 2002).

Corruption, which is “the exercise of public power for private gains” (World Governance Indicators, 2024), benefits individuals but weakens the democratic system (Bermeo, 2016; Diamond, 2015). People do not trust politicians who are involved in corruption. The loss of people’s trust makes them weak. Worst of all, non-democratic

⁵ The ethnic groups include Khas Arya, indigenous ethnicities, Madheshis and Dalits. For details, see the 2021 CENSUS National Report at <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/downloads/caste-ethnicity>.

⁶ The control of corruption index ranges from -2.5 to 2.5, from least to most. A lower score indicates a higher level of corruption. For details, see <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>.

actors are certain to use corruption to tarnish the democratic system itself. As mentioned above, corruption was pervasive throughout Nepal's second democratic experiment and the political leadership themselves were involved in it. While terminating democracy in 2002 and during the royal regime, King Gyanendra cited corruption as a reason behind the royal takeover (Shah, 2005).

5. Concluding Remarks

King Birendra acted as a semi-loyal actor after 1990 and did his best to disrupt democracy before he was assassinated in 2001. Following Birendra's footprints, King Gyanendra stood against democracy. In fact, he was looking for an appropriate opportunity to strike down democracy. The failure of the government to hold the parliamentary elections at the stipulated time gave him such an opportunity. Therefore, he unconstitutionally assumed executive power on 2 October 2002. The case of Nepal, thus, provides support to what Linz and Stepan (1978) claim that semi-system actors play a decisive role in the process of a democratic breakdown and become the immediate beneficiary of the regime change.

Behind the actions of the King was the inability of weak loyal actors to put him under check through political pressure. Nepali loyal actors became weak because of their disunity, unmanaged party factionalism, governmental instability, ethnic exclusion, and pervasive corruption. Of the indicators that made loyal actors weak in the 1990s, party factionalism was the most significant. As mentioned above, Nepal witnessed governmental instability throughout the 1990s. The instability was the product of the inability of system actors to manage factionalism. Governmental instability led to the loss of democratic institutions in several ways. First, the performance of the government was undermined. Second, absolute monarchy rather than democracy was seen to be the engine of stability and development. Third, democratic political leaders were denigrated as power grabbers and political entrepreneurs. After the restoration of democracy, Nepali democratic actors promulgated a constitution and held the first parliamentary elections in a year. However, they could not maintain unity afterwards. The disunity among loyal actors strongly factored into dismantling Nepal's democratic breakdown in 2002 as well.

Nepal has performed historic democratic exercises since its third democratic transition. The exercises include settlement of the Maoist insurgency, promulgation of the constitution through the constituent assembly, inclusive policies and mechanisms, several peaceful power transfers, and administration of two free and fair parliamentary elections. Most importantly, Nepal has done away with the monarchy to ensure the longevity of democracy. Yet, Nepal's third democratic experiment is less likely to endure so long as the existing low level of economic standards of Nepali people persists. Two unconstitutional dissolutions of the House of Representatives and extreme governmental instability after 2008 further indicate that democratic stability in Nepal is still under question.

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Intelligence Strategy Analysis for Security Enhancement at Immigration Checkpoints: A Case Study of Soekarno-Hatta Airport Autogate

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Abstract

The Soekarno-Hatta Airport played a strategic role as the main entry point for foreign nationals into Indonesia amidst increasing global mobility. The Autogate system was introduced to enhance efficiency and security at Immigration Checkpoints. However, challenges such as document misuse, lack of cross-sector data integration, and gaps in validation remain key concerns. This situation highlighted the importance of intelligence strategies in detecting and addressing security threats to support national stability. This research aimed to analyze intelligence strategies to enhance security at the Immigration Checkpoints of Soekarno-Hatta Airport through the implementation of the Autogate system. The study employed a descriptive-analytical qualitative method with a case study approach, using in-depth interviews, direct observation, and analysis of policy documents and scientific publications. The data were analyzed thematically to evaluate system weaknesses and the effectiveness of intelligence strategies. The research findings showed that intelligence strategies combining manual interviews with technology-based analysis proved effective in detecting potential security threats. However, several weaknesses were identified, including a lack of cross-sector data integration, gaps in document validation, and challenges in officer training. The study recommends strengthening inter-agency cooperation, advancing technology development, and restricting Autogate use for foreign nationals from high-risk countries to support national security more effectively.

Keywords: Autogate, Immigration Checkpoint, Intelligence Strategy, National Security

1. Introduction

Soekarno-Hatta Airport as the main international airport in Indonesia has a strategic role as the main entry point for foreign nationals visiting Indonesia. It's strategically positioned at the core of Southeast Asia region and extensive global connectivity. This airport is the main gateway for various international activities, both for

business, tourism, education, and transit purposes (Asari et al., 2024). Related to increasing global mobility, the role of Soekarno-Hatta Airport is very vital not only as a means of transportation, but also as the front line in maintaining national security.

In every year, thousands of foreign nationals enter through Soekarno-Hatta Airport. It is bringing potential economic benefits such as increased investment and tourism. However, the high influx of foreign nationals also brings major challenges, especially in the context of security. Many cases such as the entry of foreign nationals with fake documents, visa abuse, and involvement in illegal activities, such as human trafficking or terrorism threats, show the importance of strict supervision at this point. The Immigration Checkpoint at Soekarno-Hatta Airport must be able to carry out a dual function which is providing fast and efficient services to international travelers, while ensuring that no security threats escape supervision (Hamdi, 2023).

Autogate technology has become a significant innovation in improving the efficiency and security of the immigration process at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. In January 2024, the Directorate General of Immigration inaugurated 78 new Autogate units at this airport, with details of 52 units in Terminal 3 arrivals, 16 units in Terminal 3 departures, and 10 units in Terminal 2. This facility can be used by Indonesian citizens and foreign citizens. The condition for foreign citizens immigration inspection times lasting only 15-25 seconds per passer (IMMIGRATION, 2024).

Autogate utilizes facial recognition technology integrated with Border Control Management, thus supporting immigration supervision at crossings. To use Autogate, foreign nationals are required to have an electronic passport and visa submitted through the official Indonesian Immigration e-visa website. Meanwhile, Indonesian citizens can use Autogate with an electronic passport or a regular passport (Hakim, 2019).

The implementation of Autogate not only speeds up the inspection process but also increases security by minimizing direct contact between passers-by and immigration officers. This is thereby reducing the risk of human error and potential abuse of authority. In addition, this system is able to detect individuals on the watch list through integration with the Interpol database and the national prevention and control system (Ongis Travel, 2024).

The immigration screening process at Soekarno-Hatta Airport faces complex challenges, especially in detecting foreign nationals with unclear or suspicious arrival purposes. Although Autogate technology has been implemented to improve efficiency and security in certain cases show that this system has not been fully able to prevent potential threats. One of the biggest challenges is the existence of WNA who try to enter Indonesia using fake documents or exploiting loopholes in the system. For example, the cases involving foreign citizens who managed to pass through Autogate, but then attracted the attention of officers because they could not provide a clear reason regarding the purpose of their visit.

Based on data from the Directorate General of Immigration, immigration violations have continued to occur in recent years. Specifically at the Soekarno-Hatta Immigration Office in 2022, it was recorded that 1,222 foreign nationals were refused entry to Indonesia, while 3,551 foreign nationals and 568 Indonesian citizens had their departures postponed for immigration reasons (Soekarnohatta Immigration, 2022). In 2023, the number of foreign nationals refused entry decreased slightly to 1,169 people, but departure delays increased significantly with 6,451 Indonesian citizens being postponed (Soekarnohatta Immigration, 2023). In addition, administrative immigration actions, including deportation are carried out against hundreds of violators each year. These cases reflect the major challenges in maintaining border security amid increasing international mobility.

Further data shows that in 2023, the five countries with the most deported citizens were China with 507 people, Nigeria with 420 people, Malaysia with 332 people, Vietnam with 142 people, and India with 93 people. The high number of deportations indicates a significant trend of violations from these countries. This reflects the great challenge of maintaining border security amidst increasing international mobility, especially by utilizing systems such as Autogate which still have loopholes for abuse by some groups of foreign nationals.

Situations like this highlight the weaknesses of the Autogate system, which tends to rely on the validity of biometric documents without considering factors such as face-to-face interviews or behavioral analysis. Additional challenges come from the lack of cross-agency data integration, which makes the identification of individuals on international watch lists less than optimal. In some cases, sectoral egos between immigration authorities and airlines also exacerbate the situation, especially when passenger data is incomplete or not submitted on time.

The implementation of intelligence strategies in screening foreign citizens who will enter Indonesia through Immigration Checkpoints has a very important role in maintaining the stability of national resilience in this modern era. Along with the increasing flow of global mobility and open access between countries, Indonesia has become one of the main destinations for business people, tourists, and foreign workers. Behind the economic and cultural benefits brought by the flow of foreign citizens, there are major challenges related to potential security threats such as drug smuggling, terrorism, human trafficking, and visa abuse. Intelligence strategies are key to mitigating these risks, especially at main entry points such as Soekarno-Hatta Airport, which is the gateway for most foreign citizens coming to Indonesia (Setyawan, 2023).

This study aims to analyze how intelligence strategies are applied in detecting and handling suspicious foreign nationals citizens, especially at the Immigration Checkpoint of Soekarno-Hatta Airport. This strategy is important considering the challenges faced in screening individuals with unclear arrival purposes or potential threats to national security. This study also aims to identify weaknesses in the Autogate system which has provided efficiency in the inspection process, still has loopholes that can be exploited by irresponsible parties.

2. Literature Review

Immigration intelligence strategy is important in overcoming the problem of human smuggling, especially at the Immigration Checkpoint of Soekarno-Hatta Airport. Indonesia as a strategic transit country in international migration movements often faces major challenges in border control, where human smuggling often occurs due to minimal data integration between institutions and weak early detection of suspicious individuals (Asari et al., 2024). Intelligence strategies based on behavioral analysis, monitoring travel patterns, and data-based immigration technology are the main solutions to tightening supervision.

The implementation of Autogate as an automated immigration inspection system at Soekarno-Hatta Airport is an effort to modernize and increase the efficiency of immigration services. This technology allows the passport verification process and biometric identification to be carried out independently by passers-by without direct interaction with immigration officers. However, research by Hakim (2019) shows that this system still has limitations in detecting the use of fake documents and suspicious travel patterns. The lack of integration of the Autogate system with international surveillance databases, such as Interpol or I-24/7, allows individuals with a history of immigration violations to still pass through inspection without adequate detection.

Although technology has brought progress in immigration control, a study by Asari et al. (2024) emphasized that the role of officers in selective interviews and behavioral analysis is still very much needed to improve detection accuracy. Several countries have begun developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Autogate, which can analyze travel patterns, detect anomalies in travel documents, and provide early warnings to immigration officers. Integration of this system with global immigration intelligence is expected to increase effectiveness in preventing human smuggling in Indonesia.

Based on various studies that have been conducted, it can be concluded that immigration intelligence strategies have a vital role in maintaining national security. The effectiveness of Autogate in immigration supervision can be improved through a combination of AI-based technology, integration of global intelligence systems, and increasing the capacity of officers in detecting suspicious behavior. With these steps, immigration supervision in Indonesia, especially at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, can be more optimal in facing the challenges of global migration and transnational crime.

3. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach to analyze the implementation of intelligence strategies in detecting and handling suspicious foreign nationals at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport Immigration Checkpoint. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with immigration officers and direct observation of the use of Autogate while secondary data include case reports, policies, and immigration procedures.

Data analysis was conducted thematically using vulnerability theory to evaluate Autogate weaknesses. Comparative studies were applied to compare cases of foreign nationals who passed through with incomplete administration and those who were detected through manual interviews. The results of the analysis are expected to identify system weaknesses, evaluate the effectiveness of intelligence strategies, and provide recommendations to improve security and efficiency at Immigration Checkpoint.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Foreign Nationals Cases at Autogate

Autogate System at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport Immigration Checkpoint is designed to improve efficiency and simplify the immigration inspection process (Nursanto et al., 2024). However, several cases show that this system is often misused by foreign nationals to avoid in-depth checks and exploit system weaknesses. Here are three cases that illustrate the challenges faced;

4.1.1 Case 1: Initials ZZ

ZZ is a citizen of the People's Republic of China, arrived in Indonesia using a B1 index visa (Visa On Arrival) via CEA Airlines from Shanghai in 2025. After arriving at Immigration Checkpoint Terminal 3, ZZ immediately used Autogate to scan his passport, adjust his biometrics, and validate his visa. Although he passed Autogate, his hasty and panicked behavior caught the attention of immigration officers. A manual check revealed that ZZ did not have a valid return ticket or hotel reservation. When interviewed further, he claimed to have come for a vacation. However, other evidence showed that ZZ actually intended to conduct a business visit and inspect the machine, which violated the B1 visa permit. ZZ used Autogate to avoid in-depth interviews and facilitate entry into Indonesia even though his administration was incomplete.

ZZ's actions are contrary to Article 27 paragraph (1) of the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights Number 9 of 2024 concerning Procedures for Immigration Examination of Persons Entering or Leaving Indonesian Territory. The article states that every foreigner entering Indonesian territory must undergo an immigration examination, including an examination of the suitability of the purpose and purpose of arrival with the visa held. In ZZ's case, the purpose of his arrival to conduct a business visit with a B1 index visa (Visa On Arrival) was clearly not appropriate, thus violating applicable regulations.

4.1.2 Case 2: Initials LB

LB is a citizen of the People's Republic of China, is a user of a D2 index visa (multiple entry business visa). He arrived via XA airline from Fuzhou in 2025 and used Autogate for passport control. After passing Autogate, LB went to the Polsusim (Special Immigration Police) desk to request an entry stamp in the form of a sticker on his passport, even though an electronic entry stamp had been given to his email when registering for his e-visa. Thus, after LB passed the Autogate machine, the entry stamp was automatically sent to his email or to his company's email. LB argued that the stamp was needed for his company's travel expense reimbursement claim. After an in-depth interview, it was revealed that LB did not have enough hotel reservations until the end of his stay. LB's company even asked officers to ignore requests for additional hotel reservations. This case shows how Autogate is often used to enter with incomplete documents without going through a strict manual interview.

4.1.3 Case 3: Initials CH

CH is a citizen of the People's Republic of China with a B2 index visa (visit visa on arrival for business meeting purposes), arrived at Soekarno-Hatta Airport in 2024 via XA airline from Fuzhou. When his passport failed to be scanned at the Autogate, CH refused to be directed to the manual counter and even jumped over the Autogate to avoid the long queue. After being ambushed by Polsusim (Special Immigration Police) officers, CH was taken to the supervisor's room for further interrogation. During the interview, CH was suspected of being drunk because the supervisor smelled a strong odor of alcohol. After being confirmed with his sponsor in Indonesia, it was discovered that CH had consumed alcohol before entering the immigration area. Based on the violation of Article 127 of Permenkumham Number 9 of 2024 concerning procedures for checking entry and exit of Indonesian territory paragraphs 1 and 2 "Every foreigner who enters Indonesian territory is required to comply with the rules and follow the directions of the examining officer in order to maintain order in the examination process", CH was finally refused entry to Indonesia because he was considered to have disturbed public order. This case indicates that some foreign nationals are using Autogate as a quick and easy way to avoid applicable regulations.

These three cases show that Autogate is useful for speeding up the entry process, the system still has weaknesses that are often exploited by foreign nationals. Behaviors such as entering without complete administration, avoiding manual interviews, and violating regulations show that Autogate cannot completely replace the role of manual inspection by immigration officers. The weaknesses of this system show the importance of implementing a stronger intelligence strategy, including cross-sector data integration and officer training to detect signs of suspicion more effectively.

4.2 Intelligence Strategy Analysis

The implementation of an intelligence strategy in the screening process of foreign nationals at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport Immigration Checkpoint is an important step to overcome various weaknesses in the Autogate system. This strategy involves a combined approach between direct examination by officers and the use of technology for in-depth data analysis.

The manual inspection approach, such as direct interviews and inspections by immigration officers, allows officers to dig deeper into information, especially when foreign nationals show suspicious behavior or have incomplete administration. In the case of ZZ, for example, the manual interview revealed a purpose of arrival that did not match the type of visa used. Officers can use the interview to identify inconsistencies in answers, verify supporting documents, or observe non-verbal behavior that reflects nervousness or panic. Although this method takes longer, manual interviews are a very effective tool in detecting individuals who try to exploit weaknesses in the Autogate system.

Meanwhile, the use of technology is an important element in this strategy. Data-based profiling allows immigration authorities to evaluate travel history, purpose of arrival, and potential risks associated with certain foreign nationals. Biometric technology such as facial recognition applied to Autogate is an important part of this approach, as it can match the identity of the crosser with data stored in international databases such as the Interpol watch list (Nurkumalawati, 2020).

The effectiveness of the intelligence strategy in handling these cases shows significant results, although there is still room for improvement. In the cases of ZZ, LB, and CH, the application of a combination of intelligence successfully identified and handled violations that had the potential to threaten public order. However, it also revealed loopholes that were often exploited by foreign nationals. Many of them became too comfortable with Autogate so that they were reluctant to follow rules such as manual queues, officer directions, or completing travel administration. This shows that even though Autogate is running in real-time, this system has not been able to prevent abuse completely.

One recommended solution is to limit the use of Autogate for certain foreign nationals based on the record of violations committed by foreign nationals in Indonesia. Countries whose citizens have a high history of violations can be excluded from the use of Autogate. With this policy, foreign nationals from these countries are required to

go through a manual inspection route so that more in-depth checks can be carried out, including direct interviews to obtain further information.

In addition, training for immigration officers is still needed to ensure they are able to detect signs of non-technical threats that are not detected by technology. This includes the ability to read suspicious behavior, as well as handling foreign nationals who try to abuse the Autogate facility. With these steps, the use of Autogate can be safer and still support the main objectives of efficiency and security at TPI.

4.3 Identification of System Weaknesses

Autogate system at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport Immigration Checkpoint still has several weaknesses that can be exploited by foreign nationals citizens with suspicious intentions. One of the main problems is that the system only verifies electronic documents such as passports and visas without checking the purpose of arrival in more depth. This system does not have the feature to verify more complex details, such as the suitability of the type of visa to the purpose of arrival or the availability of other supporting documents. As a result, foreign citizens with documents that appear valid on the surface can easily pass the initial check without being detected.

Other weaknesses is the lack of restrictions on Autogate access. Any foreign country, as long as they have an e-visa and an electronic passport, can use Autogate without any additional process. This opens up loopholes for foreign nationals who would otherwise require more in-depth checks to still be able to enter Indonesian territory without hindrance. The Autogate system is also unable to detect more subtle administrative violations such as the misuse of a visitor visa for inappropriate purposes.

Another weakness lies in the management of passenger manifest data provided by airlines. This manifest should be sent through the Passenger Profiling Information System an online application designed to collect passenger data from airlines and send it to immigration before arrival. This system simplifies the profiling process by providing data on the number of passengers, country of origin, and other details relevant to immigration checks.

Unfortunately, some airlines often do not fill in the data in Passenger Profiling Information System completely or even do not send the data at all. For example, national airlines such as Garuda Indonesia are known to rarely fill in passenger data in it. The delay or incompleteness of filling in this data has a direct impact on the profiling process carried out by immigration, because officers do not have access to real-time passenger information to identify citizens who have the potential to pose a security risk. When manifest data is not available or incomplete, the profiling task becomes less than optimal, and this increases the risk of suspicious foreigners slipping through Autogate undetected. The main responsibility for managing Autogate lies entirely with immigration as the core business. However, the success of this system also depends heavily on the accuracy and timeliness of the manifest data provided by the airline.

These weaknesses indicate that Autogate speeds up the inspection process, it is not enough to ensure overall security. The solutions to overcome this problem are developing a more integrated system, intensive training for immigration officers, and formulating policies that support coordination. In addition, a more strategic step is to implement a selection of certain foreign national subjects. Countries with a history of high violations or whose citizens often abuse entry permits can be excluded from the use of Autogate . Citizens from these countries are required to go through a manual inspection route so that a more in-depth interview process and stricter supervision can be carried out. This policy will strengthen the security system and reduce the risk of misuse of Autogate facilities by irresponsible parties.

This is in line with the principle of selective policy stipulated in Law Number 6 of 2011 concerning Immigration, where Indonesia only grants entry permits to foreign nationals who have a positive impact on the interests of the country (Law No. 6 of 2011). Manual inspection has a strategic role in selecting potentially problematic foreign nationals, ensuring that only individuals who meet the administrative requirements and the appropriate purpose of arrival are permitted to enter Indonesian territory. By referring to this policy, the immigration selection and supervision process can be further tightened to maintain national stability and security.

Specifically for the Soekarno-Hatta Immigration Office data shows that Nigerian and Chinese citizens are the groups that most often commit immigration violations during 2024. There were a total of 267 immigration violations, consisting of 251 administrative immigration actions and 16 cases that were subject to pro justitia actions by the Immigration Intelligence and Enforcement Division (Soekarnohatta Immigration, 2025). This fact strengthens the urgency to implement a policy of restricting the use of Autogate for certain citizens and prioritizing manual checks on them to ensure better security at the Soekarno-Hatta Airport immigration checkpoints.

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BRICS as an Alternative to Western Dominance in Global Government

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Abstract

The emergence of BRICS in the structure of the global order is a new dynamic that challenges the dominance of the West. BRICS was born in the midst of slowing economic growth in the G-8 countries. The purpose of this study is to analyse the role of BRICS cooperation initiatives in influencing Western dominance of the international order by providing insights into BRICS efforts to reduce dependence on the dollar and exploring the impact of these efforts on global financial markets in terms of increased use of local currencies in trade. The increasingly influential emergence of BRICS in the structure of the global order is analysed using hegemony theory and balance of power theory as analytical frameworks. These theories underline the idea that the influence of emerging hegemon becomes a counterbalancing alternative to existing dominance, leading to multipolarity in the global order. This study provides valuable insights into the role and influence of the emergence of new hegemon candidates in the context of global economic governance. The author adopts a qualitative research approach using secondary data sources. The research findings show that BRICS has the potential to become a new hegemon capable of balancing Western dominance. However, there are several challenges that need to be addressed.

Keywords: Balance of Power, BRICS, Global Structure, global financial policy, Hegemon, Western Dominance

1. Introduction

The termination of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the commencement of a novel epoch in the domain of international politics. The pre-eminence of Western nations in the international system exerted a profound influence on the evolution of a new international order by means of a restructuring process, giving rise to international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN). These institutions were conceived with the objective of perpetuating Western dominance within the new world order, comprising the United States and European countries. The process of domination, or hegemony, is perpetuated through the dissemination of knowledge and beliefs via habituation and indoctrination, resulting in their integration into the collective consciousness of the population. The hegemonic bloc that underpins the internal system is not solely based on economic (capitalist) and political (state) power, but also incorporates significant elements of civil society (Robert Cox, 2022). The fulfilment of access to economic and political space

for the proletariat class is a fundamental reason for the state that requires the basis of social class supremacy, and it is here that the process of power that makes knowledge and mobilisation of resources as the legitimacy of social class becomes evident. From this process of ideological domination, a structure of domination is formed or called hegemony (Mckinnon, 2022).

The ongoing shifts in the global order, predominantly influenced by Western nations, have frequently resulted in unilateral favouritism towards them, thereby engendering economic interdependence and inequality among developing countries (Sachs, 2015). This economic interdependence is perpetuated through the domination of the international trade system, investment, and the oversight of global financial institutions (Stiglitz, 2002). The resultant marginalisation experienced by these developing countries subsequently precipitates the pursuit of alternative international systems that can accommodate their interests in a fairer manner and engender more equitable economic growth opportunities. In the context of the preeminence of Western nations in the international financial system, the phenomenon of inflation can be attributed to the escalating US Dollar exchange rate and the weakening of a nation's currency. Consequently, this phenomenon has emerged as a pressing contemporary issue that demands rigorous investigation within the domain of international relations scholarship.

In the last two decades, a new dynamic has emerged that challenges Western dominance. Changes in the global political landscape have also challenged American dominance (Harahap et al., 2024). The presence of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a response to Western hegemony within the international order. The formalisation of this alliance was initiated in 2009, as evidenced by the inaugural summit held on 16 June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia (Singh, S., 2017).

The formation of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) emerged in response to the prevailing economic challenges faced by several major economies, namely the G-8 (a coalition of eight of the world's most advanced countries, including France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and the European Union). The establishment of this alliance aimed to provide an alternative global entity that would be characterised by fairness and inclusivity, particularly in regard to economic associations. This initiative was designed to empower developing countries to navigate the global financial and trade systems, which were predominantly influenced by Western nations. One such initiative is the establishment of alternative institutions such as the New Development Bank (NDB), which aims to finance all sustainable development and infrastructure projects by member countries and developing countries (Griffith Jones, 2014). This creates an opportunity for developing countries to gain a greater voice in determining the direction of the global economy and a fairer distribution of voting rights in global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 2024). The foreign ministers of the four original members – Brazil, Russia, India and China – convened in New York City in September 2006. This was followed by a series of meetings that culminated in the inaugural BRIC Summit, held on 16 June 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The summit was attended by the Chinese President Hu Jintao, the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and the Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. In the subsequent year, 2010, South Africa initiated the process of joining the BRIC group and officially became a member of the BRICS on 24 December 2010. The current membership of the BRICS group consists of eleven full members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Iran and Indonesia.

2. Method

The present article aims to analyse the role of BRICS cooperation initiatives in influencing Western domination in the international order by using Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Balance of Power theory. The method employed in this research is a qualitative approach, with data collection being carried out using the literature study method. The data analysis technique used in this research is an interactive data analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1992). This technique consists of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data collection in the research became part of an interactive process, and secondary data analysis was also used in this article to ensure the research objectives were achieved.

The theory of global hegemony created by Antonio Gramsci outlines how dominant forces in society, including in the global context, maintain their power not only through military and economic power, but also through cultural influence, ideology, and consensus building. In Gramsci's understanding hegemony is an organisation of consensus where submission is obtained through the control of the ideology of the hegemonic class (Simon, 2004). So that hegemony in Gramsci's view is not related to the relationship of domination by using power. But it means a relationship of consent using leadership over cultural, political, and ideological control and social norms.

Hegemony takes place when the lower classes, including the proletariat, have accepted and imitated the way of life, way of thinking, and outlook of the elite group that dominates and exploits them. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, will trigger obedience, an attitude of accepting the situation without questioning it critically. This is because the ideology exposed by the hegemonic class is simply swallowed whole by the lower class. A class group is said to be hegemonic if it gains the approval of other social forces and classes, by creating and maintaining a system of alliances through political and ideological struggles. According to Gramsci, the working class can only become a hegemonic class when it takes into account the interests of other social classes and forces and reconciles them with its own.

In order to become a hegemonic class, three phases must be undergone, namely the economic, political and hegemonic phases (Simon, 1999: 34-36; Salamini, 1981: 33, 55-56). The initial phase is termed the economic or negative phase, and is a materialistic area, an area of inevitability, i.e. something that is inevitable for humans. This phase subsequently evolves into an economic moment that elevates a particular class's awareness of political hegemony. The emergence of historical alternatives is contingent on the advancement of production methods, such as the transition from manual to mechanised production. However, it is imperative to recognise that this process does not inherently result in an automatic transformation of history; rather, it is a sequence of events that must be followed by a political phase. The second phase, termed the political phase, is characterised by the dynamics of political forces that facilitate the identification of various levels of homogeneity and political consciousness that a potentially hegemonic group must achieve. The third phase, the hegemony phase or positive phase, is characterised by the establishment of a new worldview creation process that provides the masses with categories of thought and behaviour, and the subsequent formation of a new worldview. This phase is also referred to as the ideological hegemony phase. The nature, scope and outcome of a revolution are determined by the superstructural elements of consciousness (a new conception of the world), ideology and culture. Ideological hegemony can thus be defined as an organisation of consciousness that is distinguished from the structuring domination of material forces. In the hegemony phase, a class develops a form of political solidarity in which the interests of the group apply not only to the present, but also to the future, and even transcend the boundaries of the group and touch the interests of other subordinate groups. The process of hegemony is characterised by the development and expansion of interests, with the consideration of the interests of subaltern groups (populations that are socially, politically and geographically subjugated by a dominant group). It is important to note that if the interests of subaltern groups are not taken into account, then the realisation of hegemony is not possible.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be employed to elucidate the manner in which the BRICS nations seek to challenge Western domination by introducing alternative economic and financial systems. The establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the promotion of local currencies in international trade by BRICS member countries are indicative of an effort to reduce their reliance on the US dollar. Moreover, the BRICS endeavour to redistribute the balance of global economic power, which is currently dominated by the United States, thereby ensuring that power is not concentrated in a single country or currency.

The opportunity for China to assume a balancing role is significant, given its emergence as a superpower, as evidenced by its economic, political, and defence capabilities, which have expanded over the past decade. Conversely, the United States, as articulated in its 2022 Defence Strategy, characterises China as a 'major competitor', purportedly seeking to influence the prevailing order through economic, military, technological, and diplomatic means. Moreover, the EU declaration asserts that China, in view of its support for Russia, is evolving into a 'direct adversary' of the Western bloc (Prorokovich, 2023).

The multilateralism strategy of the People's Republic of China is being realised through the implementation of a new regionalism, as evidenced by the establishment of novel structures and institutions that empower China to assume a significant role in the global landscape. This phenomenon is exemplified by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) alliance, wherein China, Russia, and India, who were previously regarded as secondary to the United States, are progressively developing structured power and assuming a strategic role in the global political economy. The strategy of multilateralism serves to mitigate concerns regarding China's perceived role as an aggressive nation.

The emergence of the BRICS+ configuration, which will expand to include a growing number of actors interested in establishing a balance of power in international relations, is a key factor in this process. By forging strategic alliances with Russia and engaging in various multilateral formats, China has been instrumental in shaping and accelerating the establishment of this balance of power (Prorokovich, 2023).

Every state has the principle to protect and realise its interests, but when it is not ideal to do so, it is ready to cooperate with other actors or negotiate through international organisations. Of course, to a certain extent. For, as Kenneth Waltz notes, actors are not only forced to ask themselves, 'will they win?', but also: 'who will win more?' (Waltz, 1979, pp. 107-113). By establishing a balance of power and limiting US actions, non-Western actors hoped to gain more. The choice offered to them thirty years ago was to project their interests in a clearly hierarchical system, where they would be able to achieve the status of regional powers with greater or lesser influence on global processes. According to the changes that have taken place, some of them (China, Russia and India to begin with) now regard themselves as great powers and by their concerted actions establish a balance of power against the US to legitimise this new status. In this way they are also working towards the eventual transformation of the structure of the world political system from unipolar to multipolar. To gain insight into China's potential access to global leadership, Stekić (2023) describes the layers of its foreign policy, which allows for a deeper understanding of its engagement in different segments of the international arena. With this approach, the US will eventually be forced to recognise equal status with China. According to Stekić, characterising China as a 'hesitant hegemon' and stating that despite its global influence, China shows reluctance to fully embrace the role of a traditional unipolar superpower in its security and foreign policy.

The solution to the aforementioned question can be found in China's strategy, which is characterised by a gradual and patient approach to establishing a balance of power in international relations. The prioritisation of internal development has resulted in an increase in economic power, thus creating an economic balance. Simultaneously, the expansion of economic power has facilitated increased investment in strengthening military capabilities, allowing for more effective protection of economic interests. This increased military power, in turn, has supported successful efforts to shape a favourable and desirable international landscape through various strategic decisions, initiatives and partnerships.

3. Discussion

3.1. Policy and Impact of Using BRICS Local Currencies in Global Transaction Schemes against the US dollar

The dependence of international financial institutions on the use of the US dollar allows for economic instability. In the economic field, its influence can be seen from the hegemony of the American dollar as the main currency of international trade and the world financial centre located on Wall Street (Kartini, 2016). The dominance of the USD, of course, also causes dependence on the need for USD for reserves and payment instruments for transactions between countries to increase, which is also further exacerbated by the issuance of the policy of the Fed (The Federal Reserve System), the strongest central banking institution in the world with a global impact by issuing (printing) more USD and fluctuating interest rate changes and vulnerability to fluctuations in the dollar exchange rate.

The initiative to launch a BRICS currency is meant to facilitate transactions between members and outside the region as well as a major effort to reduce dependence on the US dollar in international trade. Although the implementation of BRICS currency is likely to take place in the next decade or two in order to realise economic

integration. One thing that distinguishes BRICS currencies from the currencies of other countries is that the materials used in BRICS currencies are gold and rare earth metals (LTJ). This material is used to create a more stable alternative means of payment that is not affected by major currency fluctuations in the initial BRICS transactions (timesindonesia.co.id, 2019). So as one of the first steps taken by the BRICS alliance in reducing the need for USD is the use of local currencies of BRICS members for trade transactions.

The policies and strategic moves by the initiator, the BRICS, have the potential to exert considerable influence in the BRICS region. However, the US dollar still controls global foreign exchange reserves and remains the main currency in world commodity trading. This is indicated by the fact that based on table 1 of the Global Foreign Exchange Reserve Allocation data by the IMF uploaded on the CNBC Indonesia website in 2024 amounting to 6687.11 US \$ Billion in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Table 1: Global Foreign Exchange Reserve Allocation Data

No.	Currency	Q4 2022 (US\$ Billion)	Q4 2023 (US\$ Billion)	Change %
1	US Dollar	6460.21	6687.11	3.51
2	Euro	2252.06	2287.57	1.58
3	Renminbi China	287.81	261.73	-9.06
4	Yen Japan	608.17	652.90	3.74
5	Pound Sterling	543.11	553.91	1.99
6	Australian Dollar	217.62	241.78	11.38
7	Canadian Dollar	262.62	295.25	12.42
8	Franc Swiss	25.31	26.38	4.23
9	Other currencies	383.64	442.77	15.41

This new currency policy is part of a broader trend of developing countries seeking to reduce reliance on the US dollar and expand the use of local or regional currencies when conducting trade transactions. While the impact on the dollar at the global level may still not be significant, this policy could be a catalyst in further shifting the use of the dollar currency in the international monetary ecosystem. In November, the yuan became the fourth most used currency in global payments, doubling from its 2022 level to a record 4.61. Quoted in CNBC Indonesia, according to Bonnie Chan, CEO of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and Clearing Limited in a panel on Tuesday (25/6/2024), for the Chinese yuan to be used more globally, the currency needs more 'applications' such as for stocks and bonds. Then citing Business Insider, renminbi (the global use of the Chinese yuan) accounts for 42% of all foreign currency trading on Russia's largest exchange. The data was first reported by Reuters on Thursday (18/1/2024), citing data compiled by Russian news outlet Kommersant Daily. This suggests that while there are obstacles in changing global trading patterns across the board, the use of this policy could accelerate the reduction of dollar dependence in emerging markets.

3.2. Contribution of BRICS Financial Institutions in Financing Infrastructure in Developing Countries

The BRICS Development Bank, also known as the New Development Bank (NDB), was established with an authorised capital of US\$100 billion and a large foreign exchange reserve of US\$100 billion through a Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). The purpose of this financial institution is to promote economic development through infrastructure development in several emerging BRICS member countries. This move was likened to a bold political act that challenged the world economic hegemony of the IMF and World Bank (Cattaneo et al., 2015). CRAs provide an additional safety net and increase confidence in markets and the ability of these countries to manage financial crises (Budi, 2024). Through CRAs, NDBs can provide foreign currency liquidity to their domestic banks during a financial crisis and reduce pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

The New Development Bank (NDB) agreement states that the purpose and function of the institution, which is to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS member countries and other developing countries (Article 2) through loans, guarantees, equity participation, and other financial instruments (Article 3-b) in cooperation with international organisations and other financial entities (Article 2-b). As such, the NDB aims to establish partnerships with national and regional development banks and the World Bank Group, in co-financing activities in both the private and public sectors. The NDB will handle 50-70 projects between 2017 and 2021 under the NDB Plans (Xiujun, X., 2017).

The NDB will play an important role in financing infrastructure development in member countries by offering alternative sources of funding for member countries and promoting sustainable development and enhancing co-operation and partnership among BRICS countries. The NDB thus supports developing countries by providing financial assistance to developing countries within BRICS. The NDB is projected to have a marked impact on multilateral lending, and thus on global governance (Reisen, 2015). With the implication that the NDB's lending stock could potentially reach about two-thirds that of the World Bank.

In Brazil, the NDB plays a role in promoting the expansion and modernisation of power distribution infrastructure including High Voltage (HV) distribution networks and substations; Low Voltage (LV) distribution networks, automation equipment and transformers; and new house connection equipment, to be implemented in the state of São

Paulo (New Development Bank, 2024). The project will contribute primarily to SDG 7: (i) ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services; (ii) double the rate of global energy efficiency improvements; and (iii) expand infrastructure and improve technologies to supply modern and sustainable energy services to all people in developing countries. Financing from NDB amounting to BRL 1,041 million or equivalent to RMB 1,425 million).

The NDB provided financing assistance to the Ufa East Exit Project in Russia totalling USD 68.8 million. The project is aimed at helping the city of Ufa become better connected and address the issue of widening gaps due to increasing traffic volumes and inadequate road infrastructure. The transport corridor will connect industrial centres in the north and west of the city with residential areas in the east. The project includes a 1.2-kilometre road tunnel connecting to Prospekt Salavat Yulaev in the west, a 2.5-kilometre bridge across the Ufa River, a 10.2-kilometre road connecting to the M-5 federal highway in the east, toll collection points, road maintenance facilities, and automated systems for traffic control (New Development Bank, 2017).

In India, the NDB funds infrastructure projects that include railway construction, renewable energy, and sanitation projects that not only accelerate economic recovery but also create jobs (Radhika Desai, 2022). The New Development Bank (NDB) has also played a significant role in reducing tensions between China and India by providing loans to both countries for their domestic projects of funding infrastructure and sustainable development projects in its member countries worth USD 30 billion in the next five years, which contributed to the stabilisation of bilateral relations amid the conflict. The NDB thus serves as an important bridge in overcoming political differences and promoting co-operation between China and India despite tensions on both sides.

In China, the NDB helps finance green urban development projects that focus on environmental sustainability, and Health that also contribute to economic recovery. One example is the NDB supporting the Luoyang Metro project which is designed to address the challenges of traffic congestion and to improve the city's connectivity. This will reduce the level of traffic congestion in Luoyang and to improve the city's overall mobility, accessibility and connectivity. The project was implemented between 2017 and 2021 and became operational on 28 March 2021 through a state project loan of USD 300 million (New Development Bank, 2018).

Through the IDC Renewable Energy Sector Development Project in South Africa, the NDB proposed a loan to the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa Limited (IDC) and the National Financial Intermediary (NFI) in South Africa. This aims to realise efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its emissions growth trend by 34% by 2020, and by 42% by 2025. Through a two-step lending modality scheme will be utilised by the IDC for follow-on loans to identified sub-projects including the solar, biomass and wind energy sectors. The NDB will

provide loans without state guarantees to NFIs and IDCs, totalling up to ZAR 1.15 billion (New Development Bank, 2019).

4. Result

The presence of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries has the potential to become a new hegemon in the global political economy, as evidenced by its contributions to several fields and its role as a counterweight to traditional economic powers. The BRICS countries have succeeded in creating space for the improvement of more pragmatic and cooperative relations, especially in the context of joint economic development. The presence of the BRICS countries makes a significant contribution in various fields and has the potential to become a new hegemon power that can influence the map of the global political economy. As a group that includes countries with growing economic power, BRICS has a balancing role in international relations and challenges the dominance of traditional economic powers. Through creating space for more pragmatic and cooperative collaboration, BRICS has succeeded in strengthening relations among its member countries, especially in the context of joint economic development. This suggests that BRICS is not only focused on the national interests of individual members, but is also committed to creating a place for sustainable economic progress.

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Breaking the Cycle: The Role of Family Communication in Preventing Diabetes Mellitus Across Generations in Indonesia

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Abstract

Diabetes Mellitus (DM) remains a major global health concern, with familial risk playing a crucial role in its prevention and management. This study examines how family communication shapes diabetes risk perception and preventive behaviors, highlighting the bottom-up flow of health information from children to parents. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with families in Surakarta, Indonesia, revealing two primary communication patterns: anxious and responsive. Anxious families avoid discussions about diabetes due to fear, stigma, or emotional distress, leading to low engagement in preventive actions. In contrast, responsive families embrace open discussions, resulting in higher awareness and proactive health behaviors. Younger family members, particularly those with access to digital health resources, act as key facilitators of diabetes knowledge, translating complex medical information into practical strategies for their parents. However, the effectiveness of these discussions depends on parental receptiveness and the family's willingness to engage in structured health conversations. The findings also show that exposure to health information alone does not guarantee action, as some individuals exhibit information avoidance due to anxiety or a belief in the inevitability of diabetes. This study underscores the importance of strengthening family communication skills to enhance diabetes prevention efforts across generations. Encouraging non-intimidating, constructive health discussions within families may bridge the gap between awareness and preventive action, ultimately fostering long-term, sustainable diabetes management at the household level.

Keywords: Family Communication, Diabetes Prevention, Risk Perception, Intergenerational Health Discussions, Health Information Avoidance

1. Introduction

Diabetes Mellitus (DM) is a chronic disease with increasing prevalence worldwide. According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), by 2030, the number of adults living with diabetes is projected to exceed 643 million globally, with an alarming rise due to urbanization, aging populations, and changes in dietary patterns (IDF, 2021; Zheng et al., 2018). The growing burden of DM poses significant challenges to healthcare systems, economies, and the overall quality of life for affected individuals (Lin et al., 2020; Saeedi et al., 2019).

Indonesia ranks among the top seven countries with the highest number of diabetes cases, reflecting a rapid epidemiological shift towards non-communicable diseases (Soewondo et al., 2022; Pranata et al., 2020). The increasing prevalence of DM in Indonesia is largely attributed to sedentary lifestyles, dietary shifts towards high-calorie processed foods, and urbanization-related stress (Mulyani et al., 2021; Widya et al., 2023). Additionally, socioeconomic factors, including limited access to healthcare, disparities in health literacy, and cultural attitudes towards disease prevention, contribute to the rising diabetes burden (Rahman et al., 2021; Chan et al., 2019).

While lifestyle factors such as poor diet, physical inactivity, and obesity significantly contribute to diabetes development, genetic predisposition remains a crucial risk factor (Gupta et al., 2023; Nolan et al., 2019). Studies indicate that individuals with a family history of DM are two to four times more likely to develop the disease than those without such a history, highlighting the interplay between genetic and environmental influences (Meigs et al., 2020; Poulsen et al., 2019). Epigenetic mechanisms, including gene-environment interactions and metabolic programming, further exacerbate the hereditary nature of diabetes risk (Krishnan et al., 2021; Groop & Pociot, 2022). Additionally, emerging evidence suggests that early-life exposure to maternal diabetes may predispose offspring to impaired glucose metabolism and increased susceptibility to DM later in life (Zhou et al., 2020; Barker et al., 2019).

Given the multifactorial nature of diabetes risk, understanding the role of genetic predisposition and modifiable lifestyle factors is essential for designing effective prevention strategies. A comprehensive approach involving genetic screening, personalized lifestyle interventions, and targeted public health campaigns is necessary to mitigate the rising diabetes epidemic (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2021; Weir et al., 2022). Therefore, addressing diabetes prevention requires not only medical interventions but also fostering family-based awareness and support systems to encourage behavioral modifications and early risk assessment (Chatterjee et al., 2020; Fuchsberger et al., 2021). Family communication plays a crucial role in shaping health perceptions and behaviors, influencing whether individuals take proactive steps or engage in information avoidance regarding their health (Smith et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021). Effective family discussions help individuals recognize their susceptibility to diabetes and adopt preventive measures such as lifestyle modifications and regular health screenings (Brown et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Open and frequent conversations about hereditary risk foster a culture of shared responsibility in health management and create an environment conducive to healthier behavioral choices (Kim & Park, 2020; Jackson et al., 2021).

Conversely, the absence of health discussions or avoidance of diabetes-related topics may contribute to increased stress and delayed medical intervention, particularly in families with a history of diabetes (Jones & Carter, 2019; Patel et al., 2022). Studies suggest that individuals who engage in limited health discussions with their families are less likely to acknowledge their risk and, therefore, less likely to seek preventive care (Williams & Zhao, 2022; Lin et al., 2023). Misinformation, cultural stigmas, and emotional distress often deter family members from addressing diabetes risk openly, exacerbating health disparities within affected populations (Nguyen et al., 2021; Lopez et al., 2022).

Despite the evident impact of family discussions on health behaviors, many families struggle to address diabetes risk effectively. Research suggests that cultural beliefs, misinformation, and fear of diagnosis often hinder meaningful conversations about diabetes prevention (Williams & Zhao, 2022; Carter et al., 2023). Stigma surrounding chronic illnesses may discourage family members from discussing the topic openly, leading to missed opportunities for early intervention (Miller et al., 2020; Zhang & Liu, 2021). Additionally, social norms and traditional health beliefs often influence how individuals perceive and respond to hereditary risk, impacting the effectiveness of family-based health communication (Liu et al., 2022; Smith & Rogers, 2023).

Another challenge is the underestimation of personal risk among individuals with a family history of DM, which can lead to apathy toward lifestyle modifications and medical check-ups (Nguyen et al., 2021; Jackson et al., 2022). A study found that individuals who perceived their genetic risk as low were significantly less likely to engage in preventive behaviors despite having first-degree relatives diagnosed with diabetes (Garcia et al., 2023; Kim & Tan, 2022). This discrepancy highlights the importance of improving risk communication within families, ensuring that individuals accurately assess their susceptibility to DM (Rodriguez et al., 2021; Singh & Patel, 2023).

This study explores how family communication impacts diabetes risk perception and management. By analyzing different communication patterns within families, this research aims to identify the role of health dialogues in mitigating diabetes risks. Specifically, it examines how conversational openness, cultural influences, and familial support structures affect individuals' attitudes toward diabetes prevention. Understanding these dynamics can contribute to more effective public health strategies, emphasizing the importance of family-centered interventions in diabetes education and prevention programs (Miller et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this study seeks to identify key barriers that hinder family discussions on diabetes risk, such as misinformation, emotional avoidance, and perceived stigma. By investigating these obstacles, the research aims to offer recommendations for fostering constructive health communication within families (Lee et al., 2023; Gonzalez et al., 2023). The findings of this study will help inform the development of culturally sensitive interventions that leverage family dialogue as a primary mechanism for breaking the cycle of diabetes transmission across generations. In doing so, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of how communication-based strategies can enhance diabetes prevention efforts and improve overall health outcomes (Singh & Patel, 2023; Morgan et al., 2023).

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine how family communication influences diabetes risk perception and management, providing an in-depth understanding of family-based health discussions (Saldana, 2011). Conducted in Surakarta, Central Java, the study uses a purposive sampling technique to select ten informants from households in high-prevalence diabetes areas served by three primary healthcare centers (Puskesmas). This method ensures the selection of participants relevant to understanding family risk perception and communication patterns (Palinkas et al., 2015). Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, conducted in comfortable settings to encourage openness (Miles et al., 2014). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and member checking was conducted to verify responses and enhance credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The study applies three theoretical frameworks. The Risk Perception Attitude Framework (RPAF) categorizes individuals based on their perceived risk and self-efficacy in diabetes management (Rimal & Real, 2003). The Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) examines how conversational orientation and conformity orientation influence diabetes-related discussions, determining whether families foster open health dialogues or suppress them (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). The Planned Risk Information Avoidance Theory (PRIA) helps analyze why some family members avoid discussing their diabetes risk despite genetic predisposition (Deline & Kahlor, 2019).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with Yin's (2011) case study approach, following three stages: initial coding for broad themes, axial coding to establish relationships between communication patterns and behaviors, and selective coding to construct a narrative on how family dialogue influences diabetes prevention (Miles et al., 2014). Ethical considerations included written informed consent, anonymity, and secure data storage, ensuring compliance with research ethics standards (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By integrating multiple theoretical frameworks and qualitative methods, this study offers critical insights into the role of family communication in diabetes risk perception and management, contributing to public health strategies and scholarly discourse.

3. Results

This study was conducted in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia, focusing on families with a history of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM). The research examined how family members engage in diabetes discussions based on generational roles, access to healthcare, and emotional experiences. Interviews conducted between June and August 2024 revealed that younger family members often played an active role in gathering health information, influencing discussions within their households, while older members tended to rely on direct consultations with healthcare providers. Emotional experiences also played a key role in shaping communication patterns; families who had witnessed severe diabetes complications were more proactive in discussing preventive measures, while

those without direct exposure to diabetes-related health issues were less engaged in sustained discussions. These findings highlight how family structures, lived experiences, and access to health information influence diabetes awareness and preventive behaviors in Surakarta.

3.1 Variability in Risk Perception and Behavioral Responses

The study found that family members fell into two distinct categories regarding diabetes risk perception and behavioral responses: anxious and responsive. These two groups exhibited contrasting approaches in interpreting their risk, engaging in health discussions, and implementing preventive measures within their households. While both groups recognized their familial predisposition to diabetes, their reactions to this risk and their health-related behaviors varied significantly. The anxious group demonstrated heightened awareness but low self-efficacy, meaning they understood their risk of developing diabetes but felt uncertain, overwhelmed, or powerless to take preventive action. Many individuals in this category exhibited avoidance behaviors, which included postponing medical check-ups, hesitating to modify their diet, and refraining from discussing diabetes within the family. A key characteristic of this group was fear-driven decision-making, where anxiety about being diagnosed with diabetes or making major lifestyle changes led to procrastination and inaction. One participant, interviewed in June 2024, explained that although they were aware of their familial risk, they avoided seeking medical confirmation because they feared that a formal diagnosis would force them to change their lifestyle drastically. Another informant, interviewed in August 2024, admitted that their family rarely discussed diabetes because the topic was emotionally distressing, particularly after witnessing relatives suffer from complications such as amputations and kidney failure. For many in the anxious group, diabetes was perceived as an inevitable consequence of aging, leading to passivity rather than proactive behavior. A participant, interviewed in July 2024, stated that their parents often dismissed conversations about diabetes, believing that the disease was genetically predetermined and therefore unavoidable, regardless of lifestyle changes. This fatalistic attitude contributed to a lack of motivation to adopt preventive behaviors such as exercising regularly or maintaining a healthy diet. Another key challenge observed in this group was limited family engagement in health discussions. Many anxious individuals avoided conversations about diabetes not only due to fear but also because they felt isolated in their concerns. Unlike the responsive group, where discussions about diabetes prevention were inclusive and interactive, members of the anxious group often felt that bringing up diabetes-related topics would cause stress or worry within the family. Consequently, they chose silence over engagement, reinforcing a cycle of inaction and emotional avoidance.

In contrast, the responsive group demonstrated both awareness and confidence, allowing them to actively engage in discussions, seek relevant health information, and implement preventive measures. Individuals in this category recognized their risk but viewed it as manageable through lifestyle modifications and informed decision-making. A participant, interviewed in July 2024, shared that after learning about their family's history of diabetes, they made a conscious effort to monitor their blood sugar levels, adopt healthier eating habits, and incorporate regular physical activity. This group was proactive rather than reactive, meaning they took preventive action before experiencing symptoms rather than waiting until a medical crisis forced them to change their behavior. Unlike the anxious group, responsive families fostered open discussions about diabetes, where multiple family members participated in sharing knowledge, experiences, and encouragement. Another informant, interviewed in May 2024, highlighted that frequent conversations within their family helped reinforce their commitment to regular check-ups and preventive care. These discussions played an essential role in motivating both younger and older family members to take ownership of their health. Additionally, the responsive group often relied on intergenerational knowledge-sharing, particularly from younger family members to older parents. Many children or younger adults took on the role of health advocates, educating their parents about the importance of healthy eating, regular exercise, and blood sugar monitoring. One participant, interviewed in June 2024, described how their child frequently researched diabetes prevention strategies online and encouraged the family to implement them, making health-related changes feel more accessible and practical.

A major distinction between the anxious and responsive groups was their approach to diabetes-related information and communication. Anxious individuals often exhibited information avoidance, meaning they either ignored, dismissed, or resisted learning about their condition due to fear or emotional discomfort. Responsive individuals,

however, actively sought and processed health information, integrating it into their daily routines and using it to guide their decisions. For the anxious group, information overload was a common issue, where exposure to too much medical advice or conflicting sources made them feel overwhelmed rather than empowered. One participant, interviewed in August 2024, stated that reading about diabetes online often left them feeling confused and anxious, leading them to disengage from health discussions entirely. On the other hand, responsive individuals filtered and applied health knowledge more effectively. A participant from July 2024 shared that they preferred to learn about diabetes from trusted sources, such as doctors, family members, and government health organizations, rather than relying on social media or anecdotal advice. One of the most important findings in this study was that family support played a critical role in determining whether individuals fell into the anxious or responsive category. Families that fostered non-intimidating, solution-focused discussions about diabetes were more likely to encourage proactive behavior, whereas families that treated diabetes as a taboo or distressing topic reinforced avoidance behaviors.

A key factor that helped shift individuals from the anxious to the responsive category was gradual lifestyle adjustments rather than drastic changes. Many individuals in the anxious group reported that they felt pressured or intimidated when asked to change their habits abruptly, which led to resistance rather than cooperation. In contrast, responsive families adopted a step-by-step approach, focusing on small, sustainable changes that felt more manageable. For example, a participant interviewed in May 2024 explained that their family started by reducing sugary drinks and increasing vegetable intake, rather than attempting an immediate, strict dietary overhaul. This incremental method helped them ease into healthier habits without feeling overwhelmed. Similarly, another participant, interviewed in June 2024, shared that their family began incorporating short walks after meals before gradually transitioning to a more structured exercise routine. The findings of this study suggest that addressing emotional barriers, improving health communication, and fostering intergenerational knowledge-sharing can significantly enhance diabetes prevention efforts within families. Encouraging structured but flexible discussions about diabetes can help anxious individuals shift toward more responsive behaviors, ultimately improving overall family health outcomes. Furthermore, leveraging the role of children and younger family members as facilitators of health information may serve as an effective strategy in diabetes prevention programs. Given that many parents were more receptive to health advice when it came from their children, public health interventions could focus on empowering younger individuals to take an active role in educating and motivating their families. Finally, the study underscores the need for tailored health education approaches that acknowledge the emotional and psychological aspects of diabetes risk perception. Simply providing health information is not enough—ensuring that this information is processed in a way that reduces fear and encourages gradual change is crucial for fostering long-term adherence to diabetes prevention strategies. By addressing these behavioral, emotional, and communication-based factors, families can move toward a more proactive and informed approach to diabetes risk management, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes and disease prevention efforts at both individual and community levels.

3.2 Family Communication Patterns in Diabetes Risk Discussions

The findings indicate that children play a central role in shaping family discussions about diabetes risk, with a communication pattern that predominantly flows from children to parents rather than the other way around. This dynamic represents a shift from traditional health communication patterns, where parents are typically expected to guide and educate their children about health-related matters. Instead, younger family members, particularly those with access to digital health resources, often act as primary sources of diabetes-related information within the household. They seek, interpret, and convey health knowledge to their parents, thereby influencing how diabetes is understood and managed at the family level.

This child-to-parent information flow is largely facilitated by higher education levels and digital literacy among younger generations. Many children, especially those with greater exposure to medical information via online platforms, assume the role of health advisors within their families. One participant, interviewed in June 2024, described how they regularly explained dietary recommendations and lifestyle modifications to their parents after researching diabetes prevention strategies online. They found that their parents initially resisted such changes but gradually became more receptive after consistent discussions and practical demonstrations of healthier choices.

Similarly, another informant, interviewed in July 2024, highlighted that their parents originally dismissed conversations about diabetes, perceiving it as an inevitable consequence of aging. However, through persistent explanations and real-life examples, they observed a shift in their parents' perceptions, leading to a more proactive approach to managing their health.

The study also found that families with a more interactive and reciprocal communication style were more likely to adopt preventive behaviors. In these families, conversations about diabetes risk were not just one-sided lectures from children but rather open dialogues that allowed for questions, clarifications, and shared decision-making. A participant interviewed in May 2024 noted that because their family openly discussed their diabetes history, their parents became more receptive to adjusting their diet and attending regular medical check-ups. This suggests that two-way communication fosters a sense of shared responsibility, making it easier for family members to support each other in making sustainable lifestyle changes.

Conversely, families where children attempted to share information but encountered resistance or dismissal from parents often saw limited changes in behavior. One participant, interviewed in August 2024, explained that despite repeated efforts to educate their parents about diabetes risk, their reluctance to acknowledge the condition resulted in minimal preventive action. Many parents viewed diabetes as something that could be managed only when symptoms appeared, leading them to disregard their children's warnings about long-term preventive measures. This pattern reflects deep-rooted cultural and generational differences in how health risks are perceived and addressed. Older generations, particularly those who grew up with limited access to formal medical education, may rely more on personal experience and traditional beliefs rather than scientific health recommendations.

The study also identified emotional and psychological barriers that influenced family communication patterns. Some parents were hesitant to engage in discussions about diabetes due to fear, past traumatic experiences with the disease, or a sense of resignation about their health. Many had witnessed relatives suffer from severe diabetes complications, leading to feelings of helplessness or avoidance when discussing their own risk. In these cases, children had to strategically introduce health conversations, often framing them in ways that minimized confrontation. One informant, interviewed in July 2024, shared how they focused on their own health concerns rather than directly addressing their parents' risk, making the conversation less intimidating and more persuasive. This approach allowed parents to reflect on their lifestyle choices indirectly, making them more willing to consider adopting preventive behaviors.

Another significant factor influencing communication effectiveness was the role of digital health information. Children who had access to reliable health websites, social media campaigns, and medical professionals were better equipped to translate complex diabetes-related concepts into simple, actionable advice for their parents. Unlike older family members, who often relied on word-of-mouth information from peers or limited doctor visits, younger individuals had the advantage of real-time access to updated medical research. However, despite the availability of accurate information, not all parents were willing to trust digital sources, particularly when they contradicted traditional health beliefs or long-standing practices. A participant, interviewed in June 2024, explained that their parents were skeptical of online health recommendations unless they were validated by a doctor or a trusted authority figure. This suggests that bridging the gap between digital health literacy and traditional medical trust is crucial for improving family-based diabetes prevention strategies.

The study also found that the effectiveness of child-to-parent health communication was closely tied to the family's broader support system. In families where multiple members reinforced health messages, parents were more likely to accept and implement lifestyle changes. For example, a participant interviewed in May 2024 shared that when their sibling also emphasized the importance of reducing sugar intake, their parents were more inclined to listen and take action. This indicates that collective reinforcement from various family members strengthens the impact of health communication and prevents individual efforts from being dismissed.

However, in households where family dynamics were more hierarchical and authority-driven, children often struggled to challenge their parents' existing beliefs. In these families, respect for parental authority sometimes leads children to hesitate in correcting misinformation or questioning harmful dietary practices. A participant, interviewed in August 2024, admitted that they avoided contradicting their parents because doing so could be

perceived as disrespectful. As a result, even when children had access to reliable health knowledge, they were unable to translate it into behavioral change within the household. This highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in designing diabetes education programs that empower younger individuals without disrupting family harmony.

Overall, the findings suggest that children serve as key facilitators in diabetes-related family discussions, with a distinct bottom-up communication pattern that influences how diabetes risk is perceived and managed within households. While this shift enables increased awareness and knowledge-sharing, the success of these discussions largely depends on parental receptiveness and the ability to overcome emotional and psychological barriers. Encouraging a more open and interactive dialogue between generations may help strengthen diabetes prevention efforts within families, making health discussions more inclusive and action-oriented. Additionally, leveraging the role of digital health tools and integrating culturally appropriate messaging may improve parental trust in the health information shared by their children.

The study's findings underscore the importance of intergenerational health communication in diabetes prevention, emphasizing that children are not just passive recipients of health knowledge but active participants in shaping family health behaviors. Public health initiatives could benefit from designing intervention strategies that empower younger generations to play a more prominent role in facilitating diabetes education and lifestyle modifications at the household level. By strengthening child-to-parent health communication, families can develop a shared commitment to diabetes prevention, ultimately fostering long-term, sustainable health improvements across generations.

3.3 Information Avoidance and Exposure to Health Information

The study found that exposure to and avoidance of health information played a crucial role in shaping how families discussed and responded to diabetes risk. While some family members actively sought, interpreted, and shared diabetes-related knowledge, others exhibited avoidance behaviors, which led to gaps in awareness, delayed interventions, and reduced preventive actions. The way individuals engaged with or distanced themselves from health information determined whether diabetes was viewed as a manageable risk or as an unavoidable disease that could not be controlled.

Exposure to reliable health information—particularly through digital media, healthcare professionals, and peer discussions—was found to increase engagement in proactive diabetes prevention behaviors. Individuals with high exposure to health information were more likely to engage in open conversations about diabetes risk, encourage lifestyle changes, and actively seek medical check-ups. One participant, interviewed in June 2024, described how reading online articles about diabetes helped them educate their parents, ultimately leading to changes in family dietary habits and increased participation in routine check-ups. These individuals often used digital platforms such as medical websites, social media health forums, and government health portals to gather up-to-date information on diabetes prevention, which they then translated into simpler, actionable steps for their families.

However, despite the availability of credible health resources, not all individuals who were exposed to diabetes-related information took preventive action. The study found that mere exposure to health information was insufficient in motivating behavior change, particularly in families where diabetes was perceived as an inevitable consequence of aging or hereditary predisposition. One participant, interviewed in July 2024, explained that although their family had access to medical advice and understood the risks, they remained passive in making lifestyle changes. Their parents believed that diabetes was an unavoidable condition that would develop regardless of their dietary habits or exercise routines, leading to a lack of motivation to implement preventive measures. This suggests that information exposure alone does not drive behavioral change—rather, it is the way information is processed, discussed, and contextualized within family interactions that determines its impact on preventive actions.

Conversely, some family members deliberately avoided diabetes-related information due to fear, anxiety, or past traumatic experiences associated with the disease. This pattern of information avoidance was often linked to

individuals who had witnessed severe diabetes complications in relatives, making them associate diabetes with suffering, disability, or death rather than a condition that could be effectively managed. A respondent, interviewed in August 2024, admitted that they deliberately avoided health screenings and refused to engage in diabetes discussions because they had seen a close family member undergo amputations and other severe complications. This avoidance behavior led to delayed awareness, missed opportunities for early intervention, and ultimately increased vulnerability to diabetes-related complications.

The study also found that younger family members played a significant role in bridging the gap between health information exposure and behavioral change. In many cases, children served as interpreters of medical knowledge, filtering complex health messages into more digestible and culturally relevant information for their parents. A participant, interviewed in May 2024, described how they would simplify diabetes prevention strategies for their parents, helping them understand the importance of reducing sugar intake, exercising regularly, and monitoring blood glucose levels. This intergenerational knowledge-sharing was most effective in families that maintained an open and reciprocal communication style, where parents were willing to listen, ask questions, and implement suggestions made by their children.

However, in households where information avoidance was prevalent, younger members often struggled to introduce health discussions, leading to delayed awareness and intervention. In some cases, older family members dismissed or rejected diabetes-related discussions initiated by their children, either due to cultural beliefs, generational authority dynamics, or emotional discomfort. One participant, interviewed in August 2024, expressed frustration over repeated attempts to educate their parents about diabetes risk, only to be met with denial, resistance, or minimization of the issue. This suggests that while children can serve as effective facilitators of health information, their influence depends heavily on parental receptiveness and the family's overall willingness to engage in meaningful discussions about diabetes prevention.

The study further highlights that familial and social environments shape how individuals process and act upon health information. In families where health discussions were normalized and encouraged, members were more likely to internalize and apply preventive measures. This was evident in households where health education was a shared responsibility, rather than being the sole initiative of one family member. For instance, a participant interviewed in July 2024 noted that when both parents and siblings actively participated in diabetes discussions, they collectively reinforced positive health behaviors, such as adopting healthier eating habits and encouraging regular medical check-ups.

In contrast, families that treated diabetes as a sensitive or distressing topic were more prone to information avoidance, resulting in limited engagement with preventive actions. These households tended to address diabetes only when symptoms became severe, reinforcing a reactive rather than proactive approach to disease management. The reluctance to discuss diabetes openly was often rooted in cultural beliefs that illnesses should not be spoken about until they manifest, further delaying early intervention.

The findings suggest that reducing information avoidance and encouraging strategic exposure to health information could enhance diabetes prevention efforts. Family discussions that promote constructive processing of health knowledge, rather than avoidance due to fear or misinformation, may help bridge the gap between awareness and action. One effective approach could involve framing diabetes discussions in a way that focuses on empowerment rather than fear, highlighting success stories of diabetes management rather than solely emphasizing complications. A participant, interviewed in June 2024, shared that when they presented diabetes information to their parents using positive, solution-oriented language, their family was more receptive and willing to make small but impactful lifestyle changes.

These findings highlight the need for tailored public health strategies that acknowledge both information avoidance and active engagement with health knowledge. Educational initiatives should focus on creating safe spaces for family discussions about diabetes, where individuals feel supported rather than pressured into making health decisions. Additionally, leveraging digital health literacy programs can help equip younger family members with

effective communication skills, enabling them to relay diabetes-related information to their parents in culturally sensitive and engaging ways.

Ultimately, the study underscores that information exposure alone does not guarantee preventive action. Instead, the way information is framed, shared, and integrated into family discussions determines its impact on health behaviors. Encouraging non-intimidating, ongoing family dialogues about diabetes, along with gradual implementation of preventive measures, can help shift household attitudes from passive awareness to active health engagement. By addressing information avoidance and strengthening family-based health discussions, diabetes prevention efforts can become more sustainable, personalized, and culturally relevant, ultimately improving overall health outcomes within communities.

4. Discussion

The discussion in this study provides a deeper understanding of how family communication patterns influence diabetes risk perception and preventive behaviors, particularly in families with a history of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM). The findings align with and expand upon Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCP) (Fitzpatrick & Koerner), Risk Perception Attitude (RPA) (Rimal & Real, 2003), Planned Risk Information Avoidance (PRIA) (Deline & Kahlor), and Activation Theory of Information Exposure (AMIE) (Donohew et al., 1980). Through these theoretical lenses, this study highlights the variability in how families process and act upon diabetes-related information, emphasizing the roles of anxious and responsive groups in shaping family-based diabetes prevention strategies.

One of the important findings of this study is that diabetes risk perception is not solely an individual cognitive process but a collective experience shaped by family communication. The results support the Risk Perception Attitude (RPA) framework, where individuals with high-risk perception but low efficacy (anxious group) often experience psychological barriers that prevent them from taking preventive measures, while those with high-risk perception and high efficacy (responsive group) demonstrate greater engagement in health-promoting behaviors (Rimal & Real, 2003). Similar findings were reported by Turner et al. (2006), who identified that responsive individuals are more motivated to act on their risk perception, whereas anxious individuals face emotional barriers such as fear and avoidance. Furthermore, Grasso & Bell (2015) highlighted that perceived risk without sufficient efficacy often leads to helplessness, a pattern that was prevalent among anxious families in this study.

Unlike previous research that predominantly focused on individual risk perception, this study extends RPA's application to family communication, showing that interpersonal discussions within families shape both perceived efficacy and risk management behaviors. Findings from Simonds et al. (2017) support the idea that group-based risk interventions are more effective than individual-based approaches, reinforcing the importance of family decision-making dynamics. The study further suggests that the way families frame and reinforce discussions about diabetes risk plays a central role in shaping behavioral responses, confirming that family interactions either strengthen or weaken the likelihood of adopting preventive measures.

Additionally, this study supports and expands Planned Risk Information Avoidance (PRIA), which explains how cognitive, emotional, and social factors influence information-seeking or avoidance behaviors (Deline & Kahlor, 2019). The findings confirm that information avoidance was common among anxious families, particularly those with negative past experiences related to diabetes complications. Supporting this, O'Brien et al. (2024) found that negative emotions such as fear and anxiety drive information avoidance, which was observed among participants who deliberately avoided health screenings and refused to discuss diabetes within the family. Wang (2022) further noted that heightened uncertainty increases risk information avoidance, which aligns with the finding that some individuals avoided discussions due to uncertainty about the long-term consequences of diabetes.

The study also identified that children play a key role in shaping diabetes discussions within families, reversing the traditional parent-to-child flow of health information. This bottom-up communication dynamic challenges the conventional belief that health knowledge is primarily transmitted from older to younger generations. Instead, younger family members, particularly those with access to digital health resources, served as facilitators of medical

knowledge, filtering complex information and presenting it in more understandable and actionable ways for their parents. This finding is consistent with Guo et al. (2021), who noted that digital engagement enhances health literacy and self-efficacy in family settings. However, while Guo et al. focused on media-driven knowledge acquisition, this study emphasizes how family-based communication structures influence information processing and decision-making regarding diabetes prevention.

Moreover, while previous research (Turner et al., 2006) suggested that anxiety may increase information-seeking behavior, this study found that anxious individuals in family settings often felt overwhelmed by conflicting information, leading to withdrawal and disengagement rather than proactive learning. In contrast, responsive families processed health information collaboratively, reinforcing one another's confidence in their ability to take preventive actions. Similarly, Guo et al. (2021) found that digital media engagement improved self-efficacy while reducing perceived risk, a pattern mirrored in responsive families, who actively sought information and engaged in family-wide discussions about preventive strategies.

This study also applies Activation Theory of Information Exposure (AMIE) to explain selective engagement with diabetes-related information (Donohew et al., 1980). Findings suggest that anxious families filtered out overwhelming health messages, whereas responsive families actively sought relevant and practical information. Harrington et al. (2006) found that individuals with high Need for Cognition (NFC) processed information more critically, which aligns with this study's observation that responsive families engaged in deeper discussions about health and adopted preventive measures more readily.

Beyond theoretical implications, these findings offer practical insights for public health interventions. First, the results suggest that family-based interventions may be more effective than individual health campaigns in diabetes prevention. Simonds et al. (2017) emphasized that group-based health education is more impactful than individual interventions, reinforcing the idea that public health strategies should focus on strengthening family discussions around diabetes. The study also highlights the potential of children as key facilitators in diabetes prevention, given their ability to access and interpret digital health information.

However, the study also emphasizes that parental receptiveness is crucial in determining whether child-led health discussions translate into action. In some cases, generational authority structures and cultural norms prevented younger family members from convincing their parents to adopt lifestyle changes. Xu (2015) found that high-sensation messaging is effective in capturing attention, suggesting that public health campaigns targeting older adults should incorporate engaging and relatable narratives to improve receptiveness to diabetes-related advice. Similarly, Deline et al. (2024) emphasized that risk information processing varies depending on contextual framing, indicating that diabetes prevention programs should consider the long-term nature of the disease when designing interventions.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of family communication in breaking the cycle of diabetes across generations, demonstrating how discussions within families shape risk perception, preventive behaviors, and health decision-making. The findings reveal that diabetes prevention is not solely an individual effort but a collective process influenced by communication patterns between generations. Families that engage in open, supportive, and informative discussions are more likely to adopt preventive health behaviors, while those that avoid diabetes-related conversations face delayed awareness and reduced engagement in prevention efforts.

A key contribution of this study is the identification of a bottom-up communication dynamic, where children play a central role in educating their parents about diabetes risk and prevention. Unlike traditional health communication models where knowledge is passed from parents to children, this study finds that younger family members—especially those with access to digital health resources—are actively reshaping health discussions within families. By filtering and simplifying complex medical information, children help their parents understand, accept, and apply diabetes prevention strategies. However, the effectiveness of this communication depends on parental receptiveness and the willingness of families to engage in interactive discussions.

The study also underscores how information exposure and avoidance impact diabetes prevention efforts. While some family members actively seek and share health information, others engage in avoidance behaviors due to fear, anxiety, or a belief that diabetes is inevitable. This avoidance often stems from past traumatic experiences or uncertainty about long-term health outcomes, which hinders early intervention and proactive lifestyle changes. In contrast, responsive families that embrace interactive discussions and intergenerational knowledge-sharing tend to be more open to preventive measures and proactive healthcare engagement.

Breaking the cycle of diabetes across generations requires a shift in family communication patterns. Families that traditionally treat diabetes as an inevitable condition must transition toward a mindset that views diabetes as preventable through informed health choices. Open discussions within families help to normalize prevention efforts, reducing fatalistic attitudes and fostering a culture of shared responsibility for health. By addressing barriers to communication and promoting gradual, sustainable lifestyle modifications, families can create a supportive environment that encourages both immediate and long-term diabetes prevention strategies.

The findings suggest that public health interventions should focus on strengthening family-based diabetes prevention programs, leveraging the role of younger generations as facilitators of health communication. In addition to encouraging families to engage in constructive, non-intimidating conversations about diabetes risk, it is essential to enhance communication competence within families. Developing skills such as active listening, empathy, and effective message delivery can help improve how health information is conveyed and received, ensuring that discussions about diabetes risk lead to meaningful preventive actions. Strengthening family communication competence will not only improve the quality of health-related discussions but also foster a more informed and health-conscious family culture, ultimately contributing to more effective diabetes prevention across generations.

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Weaving Meaning in Old Age: Communication Resilience of the Elderly in Facing Post-Retirement Syndrome

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Abstract

This study explores the communication experience of the elderly in dealing with Post-Retirement Syndrome (PRS) with a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with nine informants. The results of the study show that the communication patterns of the elderly have undergone significant changes after retirement, both in interaction with their families, peers, and social communities. Some seniors experience increased communication with their partners and family members due to more time at home, while others feel that their social interactions are reduced due to reduced regular activities outside the home. This study found that the shift in roles in the family is one of the factors that affect the communication of the elderly. After retirement, many elderly people are no longer the main decision-makers in the family economy, but rather play a role in household activities and grandchild care. On the other hand, the digital divide is an obstacle to communication with the younger generation, especially for the elderly who are not familiar with technology. However, older adults who have strong social support, community involvement, and flexible communication approaches are more likely to adapt to these changes. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of interpersonal communication, the use of digital technology, and social involvement in helping the elderly live their retirement better.

Keywords: Communication Resilience, Post-Retirement Syndrome, Elderly, Social Support

1. Introduction

Retirement is an important phase in a person's life that brings various changes, both in economic, social, and psychological aspects. Old age, the last stage of the life cycle, is the normal developmental stage that everyone goes through when they reach old age. This is a reality that not everyone can avoid (Notoatmodjo, 2005). For some seniors, retirement can be an opportunity to enjoy free time, explore hobbies, and spend more time with family. For others, however, retirement presents new challenges, including feelings of loss of identity, reduced social activity, and changes in communication patterns with the surrounding environment. These changes affect every aspect of life, including health. Psychological changes in the elderly include changes in learning, thinking, creativity, memory, and sense of humor (Hurlock, 2011). Stress, depression, unhappiness feeling lost self-esteem and honor are some of the things experienced by those affected by *post-retirement syndrome* (Rahmat, 2016). This condition is often associated with Post-Retirement Syndrome (PRS), which can have an impact on the emotional

and social well-being of the elderly. Loneliness is also a risk factor for anxiety in older people (Domènech-Abella et al., 2019). On the other hand, risk factors for anxiety disorders in the elderly are usually female gender, low education, living alone, financial dependence on others, and at least one chronic illness. (Cengiz Özyurt et al., 2018).

This has a great impact on the lives of the elderly, but in reality, not all elderly people can fully meet their needs, and the lives of the elderly depend on the help of their families and others. While other retirees believe that elderly people are incompetent, helpless and useless people in life (Febriansyah et al., 2023). In recent years, more and more research has highlighted the social and psychological impacts of retirement, but there are still limited studies specifically exploring how older adults build communication resilience to stay connected with their families, peers, and social communities. The increase in life expectancy has an impact on the number of elderly people every year (Dharmayanti et al., 2017). Life expectancy affects how the elderly with retirement conditions from work can survive and be resilient in life. The fear of post-retirement or retirement transition causes serious psychological and physical problems for many people, especially those who have high ambitions and desperately want a high position in their jobs. That is the driving factor for the emergence of *post-retirement syndrome* (Khodijah, 2018). Therefore, this study seeks to understand how the elderly maintain and adjust their interpersonal communication in the face of post-retirement changes.

Retirement can have different consequences for each individual. Some seniors have difficulty adjusting due to the loss of work routines that have become part of their identity. These changes not only have an impact on the psychological aspect, but also on daily communication patterns. Seniors who previously had regular interactions with colleagues and the professional community often experienced a decrease in the frequency of communication after retirement. In addition, relationships with family, especially with spouses, children, and grandchildren, have also shifted. In the broader social context, technological developments are also a challenge for the elderly. Changes in the way we communicate—from face-to-face to technology-based communication like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Zoom—require adaptations that aren't always easy for a generation that hasn't grown up with digital technology. Seniors who do not have adequate digital skills are at risk of social isolation, especially when their children and grandchildren communicate more through digital platforms.

Furthermore, many elderly people feel that they have lost their role in the family after retirement. They are no longer the main decision-makers in the household, and often feel no longer needed economically or socially. This can lead to a decrease in confidence as well as motivation to stay active in interpersonal communication. By understanding how the elderly adjust their communication patterns, this research can provide insights for families, communities, and policymakers in creating a more inclusive social environment for the elderly. In addition, the results of this study can also be the basis for developing programs that support the elderly in maintaining healthy social relationships after retirement. However, not all elderly people can achieve this due to various changes, declines, and problems that arise such as economic, health, social, psychological problems, post-retirement syndrome, feelings of helplessness, uselessness, and unhappiness that often occur in old age (A'yun, 2023). Research on communication of the elderly after retirement has been conducted in various countries with a diverse focus. Some studies highlight the impact of retirement on psychological well-being, while other studies highlight how seniors use technology to stay in touch with their social environment. In the Indonesian context, research on the elderly often focuses on aspects of physical health and economic well-being, but there are still limited studies that explore aspects of interpersonal communication and social resilience of the elderly.

This research contributes to enriching literature by focusing on communication strategies for the elderly in dealing with PRS. Unlike previous studies that have highlighted more of the economic and psychological impact of retirement, this study explores how seniors maintain their interpersonal relationships as well as how they adapt to communication challenges in the digital age. The approach used in this study is also different from previous studies that use a more quantitative approach to measure the level of welfare of the elderly. By using qualitative methods and in-depth interviews, this study provides a more in-depth perspective on the communication experience of the elderly from their point of view. This study aims to explore how the elderly adjust their communication patterns after retirement. In particular, this study seeks to identify changes in the communication patterns of the elderly with their spouses, children, grandchildren, and peers, understand the role of social support in helping the elderly

maintain interpersonal communication, explore the strategies that the elderly use to adapt to communication challenges, including the use of digital technology, as well as explain the barriers that the elderly face in maintaining social relationships after retirement.

In answering these questions, this study uses Interpersonal Communication Theory and Communication Resilience Theory as conceptual frameworks. Interpersonal Communication Theory emphasizes how individuals build and maintain their social relationships in a variety of contexts. In this study, this theory is used to understand how the elderly adjust the way they communicate after retirement. Meanwhile, Communication Resilience Theory focuses on how individuals use communication to overcome challenges and changes in their lives. This theory is relevant in understanding how older people experiencing PRS can use communication as a tool to rebuild social connections and reduce feelings of isolation. Good communication resilience can also help individuals overcome any shyness or discomfort they may feel when talking about their condition, by speaking in easy-to-understand language and listening with empathy, the individual can feel more comfortable opening up and expressing their feelings. Communication research investigates how individuals, organizations, media systems, and governments question and explain resilience, allowing us to better understand societal and systems perspectives on resilience (Houston & Buzzanell, 2018).

Theoretically, this research enriches the understanding of how interpersonal communication changes at different stages of life. Retirement is a major transition that not only impacts individuals personally, but also their social relationships. By connecting Interpersonal Communication Theory and Communication Resilience Theory, this research offers a new perspective on how communication can be a tool for the elderly to adapt to their social changes. Practically, the results of this research can be used as a basis for designing programs that support the elderly in maintaining an active social life. Some of the practical implications that can be produced include increasing digital literacy for the elderly through technology training programs so that they can more easily communicate with family and friends through digital platforms, strengthening social support through the formation of elderly communities that can be a forum for them to continue to interact and share experiences, education for families to increase awareness about the importance of maintaining healthy communication with the elderly so that They do not feel isolated, as well as social policies that support the elderly by encouraging their involvement in various social and community activities. Through this research, it is hoped that a wider awareness will emerge about the importance of interpersonal communication in supporting the welfare of the elderly. By understanding how older people cope with changes in communication after retirement, we can create a more inclusive social environment and support them in living better in old age.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth interview method to explore the experiences of the elderly in maintaining communication resilience after retirement. Moleong in his book entitled *Qualitative Research Methodology* Qualitative research in terms of other definitions is states that it is a research that utilizes open interviews to study and understand the attitudes, views, feelings, and behaviors of individuals or groups of people (Moleong, 2017). The case study approach was used to capture the life experiences of the informants in dealing with changes in communication patterns, the role of social support, and the challenges of maintaining social interaction. The main purpose of the case study is to increase knowledge about real contemporary communication events, in their context. The question of how and why certain things happen in a particular situation, or "what happens here" is of primary interest when choosing this approach, (Yin, 2019).

This study involved nine informants selected through purposive sampling, with the main criteria being 56 years old and above, having retired for at least one year, and willing to share their communication experiences after retirement. The informants consisted of five men and four women with diverse work backgrounds, including retired civil servants, teachers, state-owned employees, police, and bank managers. Informants were recruited through the elderly community and social networks using the snowball sampling method to obtain recommendations from previous participants.

Table 1: Research Informant

No.	Gender	Job Background	Age
1	Male	Retired Civil Servant (Lawyer)	65 Years
2	Male	Retired Civil Servant (Protocoler Officer)	68 Years
3	Woman	Retired SOE Employees	56 Years
4	Male	Police Retirement	59 years
5	Woman	Retired Civil Servants (Elementary School Teachers)	70 Years
6	Woman	Retired Bank Manager	58 Years
7	Male	Retired Junior High School Teacher	61 years
8	Male	Retired Bank Employees	60 Years
9	Male	Retired Civil Servants (Lecturers)	66 Years

Source: Researcher Processed (2025)

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility for informants to recount their experiences. Interviews last between 45 to 90 minutes and are conducted in person or via video call. The main topics of the interview include changes in communication patterns, social support, challenges in adjusting to modern communication technology, and strategies for the elderly in maintaining social relationships. All interviews are recorded with the permission of the informant to ensure data accuracy.

Data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis method, which consisted of several stages: (1) re-reading the interview transcript to understand the context, (2) encoding the data based on the main theme, (3) grouping the patterns that emerged, (4) analyzing the relationship between themes, and (5) triangulation the data by comparing the findings with relevant literature. To increase validity, some informants were allowed to review the results of their interviews.

The study follows the principles of research ethics, including informant consent, data confidentiality, and the right of participants to resign at any time. Informants are provided with information related to the purpose of the research and are guaranteed anonymity. With this methodology, the study provides in-depth insights into how older adults maintain interpersonal communication in retirement, as well as how they adapt to social and technological changes.

3. Results

This section presents the results of research that reveals various aspects of communication for the elderly after entering retirement. The change in social status from active workers to retirees has consequences on the communication patterns they undergo. Seniors who previously had a structured communication routine in the work environment now have to adapt to more flexible communication patterns in the home and community environment. For some seniors, this change is a challenge because they have to find new ways to maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships. This study shows that the elderly experience a shift in their social interactions, both with family, peers, and the wider social environment. In many cases, older people who have strong family support and remain active in social communities are more likely to adjust than those who experience limited access to communication or social engagement. Technology is also starting to play an increasingly important role in maintaining communication among the elderly, although there are still challenges in terms of digital skills and technology accessibility for this age group.

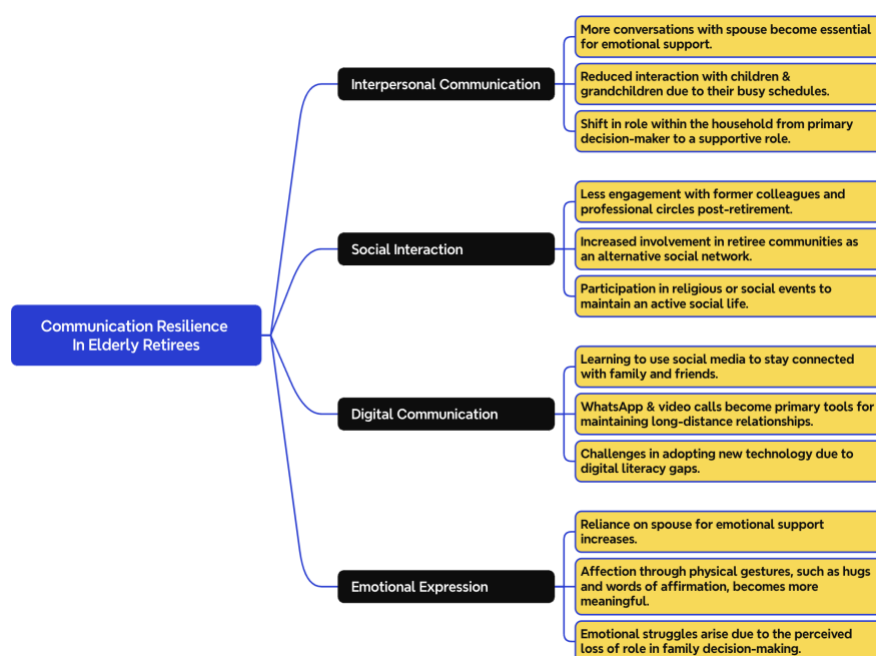


Figure 1: Post Retirement Communications Patterns

Source: Researcher Processed (2025)

In addition to changes in communication patterns, this study also identifies various challenges faced by the elderly in maintaining their social relationships. One of the main challenges is the difference in communication styles between generations, where the elderly are accustomed to more in-depth and face-to-face communication patterns, while the younger generation relies more on short, fast digital communication. This often leads to misunderstandings and gaps in intergenerational interactions, especially within the family sphere. In addition, the digital divide is also an obstacle for the elderly in accessing modern communication technology, such as social media and instant messaging applications. Seniors who are not used to using digital devices experience limitations in communicating with their children and grandchildren, which can ultimately lead to feelings of isolation. Another challenge is mobility and health limitations that limit the elderly from engaging in direct social interactions. Seniors who have health problems or physical limitations often have difficulty attending social events or visiting friends and family, which ultimately impacts the quality of their interpersonal communication.

Despite facing various challenges, many seniors are developing adaptive strategies to maintain their social relationships. Older people who have flexible communication skills and can adapt to the communication patterns of the younger generation tend to have better relationships with their family and friends. The use of technology, although not always easy, is beginning to be adopted by some elderly people to keep in touch with their children and grandchildren through instant messaging or video calls. In addition, involvement in social communities is also an effective strategy for the elderly in maintaining their interpersonal communication. Seniors who are active in community activities, such as religious organizations, social clubs, or hobby groups, are better able to maintain dynamic and meaningful social interactions. Emotional support factors from family and social environment are important factors that help the elderly in living their retirement better. By understanding the dynamics of communication for seniors after retirement, various parties, including families, communities, and policymakers, can take more effective steps to support healthy communication for seniors and improve their well-being in this stage of life.

3.1 Communication of the Elderly After Retirement

Retirement is a major transition in a person's life that brings changes in various aspects, including communication patterns. Seniors who were previously active in the work environment have quite intense social interactions with colleagues, clients, or subordinates. After retirement, the elderly experience quite significant changes in the scope of their communication. The loss of a structured social routine makes them have to adjust to new communication

patterns in the family environment and social community. For some seniors, retirement is an opportunity to strengthen relationships with family, especially spouses and children. Before retirement, they may have limited time to interact with family members due to their busy work. After retirement, the elderly have more time to communicate with their spouses, accompany their children, and interact with grandchildren. Older people who have a good relationship with their families tend to adjust more easily to these changes and experience the emotional benefits of improved communication in the family environment.

However, not all elderly people experience the same thing. Some of them feel that they have lost the role they previously held in the family. Before retirement, many elderly people become the main breadwinners and have an important position in family decision-making. After retirement, they feel that their influence in the family is diminishing. In some cases, children who are grown up and independent tend to be less dependent on their parents, so communication becomes less frequent. Older people who feel they no longer have a significant role in the family often experience a decline in confidence and withdraw from everyday conversations. In addition to changes in communication with family, the elderly are also experiencing a shift in relationships with friends and former co-workers. Seniors who had strong social relationships before retirement tended to have an easier time maintaining communication with peers. They remain active in interacting with old friends through regular meetings, such as reunions or retirement community activities. Seniors who have involvement in social organizations, religious groups, or hobby communities also have a greater chance of staying in touch with those around them.

On the other hand, the elderly who do not have a wide social network or who are used to relying on work interaction as the main source of communication have difficulty adjusting. After retirement, they no longer have access to the same social environment, so relationships with peers become increasingly rare. Some seniors feel reluctant to contact former colleagues for fear of disturbing them or feeling that they do not have interesting talking material. Over time, this can lead to social isolation, which impacts their emotional well-being. A study conducted by (Rikard et al., 2018) shows that the elderly who are open to the use of communication technology have a better level of social connection and experience lower levels of stress than those who do not use it. Communication technology is another factor that affects the communication patterns of the elderly. Technological developments have changed the way people interact, with more and more communications turning to digital platforms such as WhatsApp, social media, and video calls. For the elderly who are used to face-to-face communication or over the phone, the transition to digital-based communication is a challenge in itself. Some seniors have successfully adopted this technology with the help of their children or grandchildren, while others have struggled and ended up choosing not to use it at all.

Elderly people who can adapt to communication technology tend to have wider social relationships. They can still communicate with families who live far away, participate in online community groups, and get more information through digital media. On the other hand, the elderly who are not familiar with technology feel left behind and increasingly isolated from their social environment. This shows that digital skills are an important factor in determining how the elderly maintain communication after retirement. In addition to technological factors, physical mobility also affects the communication of the elderly. Elderly people who still have good health are easier to stay active in social activities and interact with the surrounding environment. They can attend community events, visit friends and family, and participate in recreational activities that involve interpersonal communication. However, for the elderly who experience physical limitations or have health conditions that reduce their mobility, communication with the surrounding environment becomes more difficult. Some seniors who are unable to travel easily rely more on family members or visits from friends and relatives to maintain their social connections. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the communication experience of the elderly after retirement varies greatly depending on several key factors, namely family support, involvement in social communities, technological skills, and health conditions. Seniors who have a strong social network and can adapt to technological developments are more likely to adapt to changes in communication after retirement. In contrast, older people who lose access to their social environment without adequate support tend to have difficulty maintaining their social interactions.

The importance of interpersonal communication for the elderly after retirement can also be seen from a psychological perspective. The *continuity* theory states that the elderly who can maintain the communication patterns they have before retirement tend to adapt more easily to the changes that occur. In this case, effective communication with *significant others* can help the elderly maintain a sense of self-identity and improve their psychological well-being. In contrast, defensive communication theory suggests that older adults who feel deprived of their social role may develop defensive communication patterns, such as withdrawing from social interactions or showing passive-aggressive attitudes in their communication (Becker et al., 2008). To support the elderly in maintaining healthy communication after retirement, efforts are needed from various parties, including families, communities, and the government. Families need to be more active in involving the elderly in everyday conversations and giving them a meaningful role in family life. Social communities can create more space for the elderly to continue to interact and share experiences. Meanwhile, the government and social organizations can develop digital literacy training programs to help the elderly be more comfortable with using communication technology. With adequate support, the elderly can live a happier retirement and still have meaningful social relationships. Therefore, attention to the communication patterns of the elderly must be an important part of efforts to improve their well-being in old age.

3.2 Challenges in Elderly Communication

After entering retirement, the elderly face various challenges in maintaining their interpersonal communication. These challenges arise due to changes in social roles, technological limitations, social isolation, and declining health conditions. Seniors who previously had extensive communication networks in the work environment often have to adjust to different communication patterns within the family and social community. If not managed properly, these changes can cause the elderly to have difficulty maintaining their interpersonal relationships, which can ultimately impact their emotional and psychological well-being. One of the main challenges faced by the elderly is the difference in communication styles between generations. The younger generation has a different way of communicating with the elderly. They tend to use digital technology and communicate more often through text or text messages than face-to-face conversations. Seniors who are accustomed to longer, direct interaction-based communication often feel that communication with their children or grandchildren has become more shallow and lacks the emotional depth they expect. As a result, seniors can feel neglected or unappreciated in everyday conversations. A study by Afifi (Afifi et al., 2016) in *the theory of Resilience and Relational Load* shows that individuals who continue to invest in their interpersonal relationships, both emotionally and communicatively, are better able to cope with the challenges that arise after retirement. They are more likely to adopt more positive communication patterns, such as listening with empathy, expressing feelings directly, and finding solutions together to overcoming conflicts.

In addition, social norms in communication are also changing, leading to a gap between the elderly and the younger generation. Seniors who grew up in a culture that emphasizes formality in speaking often feel uncomfortable with the more relaxed and direct communication style of young people. These differences can lead to miscommunication, where the elderly perceive the younger generation as less respectful of them, while the younger people may feel that the elderly are too rigid in communicating. If there is no effort to understand these differences, intergenerational communication relationships can become increasingly difficult and strained. In addition to the challenges related to generational differences, the digital divide is also one of the main obstacles in the communication of the elderly. As communication technology develops, more and more social interactions are turning to digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and social media. However, many elderly people experience limitations in accessing or understanding how to use this technology. Seniors who are not familiar with digital devices often find it difficult to operate smartphones or understand the features of modern communication applications. This inability can cause the elderly to be further left behind in their social relationships and find it difficult to keep in touch with younger family and friends. A study by Newman (Newman et al., 2021) shows that the elderly who belong to a supportive social group or community tend to have a more positive and adaptive level of communication. They are more open to social interactions, more receptive to change, and have lower levels of stress than those who experience social isolation.

Some elderly people who do not have technology skills also experience limitations in accessing the latest information and news. They rely more on traditional media such as television and newspapers, while the younger generation relies more on digital media. This difference can widen the communication gap between the elderly and other family members. In addition, economic limitations are also a factor that hinders the elderly from accessing technological devices. Not all seniors have smartphones or adequate internet access, which further limits their ability to connect with the outside world. In addition to the challenges related to generational and technological differences, social isolation is also a major problem for the elderly after retirement. Many seniors lose the social environment they have during work, which causes them to have fewer opportunities to communicate with others. If seniors do not have a strong social network outside of work, they are at risk of experiencing loneliness and losing the social interactions they need to maintain their mental well-being.

Elderly people who live alone or whose children have moved to other cities often experience a decrease in the frequency of communication with their families. The busyness of their children and grandchildren is also a factor that causes communication with the elderly to become less frequent. The lack of social interaction can make the elderly feel neglected and no longer have an important role in their family life. If there is no initiative from family members or the community to keep them engaged in everyday conversations, seniors can become increasingly withdrawn and experience deep emotional isolation. In addition to social factors, physical health conditions are also an obstacle to communication for the elderly. As they get older, many elderly people experience hearing loss, memory loss, or other health problems that make it difficult for them to communicate with others. Hearing loss, for example, can cause the elderly to have difficulty understanding conversations, especially in noisy environments or when talking on the phone. If there is no effort from family or friends to understand these limitations and adjust their way of speaking, communication can become more difficult for the elderly. Social support can help the elderly to cope with feelings of loss and emptiness after retirement (Hidayat et al., 2020).

The decrease in mobility is also a factor that limits the social interaction of the elderly. Seniors who have physical limitations or chronic illnesses are often unable to attend community events or visit friends and family. Another study by Zhang (Zhang et al., 2021) showed that the elderly who experience communication limitations due to physical barriers, such as hearing loss, are more prone to social isolation and loneliness. This is in line with Newman's findings (Hawkins et al., 2015), which show that elderly people with hearing loss tend to have higher levels of anxiety and depression because they feel less appreciated in conversations. The inability to travel easily makes them increasingly limited in communicating with their surroundings. As a result, they become more dependent on family members to maintain communication with the outside world. If families do not provide enough support, the elderly are at risk of a significant decrease in social interaction. In addition to physical and social factors, emotional and psychological changes are also a challenge in the communication of the elderly. After retirement, many seniors experience a change in identity and feelings of losing the role they previously held. Retirement can cause them to feel less valuable or lose their purpose in life, ultimately impacting their motivation to interact with others. Some seniors experience Post-Retirement Syndrome (PRS), where they feel anxious, unconfident, or even reluctant to talk to others. If these feelings are not properly addressed, the elderly can further withdraw from social conversations and experience deeper loneliness.

In addition, stigma against the elderly is also a challenge in their communication. Some people still have the view that the elderly are no longer productive or do not need to actively participate in social conversations. This stigma can make the elderly feel less appreciated and less invited to family or community discussions. Some elderly people even feel that their opinions are no longer considered important, so they are reluctant to speak or express their opinions in social discussions. If this stigma continues, the elderly can increasingly withdraw from social interactions, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being. Overall, the challenges in elderly communication cover a wide range of aspects, from intergenerational communication style differences, digital divides, social isolation, to physical limitations and emotional changes. To help seniors overcome these challenges, a comprehensive approach from families, communities, and governments is needed. Increasing digital literacy for the elderly, creating a more inclusive environment, and providing sufficient emotional support can help them stay active in social communication.

Efforts to address these challenges can also include the development of programs that encourage seniors to remain active in their social communities. For example, technology training programs for the elderly can help them more easily adapt to the development of digital communication. Recent research suggests that the quality of support can be a mediating factor that explains the indirect impact of *supportive communications* (High & Solomon, 2016). In addition, families also have an important role to play in giving greater attention to the elderly and ensuring that they remain engaged in daily conversations. Emotional support refers to deliberate verbal behavior designed to reduce the emotional distress of others (Burlinson & Samter, 1985). With greater attention to the communication needs of seniors, they can live a happier, more active, and meaningful retirement.

3.3 Communication Strategies for the Elderly in Adjusting

Retirement brings great changes in a person's life, including in their communication patterns. For some seniors, the transition from an active working life to a post-retirement life can be a challenge in maintaining social relationships. Therefore, seniors need to develop effective communication strategies to stay connected with their family, friends, and community. This strategy covers various aspects, ranging from family support, the use of communication technology, involvement in social communities, to improving emotional health. Seniors who can adapt to these changes will find it easier to maintain their mental and emotional well-being. Choi (Choi et al., 2023) found that elderly couples who were able to maintain positive communication tended to be happier and had higher levels of life satisfaction. Conversely, couples who experience strain in their communication tend to be more prone to conflicts that can worsen their emotional well-being.

One of the key strategies in adjusting post-retirement communication is to increase involvement in family life. Elderly people who have a harmonious relationship with their families tend to be better able to maintain healthy interpersonal communication. They can continue to play a role in the family by sharing experiences, giving advice to children and grandchildren, and discussing various things that are relevant in daily life. By continuing to actively participate in family life, the elderly will feel appreciated and have a meaningful role in the household. However, not all elderly people have smooth communication with their families. Some of them feel that their children and grandchildren are busier with their lives, so the frequency of communication becomes reduced. To overcome this, the elderly can try to adjust to the communication patterns of the younger generation, such as communicating through short messages or social media. If previously they were used to long face-to-face conversations, now they need to get used to faster and more direct communication. Seniors who can adapt to these changes will find it easier to maintain a close relationship with their families. In addition to verbal communication, non-verbal communication also plays an important role in maintaining social relations for the elderly. Expressions of affection through touch, smiles, or other gestures can strengthen emotional closeness with family and friends. Older people who show an open and friendly attitude in interacting tend to be more receptive in everyday conversations. In addition, they can also improve the quality of communication by listening more and adjusting the topic of conversation to be more relevant to the interlocutor.

Another important strategy in elderly communication is the use of communication technology. In the digital era like now, many social interactions are carried out through technological devices, such as smartphones and social media. Seniors who can adapt this technology have a greater chance of staying connected with their family and friends. To help with this process, they can ask for guidance from their children or grandchildren in understanding how to use digital communication devices. Some seniors are starting to use instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp to stay in touch with their children and grandchildren. A study by Leist (Leist, 2013) shows that communication technology can be an important tool in reducing social isolation and improving the emotional well-being of the elderly. Additionally, video calls via Zoom or Google Meet allow them to still participate in family events despite being in different locations. Seniors who find it difficult to understand technology often get help from families or communities that provide specialized technology training for the elderly. With a better understanding of technology, the elderly can be more comfortable in communicating and no longer feel left behind by the changing times.

In addition to the use of social media, seniors can also join online discussion groups that focus on topics that are relevant to them. These groups often discuss things like health, lifestyle, retirement experiences, and tips on

maintaining social relationships. Seniors who are active in online communities have a greater chance of getting new information and staying engaged in conversations with their peers. In addition to family support and technology, involvement in the social community is also an important strategy for the elderly in maintaining their communication. Seniors who remain active in the community have better emotional well-being compared to those who spend more time alone at home. One way to do this is to join a social group, such as a religious community, an elderly organization, or a hobby club. By participating in social activities, the elderly can continue to interact with peers, share experiences, and get emotional support from the surrounding environment.

Many seniors also choose to engage in volunteer activities as a way to stay in touch with their social environment. In cases like this, social community and peer relationships become very important. A study by Hope (Hope et al., 2014) shows that older people who are involved in community activities, such as religious groups, social organizations, or hobby clubs, have higher levels of emotional well-being than those who spend most of their time alone. Activities such as teaching in informal schools, assisting in social programs, or being part of community organizations give them a sense of purpose and emotional satisfaction. Seniors who remain active in these activities feel that they still have a meaningful contribution to society, which ultimately helps them maintain healthy interpersonal communication. As part of a communication strategy, seniors also need to make an effort to establish and renew their old relationships. Some seniors feel that after retirement, they lose contact with their old friends. To overcome this, they can try to reconnect with old friends by phone, social media, or hold regular meetings such as reunions or activities together. Older people who maintain relationships with old friends are more adaptable to social changes and do not feel isolated from their environment.

In addition to social and technological factors, emotional health also plays an important role in the communication of the elderly. Older people who have good emotional well-being tend to have an easier time maintaining their interpersonal relationships. One way to improve emotional health is to manage the stress and anxiety that arise as a result of changes in their lives. Seniors who remain positive and have an optimistic attitude in facing challenges are more able to adapt to changes in communication patterns that occur. Some seniors also implement relaxation strategies, such as meditation, light exercise, or pursuing hobbies they enjoy, to help reduce stress and improve their mood. In addition, support from family and peers plays an important role in maintaining the emotional health of the elderly. Older people who have a strong social support group are more likely to cope with loneliness and have higher motivation to stay active in social communication. Therefore, creating an emotionally supportive environment is essential for seniors to remain valued and connected to those around them. A study by Monin (Monin et al., 2020) found that positive communication between the elderly and their family members can reduce stress and improve the mental health of the elderly. In contrast, older adults who feel neglected or undercared for by their children are more likely to experience loneliness and feelings of worthlessness.

Overall, the communication strategies of the elderly in adjusting after retirement are highly dependent on a variety of factors, including family support, community involvement, technology utilization, and emotional health. Seniors who can adopt modern communication technologies, stay active in social communities, and adapt their way of speaking to social changes are more likely to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. Family involvement in helping seniors understand new communication patterns is also very important to ensure that they continue to feel valued and have a role in family life. Seniors who continue to strive to maintain positive and flexible communication will find it easier to adjust to the changes that occur after retirement. By implementing the right communication strategies, seniors can stay socially active, reduce the risk of isolation, and live a happier and more meaningful retirement. Through effective strategies, seniors can maintain their social interactions and maintain quality relationships with their families and communities. The theory of *continuity* (Nussbaum & Coupland, 2004) states that the elderly who can maintain the communication patterns and lifestyles they have before retirement are more likely to adapt to changes after retirement. Therefore, it is important for various parties, including families, communities, and governments, to continue to develop initiatives that promote healthy and inclusive communication for the elderly. With the right support, seniors can live their retirement better and still feel part of an active and meaningful social environment.

4. Discussion

This research reveals various dynamics of communication for the elderly after entering retirement, including changes in communication patterns, challenges faced, and the role of social support in helping them adjust. The elderly experience various changes in their communication patterns, both with family, peers, and social communities. This shift is influenced by internal factors, such as psychological adaptation to retirement, as well as external factors, such as technological developments and changes in intergenerational communication styles. One of the important aspects found in this study is how the elderly adjust their communication patterns after losing their work routine. Before retirement, most seniors have an extensive communication network in their professional environment. However, after retirement, this communication is drastically reduced, and they need to find new ways to maintain their social relationships. Older people who are active in social communities or retirement groups are better able to maintain interpersonal interactions than those who do not have access to supportive social networks.

In the family, the elderly tend to experience a change in role that has an impact on their communication. Before retirement, many of them have a central role in economic and social decision-making in the household. However, after retirement, some seniors feel that they no longer have the same influence in the family. Although some seniors still have close relationships with their family members, others feel undervalued and experience a decrease in the frequency of communication with their children and grandchildren. In social interactions outside the family, communication for the elderly has also changed. Seniors who were previously used to communicating formally in a work environment need to adjust to a more relaxed communication style in daily life. Older people who remain active in social groups, such as religious communities, retirement organizations, or volunteer activities, show better levels of adaptation to these changes. Participation in social communities provides opportunities for them to stay in touch with their peers and expand their social networks.

The main challenge faced by the elderly in communication is the limitation in accessing and understanding modern communication technology. Technological developments have changed the way communication is conducted, with more and more people turning to digital media to communicate. For seniors who are unfamiliar with this technology, communication with family and friends can become more difficult. Some seniors are trying to learn to use technology like WhatsApp, social media, or video calling to stay connected with family and friends. However, not all seniors have adequate access or support to master this technology, which causes some of them to experience limitations in digital communication. In addition to technological limitations, differences in communication styles between generations are also a challenge in the social interaction of the elderly. Younger generations tend to be quicker and more direct in speaking, while older people are accustomed to more formal, face-to-face communication. This can lead to communication gaps between older adults and younger family members, especially in the context of everyday conversations. Older people who can adapt to a more flexible communication style tend to have an easier time establishing relationships with younger generations.

In the face of these communication challenges, the elderly develop various strategies to stay connected to their social environment. One of the main strategies used is to stay active in the social community. Seniors who join social groups, such as religious communities, hobby clubs, or volunteer activities, have a greater chance of maintaining their social interactions. In addition, involvement in social communities also provides psychological benefits, such as increased self-confidence and emotional well-being. Support from family is also a key factor in helping the elderly adapt to changes in communication after retirement. Seniors who get support from their children and grandchildren in understanding communication technology are more likely to adopt new ways of communication. Technology training provided by families, such as how to use smartphones or social media, can help the elderly stay connected to the outside world.

In addition, the elderly who have a balanced communication pattern between traditional and digital communication show a better level of adaptation. Seniors who still rely on face-to-face communication but start learning to use technology gradually find it easier to adapt to the changes that occur. This strategy allows them to stay relevant in their social environment without having to completely change the communication habits they have built up over the years. The results of this study show that the communication experience of the elderly after retirement is greatly

influenced by social support, digital skills, and their involvement in the community. Older people who have access to a strong social network and can adapt to technological developments are better able to maintain their social relationships than those who experience limited social access. Overall, the study highlights that older adults who have access to social support and can adapt to technological developments are more likely to maintain healthy social relationships. In contrast, the elderly who do not have an active social network or have difficulty accessing technology tend to experience social isolation. Therefore, more interventions are needed to support the elderly so that they can continue to have a role in social life and be able to live a better retirement.

5. Conclusion

The study highlights how seniors adjust their communication patterns after entering retirement, as well as the various challenges and strategies they use to maintain healthy social interactions. The results of the study show that changes in social roles after retirement have a significant impact on the communication patterns of the elderly, especially in relationships with family, peers, and the community. Seniors who previously had a wide communication network in the work environment had to adapt to more flexible communication patterns in their daily lives. Older people who have strong social support, both from family and community, tend to be better able to adjust and maintain their interpersonal relationships compared to those with limited social access. Meanwhile, the use of communication technology is also starting to play an important role in maintaining the social interaction of the elderly, although there are still challenges in terms of digital skills and technology accessibility for this group.

In addition, this research also reveals various challenges faced by the elderly in maintaining communication after retirement. The main challenges identified included differences in communication styles between generations, the digital divide, social isolation, and mobility and health limitations that limit their ability to remain active in social communities. Seniors who do not have sufficient technology skills or family support often find it difficult to adjust to changes in the way they communicate, which can ultimately lead to feelings of marginalization or even social isolation. Therefore, it is important for various parties, including families, communities, and policymakers, to develop strategies that can help seniors overcome these communication barriers. Steps that can be taken include digital literacy education for the elderly, the creation of a more inclusive social environment, and increasing public awareness of the importance of inclusive communication for the elderly.

In conclusion, effective communication for the elderly after retirement is highly dependent on social support, involvement in the community, and their ability to adapt to evolving communication technologies. By understanding the challenges and strategies used by the elderly in adjusting, families and communities can play a more active role in supporting the elderly to continue to have healthy and meaningful social interactions. In addition, more inclusive policies are also needed to ensure that the elderly still have access to various means of communication that can help them maintain their social relationships. With collaboration between families, communities, and the government in creating an environment that supports communication for the elderly, they can live their retirement happier, more active, and have a better quality of life.

6. Implication

The findings of this study have important implications in various aspects of the life of the elderly, including in the scope of family, social community, and public policy. One of the main implications is the importance of the role of the family in maintaining communication with the elderly. Seniors who have strong social support from their spouses, children, and grandchildren tend to adjust more easily to changes in communication patterns after retirement. Therefore, families need to be more active in involving the elderly in daily conversations, providing greater emotional attention, and ensuring that the elderly still feel valued and have a role in the family. In addition, efforts to reduce the generation gap in communication are also something that needs to be considered. The younger generation needs to be given an understanding of the importance of inclusive and empathetic communication with the elderly, so that interactions in the family become more harmonious and do not cause feelings of marginalization for the elderly.

In addition to the family scope, the results of this study also show that the involvement of the elderly in the social community has a significant impact on their well-being. Older people who remain active in religious communities, social groups, or volunteer activities tend to have more dynamic communication patterns and are better able to avoid social isolation. Therefore, communities and social organizations need to create more inclusive spaces for the elderly, where they can continue to participate in meaningful social activities. In addition, the development of digital literacy programs for the elderly is also an increasingly urgent need. Seniors who can understand and use digital communication technology have a greater chance of staying connected with their family and friends. Therefore, the community can take a role in providing education and training for the elderly regarding the use of digital devices, so that they can be more comfortable in adapting to technological developments.

In terms of policy, this study emphasizes the need for intervention from the government and stakeholders in supporting communication for the elderly. The government can develop more inclusive programs to improve the social welfare of the elderly, such as the provision of communication counseling services for the elderly who have difficulty adjusting to social changes. In addition, policies regarding the development of an elderly-friendly environment also need to be considered, such as the provision of public spaces that allow the elderly to interact more comfortably and transportation facilities that support their mobility. In addition, policies that encourage intergenerational interaction can also be a solution in reducing the communication gap between the elderly and the younger generation. With support from various parties, both from family, community, and the government, the elderly can live their retirement more actively, happily, and still have meaningful social relationships.

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Organizational Culture and Communication in Muhammadiyah Higher Education Institutions: Transparency, Technology Integration, and Islamic Values

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Abstract

This study discusses the organizational culture in the superior cluster's Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM), focusing on transparency, collaboration, and technology integration in institutional governance. Transparency in managing finances and resources ensures accountability and increases stakeholder trust through an open reporting system and periodic audits. Collaboration between departments allows synergy between faculties, research units, and community service units, thereby increasing research effectiveness and expanding the reach of community service. Meanwhile, integrating technology in the academic and administrative systems improves operational efficiency and transparency in internal communication and academic evaluation. The findings of this study confirm that the combination of these three aspects contributes to improving the quality of professional and innovative Islamic-based higher education. However, challenges in human resource readiness, cross-departmental coordination, and digital infrastructure still need to be overcome to ensure the sustainability of this strategy. With a systematic approach, superior cluster PTM can continue to develop as a competitive higher education institution at the national and international levels.

Keywords: Transparency, Collaboration, Technology Integration, Academic Governance, Muhammadiyah Higher Education

1. Introduction

Organizational culture and communication have an important role in determining the effectiveness and reputation of a university. In Indonesia, Muhammadiyah Universities (PTM) exemplify how Islamic values are integrated into organizational culture and communication strategies. Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, has established many educational institutions that implement Islamic principles in their operational framework, thus encouraging ethical behavior, accountability, and continuous improvement. The

integration of Islamic values in the organizational culture of PTM serves as the basis for decision-making and leadership practices. (Purwati et al., 2016) Values such as professionalism, trust, Katonah (intelligence), and sincerity have been firmly embedded in these institutions and influence policies, leadership styles, and interpersonal relationships. (Terrorism, 2015). This values-based culture helps build integrity and trust in the academic environment. Research shows that a strong organizational culture that aligns with core values plays an important role in increasing educator commitment and institutional sustainability (Desipung et al., 2016).

In realizing the main performance indicators (KPIs) and additional performance indicators (IKT), PTMA does a very good managerial job in achieving the organization's goals. In principle, the indicator of the success of an organization is a comprehensive success, both in financial aspects, human aspects, aspects of work methods, and a conducive environment so that the organization is superior. This aspect is built from the role of the leader and the team under him. The success of an institution depends on flexibility and innovation. Effective reactions to these demands lead to changes in individuals and their behaviors and innovative changes within the organization to ensure their existence and sustainability. (Coman & Bonciu, 2016).

However, the application of technology in the education system must still consider alignment with Islamic values so as not to sacrifice the basic principles that are the foundation of the institution. Research shows that universities that can integrate technology effectively without abandoning core values have higher levels of innovation and sustainability (Kaur Bagga et al., 2023). Thus, the organizational culture and communication practices in Muhammadiyah Universities are greatly influenced by Islamic values that guide their commitment to transparency, ethical governance, and effective stakeholder engagement. (Puspitaningtyas & Kurniawan, 2013). The careful integration of technology in their operations opens up opportunities for innovation and improvement of the quality of education, as long as it remains aligned with the organization's basic principles. By adhering to Islamic values while adopting modern advancements, PTM can continue to fulfill its educational mission and positively contribute to society. (Abdullah, 2002) 4.0 and encourages higher education, which can think globally and internationally but still concentrate at the national or local level, or in other words, think globally and act locally (Mudzakkir, 2021). Culture in an organization is also important when thinking about good ethics and how to communicate with others. This is why organizational culture can also be why communication in higher education does not work as it should (Howard, 2014). This picture is conveyed (Shiflett, 2013). that many factors affect organizational culture in higher education institutions. Still, this culture remains collaborative even though the characteristics of secondary, tertiary, and quaternary organizations also influence organizational behavior.

Cultural changes in several factors, including generational differences, result in distances and gaps between the two in the organization, so these conditions in the organization cause communication problems among its members. Good communication skills become a very important skill in the work environment, ensuring that ideas, desires, and needs among staff, students, lecturers, parents, and external parties in higher education can be heard (Howard, 2014). By upholding Islamic values as the basis for governance and institutional development, PTM can continue to develop into a superior, innovative, and characterful educational center. Adopting technology that is in line with Islamic principles, transparency in governance, and effective communication are the main factors in ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of institutions in the era of globalization. By combining modernization and strong traditional values, PTM can continue to produce a generation that is not only academically superior but also has high moral integrity and can positively impact the wider community (Mudzakkir, 2021).

In an organization's context, communication functions not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a means of forming norms, values, and distinctive social structures (Widowati, 2013). five types of communication performance contribute to shaping organizational culture: ritual, desire, social, political, and enculturation. Ritual performance reflects communication activities, either personal, task, social, or organizational. Meanwhile, the performance of passion is in the form of narratives or stories that describe the experiences and values of the organization, which are often used to strengthen the organization's common identity (Sabita, 2016).

2. Method

Qualitative research is inductive research; in this case, the researcher will explore meaning and insight in the context of a certain situation (*Straus*). This refers to a series of data collection and data analysis methods that involve the deliberate selection of informants through semi-structured and open interview techniques. This condition is based on the opinion of Creswell and colleagues, who call it an efficient framework that takes place in a natural context and provides an opportunity for researchers to develop a high level of detail regarding the involvement of informants in real experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The use of appropriate research methods for social research is by several criteria, including (1) answering the research questions to be used, (2) how the researcher controls the phenomenon being studied; and (2) paying attention to the phenomena (Yin, 2018). Therefore, this research plan uses a case study design to adjust to these three criteria. Case studies are a process of seeking knowledge to investigate and examine phenomena that occur in real-life (Yin, 2018). In the design of this study, the perspective used is a plural or multi-case case study. A multi-case study is a special effort to examine something with many cases, parts, or members (Langley, 2006). Based on the conditions and criteria set, this study involved 20 informants as data sources to answer research questions. To maintain the confidentiality of personal information of the informants and their families, the data obtained will be presented using certain codes, according to the needs of this study:

The in-depth interviews were carried out at superior cluster universities with informants who followed the interview guidelines and could answer questions from the researcher to obtain appropriate data. Furthermore, interviews were conducted at the fostered cluster universities with informants according to the researcher's objectives. Then, the third interview was held at the Secondary Cluster Universities. Dean uses recording so that the document is stored properly and then in the transcript.

3. Result

3.1. *Transparent and Participatory Organizational Communication*

One of the main findings in this study is the existence of transparent and participatory organizational communication in Muhammadiyah Universities (PTM) of the superior cluster. The communication mechanism allows every organization member, including lecturers, education staff, and students, to easily access academic and administrative information. This transparency is realized through the delivery of clear policies, openness in the decision-making process, and the provision of discussion spaces that encourage active participation from the academic community. With open communication, superior cluster PTM can create a more democratic academic environment where each individual has the same opportunity to express opinions and participate in institutional policy-making. This increases trust in institutional governance and builds a sense of ownership and shared responsibility within the academic community. This is in line with research that shows that rituals in organizations have a major function in building social solidarity and increasing the involvement of organizational members in various aspects of institutional life (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Two-way communication built between leaders and organization members is the main factor that creates a more open academic atmosphere and minimal conflict. PTM leaders in the superior cluster play a role as policymakers and communication facilitators who ensure the entire academic community can easily access important information. This approach allows for more in-depth discussions on academic policy, resource management, and strategic planning involving various parties. In many cases, top-down communication often leads to misunderstandings and information inequality, which can ultimately spark dissatisfaction among educators and students. Therefore, the superior cluster PTM adopts a more inclusive communication model by opening up space for constructive dialogue between leaders and organization members.

Transparency in communication in superior cluster PTM is also supported by information technology that allows access to various sources of academic and administrative information. With an online-based academic information system, students can easily obtain data on lecture schedules, academic evaluation results, and information about academic policies being implemented. Lecturers and education staff also have access to information about recruitment policies, assessment systems, and professional development opportunities offered by institutions. Using technology in organizational communication increases efficiency in the delivery of information and ensures

that all members of the organization get accurate and timely information. Thus, using this technology is an important element in maintaining transparency and increasing communication effectiveness in the academic environment.

In addition, openness in organizational communication is also applied in the decision-making process. Superior cluster PTM implements a mechanism that allows each stakeholder to contribute to the academic and administrative policy formulation process. Students, lecturers, and education staff are allowed to express their input through academic forums, regular meetings, and focus group discussions that are held regularly. With this approach, the policies implemented not only come from the perspective of the leadership but also reflect the needs and aspirations of all members of the organization. In this context, transparent and participatory organizational communication creates a more inclusive academic environment and improves the quality of implemented policies. The impact of transparent and participatory communication on institutional performance is also significant. With open communication, superior cluster PTM can build stronger trust between leaders and organization members. This trust is the main factor in creating a more harmonious and collaborative academic culture. Students feel more valued and have a sense of ownership towards the institution, which ultimately increases their motivation and involvement in academic and non-academic activities. Lecturers and education staff also feel more appreciated for their contributions, thus creating a more productive and supportive work environment. Thus, effective communication not only functions as a tool to convey information but also as an instrument that supports strengthening organizational culture and improving the quality of education in superior cluster PTMs.

Furthermore, the study found that transparent and participatory communication also contributes to creating innovations in the management of higher education institutions. When members of the organization feel they have the freedom to express their ideas, there is room for greater collaboration and innovation. The superior cluster PTM has shown how open communication can encourage the development of new initiatives in academics, research, and community service. For example, some PTMs have implemented a project-based learning system that directly involves students in research and community service activities. Programs like these arise from open discussions and interactions between students, lecturers, and institutional leaders, allowing various innovations to be developed and implemented more effectively. The study of Islam and Zyphur (2009) supports these findings by showing that an organization's rituals create a sense of emotional attachment and build a strong social identity among its members (Islam & Zyphur, 2009).

However, although organizational communication in superior cluster PTM has shown significant progress, several challenges still need to be overcome to improve communication effectiveness further. One of the main challenges is ensuring that transparent and participatory communication can run consistently across all levels of the organization. Some obstacles still faced include differences in communication patterns between work units, the lack of involvement of some educators in academic discussions, and bureaucratic obstacles that can slow down the flow of information. Therefore, superior cluster PTMs must continue developing more adaptive and inclusive communication strategies by ensuring that every member of the organization has equal access to information and opportunities to participate in decision-making.

3.2. Integration of Technology in Communication and Academic Governance

The superior cluster's Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) has applied various technologies to support the communication system and organizational governance. Implementing digital technology, such as online-based academic information systems, internal communication platforms, and applications supporting the values of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah (AIK), has increased information dissemination and academic coordination efficiency. This technology allows openness in academic reporting, transparency in the evaluation system, and acceleration of access to important information for all stakeholders. PTM can create a more modern and inclusive academic culture with supporting technology.

Implementing an online-based academic information system provides convenience for students and lecturers in accessing academic data in real-time. Students can easily view lecture schedules, academic evaluation results, and the latest academic policies without relying on manual processes that tend to be time-consuming. In addition,

lecturers and education staff also get more flexible access to the lecture administration system, including the assessment process, curriculum management, and monitoring of student academic progress. With this system, transparency in academic management can be further maintained, thereby creating a more effective and efficient educational ecosystem.

In addition, the internal communication platform implemented in superior cluster PTM allows smoother interaction between leaders, lecturers, education staff, and students. Through technology-based applications, institutions can coordinate various academic and administrative activities more quickly and organized. The online discussion forum provided through this platform also opens opportunities for the academic community to provide input on institutional policies, ultimately increasing active participation in decision-making. Thus, superior cluster PTM implements one-way communication from leaders to organizational members and creates a more participatory two-way communication mechanism.

Furthermore, using technology to support the values of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah (AIK) in superior cluster PTM shows that digital integration is not only limited to academic and administrative aspects but also strengthens institutional identity. Applications developed specifically to support AIK, such as online learning modules based on Islamic values, digital Islamic study systems, and interactive da'wah platforms, are some of the innovations that strengthen the character of Islam in the academic environment. With the support of this technology, PTM can more easily internalize Islamic values in various aspects of education and reach more students to participate in AIK-based character development programs.

In addition, implementing technology in superior cluster PTM also increases efficiency in the academic evaluation and reporting system. The academic evaluation process previously done manually can now be carried out faster and more accurately through a digital-based system. For example, automated grading systems allow lecturers to provide faster feedback to students so they can immediately know their academic progress and make improvements if needed. In addition, a transparent academic reporting system allows students, lecturers, and education staff to access academic data more easily, thereby creating a more accountable academic culture.

The success of PTM clusters excelling in adopting technology also reflects their ability to face the challenges of globalization and digitalization in higher education. By utilizing technology optimally, PTM can increase its competitiveness at the national and international levels. The use of technology not only provides benefits in terms of administrative efficiency but also expands students' access to education. Online lecture programs, virtual-based seminars, and learning management system-based learning systems are solutions for students who want flexibility in the teaching and learning process without being limited by distance and time.

However, although the application of technology has provided various benefits for superior cluster PTM, several challenges need to be overcome to ensure the sustainability of this system. One of the main challenges is human resources' readiness to adapt to new technologies. Not all lecturers and education staff have enough digital skills to optimize the technology-based academic system. Therefore, regular training and mentoring are needed so the entire academic community can make the most of this technology.

In addition, technical constraints such as uneven network infrastructure in several regions also need to be considered. Some students from areas with limited internet access may experience difficulties accessing the online academic system, which can hinder their learning process. To overcome this problem, PTM needs to develop an inclusive strategy to reach all students, such as providing internet access facilities in the campus environment or developing a hybrid learning system that combines online and offline methods.

Overall, the application of technology in supporting communication systems and organizational governance in superior cluster PTMs has had many positive impacts on creating a more modern, inclusive, and transparent academic environment. With an online-based academic information system, an efficient internal communication platform, and an application that supports AIK values, PTM can increase the effectiveness of institutional management and provide a better learning experience for students. However, to ensure the sustainability of this system, continuous efforts are needed to improve the digital literacy of the academic community and overcome

technical obstacles that still exist. With the right strategy, superior cluster PTM can continue to develop as an Islamic-based higher education institution that is adaptive to the development of the times and still maintains its Islamic identity.

3.3. Integration of Technology in Communication and Academic Governance

The superior cluster's Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) has applied various technologies to support the communication system and organizational governance. Implementing digital technology, such as online-based academic information systems, internal communication platforms, and applications supporting the values of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah (AIK), has increased information dissemination and academic coordination efficiency. This technology allows openness in academic reporting, transparency in the evaluation system, and acceleration of access to important information for all stakeholders. With the support of this technology, PTM can create a more modern and inclusive academic culture.

The online-based academic information system implemented by the superior cluster PTM provides convenience for students and lecturers in accessing academic information quickly and in real time. Students can see lecture schedules, academic evaluation results, and academic policies that are being implemented without having to experience delays in information. In addition, lecturers and education staff also have more flexible access to academic administration management, such as grade input, student attendance monitoring, and the preparation of lecture materials. With this system, PTM can ensure that the academic process runs more efficiently, transparently, and with minimal administrative errors.

The internal communication platform developed by the superior cluster PTM also plays an important role in strengthening the interaction between organization members. Through technology-based applications, communication between leaders, lecturers, education staff, and students can run more smoothly and structured. The online discussion feature provided allows for faster and more effective information exchange. In addition, the use of this platform also allows for a reporting and feedback system that assists institutions in evaluating policies that have been implemented. Thus, communication within the institution becomes more participatory and responsive to the needs of the academic community.

In the context of Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah (AIK) values, the PTM Superior Cluster has also developed various digital-based applications to support internalizing Islamic values in academic life. Some of these applications include online AIK learning modules, digital-based Islamic study systems, and platforms that facilitate da'wah activities in the campus environment. With this application, students and lecturers can more easily access Islamic materials and participate in activities, strengthening their Islamic-based character. This technology helps PTM maintain its Islamic identity while accommodating the development of the times in higher education. In the context of organizational effectiveness, research by Van den Ende and Van Marrewijk (2018) found that rituals can increase the credibility and legitimacy of organizational policies and accelerate the process of adaptation to change (van den Ende & van Marrewijk, 2018).

In addition to the benefits in academic and communication aspects, implementing technology in superior cluster PTM also greatly contributes to increasing transparency in the evaluation system. A technology-based evaluation system allows students to obtain their assessment results faster and more accurately. This system allows lecturers to provide more systematic feedback on students' academic performance so that they can understand their weaknesses and strengths in the learning process. Transparency in this evaluation system also ensures that the entire assessment process is carried out objectively and fairly, without bias or administrative errors. According to Pfeffer (1992), organizational politics is an unavoidable phenomenon in any organization and greatly influences employee behavior. Study by Vigoda-Gadot and Drory (2006) (Buckner et al., 2016).

The success of superior cluster PTM in applying technology also impacts increasing efficiency in managing institutional resources. Technology makes financial management, campus facility management, and administrative systems more structured and effective. With an integrated digital system, PTM can reduce administrative workload previously done manually, thus allowing education staff to focus more on other strategic tasks. Thus, the

application of technology in superior cluster PTM improves academic quality and strengthens the institution's overall management efficiency. These findings support this study, which shows that organizational politics can be a factor that affects employee loyalty and work productivity (Shabbir et al., 2022).

However, although technology adoption has positively impacted superior cluster PTM, several challenges must be considered to ensure its sustainability. One of the main challenges is the readiness of human resources to operate and utilize technology optimally. Not all lecturers and education staff have enough digital literacy to adapt to technology-based systems that continue to develop. Therefore, training and mentoring programs are needed to improve the digital skills of the academic community so that they can optimize the use of technology in their academic and administrative activities.

In addition, technological infrastructure is also an important aspect that needs to be considered when developing digital systems in superior cluster PTMs. Some institutions still face obstacles regarding stable internet access, especially for students from areas with limited technological infrastructure. To address these challenges, PTM needs to develop an inclusive strategy that ensures that every student has equal access to a digital-based academic system. One of the solutions that can be implemented is to provide better internet access facilities in the campus environment and develop a hybrid learning model that allows a combination of online and offline methods. Research by (Almeida et al., 2016) Ferris et al. (2005) shows that the perception of organizational politics is closely related to job satisfaction and employee involvement.

Overall, applying technology in communication systems and organizational governance in superior cluster PTMs has brought many benefits, such as creating a more modern, inclusive, and transparent academic environment. The lack of training for day workers makes them not get the same understanding of organizational culture standards, which ultimately creates differences in work ethic and loyalty to the institution (Thamhain, 2004). With an online-based academic information system, an efficient internal communication platform, and an application that supports AIK values, PTM can increase the effectiveness of institutional management and provide a better learning experience for students. However, to ensure the sustainability of this system, PTM needs to continue to develop strategies that focus on increasing the digital literacy of the academic community and strengthening more equitable technological infrastructure. With the right approach, superior cluster PTM can continue to develop as an Islamic-based higher education institution that is adaptive to the development of the times without leaving the identity and values that are the main foundation.

3.4. Human Resource Development as an Organizational Priority

Other findings show that Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) in the superior cluster pays great attention to human resources (HR) development. Institutions in this category have various capacity-building programs, such as leadership training, academic workshops, and support for educators and education personnel to continue their studies to a higher level. This commitment to human resource development aims to ensure that lecturers and education staff have competencies in developing the increasingly dynamic world of higher education. The results of this study support the findings that show that employees who feel unfair in the distribution of resources tend to show lower performance (Abun, 2022). By improving human resources' quality, superior cluster PTM can create an adaptive, innovative, and highly competitive academic environment.

Jalaliyoon and Taherdoost (2012) highlight the importance of performance evaluation in higher education institutions to ensure sustainability and competitiveness in the f(Jalaliyoon & Taherdoost, 2012). Transformational leadership, which emphasizes intrinsic motivation, long-term vision, and academic staff empowerment, has proven more effective in creating an innovative and productive academic environment. Felício et al. (2013) argue that social entrepreneurship and transformational leadership are important in creating social value that impacts organizational performance in the non-profit sector (Felício et al., 2013).

Leadership training is one of the flagship programs designed to equip lecturers and education staff with the managerial and leadership skills needed in managing higher education institutions. In the study of organizational culture, (Joseph et al., 2021) Joseph and Kibera (2019) found that organizations with a structured ritual culture

have a higher level of loyalty and engagement from their members (Joseph et al., 2021). Through this program, participants gain insight into effective leadership strategies, data-driven decision-making, and how to build a collaborative and results-oriented work culture. Thus, educators play the role of teachers and leaders who can develop institutions in a better direction. The success of this program is reflected in the increase in the number of academic staff who can occupy strategic positions in the campus environment, both as heads of study programs, deans, and leaders in various academic and administrative units. The Haibo study (2022) shows that transformational and transactional leadership styles significantly influence organizational performance in higher education institutions in China (Haibo, 2022).

In addition to leadership training, academic workshops are an integral part of the human resource development strategy in superior cluster PTMs. This workshop is designed to enrich lecturers' skills in aspects of teaching, research, and scientific publications. In an increasingly competitive academic world, the ability of lecturers to conduct quality research and publish their research results in internationally reputable journals is very important. Therefore, PTM superior clusters actively organize training on research methodologies, academic writing, and effective scientific publication strategies. With this workshop, the number of academic publications from superior cluster PTMs has increased significantly, thus increasing institutional rankings at the national and international levels. Exemplary-based leadership (*uswah hasanah*) is highly emphasized when developing lecturers and education staff. This is in line with the findings of Sopiah et al. (2021), which show that a strong and value-based organizational culture has a high correlation with improved performance and commitment of organizational members (Ulfa & Salamah, 2017).

Support for educators and education staff to continue their studies to a higher level is also the main focus of the human resource development policy in superior cluster PTMs. The institution provides various scholarship schemes, research grants, and partnerships with overseas universities to help lecturers and education staff pursue higher academic degrees. With this support, PTM superior clusters can increase the number of lecturers who have doctoral qualifications and improve the quality of education personnel who have professional competence in the field of academic administration. This program also creates a long-term effect in increasing the competitiveness of PTM graduates, as they receive guidance from teaching staff with higher qualifications and academic experience. This is in line with the research of Ghumiem et al. (2023), which found that a structured organizational culture significantly impacts work effectiveness and innovation in organizations (Ghumiem et al., 2023).

In addition to improving the quality of teaching, this human resource development program also positively impacts employee loyalty and motivation in supporting the achievement of the vision and mission of the institution. When educators and education staff feel that they have the attention and support of the institution, they tend to be more loyal and motivated in carrying out their duties. The sense of ownership of the institution is also increasing, thus creating a more conducive and collaborative work environment. Studies show that institutions with good HR development policies tend to have higher labor retention rates and better productivity. Thus, PTM superior clusters focus on improving academic quality and the welfare and professional development of educators and their education staff. The results of this study show that a moderate level of organizational politics can improve individual performance, but if it is too high, it can reduce work motivation (Albloush et al., 2025).

However, even though the human resource development program in the superior cluster PTM has shown positive results, several challenges still need to be overcome so that its implementation can run more optimally. One of the main challenges is ensuring that every educator and education staff has the same opportunity to access this program. In some cases, limited time and workload are obstacles for lecturers and education staff to take part in training and continue their studies. Therefore, PTM needs to design a more flexible strategy, such as providing online training programs, a more adaptive academic leave system, and incentives for those active in competency development. This is consistent with the findings in this study, which show that high levels of organizational politics can hinder employee work effectiveness (Rahman et al., 2011).

3.5. Collaboration and Synergy between Departments

One of the main strengths in the organizational culture of Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) superior clusters is a work environment that supports collaboration between departments. A structured cross-departmental work program allows for synergy between faculties, research, and community service units. With a good cooperation mechanism, PTM can increase the effectiveness of research, expand the range of community service activities, and ensure that the academic process runs more dynamically and is oriented towards a real impact on the surrounding environment.

Collaboration between departments in superior cluster PTM occurs not only in the form of academic programs but also in aspects of research and community service. In research, cross-disciplinary integration allows academics from different fields of study to work together to develop more comprehensive and applicable innovations. For example, the collaboration between the faculty of engineering and the faculty of health has resulted in various research related to Islamic-based medical technology, which can ultimately benefit the wider community. In addition, Islamic-based research is also growing by involving the faculty of Islamic religion in cross-disciplinary discussions to ensure that each research finding is in line with Islamic values.

Academic forums and regular discussions involving various parties are important means of ensuring active involvement in strategic decision-making. This discussion is not only limited to the academic scope but also covers aspects of institutional governance, improving the quality of education, and human resource development strategies. Through these forums, university leaders can absorb the aspirations of various elements of the academic community, including lecturers, education staff, and students. Open communication makes the resulting policies more inclusive and acceptable to all parties involved. This approach also increases a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the policies that have been set.

Furthermore, collaboration between departments also positively impacts increasing institutions' competitiveness at the national and international levels. With cross-departmental cooperation in research and scientific publications, the number of publications produced by superior cluster PTMs has increased significantly. In addition, collaboration with various foreign institutions is further strengthened through lecturer and student exchange schemes and research collaborations with international partner universities. This shows that superior cluster PTMs are not only able to create synergy within the institution but also establish wider academic relationships at the global level.

While cross-departmental collaboration has provided many benefits, some challenges still need to be overcome to ensure the sustainability of this collaboration. One of the main challenges is creating an effective coordination system between academic and administrative units. In some cases, differences in work culture and priorities between departments can hinder achieving shared goals. Therefore, a more systematic coordination mechanism is needed, such as forming a cross-departmental team with a special mandate to coordinate cooperation programs. With a better coordination system, each unit in PTM can more easily adjust to the collaboration strategy that has been set.

4. Discussion

The discussion in this study focuses on three main aspects of the organizational culture in Muhammadiyah Higher Education (PTM) superior clusters: transparency in managing financial and institutional resources, collaboration between departments, and technology integration in academic and administrative processes. These three aspects are important in creating accountable institutional governance, improving operational efficiency, and building an inclusive and innovative academic environment. Transparency in financial management is the main factor in ensuring that every resource PTM owns is managed with high accountability principles. An open financial policy allows the allocation of funds for operations, research, and community service to be carried out effectively and by the institution's needs.

With a transparent reporting system and periodic external audits, PTM can build trust from various stakeholders, including the academic community, donors, and institutional partners. In addition, openness in financial management also impacts increasing efficiency in using the budget, thus allowing institutions to allocate resources

more optimally to support academic development and improve the quality of education. Meanwhile, collaboration between departments is one of the main strengths in building synergy between faculties, research units, and community service units. With a structured cross-departmental work program, PTM can increase the effectiveness of research, expand the scope of community service, and ensure that the academic process runs more dynamically. Academic forums and regular discussions involving various parties also play a role in strengthening coordination and ensuring that every institutional policy is made considering the various perspectives in the academic environment. This synergy increases academic productivity and encourages innovation in various research and institutional development fields.

Furthermore, integrating technology in communication and academic governance is important in supporting the effectiveness of information dissemination and internal coordination. Implementing online-based academic information systems, internal communication platforms, and applications based on *Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah* (AIK) values has enabled PTM to create a more modern and inclusive academic environment. This technology allows for openness in academic reporting, transparency in the evaluation system, and acceleration of access to important information for all stakeholders. With adequate technological support, PTM can ensure that every element in the organization has equal access to relevant information, thus creating a more democratic and participatory academic ecosystem. Although the implementation of transparency, collaboration, and technology integration has brought many benefits to superior cluster PTM, several challenges still need to be overcome to run more optimally. One of the main challenges in implementing financial transparency is how to ensure that all work units within the institution have the same understanding of the accountability standards applied.

In some cases, differences in administrative capacity between units can cause inconsistencies in financial reporting, so there is a need for more systematic training and assistance for education personnel involved in budget management. In addition, obstacles in coordination across departments are also a challenge in ensuring that cooperation programs can run effectively. In some situations, differences in priorities between faculties and academic units can hinder the expected synergy, so a more systematic coordination mechanism and strong leadership are needed to encourage productive cooperation. On the other hand, technology integration also faces challenges regarding the readiness of human resources and supporting infrastructure. Not all educators and education personnel have adequate digital skills to operate a technology-based academic system, so a continuous training program is needed to improve the digital literacy of the academic community.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study confirms that transparency, collaboration, and technology integration are the three main pillars of building a strong organizational culture in superior cluster PTMs. Transparency in financial management ensures accountability and increases stakeholder trust through an open reporting system and periodic audits. Collaboration between departments encourages synergy in research, teaching, and community service, creating a more dynamic and productive academic environment. Meanwhile, integrating technology in the academic and administrative systems improves communication efficiency and transparency in academic evaluation. However, challenges such as gaps in administrative capacity, differences in priorities between faculties, and digital infrastructure readiness still need to be overcome. With the right strategy and the support of all stakeholders, superior cluster PTM can continue to develop as a professional, innovative, and sustainable Islamic-based higher education institution.

6. Implication

The implications of this study show that transparency, collaboration, and technology integration in the organizational culture of superior cluster PTM have a significant impact on institutional governance, improving academic quality and stakeholder trust. By implementing a transparent system in managing institutional finances and resources, PTM can create a more accountable and professional academic environment. Openness in financial reporting allows stakeholders, including students, faculty, education staff, institutional partners, and donors, to know how funds are being used effectively. This impacts increasing trust in the institution and strengthening the reputation of PTM as a university with good governance. In addition, transparent financial policies allow

institutions to allocate resources more efficiently, ensuring that available funds are used to support academic development, research, and community service.

Regarding collaboration between departments, the implications are increasing research and community service effectiveness. With cross-disciplinary cooperation, superior cluster PTM can produce more applicable research that has a wide impact on society. Integration between the faculty of engineering and the faculty of health, for example, can produce innovations in medical technology based on Islamic values, which are beneficial to the academic world and the needs of the wider community. In addition, the synergy between the research unit and the community service unit allows the implementation of research results to become a real solution that can be applied in community empowerment programs. Another implication is forming a more dynamic and participatory academic environment, where lecturers and students have greater opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary projects that enrich their academic experience. However, challenges in this collaboration remain, especially in terms of coordination and differences in priorities between departments. Therefore, policies encouraging cross-faculty cooperation through joint research incentives and more effective communication platforms are needed.

Overall, this study's implications point to the need to strengthen institutional policies that support transparency, collaboration, and technology as part of the long-term strategy of superior cluster NCDs. By ensuring that transparency policies are implemented consistently, strengthening cross-departmental collaboration mechanisms, and optimizing the use of technology in the academic system, PTM can continue to grow as a globally competitive, Islamic-based higher education institution.

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The Relationship Between Future Learning Objectives and Exploratory Motivations and Intellectual Curiosity

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Abstract

In the face of the rapid developments imposed by the changing world, opinions and recommendations have proliferated to improve curricula to keep pace with the era of exploration and equip learners with the necessary skills. Among these new ideas is the utilization of the skill of curiosity. This article invokes scientific accumulations and fundamental concepts that constitute references for the theoretical approach. While its concepts may vary from practices that reduce effort, it may be a choice for teachers to measure the impact of learning. The article presents proposals and adopts options that facilitate its application, a fertile field manifested in its openness to various knowledge sources. The current article attempts to provide a general overview of the theoretical interpretations of curiosity and how both initial and future research has addressed intellectual curiosity as a driving force and hence a personal trait and characteristics that can be developed. Its use may lead to solving some problems and overcoming obstacles. We seek to present its importance and effective applications in the active interactive transformation of teaching and learning, and openness to competence. Awareness of the contexts in which these strategies are used enables the teacher to formulate mental activities, allowing for deep understanding and activation of cognitive acquisition processes. In this paper, we attempt to broaden our understanding of intellectual curiosity by addressing the question: How can this new approach help better understand the mechanisms underlying curiosity-related learning? To what extent can it contribute to future learning endeavors?

Keywords: Intellectual Curiosity, Exploratory Motivations, Future Learning

1. Introduction

Researchers in the problematics of learning and exploration have long linked them to the extent of innate predispositions and educational institutions that strive to equip individuals with preparation and cognitive awareness. There is no doubt that when the conditions are conducive to learning, we owe this acquisition to our intellectual curiosity. However, through preliminary readings, it is observed that research on its strategies is relatively neglected, attributed in our view to negative associations and classifications that researchers have overlooked. Its purpose appears distorted, and research on it seems to fade without experimentation.

The comprehension of its impact on the learning process has been relatively minimal (Matthias et al., 2019). This was evident when there was a negative portrayal of it in children's literature, making it a condemned flaw. This negative portrayal has added further closure to the development of its concept, strategies, or the recognition of its importance. However, Torrance (1965) considered it the primary motivating force for scientific exploration that

should be nurtured and directed in children. He believed that it represents the greatest driving force for the processes of learning and thinking.

Subsequent research interpretations focused on its significance and specificity, indicating that children engage in the process of searching for missing information early on, through inquiry and exploration. Scientific thinking in these young minds is driven by natural curiosity towards research and exploration (Jirout.JJ, 2020).

Additionally, some related studies that discuss less specific concepts do not employ the term "intellectual curiosity." Instead, they focus on specific strategies related to it, such as play-based learning, exploration, and enhanced learning. On the other hand, contemporary studies using the term "intellectual curiosity" define it as the propensity to seek information that has real value to individuals. Cognitive deprivation arises from the perception of a knowledge gap, and information gap is considered one of the active learning strategies (1994).

To ensure the success of active learning, there must be a conducive learning community and an environment that supports and enriches learning processes. This requires implementing projects outside the school environment and addressing environmental issues, forming effective and active learning practices (Mahmoud et al., 2019).

In this context, one of the key factors creating a sense of information gap is the feeling of deprivation, fostering the desire for natural exploration and learning (Markey and Loewenstein, 2014). In light of this, we will attempt to study the problem of employing intellectual curiosity as an aspect of exploration and active learning.

This leads us to ask several questions, including: What makes individuals curious about learning and exploration? Why do they explore the unknown? To what extent can we employ the passion for knowledge in young children to support scientific and future thinking? What are the mechanisms through which curiosity can support active learning and exploration?

The goal we seek is to understand the importance of investing in these connections for intellectual curiosity and exploration conducted by learners, as it represents an approach to active learning that allows for understanding and evoking effective forms of acquisition, all from a future-oriented perspective.

2. Conceptual Framework

Among the fundamental concepts we will attempt to review are:

2.1. Concept of Intellectual Curiosity

Curiosity is defined as the desire to seek information to address cognitive gaps resulting from uncertainty, lack of knowledge, or mystery (Loewenstein, 1994; Jirout and Klahr, 2012). Curiosity can manifest in various types of information characterized by mystery and uncertainty. It is similar to critical thinking in knowledge and active learning fields and problem-solving (Gopnik, 2012; Klahr et al., 2012; Saylor and Ganea, 2018).

2.2. Concept of Future Learning

Mat Mathews' L0 K (2006) sees active learning as an effort to make the learner exert effort in classroom activities rather than passively receiving information from others. Active learning encourages students to interact and participate in group work, ask various questions, engage in discovering concepts, and participate in problem-solving-based exercises. The aim of training students for deep analysis of works and engaging them in activities is to impart creative and investigative thinking skills and problem-solving skills.

In conclusion, our understanding of future learning is to induce a change in individual behavior through the impact of discovery learning, supported by guidance, and the acquisition of skills that become a behavior paving the way for achievement.

3. Theoretical Background

There are varied perspectives when it comes to conceptualizing intellectual curiosity, and most initial research results have relied on theoretical approaches that recent readings have highlighted and strengthened by associations linked to cognitive development, research, and exploration. In this presentation, we will provide a general overview of the theories built upon it.

When Williams (1957) sought to classify curiosity as an essential element of perception and as a motivator and influencer in learning and decision-making, Berlyne (1960) surpassed that by presenting it through multiple dimensions, including cognitive and perceptual curiosity. The former relates to the motivation and desire for knowledge, while Hunt (1963) claimed that curiosity refers to motivations underlying information processing, asserting that it is a blend of perception and motivation.

The initial breakthrough included introducing new interpretations. Interest in curiosity, especially after Galileo's telescope discoveries, emphasized the importance of exploratory curiosity as one of the fundamental goals of education (Blumenberg, 1983). Subsequent research described it as exploratory behavior with a significant role in promoting cognitive development (Spielberger, 1994). In light of this, questions arise: What makes individuals have a curiosity for learning and exploration? Why do these individuals explore the unknown? Susan Edelman (1997) adopted these formulations, attributing curiosity to being a motivation or the motivation for exploration.

What is striking is the endorsement of curiosity as a key factor in building and maintaining cognitive functioning by researchers such as Cagle (1985), Gibson (1988), Kagan (1978), Singer & Singer (1990), and Voss & Keller (1983). It is of great theoretical and practical importance to clarify the motivational and cognitive determinants of future exploration goals. Individual differences in curiosity traits have been observed to show their relationship and impact on learning and academic success. Curiosity is also evident as a significant element in the "openness to experience" trait and interest in non-traditional ideas related to exploration and roles in active learning (Deyoung et al., 2007).

A unique series of explanations for the importance of intellectual curiosity was presented by Day (1982). It was considered the foundation for excellence and progress, representing a valuable asset for any society. Interestingly, individual differences in curiosity traits may show their relationship and impact on learning and academic success. It is also understood as an influential element in the trait "openness to experience" and interest in non-traditional ideas related to exploration and roles in active learning (Deyoung et al., 2007).

Professor Litman (2008) conducted a study on the impact of curiosity on the process of development and cognitive evolution, relating it to exploration. Curiosity was identified as a motivator for research and exploration, and the study indicated that curiosity is associated with various learning goals. The study emphasized that curiosity stimulates positive learning effects and diverse exploration. Unique correlations were found between curiosity and different learning goals, including general exploration and specific exploration, completely learning something new, performance-oriented learning, and reducing uncertainty.

4. Exploration-Based Approach

4.1. Curiosity's Connections to Exploration

One of the most significant approaches to understanding the trait of curiosity in research is the exploration-based approach. Clark (2012) emphasized this approach, considering it a characteristic of the gifted. The approach sees high intellectual curiosity as evidenced by a child's abundant probing questions, which educators should be attentive to, understanding the methods that can be employed to develop this skill to the fullest. Clark also affirmed that the gifted have diverse interests and unusual curiosity, which ignites questioning skills, a component of creative thinking that stimulates idea generation. Langevin (1971) believes it is impossible to separate intellectual curiosity from exploration.

Day (1982) clarified that scientific curiosity, or what he called deep curiosity for exploration, arises due to the presence of uncertainty, mental mystery, and cognitive gap about an issue. Day's characteristics stimulate individuals to develop research and exploration capabilities by enhancing excitement and directing attention. They are closely related to strategies of creative thinking that adopt strategies for breaking away from traditional ideas toward active learning.

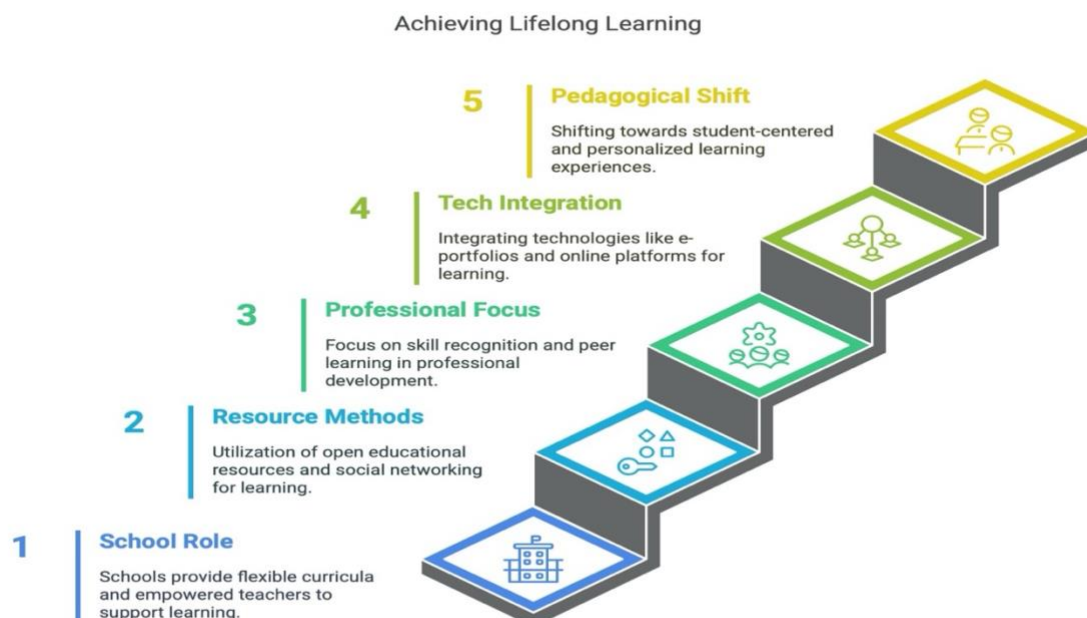
This was confirmed by Oudeyer (2018) in his study, finding the profound impact of curiosity on development and evolution. He observed that curiosity driven by the search for learning and exploration led to robot learning and its embodiment in tools for various uses.

4.2. Future Learning and Its Objectives

The concept of future learning involves delving into the philosophy of teaching active, participatory learning, problem-solving, creativity tools, and authenticity. In parallel, it becomes a requirement due to the rapid challenges of technological advancement and the countless opportunities it presents for human development (Redecker et al., 2011). Technological evolution and rapid changes in the twenty-first century have necessitated the adaptation of education to these continuous developments (Almaqabali, 2021). Accordingly, the change that needs attention is the emergence of individuals in this rapidly informational specificity, enabling them to navigate between what they receive in their schools and virtual reality. Among these principles outlined by Yeoman (2018) are:

- The student should be the focus of the learning process.
- Teaching roles should be authentic in simulating the learning environment.
- Utilizing problem-solving and negotiation strategies.
- Employing the skill of openness to experiences and accepting others' perspectives.

In the same context, Redecker et al. (2011) emphasized that education and training programs, including educational policy planners, need to respond more effectively to the changing needs of societal trends, future job requirements, and collaboration. They advocate adopting future learning strategies for lifelong learning, as depicted in the proposed figure (1), providing an overview of future lifelong learning strategies.



What distinguishes this approach is giving learners the appropriate frameworks to solve problems positively. This involves reflecting on how teachers interact through this training, encouraging learners to research, define problems, and negotiate solutions in their environments. The teacher, on the other hand, commits more to the facilitating role than being traditional. In these interactive environments that allow students to apply their knowledge in unknown and sophisticated conditions, students need to employ imagination, flexibility, and self-organization. They also need curiosity and appreciation of others' ideas and perspectives. This teaching style can equip learners with a wide range of skills, including cognitive and knowledge-based skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn, and self-organization.

The question that may arise is: How can educational systems effectively develop these knowledge and skills? To achieve personal and collaborative learning goals, comprehensive changes are needed, initiating mechanisms that make flexible, lifelong learning a reality. It is essential to recognize skills acquired informally. Opportunities given to students who are better prepared for the future are likely to be the agents of change, positively impacting their environment and the future (OECD, 2018).

4.3. Exploration and Future Learning Objectives

Studies agree that exploratory scientific research generally represents intellectual curiosity (Litman, 2008). Therefore, some individuals devote much time and effort to discover knowledge, driven by scientific research curiosity. There are two types of perceptual curiosity that lead to increased stimulus awareness. Some information strongly influences curiosity (Zigler and Kreiter, 1974).

Caroline B.'s conclusions (2016) in this context suggest that understanding and explaining curiosity enhance significant effects on educational interventions and learning strategies for children in the classroom. She indicated that the absolute value of information is not what drives learning but rather the mystery and knowledge gap. This may align with Loewenstein's theory of information gap (1994), suggesting that curiosity results from an imagined gap between what one knows and what one wants to know.

If we consider this information valid, curiosity seems to emerge from information vagueness and uncertainty. Survey and scientific curiosity may work to prepare the mind for learning and make the senses ready to explore cognitive stimuli. Al-Jaghiman (2018) outlines another framework, believing that a logical connection exists between the urgent mental need to explore the new and the knowledge of justifications. He emphasizes that this connection occurs when rejecting accepting a statement or claim without mental scrutiny or questioning. Being attentive to new ideas and being open to addition and modification is an advantage for students, making the learning process more effective and enjoyable. This contribution maintains mental activity positively.

In general, questions starting with what if, how, why, and why not tend to stimulate new thinking patterns. This confirms that scientific research curiosity is an important tool for promoting active learning. The question that arises in this context is: What are the mechanisms through which curiosity can support active learning and exploration?

Some of the topics that can develop through curiosity include:

- Stimulating information-seeking behavior, leading to asking questions or engaging in behaviors seeking information, which can
- Activate relevant prior knowledge and support deep learning.

For example, when a child sees that some butterflies have open wings while others have closed wings and may be unsure of the reason, it leads to more cautious observations and the possibility of learning and investigation (Jirout JJ, 2020). While the presence of uncertainty or ambiguity leads to increased participation (Howard-Jones and Demetriou, 2009).

In addition to all this, a large body of research has shown that mental curiosity and explorations play a significant role in enhancing active learning and creative thinking. Thus, developing productive mental habits contributes to

establishing modern educational paths that prepare generations to possess the necessary skills for life and the future (Al-Amri, 2021).

4.4. Active Performance on Tasks

In his book chapter "The Place of Exploratory Behavior," Jum C. Nunnally and Charles Lemond (1974) discussed curiosity as the inclination to acquire new knowledge, such as concepts, ideas, and facts. It is expected to stimulate intellectual interest or eliminate conditions of deprivation. Cognitive curiosity, the first type, seems to be significantly activated when individuals encounter opportunities to explore entirely new things. In contrast, epistemic curiosity is optimally stimulated when people lack specific information they wish to integrate into their existing knowledge. Activation results in a degree of both types of curiosity, varying based on individual differences in personality traits (Litman, 2008). Loewenstein (1994) explained curiosity as an innate passion for learning and knowledge, an authentic motivational desire. This aligns with Posnock's (1991) assertion that curiosity involves a love for inquiry and exploration.

Christopher Powell (2017) delved into discussions regarding curiosity's impact on academic performance in his thesis, raising the question: Does curiosity predict academic performance? When interest and thinking are stimulated, curiosity is naturally enhanced. Initial curiosity might be substantially inhibited when individuals become familiar with opportunities to discover entirely new things. Performance on such tasks and active exploration for inquiry lead to forms of cognitive exploration and learning (Forestier et al., 2017). For example, a study by Cook et al. (2011) investigated how children build musical toys with sensitivity to obtaining or deriving information. The study showed that ambiguous cues prompted children to actively seek and explore causal relationships. (Denison et al., 2013; Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 1999; Gweon et al., 2014; Schulz, Gopnik, & Glymour, 2007; van Schijndel et al. 2015).

4.5. Open-mindedness and Learning New Things

What does it mean to be open-minded? Do some individuals truly stand out for their broad thinking and acceptance of differences? Open-mindedness reflects a mindset of curiosity, exploring the external and internal world, gaining experiences, welcoming new ideas, having a broad perspective, and a curiosity for learning and knowledge (Smith & Canger, 2004).

Experiments in psychology and personality studies demonstrated that open-minded individuals exhibit a desire to think about both familiar and unfamiliar things, utilizing positive and negative emotions more than closed-minded individuals. Open-mindedness involves two dimensions, namely, "process" and "operations." Process refers to sequential stages in executing a procedure, with sub-components named "desire for new intellectual challenges" and "desire to master current knowledge areas." Operations reflect a person's preference for engaging in various intellectual activities, including "thinking," "learning," and "creating." Notably, these operations align with aspects of intelligence theory, extending into conceptual and creative spaces, covering:

- Search for learning
- Search for thinking
- Search for creativity

Recently, El-Abbasi and others (2019) interpreted Rokeach's cognitive openness theory, suggesting that this trait reflects an individual's acceptance of interests and unconventional ideas. Open-mindedness is judged by an individual's flexibility in dealing with challenges, both mentally and psychologically, openness to ideas, and avoidance of extremism. These factors are linked to students' characteristics and personalities, predicting their performance and scientific behavior. Therefore, curiosity is associated with openness, and it is necessary to develop an interest in studying these traits in students to guide them and help them adapt their thinking toward cognitive openness. Additionally, educators can use these factors to promote students' research and exploration abilities (Hama et al., 2005). Consequently, we can say that curiosity is linked to openness, and it is essential to develop an interest in studying these traits in students to guide them and help them adapt their thinking toward

cognitive openness. Additionally, educators can use these factors to promote students' research and exploration abilities (Hama et al., 2005). Furthermore, it allows for understanding new reasons, making it crucial for their passion for achievement, following developments, and experimenting with new methods (Al-Quraiti, 2000). "On the other hand, openness to experience, as proposed by Howard and Howard (1995), serves as a measure of depth, breadth, and diversity in an individual's imagination, as well as the desire for experiences. Regarding the factor of thought openness and openness to new ideas, cultural interests, educational competence, and creativity, as well as an interest in diverse sensory and cognitive experiences.

From the dimensions of this personality trait, there is a love for exploring both the internal and external worlds, and the individual is enriched with experiences and has a desire to think about unfamiliar things. Individuals with a passion for exploring new and unconventional ideas tend to reflect a factor of accepting others, with a focus on growth and development (Costa & McCrae, 1988). Their concentration is characterized by seriousness, determination, strong will, continuous effort, and a commitment to achievement through goal-directed activity (Howard & Howard, 1995). They overcome challenges with traits of seriousness, determination, and a strong will to work continuously, and they are determined to achieve goals through goal-directed activity (Costa & McCrae, 1988).

In conclusion, openness is a characteristic in an individual that drives them to learn new things, reflecting an interest in exploration. They are self-achievers, enriched by experience and the ability to persist, perceiving the world in a fascinating way, and embracing new experiences."

4.6. Cognitive Gap and Curiosity

The modern view of learning reflects a focus on developing cognitive curiosity as the foundation for fostering research and exploration in learners. When it comes to the principles, there is general agreement on how to achieve this. One of the important issues proposed by research to activate cognitive curiosity is the "cognitive gap," which stimulates mental processing and the inevitable development of creative abilities and exploration. Wright et al. (2018) discussed its development, emphasizing that the first step in activating curiosity is creating an ideal cognitive gap and helping students realize it. They suggest a simple way to achieve this by introducing cognitive contradictions immediately after providing students with basic knowledge of a specific subject. This introduces an exception, deviating from previously acquired knowledge, surprising learners and leading them to seek further clarification (i.e., curiosity). Incorporating it into classroom activities can stimulate students' interest, promote research, and enhance exploration. Moreover, it contributes to deeper exploration and learning for some.

In a recent study on the impact of implementing the information gap in educational curricula, a study by Maikhan (2020) confirmed a positive effect of the information gap strategy on improving academic achievement among middle school students compared to traditional teaching methods. Additionally, it contributed to raising the level of social intelligence among the examined students. The study recommended adopting this strategy in science curriculum teaching.

This suggests that working on presenting undefined problems or implementing problem-based learning are also effective strategies that can generate a cognitive gap. Teachers can ask provocative questions that challenge learners' certainty and previous solidified knowledge or intentionally withhold crucial information instead of presenting it all at once, prompting learners to search for missing information (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). On the contrary, if learners are aware of the cognitive gap, they will not pursue curiosity unless they believe the missing information is valuable.

Therefore, questions that enable students to work progressively can increase the value of accessing answers at each step (Coenen, A., Nelson, J. D., & Gureckis, T. M., 2018), emphasizing the importance of acquired information for all educational subjects. Familiarity with cognitive gaps or practical applications of materials may achieve high learning goals for students in terms of cognitive exploration and active learning (Song, 2015). Based on this strategy and its refinement, we must instill the desire to develop exploration and learning beyond the

classroom, fostering discussions that enhance learners' ability to build knowledge, communicate, ask inquiry-based questions, and think relevantly to active learning and the efficiency and authenticity of the learning process.

4.7. Knowledge Exploration and School Readiness Skills

Children's curiosity is associated with the construction of intrinsic motivation, promoting independence, feelings of competence, and communication. Haith (1980) believes that children recognize their environments through simple inferences but need guidance to direct their attention to certain features. Most children have a strong desire for exploration and inquiry, needing support to make the skill they want to enhance successful.

In the same vein, a recent study by Prachi E et al. (2018), the first longitudinal study investigating cognitive curiosity in early childhood and kindergarten, addressed academic achievement in mathematics. This study sought to investigate and monitor 6200 children from early childhood to kindergarten. The study provided some evidence of increased curiosity in the early childhood sample, which included direct assessments of reading and mathematics, as well as a behavioral questionnaire for parental reporting. The study indicated a link between early childhood reading curiosity and academic achievement in mathematics. Curiosity may have an important contribution, though unrecognized, to academic achievement. Encouraging early childhood curiosity and fostering a love of reading, with the goal of promoting early reading and academic development, are recommended.

The study also included several associations related to the sample that educators should enhance in early childhood, believing that curiosity has an important contribution to building self-motivation and enhancing feelings of competence.

The foregoing makes it clear to us that children are inherently curious, and the passion for learning drives them to continue the process of learning, questioning, and exploration. It is a positive motivational factor for the growth of knowledge in this age group, encouraging research and active learning. It may lead the child to learning paths that enhance their latent characteristics and talents, sparking creativity when ignited early. This leads us to the question:

To what extent can we harness the curiosity for knowledge in young children to support scientific and future thinking?

Reflecting on this, it is recognized that there is another challenge hindering our children's access to these outcomes and the development of these habits. Therefore, it is necessary to propose new learning ecosystems in these stages to fulfill that engagement.

A study by Jirout JJ (2020) discussed curiosity as likely encouraging the application and development of scientific learning within the individual's culture and environment. However, the methods and strategies employed may contract, while it remains an important field for research in future science. The study emphasized the need to discuss the impact of peers, teachers, parents, and others in children's environments, focusing efforts on promoting curiosity-inspiring potentials to support children's learning and enhance their abilities, even when children express curiosity about things outside of school.

What stands out in this matter is when curiosity is classified as creating a "passion for knowledge" in young children by early childhood educators and considered "very important" or "essential" for school readiness. They even deem it more important than some academic skills. For instance, information-seeking can lead to new questions, and with the activation of previous knowledge, it can influence how the child searches for information (Heaviside S, Farris E, 1993). Can we then acknowledge that our children are born scientists accompanied by a curiosity for questioning and exploration? Research indicates that cognitive curiosity is important, correlating with learning science and knowledge. Focusing on the skills it achieves begets more of them.

In light of this, Jirout JJ (2020) suggested several strategies that may enhance children's curiosity, including:

1. Encouraging and providing opportunities for children to explore and seek knowledge, emphasizing the value of exploration, as children will not ask questions unless they are notified of the importance of their questions.

2. Allowing them to identify or read about accomplished figures during information-seeking activities, aiming to encourage questioning, discussion, and research.
3. Teachers can encourage deep questioning when children spontaneously ask questions, using clear inquiries that support generating deeper questions. This gives children a hint to practice analyzing what they do not know, fostering the development of effective self-evaluation. These inquiries differ from questions that allow simple "yes" or "no" answers.
4. Part of curiosity is identifying questions that can be asked; children often have an understanding and availability of solutions or multiple ways to do something. Encouraging children's thinking about alternative ideas they seek to present and solve, believed to support creativity, and promote active learning.

In addition to the above, it is expected that creating a supportive educational climate and positively responding to enhance curiosity and learning strategies will increase the value of children's research participation, maintain continuous learning, and support sustainable scientific thinking and active learning. The idea here is that allowing the learner to immerse themselves in their curiosity allows them to focus their efforts on useful information to possess and utilize later. This sustains the passion and curiosity for research and learning. To enhance this learning, it is essential to emphasize to students the enjoyment of performance. Importantly, teachers' feedback can inspire students to present an enjoyable and beneficial experience, enhancing deeper idea generation.

5. Strategies for Developing Cognitive Curiosity

5.1. Practical Aspect

Perhaps the simplest thing a teacher or educational supervisor can do is to stimulate the desire for exploration and cognitive curiosity and encourage questioning and challenging assumptions and common concepts. Some applied strategies have been presented regarding cognitive curiosity in its roles of exploration and investigating knowledge gaps or the desire to acquire new knowledge. The openness to learning and exploration will be discussed in brief points.

Implementing these strategies requires providing sufficient time to identify contradictions or gaps and explore multiple aspects of them, further stimulating the desire for more research and inquiry. Therefore, it is important to allocate enough time for them to explore the topic from various angles. One of the aspects that stimulates exploration and scientific curiosity is providing opportunities for students to choose diverse alternatives. For instance, teachers can allow students to choose topics according to their preferences in the academic field or enrichment program (Aljghiman, 2018).

Through studies, it becomes evident that when (Loewenstein, 1994) proposed the information gap theory for curiosity, a sense of deprivation triggers curiosity. Individuals become aware of the difference between "what they know and what they want to know." Identifying and suggesting certain strategies forms a roadmap to enhance curiosity considering these theories and studies, including:

- First Strategy: Curiosity as a Cognitive Spark

Use curiosity as a fundamental motivator at the beginning of the lesson during preparation. For example, pose a thought-provoking question or make a surprising statement that stimulates investigation of prior knowledge.

- Second Strategy: Conceptual Contradiction

Introduce conceptual contradiction when possible. Learners will feel compelled to explore the contradiction until it is resolved. Upon resolving the contradiction, they will experience a sense of relief.

- Third Strategy: Question-Friendly Environment

Create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions, testing their hypotheses through discussion and brainstorming. This not only promotes curiosity but also helps build confidence.

- Fourth Strategy: Time

Allow sufficient time to explore a topic. If the teacher has successfully stimulated curiosity, learners will want to continue exploring.

- Fifth Strategy: Choices

Grant students the opportunity to choose topics within the subject area. Allowing them to choose a motivating topic fundamentally helps maintain their curiosity and active learning, developing other areas of interest.

- Sixth Strategy: Elements of Curiosity

Introduce one or more of the following elements in a lesson to arouse curiosity (contradictions, surprises, complexity, uncertainty). Learners will be eager to explore the source of contradictions, surprises, etc., satisfying their curiosity and evolving their knowledge.

- Seventh Strategy: Appropriate Stimulation

Be aware of the level of stimulation during learning. Recognize that there are individual differences in applying curiosity; some learners may become anxious if the stimulation is too complex or uncertain, quickly leaving the "curiosity zone" and entering the "anxiety zone."

- Eighth Strategy: Exploration

Encourage students to learn through active exploration, prompting questions like, "What would happen if..."

- Ninth Strategy: Reward for Exploration

When allowing exploration and research, make the act of exploring a reward in itself. Use external motivation wisely, as some studies suggest that external motivation given for task performance perceived as fundamentally motivating may weaken future interest in the activity.

- Tenth Strategy: Modeling

Model curiosity, ask questions, engage in specific exploration to solve a posed question, and demonstrate enthusiasm (Marilyn P. Arnone, 2020).

5.2. Objectives and Future Directions

The results obtained through a review of studies and research focusing on the pivotal role of enhancing curiosity have shown how to promote research and exploration of curiosity. Active learning and self-learning, in an era demanding contemporary curricula centered around the learner, require the ability to learn. Research has indicated the application of various strategies used by teachers to initiate active learning in their classrooms, aiming to find solutions to environmental problems from a developmental perspective of individual performance in diverse environments (Singh et al., 2010).

These methods suggest that they contribute to helping students understand the structure of the subject matter and its key ideas, leading to the active integration of students in the learning process. The results of applied research confirm the improvement of teaching strategies and the direction of future educational policies. In general, the pursuit of these strategies is likely to function as a mechanism directing individuals toward new knowledge or skills, regardless of their cognitive abilities. The efficiency of using exploration strategies, driven by curiosity and based on goals that provide maximum implementation and learning, is beneficial for life and individuals (Smith, 2013).

Based on the above, to develop strategies that enhance learning, thinking, and research, it is necessary to define them, emphasize their importance, and outline methods for their application. The current results indicate that the benefit is limited to specific cases or groups, as the focus on developing these aspects is not included in educational goals. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the results of research and the conditions under which these variables can be applied. In light of the study's findings, it is believed that the application of curiosity carries strong validity for predicting the quality of future learning.

6. Conclusion

In this article, I describe the specific research position that considers curiosity as an important element related to active learning, presenting several mechanisms for employing curiosity to facilitate the learning process. It is concluded that curiosity, a state of increasing interest resulting in exploration and breaking the rigidity barrier in the learning process, reorganizes the roles of learning to allow the emergence of the learner's researching and thinking personality. It enables them to discover and build learning mechanisms that encourage them to contribute to problem-solving by deepening their understanding and adopting more comprehensive learning methods. The study also contributes to building the confident learner by applying and appreciating their knowledge.

Although the benefits of mental curiosity branch out, we lack an integrated theory and mechanisms for presentation and guidance for its investment. The paper prompts the question: How will this philosophy look when applied to identifying students or young explorers while providing appropriate care and improving the learning environment? The application of mental curiosity appears to hold strong potential for predicting the quality of future learning.

The study emphasizes that achieving positions around mental curiosity strategies, "exploration and openness to experience," requires providing opportunities for collaboration and coordination with school management to invest in these characteristics at the school level. To improve these opportunities, we must study the risks associated with neglecting them.

Teachers should strive to develop programs that foster intellectual openness, expose students to serious activities inside and outside school, and engage in scientific and cultural visits. These roles may be crucial in recognizing their potential, enhancing their personalities, and gaining skills and experience.

7. Recommendations

Further studies are needed to address the challenges of neglecting these strategies as a primary support for future learning.

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From Silence to Action: Organizational Communication in University-Based Sexual Violence Prevention

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Abstract

Sexual violence in higher education institutions (HEIs) remains a pervasive issue that threatens student safety and academic success. Despite increasing institutional policies and government interventions, the prevalence of sexual violence remains high, highlighting gaps in prevention strategies and institutional responses. This study examines the role of organizational communication in shaping university-based prevention and response efforts. Using a case study design, this research explores how three universities, Universitas Andalas, Universitas Riau, and Universitas Indonesia manage policy dissemination, interdepartmental coordination, and support mechanisms for survivors. The study applies the Four Flows Theory to analyze how membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning influence sexual violence prevention efforts. Findings reveal innovations in institutional communication strategies for prevention, with some universities demonstrating proactive engagement through structured policies and survivor-centered outreach, while others adopt a reactive approach primarily focused on reputation management. The speed of interdepartmental coordination, bureaucratic responsiveness, and victim protection significantly support prevention efforts. Digital communication channels and student-led initiatives play a crucial role in shaping a campus culture that is aware of and responsive to sexual violence. This study emphasizes the need for transparent, survivor-centered, and well-coordinated communication strategies to enhance institutional accountability, student trust, and the prevention of sexual violence in higher HEIs.

Keywords: Prevention, Sexual Violence, Higher Education, Organizational Communication, Institutional Response

1. Introduction

Sexual violence within higher education institutions (HEIs) remains a critical and widespread issue that threatens the safety, psychological well-being, and academic success of students worldwide. Despite increased advocacy efforts, institutional policies, and government interventions, the prevalence of sexual violence in universities

continues to be alarmingly high, highlighting the need for stronger, more effective prevention mechanisms (McMahon et al., 2019). Research suggests that the university environment, which fosters close social interactions, hierarchical power dynamics, and sometimes inadequate regulatory oversight, creates conditions that facilitate sexual violence and limit effective institutional responses (Krebs et al., 2016).

Numerous studies indicate that sexual violence in HEIs is not limited to a particular region but is a global concern affecting students across diverse cultural and institutional settings. In the United States, a nationwide survey reported that 26.4% of undergraduate women and 6.8% of undergraduate men had experienced non-consensual sexual contact during their time in college (Cantor et al., 2020). Similarly, research in Europe found that one in five female students had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment or violence (Krahé et al., 2015). In Australia, an extensive report revealed that 51% of students had witnessed sexual violence on campus, while 6.9% reported experiencing sexual assault (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). Studies from South Asia, Africa, and Latin America present similar findings, reinforcing that sexual violence in HEIs is not just a Western problem but a deeply embedded issue in university settings globally (Mullins et al., 2021).

One of the major challenges in addressing sexual violence in universities is the persistent underreporting of cases. Fear of retaliation, social stigma, lack of institutional support, and uncertainty about the reporting process often prevent survivors from coming forward (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Fisher et al. (2003) found that less than 30% of sexual assault cases in HEIs are reported to authorities, suggesting that official statistics may vastly underestimate the actual prevalence. Survivors often doubt the effectiveness of institutional responses due to previous cases where reports were mishandled, dismissed, or subjected to victim-blaming narratives (Richards, 2019). This failure to establish trust in institutional mechanisms perpetuates a culture of silence that enables perpetrators and further discourages victims from seeking justice (Amar et al., 2014).

Institutional responses to sexual violence vary significantly across universities, leading to disparities in support for survivors and accountability for perpetrators. While some institutions have implemented robust Title IX policies, crisis response teams, and survivor-centered approaches, others still lack clear guidelines, trained personnel, and adequate funding to address sexual violence effectively (McMahon et al., 2019). Institutions with insufficiently defined reporting mechanisms or opaque disciplinary procedures tend to discourage survivors from seeking institutional support (Holland et al., 2020). The inconsistency in policy implementation across different universities creates a fragmented system where students receive varying degrees of protection depending on their institution's commitment to addressing sexual violence (Coker et al., 2016).

A growing body of research highlights the importance of organizational communication in shaping institutional approaches to sexual violence prevention. Effective communication strategies can facilitate awareness campaigns, encourage reporting, and enhance survivor support by ensuring that students and faculty understand their rights, responsibilities, and available resources (Banyard et al., 2010). Universities that employ clear and consistent communication regarding sexual violence policies have been shown to foster more supportive environments where survivors feel safer reporting their experiences (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). Additionally, institutions that engage in proactive and transparent communication efforts tend to experience higher rates of student engagement in prevention initiatives and bystander intervention programs (Edwards et al., 2011).

Bystander intervention programs have been particularly effective in reshaping campus culture by encouraging students to recognize and prevent potentially harmful situations (Coker et al., 2011). These programs train students to act as active participants in creating safer environments rather than passive witnesses to sexual misconduct. A study by Banyard et al. (2007) found that students who underwent bystander intervention training were more likely to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence. Similar initiatives in Australian and European universities have demonstrated a measurable reduction in sexual violence incidents following widespread implementation of bystander intervention training (McMahon et al., 2019).

Beyond bystander intervention, the integration of social norms campaigns in HEIs has also contributed to shifting attitudes toward sexual violence prevention. These campaigns use strategic messaging to challenge common misconceptions, such as the idea that sexual assault is inevitable or that victims are responsible for their

own victimization (DeGue et al., 2014). Studies indicate that universities that consistently promote positive social norms regarding consent and respectful relationships tend to have lower rates of sexual violence and increased student participation in prevention efforts (Katz & Moore, 2013). Digital and multimedia campaigns have further expanded the reach of these initiatives, utilizing social media, online platforms, and campus-wide email campaigns to reinforce anti-violence messaging (Amar et al., 2014).

Another key aspect of effective communication in sexual violence prevention is the accessibility and inclusivity of institutional messaging. Many universities fail to adequately consider marginalized student populations, including LGBTQ+ students, international students, and students with disabilities, who face disproportionate risks of sexual violence (Sterzing et al., 2017). Coulter and Rankin (2020) found that LGBTQ+ students were significantly more likely to experience sexual violence than their heterosexual peers, yet many campus policies and communication strategies failed to address their specific needs. Institutions that implement culturally responsive communication—such as multilingual outreach materials, specialized programming for at-risk groups, and trauma-informed approaches—tend to have higher rates of student trust and engagement in prevention efforts (DeGue et al., 2014).

The role of institutional leadership in sexual violence prevention cannot be understated. Research suggests that students are more likely to trust their university's response to sexual violence when campus leaders actively promote and endorse prevention initiatives (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Universities with strong leadership in sexual violence prevention not only provide clearer policy frameworks but also ensure accountability through rigorous enforcement mechanisms (Richards, 2019). Leadership involvement also fosters a campus-wide culture of zero tolerance toward sexual violence, making it clear that such behavior will not be condoned (McMahon et al., 2019).

As digital technology continues to evolve, universities have increasingly turned to digital tools and online platforms for sexual violence prevention and reporting. Mobile applications, online reporting portals, and social media campaigns provide students with easier access to support services while ensuring anonymity in reporting cases (Amar et al., 2014). Research shows that students are more likely to engage with digital-based prevention efforts, particularly when those efforts are interactive, accessible, and user-friendly (DeGue et al., 2014). However, while digital tools offer significant advantages, they also pose challenges related to data privacy, potential misuse, and cybersecurity concerns (Holland et al., 2020).

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore how universities manage organizational communication in preventing and handling sexual violence. A multiple case study allows comparison across institutions to understand how different actors engage in communication strategies (Yin, 2018). The study is based on the Communication of Organizations theory and Four Flow by McPhee and Zaug (2000), which argues that organizations are shaped and sustained through communication rather than existing as static entities. This framework is useful in examining how universities structure policies, coordinate responses, and communicate prevention strategies related to sexual violence (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009).

The study was conducted at three Indonesian universities—Universitas Andalas, Universitas Riau, and Universitas Indonesia—selected due to their active engagement in sexual violence prevention programs. Participants included members of the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (Satgas PPKS), lecture, faculty members, administrative staff, student, and public relations officers involved in crisis communication. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 20 participants based on their experience in policy-making, communication management, and sexual violence prevention (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method ensures that insights are gathered from individuals directly involved in university decision-making and communication efforts (Amar et al., 2014).

Data were collected using in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews lasting 60–90 minutes were conducted with key stakeholders to explore their roles in crisis

communication and policy implementation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Participant observations were conducted in task force meetings, prevention workshops, and policy discussion forums to examine real-time interactions and decision-making processes (Banyard et al., 2010). Document analysis included reviewing institutional policies, government regulations—especially Ministerial Regulation No. 30 of 2021—media reports, and university archives related to sexual violence cases (Richards, 2019).

Data were analyzed using pattern matching and explanation building, in line with case study research methods (Yin, 2018). The study examined how four communicative flows of four flow theory—membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning—were reflected in university policies and crisis responses (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Membership negotiation was analyzed through how task force members were recruited and trained, self-structuring examined how policies were designed, activity coordination focused on interdepartmental collaboration, and institutional positioning assessed how universities managed external communication with media, government, and the public (Coker et al., 2016).

To ensure research validity and reliability, triangulation was applied by cross-referencing interviews, observations, and document reviews (Flick, 2018). Ethical considerations were strictly followed, including informed consent, participant anonymity, and voluntary participation (Holland & Cortina, 2017). This study provides insights into how organizational communication structures influence the effectiveness of sexual violence prevention and response strategies in higher education institutions.

3. Results

This study reveals the complex and multi-layered nature of organizational communication in the prevention and handling of sexual violence in higher education institutions. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that universities employ various communication strategies, yet their effectiveness is shaped by multiple institutional and cultural factors. While universities have demonstrated a commitment to addressing sexual violence through the establishment of Task Forces for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (Satgas PPKS), the extent to which these task forces operate successfully varies across institutions. In some universities, task forces serve as active agents of change, ensuring that information about sexual violence policies is widely disseminated and that survivors receive the necessary support and guidance.

One of the key challenges affecting communication strategies is the institutional prioritization of sexual violence prevention. While universities formally recognize the issue, prevention efforts often compete with other administrative and academic concerns, resulting in inconsistent messaging and a lack of sustained engagement. In some cases, communication efforts are reactive rather than proactive, with universities addressing sexual violence only after public pressure or media scrutiny. Additionally, internal coordination plays a significant role in shaping communication effectiveness. Universities that foster collaboration between student affairs offices, legal teams, and task forces tend to have more structured and responsive communication strategies, while institutions with fragmented interdepartmental coordination experience delays in case handling and inconsistent messaging.

The cultural environment surrounding sexual violence discourse further influences how communication strategies are perceived and adopted. Universities situated in more conservative settings often encounter social resistance to open discussions about sexual violence, which impacts how prevention programs and reporting mechanisms are framed. In contrast, institutions that actively engage with student organizations and advocacy groups tend to create a more inclusive and survivor-centered communication approach. These findings underscore the importance of context-sensitive and well-integrated communication strategies that extend beyond policy creation to ensure effective implementation and institutional accountability.

At Universitas Andalas, Universitas Riau, and Universitas Indonesia, the role of task forces has been instrumental in shaping the way sexual violence policies are communicated and understood within the university community. Task force members play a pivotal role in ensuring that institutional leadership, survivors, and the broader academic community remain informed about prevention initiatives, reporting mechanisms, and available

support services. Through policy dissemination, training programs, and direct engagement, these task forces are intended to function as the main institutional actors responsible for implementing communication strategies related to sexual violence prevention and response. However, despite their critical role, their effectiveness is frequently constrained by institutional barriers and structural limitations.

One of the primary challenges faced by task forces is limited institutional support, which manifests in resource constraints, administrative delays, and leadership reluctance to fully integrate sexual violence prevention into university-wide policies. Task force members reported that communication efforts about sexual violence are often reactive, occurring primarily in response to media coverage or external pressure. This reactive approach limits the effectiveness of awareness campaigns, as prevention messaging is often delivered sporadically rather than being embedded into the broader institutional culture. Reporting mechanisms has left many students and staff unaware of the formal procedures for seeking help. In many cases, awareness of reporting systems depends on individual initiative, meaning that only those who actively search for information become informed, while others remain unaware of their rights and available support.

In addition to resource and awareness challenges, institutional bureaucracy has further hindered the ability of task forces to function effectively. Task force members described administrative delays in the approval and implementation of new policies in different departments. Task force members emphasized that while formal policies exist, their ability to implement meaningful change is making structures that require approval from multiple levels of university administration. This often results in slow response times when handling cases and delayed outreach efforts for prevention campaigns.

Moreover, cultural and social factors also influence how these policies are communicated and received within the university. Discussions with students revealed that deeply ingrained societal stigmas surrounding sexual violence discourage survivors from coming forward, making communication efforts even more challenging. Task force members acknowledged the need for more inclusive and survivor-centered messaging, as well as stronger engagement with student organizations to build trust within the university community. These findings suggest that while task forces play an important role in shaping institutional communication strategies, their effectiveness is contingent on institutional commitment, consistent policy enforcement, and the ability to foster open dialogue within the academic environment.

Interviews with student representatives further highlighted gaps in institutional communication, particularly regarding how information about sexual violence prevention and reporting mechanisms is disseminated and perceived by students. The student shared their concerns about the inconsistency of institutional messaging, which has contributed to widespread uncertainty among students about where to seek help. While official university policies outline reporting mechanisms, students expressed that these procedures are not always clearly communicated, leaving them unsure of who to approach in cases of sexual violence. Many students described their experiences of navigating institutional channels as confusing, with different departments providing varying levels of support and information, leading to delays or misinterpretations of available services. Beyond the lack of clarity in communication, students also voiced concerns that sexual violence prevention efforts appear to be more focused on institutional compliance rather than fostering meaningful cultural change.

At Universitas Riau, Universitas Andalas, and Universitas Indonesia, student-led organizations have stepped in to fill gaps in institutional communication, taking on the role of informal communicators for sexual violence prevention and response. Student activists described how peer networks and social media platforms have become primary sources of information about survivor support services. These student-led initiatives have been instrumental in raising awareness, because not all students have equal access to accurate information, reinforcing the need for more structured and proactive institutional communication strategies.

Observations during university-hosted events provided deeper insights into how institutional culture shapes the effectiveness of communication in preventing sexual violence. The task force revealed that discussions on sexual violence prevention programs must be formally incorporated into the university agenda, on par with other institutional priorities such as academic policies, faculty development, and administrative restructuring. This

approach addresses bureaucratic procedures and competing administrative concerns that often diminish the visibility and perceived importance of sexual violence prevention initiatives.

Several faculties actively promote awareness by organizing campaigns, discussions, and prevention programs, ensuring equitable access to information across the university. Research indicates that departments with strong leadership support for sexual violence prevention, such as the faculties of medicine and psychology, are more likely to allocate resources, establish infrastructure, and encourage student participation. In contrast, less engaged faculties often lack the necessary resources and infrastructure. Task force members emphasized that university-wide policies should be implemented uniformly rather than being left to the discretion of individual departments.

The variation in engagement across faculties reflects broader challenges related to leadership and institutional commitment. Some departments have demonstrated a clear willingness to facilitate open discussions, support survivor-centered initiatives, and collaborate with student organizations. However, others perceive discussions on sexual violence as controversial or outside the scope of academic priorities. These findings suggest that while institutional culture plays a crucial role in shaping communication strategies, the extent to which universities fully integrate sexual violence prevention efforts largely depends on leadership engagement and the consistent enforcement of policies at all levels of the institution.

Another recurring theme from the findings was the lack of structured coordination between university departments, which significantly affects how sexual violence cases are handled. Observations and interviews revealed that fragmented communication between departments often results in delays in decision-making, inconsistent responses, and inadequate survivor support. Public relations officers, faculty members, and student affairs representatives acknowledged that institutional responses to sexual violence are not always well-coordinated, leading to gaps in procedural efficiency. Some staff members described how, in cases of sexual violence, different departments handle incidents separately, rather than collaborating under a unified framework. As a result, survivors often experience delays in receiving support services.

Coordination challenges are particularly evident in the relationship between legal units, counseling services, and academic departments. One informant explained that these departments often operate independently, making it difficult for survivors to navigate the reporting process. Delays in receiving formal assistance prolong survivors' distress and diminish their trust in the institution's ability to provide effective support. Task force members identified similar structural deficiencies, noting that survivors frequently have to repeat their testimonies multiple times to different university personnel. This repeated recounting of traumatic experiences contributes to emotional distress and discourages some survivors from filing formal complaints. The findings indicate that without improved coordination and communication between departments, institutional responses remain reactive, preventing survivors from accessing the timely and supportive interventions they need. These challenges highlight the urgent need for clearer protocols, interdepartmental collaboration, and an integrated response system to ensure that survivors receive adequate support without bureaucratic barriers.

In addition to internal communication concerns, the study also examined how universities engage with external audiences, including the media, advocacy organizations, and government bodies. At Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Andalas, and Universitas Riau, task force members described how collaboration with women's rights organizations and independent advocacy groups has contributed to a broader dialogue on sexual violence prevention. Digital communication has also emerged as an area where universities are beginning to recognize the importance of student engagement but have yet to fully integrate digital strategies into their prevention frameworks. Task force members explained that while official university accounts have posted about sexual violence prevention, student organizations have taken the initiative to use social media platforms to raise awareness and share survivor support resources. However, students have also expressed concerns about online reporting platforms, particularly regarding privacy and anonymity. Digital reporting channels must ensure strong confidentiality protections so that reporters do not fear potential exposure or retaliation.

Despite these ongoing challenges, the study also identified emerging initiatives that reflect a growing institutional willingness to improve communication on sexual violence prevention. At Universitas Andalas, a new faculty training program has been introduced to help academic staff develop skills in trauma-informed communication, ensuring that survivors receive more appropriate responses when disclosing their experiences. At Universitas Riau, efforts are underway to simplify reporting procedures, reducing bureaucratic obstacles that have previously discouraged survivors from seeking institutional support. Meanwhile, Universitas Indonesia has initiated a collaborative campaign involving student organizations, university leadership, and advocacy groups, aiming to promote a more open and consistent discussion on sexual violence prevention across multiple platforms.

Taken as a whole, the findings demonstrate that while universities have made progress in addressing sexual violence, distinction remain in how communication strategies are implemented and sustained over time. Institutional efforts are often shaped by administrative priorities, leadership involvement, and socio-cultural norms, meaning that policies alone are not always enough to foster a meaningful shift in attitudes and behaviors. Survivor trust remains a key issue, as reporting mechanisms are not always widely understood or perceived as accessible. Furthermore, inconsistencies in communication across different university units have created barriers to effective collaboration, leading to delays in policy enforcement and case resolution. These challenges highlight the ongoing need for more structured, inclusive, and proactive communication strategies to ensure that sexual violence prevention efforts are fully integrated into university life.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complex and multi-layered role of organizational communication in shaping institutional responses to sexual violence prevention in higher education institutions (HEIs). While universities have implemented policies and established task forces to address this issue, the effectiveness of these efforts is heavily influenced by institutional priorities, internal coordination, and broader cultural dynamics. The findings align with the principles of Communication of Organizations and four flow theory, which argues that organizations are socially constructed through communication rather than existing as fixed entities (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). This study demonstrates how the four communicative flows of membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning shape the way universities respond to sexual violence cases. Membership negotiation is evident in how universities integrate task force members into their institutional framework. While some universities provide structured training and clear role definitions, others treat these bodies as symbolic entities with limited authority. This finding supports previous research that highlights the importance of well-defined roles and structured recruitment in strengthening institutional responses to sexual violence (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). The study also found that self-structuring plays a crucial role in determining how sexual violence policies are designed and enforced. Universities with well-defined policies and strong interdepartmental coordination tend to have more effective prevention strategies, while those with fragmented communication structures experience delays and inconsistencies. This aligns with research indicating that structured communication frameworks enhance institutional accountability and survivor trust (McMahon et al., 2019).

A recurring issue in the findings is the lack of structured coordination between university departments, which significantly affects case handling and survivor support. Responses to sexual violence cases are not always well-coordinated, leading to delays in decision-making and survivor assistance. How legal units, counseling services, and academic departments often function independently, making it difficult for survivors to navigate the reporting process. This lack of coordination is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of interdepartmental collaboration in improving institutional crisis responses (Richards, 2019). A related issue is the emotional distress survivors experience when they must repeat their testimonies multiple times to different university departments. The inefficiencies caused by fragmented coordination discourage many survivors from pursuing formal complaints, a challenge that has been widely documented in studies on campus sexual violence reporting (Holland & Cortina, 2017). In addition to structural coordination, the findings also illustrate that universities vary significantly in how they position themselves within public discourse regarding sexual

violence. Some universities, particularly those with stronger engagement in advocacy networks, adopt transparent and proactive communication strategies, fostering a more supportive institutional climate. Others focus on reputation management, responding to sexual violence cases only when public scrutiny forces a response. This supports previous research demonstrating that universities with open and transparent communication policies are more likely to build trust among students and faculty (DeGue et al., 2014).

A key finding from this study is the persistent issue of underreporting, which remains a major challenge across all three universities. Many survivors hesitate to report sexual violence due to fears of retaliation, social stigma, and skepticism about institutional support mechanisms. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which indicate that when universities fail to provide clear and survivor-centered communication strategies, reporting rates decline, and survivors may seek external alternatives rather than relying on internal institutional processes (McMahon et al., 2019). Moreover, this study found that many students perceive university-led sexual violence prevention efforts as compliance-driven rather than a genuine commitment to cultural change. While formal policies exist, the university's messaging does not always reflect a commitment to fostering a long-term cultural shift, reinforcing the idea that prevention efforts are procedural rather than transformative. This aligns with previous research that critiques universities for prioritizing regulatory compliance over meaningful institutional change in addressing sexual violence (Amar et al., 2014). A similar challenge, where student-led organizations have stepped in to fill communication gaps left by the university. Student activists described how peer networks and social media platforms have become primary sources of information about survivor support services, particularly in cases where university-led communication has been inconsistent or insufficient. This aligns with previous findings that highlight the critical role of student activism in shaping campus discourse on sexual violence (Banyard et al., 2010).

Another important finding concerns the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in sexual violence prevention. While universities are increasingly using social media, email campaigns, and online reporting tools, these efforts remain largely unstructured. Some universities have implemented digital initiatives but have no to integrate them into a broader, long-term prevention strategy. This reflects earlier research emphasizing that digital platforms can enhance accessibility and engagement, but they require structured implementation and strong privacy safeguards to be truly effective (Amar et al., 2014). Moreover, concerns about anonymity and digital security emerged as a major issue for survivors, as some online reporting tools lack adequate confidentiality protections, discouraging survivors from utilizing these platforms. This echoes findings from previous research, which argue that digital innovations in reporting must be accompanied by rigorous privacy policies to ensure that survivors feel safe when accessing support services (DeGue et al., 2014). Beyond digital strategies, this study highlights that bystander intervention and student-led awareness campaigns play a crucial role in bridging communication gaps in universities. Student organizations have taken on the responsibility of disseminating survivor support information via peer networks and social media, compensating for the lack of sustained university-led outreach. This finding aligns with research by Banyard et al. (2010), which argues that bystander intervention programs and student-led initiatives are highly effective in shifting campus culture toward active prevention.

The role of institutional leadership also emerged as a defining factor in determining the effectiveness of sexual violence prevention policies. Universities with strong leadership commitment tend to have more comprehensive policies, clearer enforcement mechanisms, and higher levels of survivor trust. The study found that leadership engagement is a key driver of communication effectiveness, as universities where leadership actively endorses and promotes sexual violence prevention initiatives demonstrate higher levels of student and faculty involvement. This finding is consistent with previous research by Richards (2019), who found that leadership-driven communication strategies contribute to greater institutional accountability and more effective crisis response mechanisms. Conversely, universities where leadership is hesitant or reluctant to openly address sexual violence tend to have weaker implementation frameworks, allowing inconsistencies and delays in policy enforcement to persist.

Taken together, the findings reinforce that organizational communication is not just a procedural element of sexual violence prevention but a fundamental determinant of how effectively institutions address and respond to

the issue. The study demonstrates that when communication is structured, proactive, and survivor-centered, institutional responses tend to be more effective. However, when communication is fragmented, inconsistent, or primarily driven by compliance concerns rather than a commitment to change, prevention efforts remain inadequate. The comparison with previous research highlights that universities globally face similar challenges in aligning their policies with meaningful action, further emphasizing the critical need for clear, coordinated, and transparent institutional communication strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of organizational communication in shaping institutional responses to sexual violence prevention in higher education institutions (HEIs). The findings reveal that while universities have implemented policies and established task forces, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains inconsistent across institutions. The presence of Task Forces for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (Satgas PPKS) reflects institutional efforts to address sexual violence; however, their ability to function effectively depends on institutional priorities, leadership engagement, interdepartmental coordination, and cultural attitudes toward sexual violence discourse. In some universities, task forces operate as active agents of change, ensuring that prevention programs and survivor support services are well-communicated and accessible. In others, they function more symbolically, with limited authority and inadequate institutional support, resulting in fragmented implementation and minimal impact.

One of the most significant challenges identified in this study is the lack of structured coordination, which affects the efficiency of case handling and survivor support mechanisms. The study found that survivors frequently face bureaucratic barriers when navigating the reporting process. In institutions where legal units, counseling services, and student affairs offices operate independently, survivors struggle to access clear and reliable support. This fragmented communication system discourages reporting, contributes to emotional distress, and reinforces mistrust toward institutional responses. These findings underscore the need for universities to establish centralized, survivor-centered support systems that streamline communication between departments and ensure a more coordinated and trauma-informed response.

Another key finding is the variation in institutional positioning regarding sexual violence prevention. Some universities adopt transparent and proactive communication strategies, engaging with students, advocacy groups, and external stakeholders to promote awareness and policy accountability. Others, however, prioritize reputation management, addressing sexual violence only when public scrutiny or media pressure demands action. The study found that institutions with open, survivor-centered messaging tend to foster greater trust and engagement among students and faculty, while those with opaque or reactive approaches risk deepening the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence. This highlights the importance of institutional transparency in fostering a culture of prevention and accountability.

A persistent challenge across universities is many survivors remain reluctant to report incidents due to concerns about how their cases will be handled and whether institutional responses will be adequate. This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the need for universities to create an environment in which survivors feel safe and supported when coming forward. The study also found that university-led prevention efforts often appear compliance-driven rather than reflecting a deep institutional commitment to cultural change. While formal policies exist, their implementation and integration into campus culture must be consistent, reinforcing perceptions that prevention initiatives are more procedural than transformative.

The role of digital communication strategies in sexual violence prevention also emerged as a key theme in this study. While universities are increasingly utilizing social media, email campaigns, and online reporting tools, these efforts remain largely unstructured. Survivors and student representatives expressed concerns about data privacy and anonymity in digital reporting mechanisms, leading to hesitation in utilizing online platforms. This highlights the importance of implementing secure and confidential digital reporting tools, alongside clear policies on data protection and institutional accountability.

Beyond institutional efforts, this study found that student-led initiatives and peer networks play an essential role in bridging communication gaps. Student organizations have taken the lead in raising awareness and disseminating survivor support information, compensating for weak institutional messaging. This demonstrates the potential of student-led activism in fostering a more engaged and informed university community. However, the study also emphasizes that while student-led initiatives are valuable, universities must take primary responsibility for ensuring that communication strategies are structured, sustained, and inclusive of all students.

Overall, this study underscores that organizational communication is not merely a procedural aspect of sexual violence prevention but a fundamental determinant of its effectiveness. The findings indicate that when communication is structured, proactive, and survivor-centered, institutional responses are more effective in preventing sexual violence and supporting survivors. Conversely, when communication is fragmented, inconsistent, or driven primarily by regulatory compliance rather than a commitment to change, prevention efforts remain insufficient. To address these challenges, universities must adopt more integrated, transparent, and survivor-centered communication strategies that prioritize prevention, accountability, and long-term cultural change in addressing sexual violence on campus.

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Commonalities or Variations among Dimensions: An Analysis of Regions based on Hofstede's Six Cultural Pillars

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Abstract

Cultural dimensions play a crucial role in shaping governance structures and corruption dynamics across nations. This study investigates the relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, and Uncertainty Avoidance) and two key explanatory variables: Region (Africa, America, Asia, and Europe) and Level of Corruption (High, Medium, and Low). The objective is to determine whether cultural dimensions significantly vary based on geographic location and corruption levels, offering insights into governance and institutional structures. A Two-Way ANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of region and corruption on cultural dimensions, followed by Tukey HSD post hoc tests for pairwise comparisons. The results indicate that Masculinity remains stable across all regions and corruption levels, supporting previous studies that view it as a deeply ingrained cultural trait. Power Distance exhibits strong regional and corruption-related differences, with high-corruption countries, particularly in America and Asia, showing significantly greater hierarchical acceptance, while African countries demonstrate unexpectedly low Power Distance despite high corruption. Individualism is significantly lower in highly corrupt countries, particularly in Asia and America, reinforcing the link between collectivist cultures and corruption resilience. Uncertainty Avoidance is more influenced by regional factors than corruption, with African nations displaying significantly lower Uncertainty Avoidance than American and European nations. However, the lack of significant differences in Uncertainty Avoidance across corruption levels challenges theories suggesting corruption leads to higher uncertainty aversion. The study recommends that anti-corruption policies should consider cultural variations, with governance reforms tailored to regional contexts to reduce Power Distance and enhance Individualism in highly corrupt societies.

Keywords: Cultural Dimensions, War, Hofstede Model, Corruption, Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Governance, Israel-Gaza, Russia-Ukraine

1. Introduction

Cultural variations across nations have been widely studied, with research suggesting that geographic proximity plays a significant role in shaping cultural similarities (Hofstede, 2011; Osiobe, 2024). Countries within the same region often exhibit common cultural traits due to shared histories, economic ties, and interactions, while nations separated by vast distances tend to display more distinct cultural attributes (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2022). However, analyzing cultural similarities and differences purely based on geographic location may lead to oversimplified conclusions, as culture is a multifaceted construct influenced by numerous factors beyond physical proximity (Dipierro & Rella, 2024; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). Geert Hofstede's six cultural dimensions—Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence—offer a systematic framework for evaluating cultural differences (Hofstede, 2011; Zhou & Kwon, 2020). Rather than relying on general geographic categorizations, a more precise approach involves assessing how these cultural dimensions vary across regions and how corruption levels influence cultural structures (Achim, 2016; Seleim & Bontis, 2009). This study examines the extent to which each of these dimensions differs between countries within the same region and across regions, considering both regional influences and the presence of corruption as a determining factor in cultural evolution (Melgar, Rossi, & Smith, 2010; Chandler & Graham, 2010).

Corruption has long been recognized as a significant factor in shaping national cultures and governance structures (Hamilton & Hammer, 2018; Hooker, 2009). Countries with higher corruption levels tend to exhibit cultural characteristics that support informal networks and patronage systems, while those with lower corruption levels are more likely to foster transparent institutional frameworks (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Achim, 2016). Research suggests that Power Distance, for instance, increases in societies where corruption is more prevalent, as hierarchical structures become deeply entrenched in governance and everyday interactions (Melgar et al., 2010; Dipierro & Rella, 2024). Conversely, individualism tends to decline as corruption rises, reinforcing collectivist values that prioritize group loyalty over institutional integrity (Cultural Dimensions and Perception of Corruption, 2023; Seleim & Bontis, 2009). A comparative approach that evaluates cultural dimensions across multiple regions provides insights into how corruption modifies cultural attributes. Studies have shown that in regions where corruption is rampant, Uncertainty Avoidance increases, as societies develop mechanisms to navigate the unpredictability associated with corrupt environments (Chandler & Graham, 2010; Kirkman et al., 2006). Similarly, Masculinity levels tend to rise in economies where corruption persists, reflecting competitive and assertive behaviors that are often necessary to thrive in such contexts (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Achim, 2016). On the other hand, Long-term orientation appears to be more pronounced in less corrupt nations, where institutional stability and trust in governance structures support long-term economic planning and societal progress (Alqarni, 2022; Melgar et al., 2010).

In addition to corruption, digital transformation, and globalization have also impacted cultural dimensions by reshaping how societies interact and communicate (Asdourian, Chariatte, & Ingenhoff, 2024; Spry, 2018). The rise of digital diplomacy and international communication networks has facilitated cultural exchanges that challenge traditional cultural boundaries, further complicating the regional categorization of cultures (Hamilton & Hammer, 2018; Alqarni, 2022). These technological advancements have enabled nations to engage in digital city diplomacy, creating new avenues for collaboration while simultaneously reinforcing national branding efforts in the global arena (Asdourian et al., 2024; Malallah & Osiobe, 2024). This study seeks to analyze whether cultural dimensions are more influenced by regional proximity or by corruption levels. By assessing cross-regional variations and investigating whether corruption significantly alters cultural structures, the research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how cultural attributes evolve (Osiobe, 2024; Kirkman et al., 2006). The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on cultural dynamics, governance, and international collaboration, highlighting the interplay between cultural frameworks and institutional integrity across different geographic regions (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Malallah & Osiobe, 2024).

2. Empirical Review

A comprehensive examination of cultural dimensions and corruption has been conducted across various studies,

leveraging frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011), the GLOBE project (Seleim & Bontis, 2009), and diverse international corruption indices (Hamilton & Hammer, 2018). Research has consistently shown that national cultures play a significant role in shaping governance structures, economic development, and corruption perceptions (Achim, 2016; Melgar, Rossi, & Smith, 2010).

2.1 *Cultural Dimensions and Corruption Perception*

Numerous studies have analyzed the relationship between cultural dimensions and corruption perception. Achim (2016) found that Power Distance, Individualism-Collectivism, and Long-Term Orientation significantly influence corruption levels. Similarly, Dipierro & Rella (2024) confirmed that societies with higher Power Distance and lower Individualism tend to have more entrenched corrupt practices, aligning with Hofstede's framework (Hofstede, 2011). The work of Seleim & Bontis (2009) further supports these findings, emphasizing the role of uncertainty avoidance and human orientation in moderating corruption. Zhou & Kwon (2020) reviewed over four decades of Hofstede-based research and identified patterns in how cultural values influence corruption perceptions globally. Their findings revealed that cultures emphasizing collectivism and rigid hierarchies tend to tolerate higher levels of corruption, while societies valuing transparency and individual accountability report lower corruption levels. Similarly, Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson (2006) reviewed 180 empirical studies, confirming that Hofstede's dimensions remain robust indicators of corruption's cultural determinants.

2.2 *Regional Perspectives on Cultural Dimensions and Corruption*

The impact of cultural dimensions on corruption varies across regions. Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018) examined cross-national cultural shifts and found that regions with historically high Power Distance and Masculinity scores, such as parts of Asia and Africa, experience more systemic corruption. Similarly, Hamilton & Hammer (2018) noted that Uncertainty Avoidance increases in corruption-prone environments, as societies develop coping mechanisms for unpredictability.

Malallah & Osiobe (2024) applied Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to assess cultural commonalities and their influence on diplomatic relations, showing that even countries with distinct historical backgrounds can exhibit similar cultural responses to corruption. Osiobe et al. (2024) further analyzed Hofstede's dimensions across various regions, emphasizing that Indulgence and Long-Term Orientation play crucial roles in governance effectiveness and institutional trust.

In Europe, corruption and cultural dimensions were analyzed through correlation matrices by Leonavičienė & Burinskienė (2022), who found that Scandinavian countries with high Individualism and low Power Distance scores demonstrate greater institutional transparency. Conversely, Southern European nations exhibit stronger hierarchical structures, which correlate with higher corruption perceptions (Cultural Dimensions and Perception of Corruption, 2023). Chandler & Graham (2010) studied how corruption impacts international business, revealing that corruption levels influence marketing success across France, Japan, and the US.

2.3 *Digital Transformation and Cultural Evolution*

Recent studies have explored how digital transformation influences cultural dimensions and corruption. Asdourian, Chariatte, & Ingenhoff (2024) examined how digital city diplomacy is reshaping governance structures, indicating that technology-driven international engagement can help mitigate corruption by fostering transparency and cross-cultural cooperation. Similarly, Spry (2018) investigated the role of social media in diplomatic engagement, showing that digital diplomacy is increasingly relevant for smaller nations in combating corruption and improving international relations.

Alqarni (2022) analyzed the intersection of Hofstede's dimensions and online learning behaviors, revealing that cultural dimensions influence the adoption of digital education platforms. These findings suggest that digital advancements are actively shaping cultural behaviors, potentially affecting long-term corruption trends.

2.4 Gaps in Literature

Despite extensive research on the relationship between cultural dimensions and corruption, several gaps remain, necessitating further study. While studies establish strong correlations between Power Distance, Individualism, and Uncertainty Avoidance with corruption levels (Achim, 2016; Dipierro & Rella, 2024), there is limited understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships, as most analyses focus on correlation rather than causation. Additionally, research predominantly examines corruption and cultural dimensions at the national level, overlooking sub-national and regional variations, which are essential in multi-ethnic and politically diverse nations (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2022). Another critical gap concerns the role of digital transformation in reshaping cultural dimensions and corruption perceptions, as studies by Asdourian, Chariatte, & Ingenhoff (2024) and Spry (2018) explore digital diplomacy and governance but do not sufficiently analyze how digital engagement actively influences cultural values and resistance to corruption. Furthermore, globalization and cross-cultural interactions remain underexplored, with most studies relying on Hofstede's framework (Hofstede, 2011) without considering the effects of international migration, trade, and governance mechanisms on corruption perceptions (Chandler & Graham, 2010). While there are significant findings on corruption and cultural dimensions across regions (Cultural Dimensions and Perception of Corruption, 2023; Seleim & Bontis, 2009), limited research explores how governance policies effectively mitigate corruption within specific cultural frameworks. It is therefore against these backdrops that this study provides deeper insights into how cultural dimensions, corruption, and digital transformation interact, fostering a more comprehensive foundation for policy recommendations and future research directions.

3. Methodology

This study employs a Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) model to assess the impact of a country's *level of corruption* and *geographic location (region)* on key cultural dimensions categorized by *Geert Hofstede* (Hofstede, 2011). By including two independent factors—corruption level and geographic region—this study examines both main effects and interaction effects on the dependent variables. Prior research (Achim, 2016; Dipierro & Rella, 2024) indicates that cultural dimensions are significantly influenced by corruption levels, while other studies (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Zhou & Kwon, 2020) highlight regional clustering in shaping cultural traits. Given the non-additive model approach, we anticipate a significant interaction between these two factors, suggesting that corruption level and regional location jointly influence cultural dimensions rather than acting independently. This aligns with findings that corruption perception is shaped by both socio-cultural and institutional factors (Melgar et al., 2010; Hamilton & Hammer, 2018).

3.1. Model Specification

Our initial hypothesis posits that countries exhibit similar levels of Masculinity, Power Distance, Individualism, and Uncertainty Avoidance, regardless of their geographic location and level of corruption. While Hofstede's cultural framework consists of six dimensions, we exclude Long-Term Orientation and Indulgence due to data limitations and weaker associations with corruption levels (Seleim & Bontis, 2009; Achim, 2016).

The study evaluates four response variables:

- i. Masculinity (M)
- ii. Power Distance (PD)
- iii. Individualism (IDV)
- iv. Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)

These cultural dimensions are examined concerning two explanatory factors:

- Region (R): Four levels—*Africa, America, Asia, and Europe*
- Level of Corruption (C): Three levels—*High, Medium, and Low*

The model is mathematically represented as:

$$Y_{ijk} = \mu + \alpha_i + \beta_j + (\alpha\beta)_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

Where:

Y_{ijk} represents the observed cultural dimension for the k^{th} observation in the $(i, j)^{th}$ group

μ is the grand mean of all observations

α_i is the effect of Region i ($i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ for Africa, America, Asia, and Europe)

β_j is the effect of Corruption Level j ($j = 1, 2, 3$ for High, Medium, and Low)

$(\alpha\beta)_{ij}$ is the interaction effect between Region and Corruption Level

ε_{ijk} is the random error term, assumed to follow a normal distribution:

$$\varepsilon_{ijk} \sim \text{i.i.d. } N(0, \sigma^2) \quad (2)$$

To ensure model identifiability, we impose the following constraints:

$$\sum_{i=1}^4 \alpha_i = 0, \sum_{j=1}^3 \beta_j = 0, \sum_{i=1}^4 \sum_{j=1}^3 (\alpha\beta)_{ij} = 0 \quad (3)$$

These constraints enforce sum-to-zero conditions, ensuring that effects are measured as *deviations from the grand mean* rather than absolute values.

3.2. Hypothesis Testing Framework

Since we employ a non-additive Two-Way ANOVA, we test the following three sets of null and alternative hypotheses for each cultural dimension X (where $X \in \{M, PD, IDV, UAI\}$):

1. Interaction Effect Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no interaction between Region and Level of Corruption on cultural dimension X

2. Main Effect of Region

H_0 : The factor Region does not affect cultural dimension X

3. Main Effect of Corruption Level

H_0 : The factor Level of Corruption does not affect cultural dimension X

3.3. Justification for Methodology

Several studies validate the use of Two-Way ANOVA in cross-national cultural analysis. Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018) emphasize the need for regional-level cultural comparisons, while Achim (2016) and Seleim and Bontis (2009) highlight the impact of corruption on cultural dimensions. Additionally, Zhou and Kwon (2020) stress that culture-based research must control for interactions between institutional and socio-economic factors. Employing a Two-Way ANOVA, this study extends the existing literature by assessing both regional and corruption-based variations simultaneously, offering an understanding of cultural evolution.

4. Results

This section presents the results of our analysis investigating the relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and two explanatory variables: Region (Africa, America, Asia, and Europe) and Level of Corruption (High, Medium, and Low).

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Cultural Dimensions

Region	C-Level	Count	Mean M	SD M	Mean PD	SD PD	Mean Indiv	SD Indiv	Mean UA	SD UA
Africa	High	14	48.4	14.1	45.6	24.6	58.8	26.0	54.9	8.4
Africa	Medium	7	43.1	11.8	40.3	20.3	60.6	22.3	59.1	11.1
America	High	15	50.7	12.8	74.9	12.3	21.2	13.7	79.4	15.1
America	Low	4	45.0	15.0	50.8	13.0	47.8	22.3	69.5	26.5
America	Medium	3	49.0	24.8	42.3	6.4	23.3	13.6	51.3	36.6
Asia	High	17	47.5	16.3	72.6	18.9	29.7	11.0	63.4	20.4
Asia	Low	7	52.3	20.4	72.4	16.3	30.6	14.2	61.1	31.3
Asia	Medium	9	54.7	14.4	72.4	24.7	34.9	12.9	58.8	22.6
Europe	High	8	55.1	24.8	85.0	20.5	37.0	23.7	76.9	22.9
Europe	Low	17	37.3	24.1	39.6	16.7	62.8	13.4	61.8	21.5
Europe	Medium	12	46.2	22.9	64.9	15.8	47.4	20.9	84.2	10.3

Source: Researcher's computation

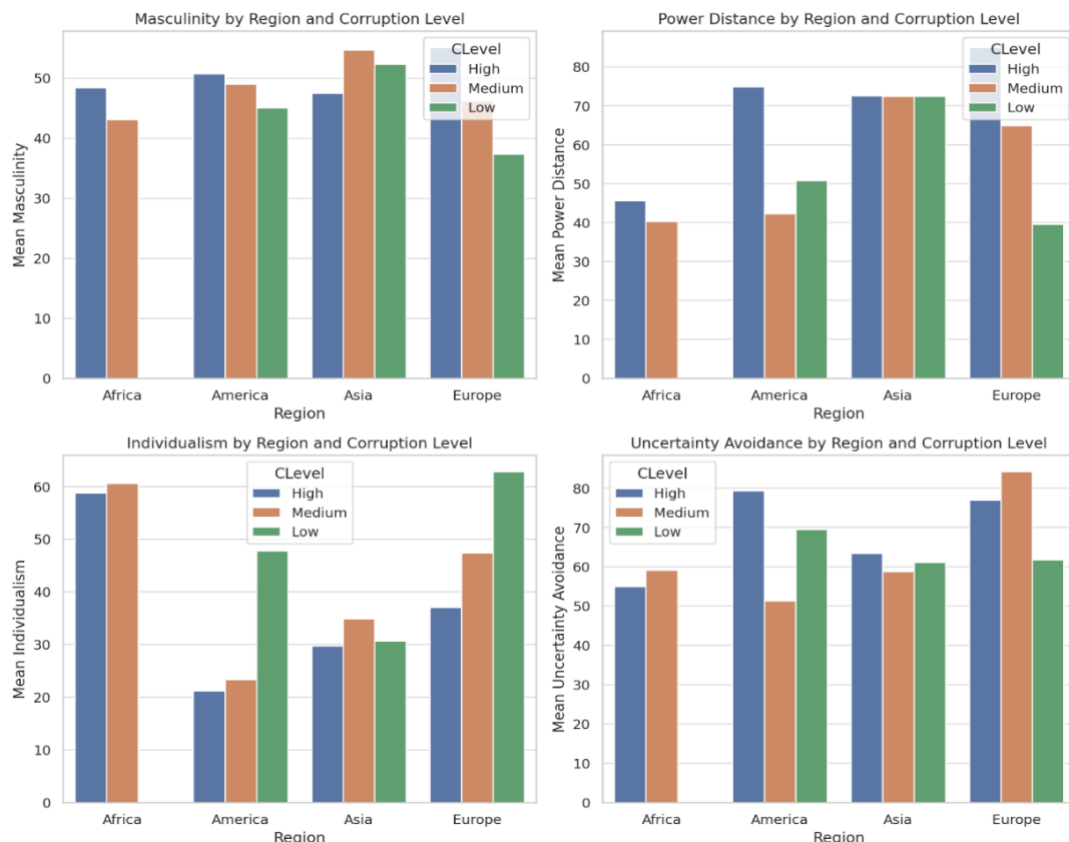


Figure 1: Cultural Dimensions by Region and Corruption Level

4.1.1. Masculinity Across Regions and Corruption Levels

The findings suggest that Masculinity does not exhibit significant variation across regions or corruption levels, with values ranging between 43.1 (Africa, Medium) and 55.1 (Europe, High). This aligns with Hofstede's (2011) assertion that Masculinity is a stable cultural dimension that is more deeply rooted in socialization and historical gender roles rather than being influenced by corruption or regional governance structures. Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018) also found that Masculinity remains relatively constant across countries, reinforcing that corruption does

not significantly impact gender role differentiation and competitive values. However, a closer examination reveals a slightly higher Masculinity index in highly corrupt European and American countries (55.1 and 50.7, respectively). This aligns with Chandler and Graham (2010), who suggested that more corrupt business environments in Western economies might encourage competitive and assertive behaviors, possibly reinforcing Masculine traits in organizations and politics.

4.1.2. Power Distance Across Regions and Corruption Levels

The Power Distance dimension demonstrates a notable regional variation, ranging from 39.6 (Europe, Low Corruption) to 85.0 (Europe, High Corruption). The data supports prior findings by Hofstede (2011), Achim (2016), and Dipierro & Rella (2024), who argued that Power Distance is strongly associated with corruption levels, as corrupt societies tend to reinforce hierarchical structures that limit transparency and accountability. The African countries with high corruption exhibit relatively low Power Distance (45.6), which contradicts Hofstede's (2011) expectation that corrupt societies generally promote high Power Distance. This finding supports Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who suggested that African cultural traditions emphasize communal leadership structures that may counteract the centralization of power despite corruption. Conversely, Europe's Power Distance varies dramatically between low (39.6) and high corruption levels (85.0), confirming Zhou and Kwon's (2020) observation that hierarchical acceptance in Western societies is flexible, shifting based on governance quality. In highly corrupt American and Asian countries, Power Distance remains high (74.9 and 72.6, respectively), reinforcing Chandler & Graham's (2010) argument that corrupt political systems in these regions rely heavily on hierarchical control to maintain power.

4.1.3. Individualism Across Regions and Corruption Levels

The data reveals a stark contrast between highly corrupt and low-corruption societies in terms of Individualism. Highly corrupt regions, particularly in America (21.2) and Asia (29.7), exhibit significantly lower Individualism, supporting Dipierro & Rella's (2024) finding that corruption flourishes in collectivist cultures, where patronage networks and group loyalty take precedence over personal autonomy. On the other hand, low-corruption European countries exhibit the highest Individualism (62.8), aligning with Hofstede (2011) and Achim (2016), who found that Individualism thrives in societies with strong institutions, transparency, and accountability. This is further supported by Spry (2018), who argued that individualistic cultures encourage personal responsibility, making corrupt behaviors more difficult to sustain. Interestingly, African countries exhibit relatively high Individualism (58.8 and 60.6 for High and Medium Corruption, respectively). This partially contradicts the traditional assumption that African societies are predominantly collectivist (Hofstede, 2011). However, Hamilton & Hammer (2018) suggested that economic liberalization and global influences may be gradually shifting African societies toward more individualistic values, which could explain this trend.

4.1.4. Uncertainty Avoidance Across Regions and Corruption Levels

Unlike other cultural dimensions, Uncertainty Avoidance appears to be more regionally influenced rather than shaped by corruption levels. African countries, regardless of corruption levels, exhibit relatively low Uncertainty Avoidance (54.9–59.1), supporting Beugelsdijk & Welzel's (2018) argument that African societies tend to be more adaptive to uncertainty due to historical and economic volatility. Conversely, highly corrupt European (76.9) and American (79.4) countries exhibit the highest Uncertainty Avoidance, aligning with Achim (2016), who found that corrupt societies often create uncertain environments that increase risk aversion. However, the lack of significant differences in Uncertainty Avoidance across corruption levels within Asia and America challenges Seleim & Bontis (2009), who suggested that corruption strongly amplifies uncertainty in all societies.

4.2. *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*

To inferentially evaluate the effects of Region and Level of Corruption on cultural dimensions, a Two-Way ANOVA was conducted.

4.2.1. Masculinity

Table 2: ANOVA Results for Masculinity

Factors	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	Pr(>F)
Region	3	840	280.1	0.493
C-Level	2	810	404.8	0.316
Region: C-Level	5	1561	312.3	0.485
Residuals	102	35419	347.2	-

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results for Masculinity, showing that Region ($p = 0.493$), Corruption Level ($p = 0.316$), and the interaction effect between Region and Corruption ($p = 0.485$) are all non-significant. These results indicate that Masculinity remains stable across different geographic regions and corruption levels, aligning with Hofstede (2011) and Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who found that Masculinity is deeply ingrained in societal norms and does not fluctuate based on governance quality or geographic factors. The findings also support Achim (2016), who argued that corruption does not significantly impact gender role differentiation or competitiveness within cultures. Additionally, the lack of significant regional variation contradicts Seleim & Bontis (2009), who suggested that Masculinity may vary across regions based on historical governance structures and economic transitions. The non-significant interaction effect ($p = 0.485$) further suggests that Masculinity is not influenced by the interplay between geography and corruption, reinforcing the idea that cultural perceptions of gender roles remain relatively stable despite governance challenges. These findings indicate that future research should explore other socioeconomic variables, such as education and labor market structures, to better understand what influences changes in Masculinity across societies.

4.2.2. Power Distance

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Power Distance

Factors	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	Pr(>F)
Region	3	11529	3843	2.41e-06 ***
CLevel	2	9167	4583	8.08e-06 ***
Region:CLevel	5	6921	1384	0.0024 **
Residuals	102	35461	348	-

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results for Power Distance, showing that Region ($p = 2.41e-06$) and Corruption Level ($p = 8.08e-06$) both have highly significant effects, while the interaction effect between Region and Corruption is also significant ($p = 0.0024$). These results confirm that Power Distance varies significantly across geographic regions and governance quality, aligning with Hofstede (2011) and Achim (2016), who argued that societies with high corruption tend to reinforce hierarchical structures, limiting social mobility and increasing acceptance of centralized authority. The strong regional effect supports Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who emphasized that historical governance systems shape societal perceptions of power and authority over time. Additionally, the significant impact of Corruption Level corroborates findings by Dipierro & Rella (2024) and Chandler & Graham (2010), who demonstrated that corruption fosters greater power imbalances by strengthening elite control and reducing institutional accountability. The significant interaction effect ($p = 0.0024$) further suggests that the relationship between Power Distance and Corruption is not uniform across regions, reinforcing Zhou & Kwon's (2020) argument that Western societies exhibit more fluid hierarchical perceptions based on governance quality,

whereas other regions may maintain power structures regardless of corruption levels. These findings indicate that effective governance reforms must be tailored to regional cultural contexts to reduce Power Distance and promote equitable institutional structures.

4.2.2.1 Post Hoc Analysis for Power Distance

Table 4: Tukey-Kramer Post Hoc Test for Power Distance

Region:Corruption	Difference	Lower	Upper	p-adj
America:High - Africa:High	29.2	6.0	52.4	0.00298
Asia:High - Africa:High	26.9	4.4	49.5	0.00632
Europe:High - Africa:High	39.4	11.7	67.0	0.00038
Asia:Medium - Africa:High	26.8	0.2	53.5	0.04736
Europe:Low - America:High	-35.3	-57.4	-13.2	3.53E-05
Africa:Medium - America:High	-34.6	-63.1	-6.0	0.00536
Europe:Low - Asia:High	-33.0	-54.4	-11.6	7.57E-05
Africa:Medium - Asia:High	-32.3	-60.3	-4.3	0.01035
Europe:Low - Europe:High	-45.4	-72.2	-18.7	8.12E-06
Africa:Medium - Europe:High	-44.7	-77.0	-12.4	0.00063
America:Medium - Europe:High	-42.7	-84.9	-0.4	0.0453
Europe:Low - Asia:Low	-32.8	-60.9	-4.8	0.00835
Asia:Medium - Europe:Low	32.9	7.1	58.6	0.00243
Europe:Medium - Europe:Low	25.3	1.8	48.8	0.02337
Asia:Medium - Africa:Medium	32.2	0.7	63.6	0.0401

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 4 presents the Tukey-Kramer post hoc test results for Power Distance, highlighting significant differences across regions and corruption levels. The results indicate that highly corrupt African countries exhibit significantly lower Power Distance compared to their counterparts in America ($p = 0.00298$), Asia ($p = 0.00632$), and Europe ($p = 0.00038$), contradicting Hofstede's (2011) assumption that corrupt societies inherently reinforce hierarchical structures. This finding aligns with Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who argued that some African governance traditions emphasize communal leadership rather than centralized control, mitigating the effects of corruption on Power Distance. Additionally, low-corruption European countries have significantly lower Power Distance compared to highly corrupt European countries ($p = 8.12E-06$), confirming Zhou & Kwon's (2020) assertion that hierarchical acceptance in Western societies fluctuates based on governance quality. The large differences observed between Europe:High and Europe:Low (-45.4 , $p = 8.12E-06$) and America:High and Europe:Low (-35.3 , $p = 3.53E-05$) support Chandler & Graham's (2010) findings that hierarchical structures in Europe and America are more flexible and governance-dependent than in other regions. Furthermore, the significant difference between medium- corruption African countries and highly corrupt American and Asian countries (-34.6 , $p = 0.00536$ and -32.3 , $p = 0.01035$, respectively) suggests that corruption alone does not determine Power Distance, but rather interacts with historical governance structures and cultural norms. These results reinforce the importance of regional context in shaping hierarchical acceptance and suggest that reducing Power Distance in corrupt societies requires governance reforms tailored to local cultural values.

4.2.3. Individualism

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Individualism

Factors	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	Pr(>F)
Region	3	19374	6458	2.03e-10 ***
CLevel	2	4192	2096	0.002 **
Region:CLevel	5	2263	453	0.221
Residuals	102	32348	317	-

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 5 presents the ANOVA results for Individualism, showing that Region ($p = 2.03e-10$) and Corruption Level ($p = 0.002$) have significant effects, while the interaction effect between Region and Corruption is not significant ($p = 0.221$). These findings indicate that both geographic location and governance quality play a crucial role in shaping Individualism, aligning with Hofstede (2011) and Achim (2016), who found that individualistic values tend to be higher in economically developed and politically stable societies. The strong regional effect supports Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who emphasized that historical and institutional factors determine whether a society leans toward Individualism or Collectivism. Additionally, the significant influence of Corruption Level reinforces Dipierro & Rella (2024) and Spry (2018), who argued that higher corruption levels weaken individualistic values by fostering dependence on patronage networks and group loyalty. However, the non-significant interaction effect ($p = 0.221$) suggests that the impact of corruption on Individualism is consistent across regions, contradicting Seleim & Bontis (2009), who proposed that corruption erodes Individualism more aggressively in certain cultural contexts than others. These results highlight that while regional influences shape Individualism, governance and institutional trust remain key factors in understanding its global variations.

Table 6: Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test for Individualism

Comparison	Difference	Lower	Upper	p-adj
America - Africa	-33.06	-47.25	-18.87	1.23E-07
Asia - Africa	-28.08	-41.06	-15.09	8.76E-07
Europe - Africa	-7.16	-19.87	5.54	0.4577
Asia - America	4.98	-7.82	17.79	0.7398
Europe - America	25.90	13.37	38.42	2.57E-06
Europe - Asia	20.91	9.78	32.05	2.09E-05

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 6 presents the Tukey HSD post hoc test results for Individualism across regions, highlighting significant differences between America and Africa ($p = 1.23E-07$), Asia and Africa ($p = 8.76E-07$), Europe and America ($p = 2.57E-06$), and Europe and Asia ($p = 2.09E-05$), while other comparisons do not show statistical significance. The results confirm that African countries exhibit significantly lower Individualism than America and Asia, aligning with Hofstede (2011) and Dipierro & Rella (2024), who noted that collectivist cultures, often found in Africa, emphasize group cohesion over personal autonomy.

Additionally, European countries demonstrate significantly higher Individualism than both Asia and America, reinforcing Spry's (2018) argument that Western societies encourage personal accountability, which discourages corruption and promotes institutional trust. However, the non-significant difference between Europe and Africa ($p = 0.4577$) suggests that African societies may not be entirely collectivist, challenging previous assumptions by Hofstede (2011) and supporting Hamilton & Hammer (2018), who argued that economic globalization is gradually shifting some African cultures toward more individualistic tendencies. Furthermore, the insignificant difference between Asia and America ($p = 0.7398$) contrasts with Seleim & Bontis (2009), who proposed that American societies should be significantly more individualistic than their Asian counterparts. These findings indicate that

while regional factors influence Individualism, additional economic and governance-related elements must be considered to fully understand its variations.

4.2.4. Uncertainty Avoidance

Table 7: ANOVA Results for Uncertainty Avoidance

Factors	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	Pr(>F)
Region	3	5372	1790.6	0.00385 **
C-Level	2	2240	1119.8	0.05578 .
Region: C-Level	5	3778	755.5	0.08436 .
Residuals	102	38461	377.1	-

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 7 presents the ANOVA results for Uncertainty Avoidance, showing that Region has a significant effect ($p = 0.00385$), while Corruption Level is only marginally significant ($p = 0.05578$), and the interaction effect between Region and Corruption is not significant ($p = 0.08436$). These results indicate that regional factors play a more prominent role than corruption in shaping Uncertainty Avoidance, aligning with Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who found that cultural attitudes toward uncertainty are often rooted in historical and economic stability rather than governance alone. The marginal significance of Corruption Level suggests that while governance and institutional quality may influence Uncertainty Avoidance to some extent, it is not the primary determinant, challenging the assumptions of Achim (2016) and Seleim & Bontis (2009), who proposed that corruption fosters greater uncertainty aversion. The non-significant interaction effect ($p = 0.08436$) further reinforces the idea that corruption does not consistently modify the regional differences in Uncertainty Avoidance, supporting Zhou & Kwon (2020), who emphasized that cultural responses to uncertainty are shaped by long-standing social structures rather than short-term governance fluctuations. These findings suggest that future studies should explore alternative institutional and economic factors that may better explain variations in Uncertainty Avoidance across different societies.

4.2.4.1 Post Hoc Analysis for Uncertainty Avoidance

Table 8: Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test for Uncertainty Avoidance

Comparison	Difference	Lower	Upper	p-adj
America - Africa	17.44	1.97	32.91	0.0206 *
Asia - Africa	5.33	-8.82	19.49	0.7589
Europe - Africa	16.02	2.16	29.88	0.0166 *
Asia - America	-12.11	-26.07	1.85	0.1131
Europe - America	-1.42	-15.08	12.23	0.9929
Europe - Asia	10.68	-1.46	22.83	0.1052

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 8 presents the Tukey HSD post hoc test results for Uncertainty Avoidance across regions, revealing significant differences between Africa and both America ($p = 0.0206$) and Europe ($p = 0.0166$), while other regional comparisons do not reach statistical significance. These findings indicate that African countries exhibit significantly lower Uncertainty Avoidance than both American and European nations, aligning with Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who argued that African societies tend to be more adaptive and resilient to uncertainty due to historical and economic volatility. However, the lack of significant differences between Asia and Africa ($p =$

0.7589) and between Europe and Asia ($p = 0.1052$) suggests that cultural responses to uncertainty are not universally determined by region alone, supporting Zhou & Kwon (2020), who emphasized the importance of institutional and historical contexts. Additionally, the non-significant difference between Asia and America ($p = 0.1131$) challenges prior assumptions by Achim (2016) and Seleim & Bontis (2009) that higher corruption levels should be associated with greater uncertainty aversion in all societies. Instead, these results suggest that regional governance structures and economic stability play a more decisive role in shaping Uncertainty Avoidance than corruption alone.

Table 9: Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test for Uncertainty Avoidance (Corruption Level)

Comparison	Difference	Lower	Upper	p-adj
Low - High	-9.55	-20.31	1.20	0.0924
Medium - High	-0.19	-10.60	10.22	0.9989
Medium - Low	9.36	-2.68	21.40	0.1589

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 9 presents the results of the Tukey HSD post hoc test for Uncertainty Avoidance across different levels of corruption, indicating that there are no statistically significant differences between corruption levels. The low - high corruption comparison shows a mean difference of -9.55 ($p = 0.0924$), while Medium - High corruption and Medium - low corruption comparisons also fail to reach significance ($p = 0.9989$ and $p = 0.1589$, respectively). These findings suggest that corruption levels alone do not systematically influence Uncertainty Avoidance, challenging previous assumptions by Achim (2016) and Seleim & Bontis (2009), who argued that corruption fosters higher risk aversion. Instead, the results align more closely with Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who proposed that regional and historical factors play a more decisive role in shaping how societies respond to uncertainty than corruption alone. The marginally non-significant difference between Low and High corruption levels suggests that while corruption may contribute to uncertainty in governance and institutions, other socio-political and economic variables must be considered to fully understand cultural responses to uncertainty.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study conclude with the following:

Masculinity: The results indicate that Masculinity does not significantly vary across regions or corruption levels ($p = 0.485$), suggesting that gender role differentiation and competitiveness remain relatively stable across different governance contexts. This finding aligns with previous studies (Hofstede, 2011; Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018), which argued that masculinity is more deeply rooted in societal values than in political or economic corruption. Achim (2016) also found that corruption had no significant relationship with masculinity, reinforcing our conclusion that corruption levels do not directly shape masculine traits within a culture. However, these results contrast with Seleim and Bontis (2009), who posited that masculinity might be linked to governance structures in certain societies.

Power Distance: Unlike Masculinity, Power Distance exhibited a significant interaction effect between Region and Corruption Level ($p = 0.0024$), indicating that hierarchical structures and authority perceptions are not uniform but rather shaped by both geography and governance. The post hoc analysis reveals that Africa, despite having high corruption levels, exhibited significantly lower Power Distance compared to highly corrupt countries in America, Asia, and Europe. This finding contradicts Hofstede (2011) and Achim (2016), who suggested that corruption fosters greater Power Distance by reinforcing hierarchical governance. Instead, our findings align with Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who argued that Power Distance may not always increase with corruption but could be mitigated by regional sociocultural traditions emphasizing communal leadership structures. Moreover, Europe exhibited the greatest variation in Power Distance based on corruption levels, confirming Zhou & Kwon's (2020) assertion that Western societies display fluidity in hierarchical perceptions depending on governance effectiveness.

The results also align with Chandler & Graham (2010), who found that Power Distance within a region fluctuates due to corruption, especially in Europe.

Individualism: The findings confirm that Individualism significantly differs across regions and corruption levels ($p = 2.03e - 10$ and $p = 0.002$, respectively), with no significant interaction effect. This reinforces prior studies by Hofstede (2011) and Dipierro & Rella (2024), which highlighted that individualistic societies tend to have lower corruption perceptions due to greater personal accountability and institutional trust. The results also corroborate Spry (2018), who suggested that corruption weakens individualistic values by increasing reliance on collective patronage networks. The post hoc analysis reveals that Africa remains distinct from other continents, exhibiting significantly lower Individualism levels, while Europe stands apart as the most individualistic region. This aligns with Hamilton & Hammer (2018), who reported that Western societies foster individualistic behaviors through robust legal frameworks. Additionally, the significant difference in Individualism between high- and low-corruption countries supports Achim (2016), who found a negative correlation between Individualism and corruption. However, the lack of significant differences between medium- and high-corruption countries contradicts Seleim & Bontis (2009), who argued that Individualism erodes steadily as corruption intensifies.

Uncertainty Avoidance: The results show that Uncertainty Avoidance varies significantly by region ($p = 0.00385$) but does not show meaningful differences based on corruption levels. Africa exhibits significantly lower Uncertainty Avoidance than both America and Europe, while Asia, America, and Europe display similar tendencies. These findings confirm previous research by Beugelsdijk & Welzel (2018), who reported that African societies tend to adopt more flexible, adaptive approaches to uncertainty. However, the lack of significant differences in Uncertainty Avoidance across corruption levels challenges Achim (2016) and Seleim & Bontis (2009), who argued that corruption breeds greater uncertainty, making societies more risk-averse. The marginal significance of corruption ($p = 0.05578$) suggests that while governance instability may contribute to uncertainty management styles, it is not the sole determinant. This aligns with Zhou & Kwon (2020), who emphasized that historical and economic contexts influence uncertainty perception more than corruption alone.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Since Masculinity remains stable across regions and corruption levels, future governance policies should focus on socio-economic factors rather than cultural shifts when addressing gender-based issues.
- ii. Given that Power Distance is significantly influenced by both Region and Corruption Levels, policymakers should implement context-specific leadership and governance reforms to reduce hierarchical imbalances in highly corrupt regions.
- iii. Countries aiming to reduce corruption should promote institutional trust and individual accountability, as these are key drivers of Individualism in low-corruption societies.
- iv. Since Uncertainty Avoidance varies primarily by Region rather than Corruption Level, policies should focus on historical and economic stability rather than solely addressing governance issues.

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Appendix

Region: Corruption	diff	lower	upper	p.adj
America:High-Africa:High	29.2	6.0	52.4	0.0029845
Asia:High-Africa:High	26.9	4.4	49.5	0.0063177
Europe:High-Africa:High	39.4	11.7	67.0	0.0003805
America:Low-Africa:High	5.1	-30.3	40.5	0.9999979
Asia:Low-Africa:High	26.8	-2.1	55.7	0.0957425
Europe:Low-Africa:High	-6.1	-28.6	16.5	0.998997
Africa:Medium-Africa:High	-5.4	-34.2	23.5	0.9999728
America:Medium-Africa:High	-3.3	-43.0	36.4	1
Asia:Medium-Africa:High	26.8	0.2	53.5	0.0473635
Europe:Medium-Africa:High	19.3	-5.3	43.8	0.2786555
Asia:High-America:High	-2.3	-24.4	19.8	0.9999999
Europe:High-America:High	10.1	-17.2	37.4	0.9841274
America:Low-America:High	-24.1	-59.2	11.0	0.4844874
Asia:Low-America:High	-2.4	-31.0	26.1	1
Europe:Low-America:High	-35.3	-57.4	-13.2	3.533E-05
Africa:Medium-America:High	-34.6	-63.1	-6.0	0.0053618
America:Medium-America:High	-32.5	-72.0	6.9	0.2138667
Asia:Medium-America:High	-2.4	-28.7	23.9	1
Europe:Medium-America:High	-10.0	-34.1	14.2	0.9652106
Europe:High-Asia:High	12.4	-14.3	39.2	0.9215361
America:Low-Asia:High	-21.8	-56.5	12.8	0.6186169
Asia:Low-Asia:High	-0.2	-28.2	27.9	1
Europe:Low-Asia:High	-33.0	-54.4	-11.6	7.574E-05
Africa:Medium-Asia:High	-32.3	-60.3	-4.3	0.0103512
America:Medium-Asia:High	-30.3	-69.3	8.8	0.2986261
Asia:Medium-Asia:High	-0.1	-25.9	25.6	1
Europe:Medium-Asia:High	-7.7	-31.2	15.8	0.9944529
America:Low-Europe:High	-34.2	-72.4	3.9	0.1238859
Asia:Low-Europe:High	-12.6	-44.9	19.7	0.9769987
Europe:Low-Europe:High	-45.4	-72.2	-18.7	8.123E-06
Africa:Medium-Europe:High	-44.7	-77.0	-12.4	0.0006304
America:Medium-Europe:High	-42.7	-84.9	-0.4	0.0452983
Asia:Medium-Europe:High	-12.6	-42.9	17.8	0.9637403
Europe:Medium-Europe:High	-20.1	-48.6	8.4	0.4425005
Asia:Low-America:Low	21.7	-17.4	60.8	0.7833312
Europe:Low-America:Low	-11.2	-45.8	23.5	0.9950308
Africa:Medium-America:Low	-10.5	-49.6	28.6	0.9990409
America:Medium-America:Low	-8.4	-56.1	39.2	0.9999835
Asia:Medium-America:Low	21.7	-15.8	59.2	0.7338365
Europe:Medium-America:Low	14.2	-21.8	50.2	0.9751797
Europe:Low-Asia:Low	-32.8	-60.9	-4.8	0.0083547
Africa:Medium-Asia:Low	-32.1	-65.5	1.2	0.0696109
America:Medium-Asia:Low	-30.1	-73.1	12.9	0.4566241
Asia:Medium-Asia:Low	0.0	-31.4	31.4	1
Europe:Medium-Asia:Low	-7.5	-37.2	22.2	0.999428
Africa:Medium-Europe:Low	0.7	-27.3	28.7	1
America:Medium-Europe:Low	2.7	-36.3	41.8	1
Asia:Medium-Europe:Low	32.9	7.1	58.6	0.0024289
Europe:Medium-Europe:Low	25.3	1.8	48.8	0.0233731
America:Medium-Africa:Medium	2.0	-41.0	45.1	1

Asia:Medium-Africa:Medium	32.2	0.7	63.6	0.0400967
Europe:Medium-Africa:Medium	24.6	-5.0	54.3	0.2055192
Asia:Medium-America:Medium	30.1	-11.5	71.7	0.4010351
Europe:Medium-America:Medium	22.6	-17.7	62.8	0.7707156
Europe:Medium-Asia:Medium	-7.5	-35.0	20.0	0.9988227

Conflict Management in Multicultural Teams: Optimizing Intercultural Communication Based on *Wetu Telu* Local Wisdom Values

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Abstract

Multicultural teams within organizations are susceptible to potential communication failures, which may impede attaining organizational objectives. This research endeavours to investigate local wisdom values that possess the potential to serve as work culture values and conflict management solutions. The study employed a case study approach, interviewing religious and cultural leaders. Thematic analysis was applied for relevant triangulation. The findings indicate that the *wetu telu* local wisdom values in North Lombok present an opportunity for application in organizational conflict management. *Wetu telu* wisdom values can be integrated into training programs and human resource development policies to enhance intercultural communication and conflict management. Furthermore, *wetu telu*'s holistic approach can serve as a foundation for fostering a more inclusive and harmonious work environment, ultimately improving employee productivity and retention. Additionally, the findings encourage organizations to consider local wisdom an integral component of their organizational development strategy, particularly within globalization. Future research could employ a mixed methods approach to evaluate local wisdom-based approaches periodically and longitudinally.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Conflict Management, Human Resource Management, Local Wisdom, *Wetu Telu*.

1. Introduction

Globalization driven by information and communication technology development has precipitated a significant transformation in organizational structures (Alcon Andrades & Tordo, 2023). This advancement has enabled organizations to recruit talent from diverse locations and establish multicultural work environments. Contemporary work teams comprise individuals with varied religious backgrounds, cultures, values, and norms (Lu et al., 2024). Consequently, organizations are compelled to develop management strategies that are inclusive

and sensitive to cultural differences. Without an appropriate approach, such differences may engender conflicts and impede team productivity within the organization.

Organizations are expected to optimize intercultural communication to minimize the potential for conflict in multicultural teams (Sakr et al., 2023). Recognition and understanding of each team member's religious values and cultural norms are paramount in fostering harmony (Kim & Sebbi, 2023). Organizations can leverage diversity as an asset to effectively achieve the organization's common objectives. The integration of diverse intercultural perspectives not only leads to enhanced problem-solving and creativity but also necessitates a commitment to inclusiveness and adaptability (Sivunen et al., 2023), resulting in the identification of more substantive solutions and a supportive work culture (Delemotte et al., 2022), although not necessarily in the permanent avoidance of conflict.

Conflicts in multicultural teams frequently arise from miscommunication caused by differences in language, communication styles, and cultural norms (Kalagy & Braun-Lewensohn, 2023; Lu et al., 2024). For instance, certain cultures may favour direct and assertive communication, while others prefer indirect and diplomatic communication. This disparity can lead to misunderstandings, wherein one party may perceive insult or disrespect while the other party remains unaware of the impact of their words or actions. Furthermore, divergent perceptions of time, hierarchy, or responsibility can exacerbate the situation. If not managed effectively, such conflicts can generate tension within the team, diminish collaboration, and ultimately reduce productivity.

Cultural value clashes constitute a significant source of conflict in multicultural teams. Each culture brings different values, such as individualism versus collectivism or short-term versus long-term orientation (Abravan et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022). These values influence team members' decisions, solve problems, or address change. When these values are not understood or respected, conflicts can arise and disrupt team dynamics. Therefore, organizations must develop culturally sensitive conflict management approaches through intercultural training and inclusive values-based mediation to maintain team harmony and productivity.

Moral degradation exacerbated by consumerism and over-reliance on communication technologies has created new challenges (Cabañes, 2023) in managing conflict in multicultural teams (Minson & Dorison, 2022). Consumerism encourages individuals to focus more on self-interest and materialism, which can diminish empathy and concern for others (Trenerry et al., 2024). Reliance on communication technologies, such as instant messaging or email, often reduces direct, face-to-face interactions, essential for building understanding and trust between team members. Consequently, miscommunication becomes more frequent, and conflicts that could have been resolved with direct dialogue are exacerbated due to the lack of emotional nuance in digital communication.

Using communication technologies to facilitate coordination and collaboration can exacerbate multicultural team dynamics (Hayashi, 2023; McGreavy et al., 2022) if not implemented judiciously. For instance, social media and digital communication platforms frequently enable the disseminating of inaccurate or culturally biased information, which may intensify differences and precipitate conflict. Conversely, reliance on technology also diminishes the capacity of team members to develop interpersonal communication skills crucial in resolving conflict (Feitosa et al., 2022). Consequently, organizations must balance the use of technology with initiatives to promote in-person interactions and moral values that support collaboration, such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences (Hayashi, 2023). Without these efforts, conflict in multicultural teams will become increasingly challenging to manage, and team harmony and productivity will continue to be compromised. There is a necessity for wisdom values that can serve as a solution to multicultural team dynamics and be applied in managing team differences.

Local wisdom values, such as those embodied in the *Wetu telu* philosophy from Lombok, offer innovative solutions to address the complexity of conflict in multicultural teams (Sutama et al., 2025). *Wetu telu* emphasizes the principles of harmony, balance, and tolerance, which can serve as the foundation for building effective intercultural communication (Pajariantanto et al., 2022) in multicultural teams. The principle of harmony encourages each team member to cultivate harmony within differences, while balance teaches the importance of valuing each individual's contribution without dominating or disregarding the other party. Tolerance, as a core value, enables

team members to accept and celebrate religious and cultural diversity as a strength rather than a source of division. Organizations can foster a more inclusive and cohesive work environment by integrating these values.

Applying local wisdom values such as *wetu telu* in the context of organizational communication, particularly in multicultural teams, presents distinct challenges. Firstly, these values must be adapted to maintain relevance in a broader multicultural team's global context and work culture without compromising their essence. Secondly, intensive education and socialization efforts must ensure all team members comprehend and appreciate these wisdom values. Thirdly, organizations should avoid romanticizing local wisdom and maintain a critical perspective regarding limitations or potential cultural biases. Nevertheless, with an appropriate approach, local wisdom values such as *wetu telu* can be a powerful tool for managing conflict, enhancing intercultural communication, and cultivating harmonious and productive multicultural teams.

This research examines integrating *wetu telu* values into multicultural teams' conflict management strategies and intercultural communication. These values are considered a holistic approach that can mitigate cultural differences and reduce conflicts frequently arising due to miscommunication or value discrepancies. Maintaining harmonious relationships among team members is crucial to establishing principles of equity and respect for individual contributions. Furthermore, team members are expected to cultivate an appreciation for diversity as a collective asset, thereby creating a more inclusive and effective conflict management framework.

The study also addresses the challenges of adapting *wetu telu* values to a complex global context, specifically how these local values can be translated into practices relevant to multicultural teams comprising individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This necessitates a participatory approach wherein all team members understand and apply these values. Potential biases or limitations in applying *wetu telu* values warrant consideration, such as the risk of idealizing local culture or incompatibility with global values. Consequently, this research aims to significantly contribute to creating a harmonious, productive, and responsive work environment in globalization dynamics.

Previous research on conflict management in multicultural teams has predominantly relied on Western or universal approaches (Desrayaud & Hurley, 2023), such as structural conflict theory or negotiation-based mediation models, which often neglect the local cultural context (Mudambi et al., 2023). In contrast, local wisdom such as *wetu telu*, developed by the Sasak people in Lombok, offers a unique perspective that is holistic and inclusive, emphasizing the value of harmony in work teams. However, initiatives to explore and integrate these local wisdom values into conflict management strategies have resulted in significant gaps in literature and practice. Consequently, the potential of local culture-based solutions that may be more relevant and effective in certain contexts, such as Indonesia or areas of high cultural diversity, has not been optimally utilized (Leifels & Zhang, 2023) as an alternative approach in multicultural team conflict management.

Although local wisdom values such as *wetu telu* offer significant potential for fostering harmony in multicultural teams, research specifically integrating these values in the context of globalization remains limited (Leifels & Zhang, 2023; Schnurr & Zayts, 2022). Globalization's multifaceted dynamics, including moral degradation due to consumerism and dependence on communication technology, have generated new complex challenges in managing intercultural conflict, particularly in work teams. *Wetu telu* values may present a relevant solution to address these challenges. However, there has been no systematic effort to adapt and evaluate the efficacy of such values in the face of modern realities such as digital miscommunication, individualism, and the erosion of in-person interactions (Mudambi et al., 2023; Syme & Hagen, 2023).

While extensive research on intercultural communication exists, it predominantly focuses on theoretical aspects, such as the development of models or conceptual frameworks, without substantial emphasis on practical implementation in real-world contexts (Liu et al., 2023), especially in mitigating conflicts in multicultural work environments (Men et al., 2023). These theories often do not account for the complex dynamics in the field, such as miscommunication due to language differences, conflicting values, or the influence of technology that diminishes direct interaction. Consequently, there is a disparity between the theory produced and the practical needs of organizations to develop effective and applicable solutions. Developing local values-based theories such

as *wetu telu* can provide concrete guidance for organizations in managing conflict and enhancing intercultural communication in the workplace.

2. Literature Reviews

Research on conflict management in multicultural teams, such as case studies in multinational corporations and international non-profit organizations, indicates that conflicts are frequently precipitated by cultural differences, miscommunication, and goal incompatibility (Desrayaud & Hurley, 2023). Variations in communication styles (high-context versus low-context) and work preferences (collectivist versus individualist) are common sources of tension in multicultural teams (Hofstede et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey, 2006). Furthermore, stereotypes, cultural biases, and insufficient intercultural understanding exacerbate conflict (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Wiseman & Koester, 1993). Most research continues to focus on universal or Western approaches to managing conflict, such as collaborative conflict management theory or formal mediation approaches.

While extensive research has been conducted on conflict management in multicultural teams, case studies that incorporate local wisdom as a solution remain limited. Most research emphasizes Western or global contexts, while the potential of local values, such as *wetu telu* from Lombok, has not been adequately explored. Indeed, local wisdom often encompasses principles pertinent to addressing conflict, emphasizing three-dimensional harmony (relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature), which can serve as the foundation for creating an inclusive and sustainable work environment.

Effective intercultural communication can enhance collaboration and innovation in multicultural teams. Proficient intercultural communication enables employees from diverse backgrounds to comprehend one another, exchange ideas, and work together harmoniously. However, significant challenges in intercultural communication frequently include stereotypes, cultural biases, and misunderstandings arising from differences in language, norms, and values (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Most research continues to focus on universal or Western approaches, such as communication technologies or cultural training, without considering the potential of local values as alternative solutions.

Although the challenges of intercultural communication have been extensively examined, case studies investigating the role of local wisdom in addressing these challenges remain limited. Local wisdom, such as the *wetu telu* values from Lombok, offers pertinent principles to enhance intercultural communication, including harmony, tolerance, and togetherness (Budiwanti, 2000). Wisdom values such as the spirit of tolerance in *wetu telu* can contribute to reducing stereotypes and cultural biases. In contrast, the value of togetherness can foster openness and collaboration among employees. However, few studies have assessed local values' efficacy in intercultural communication within modern work environments.

Nevertheless, integrating local wisdom can provide a more comprehensive and contextual approach to addressing the challenges of intercultural communication, particularly in the era of globalization that necessitates adaptation to cultural diversity. Consequently, a significant gap exists in the literature, specifically regarding the adaptation and integration of local wisdom into intercultural communication strategies in the work environment. This research addresses this gap by exploring the relevance of *Wetu telu* values in enhancing intercultural communication.

Case studies on local wisdom, such as research on Balinese values in the tourism industry, demonstrate that local values possess considerable potential to foster harmony in multicultural environments. Values such as togetherness, tolerance, and balance inherent in local wisdom can serve as a foundation for conflict resolution and the enhancement of intercultural collaboration. For instance, the Balinese value of togetherness has contributed to creating an inclusive and harmonious work environment in the tourism industry, where intercultural interactions occur frequently. However, these studies have been confined to local contexts and have not explored the adaptability of local values to global contexts, such as multinational corporations or international organizations. Indeed, local values such as *wetu telu* from Lombok, which emphasizes three-dimensional harmony (relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature), possess equal potential to cultivate harmony in multicultural teams across diverse industry sectors.

While local values such as *wetu telu* possess significant potential for fostering harmony in multicultural teams, their application in a global context remains limited. Most research on local wisdom continues to focus on localized contexts, such as the tourism industry or Indigenous communities. In contrast, its potential application in contemporary and global work environments has not been extensively explored. *Wetu telu* values, which emphasize harmony, tolerance, and balance, may serve as an innovative approach to addressing the challenges of conflict and intercultural communication in multinational corporations. This research aims to address this gap by examining the relevance of *wetu telu* values in promoting harmony within multicultural teams in a global context.

3. Theoretical Framework

Conflict Management Theory provides a pertinent framework for analyzing and managing conflict in multicultural teams (Ramirez Marin et al., 2019), specifically by identifying five conflict management styles: competitive, collaborative, compromising, avoidant, and accommodative. Within multicultural teams, conflicts frequently arise due to cultural differences, miscommunication, and goal incompatibility, necessitating adaptive and inclusive approaches (Desrayaud & Hurley, 2023; Shirish et al., 2023). *Wetu telu* wisdom values, such as harmony, tolerance, and togetherness, can shift conflict management styles from competitive (which tends to exacerbate tension) to collaborative (which promotes cooperation and joint problem-solving). The three-dimensional value of harmony (relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature) encourages employees to exhibit greater empathy and respect for differences. In contrast, the value of tolerance reduces defensiveness and increases receptiveness to discussion. By incorporating *wetu telu* values into conflict management practices, organizations can foster a more harmonious and productive work environment, wherein conflict is not avoided but managed constructively to achieve common objectives.

Intercultural Communication Theory proposed by (Ting-Toomey, 1999) emphasizes the significance of cultural understanding in reducing misunderstandings and enhancing communication effectiveness within multicultural teams. Key challenges in intercultural communication, such as stereotypes, cultural biases, and differences in communication styles (high-context vs. low-context), frequently serve as sources of conflict and tension in diverse work environments (Feitosa et al., 2022). *Wetu telu* wisdom values offer an innovative approach to address these challenges. By integrating *wetu telu* values into intercultural communication practices, organizations can foster a more inclusive and harmonious work environment, wherein cultural differences are transformed from barriers into strengths for achieving common objectives. This approach aligns with intercultural communication theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and enriches the perspective of intercultural communication by incorporating a holistic and contextual dimension of local wisdom.

Cultural Value Theory proposed by (Hofstede, 2009) elucidates how cultural dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism, influence behaviour and interactions in multicultural teams. In a global context, the predominant individualist culture in many multinational companies often engenders a competitive work dynamic and diminished concern for group interests, potentially exacerbating conflict and reducing collaboration. *Wetu telu* wisdom values present a solution to counterbalance the dominant individualist culture. Integrating *wetu telu* values into organizational culture can facilitate the creation of a more balanced and inclusive work environment, wherein individualist and collectivist cultures can complement each other in pursuit of common goals. This approach enhances the understanding of cultural dynamics by incorporating a holistic and adaptive perspective of local wisdom.

Based on the aforementioned background, the research questions were formulated as follows: How can *wetu telu* wisdom values be integrated into conflict management and intercultural communication in multicultural teams in the era of globalization? Specifically, how are conflicts in multicultural teams influenced by various factors, what values in *wetu telu* wisdom are relevant to resolving conflicts and improving intercultural communication, and how can *wetu telu* values be adapted and implemented in conflict management and intercultural communication practices in multicultural work environments? This study aims to elucidate and analyze the potential integration of *wetu telu* wisdom values in conflict management and intercultural communication to foster a harmonious and productive work environment in multicultural teams.

4. Method

This research employed a qualitative methodology with a case study approach, as both were deemed most appropriate to explore an in-depth understanding of *wetu telu* wisdom values and their application in multicultural team conflict management. The case study approach was selected due to its capacity to facilitate a holistic and detailed examination of conflict in multicultural teams. The qualitative method was chosen for its ability to elucidate the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of informants related to *wetu telu* values and intercultural conflict dynamics, which cannot be quantitatively measured (J. W. . Creswell. & Poth, 2017; J. W. Creswell, 2014). This case study was conducted in North Lombok, a region rich in *wetu telu* local wisdom values that remain extant and are implemented in daily life. North Lombok was selected due to its high cultural and religious diversity, presenting the potential for intercultural conflict in both quotidian and professional environments, thus allowing for an exploration of how local values can be integrated into modern conflict management practices. The informants in this study comprised cultural and religious leaders in North Lombok, who were selected based on specific criteria (purposive sampling). Individuals with a profound understanding of *wetu telu* values, their role in community life, and comprehension of the spiritual dimension of *wetu telu* values were chosen.

Data was collected through two primary techniques: in-depth interviews and participatory observation. Interviews were semi-structured, utilizing open-ended guiding questions that enabled informants to express their thoughts and experiences comprehensively. The participatory observation was executed by directly engaging in community or organizational activities and observing how *wetu telu* values are practiced in daily life and the work environment. Data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, including Data Transcription and Organization. Interview and observation data were transcribed and systematically organized; Coding: Data were coded based on emerging themes, such as the values of harmony, tolerance, togetherness, and balance; Pattern Identification: Patterns and relationships between themes were identified to understand how *wetu telu* values can be applied in conflict management; and Interpretation: Findings were interpreted in the context of conflict management theory, intercultural communication, and cultural values.

5. Results

5.1. Overcoming Conflict in Multicultural Teams

Conflicts in multicultural teams frequently arise due to differences in communication styles, norms, and work expectations. For instance, employees from collectivist cultures tend to prefer working in groups and prioritize team interests over personal interests, while employees from individualist cultures are more independent and focused on personal achievement (Hofstede et al., 2010). These differences can create tensions, particularly when diverse work styles are not effectively managed. Furthermore, varying cultural norms affect how individuals express opinions or provide feedback. In high-context cultures like Japan, communication tends to be indirect and nuanced, whereas in low-context cultures like the United States, communication is more direct and explicit (Hall, 1976). This discrepancy in communication styles often serves as a source of miscommunication and conflict in multicultural teams.

Ineffectively managed conflict can negatively impact productivity and cohesion within a team. According to (De Dreu & Weingart, 2014), unresolved conflict can decrease job satisfaction, reduce collaboration, and increase turnover intention. In multicultural teams, conflict triggered by cultural differences can deteriorate employee relationships and create an uncondusive work environment. For example, employees from collectivist cultures may feel disregarded or undervalued when coworkers from individualist cultures emphasize personal achievement. Conversely, employees from individualist cultures may feel constrained by strong group preferences in collectivist cultures. Therefore, it is imperative to identify and proactively manage these conflicts to prevent disruption of team dynamics.

Wetu telu wisdom values, such as harmony, tolerance, and balance, offer a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution in multicultural teams. Three-dimensional harmony (harmonious relationships with God, fellow

humans, and nature) can serve as a foundation for establishing an inclusive and respectful work environment (Budiwanti, 2000). For instance, the principle of tolerance can encourage employees to be more receptive to cultural differences and diverse work styles, while the concept of balance can facilitate the equilibrium between individual and group interests. Furthermore, a collaborative approach based on *wetu telu* values can mitigate tensions between collectivist and individualist cultures by creating opportunities for each team member to contribute according to their strengths. Organizations can foster more harmonious and productive multicultural teams by incorporating these values into conflict management practices.

This approach aligns with Conflict Management Theory, which posits that conflict can be managed through various strategies, such as collaboration, compromise, or avoidance. In multicultural teams, cultural differences frequently precipitate conflict due to variations in conflict management style preferences. Research indicates that conflict in multicultural teams often arises from disparities between collectivist and individualist cultures. *Wetu telu* values, such as togetherness and tolerance, can promote a collaborative approach to conflict resolution.

5.2. The Relevance of *Wetu telu* Values in Overcoming Organizational Conflicts

Wetu telu wisdom values, such as harmony and tolerance, significantly mitigate tension within multicultural teams. Harmony, as a fundamental principle of *wetu telu*, emphasizes the importance of establishing equilibrium in interpersonal relationships, including those within the professional environment (Budiwanti, 2000). In multicultural teams, the value of harmony encourages individuals to appreciate diversity and seek common ground rather than exacerbating conflicts. Concurrently, tolerance promotes accepting and respecting alternative perspectives, even when they diverge from one's own views. For instance, employees from collectivist and individualist cultures can develop an understanding of and adapt to each other's work methodologies, thereby reducing the potential for conflict. These values foster a more harmonious work environment and enhance mutual trust among employees.

The value of togetherness in *wetu telu* encourages employees to prioritize team interests over individual concerns. This principle aligns with collaborative conflict management theory, which emphasizes the importance of cooperative efforts to achieve mutually beneficial solutions. In multicultural teams, the value of togetherness can facilitate the transcendence of individual egos and promote more effective collaboration. For example, employees from individualist cultures can cultivate greater receptivity to colleagues' input, while employees from collectivist cultures may experience increased validation when the team acknowledges their contributions. Consequently, the value of togetherness mitigates conflict and strengthens team cohesion, ultimately supporting the attainment of organizational objectives.

The integration of *wetu telu* values in conflict management has a significant positive impact on achieving organizational goals. According to intercultural communication theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999), effective and harmonious communication in multicultural teams can increase productivity and innovation. *Wetu telu* values, such as harmony, tolerance, and togetherness, contribute to creating a work environment that supports open communication and collaboration. For instance, when employees perceive that they are valued and their opinions are considered, they are more likely to be motivated to contribute optimally. Furthermore, these values can also reduce turnover intention and increase employee retention, as employees from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to prefer harmonious and inclusive work environments. Thus, *wetu telu* values address conflict and support organizational sustainability and success.

(Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ting Toomey, Stella & Chung, 2012) Their theory emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding in reducing misunderstandings and improving collaboration in multicultural teams. It is pertinent that *wetu telu* values, such as tolerance and togetherness, assist employees in understanding and appreciating cultural differences, which enhances communication effectiveness and reduces conflict. Additionally, Cultural Adaptation Theory (Berry, 2013) elucidates how individuals and groups adapt to different cultures. This is relevant where *wetu telu* Values can be adopted by employees from diverse cultures, fostering a more harmonious and productive work environment and thereby improving intercultural communication to achieve organizational goals.

5.3. Adaptation of *Wetu Telu* Local Wisdom Values

Wetu telu values, such as three-dimensional harmony (harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature), offer a unique holistic approach to conflict management in multicultural teams. This three-dimensional harmony not only focuses on human relationships but also encompasses spiritual and environmental aspects, which are often neglected in conventional approaches (Budiwanti, 2000). In multicultural teams, this approach facilitates the creation of equilibrium between the interests of individuals, groups, and the work environment. For instance, harmony with fellow humans encourages employees to exhibit greater empathy and tolerance towards cultural differences. In contrast, harmony with nature emphasizes establishing a sustainable and conducive working environment for all parties. Consequently, *wetu telu* values provide a more comprehensive and profound perspective on managing conflict.

The values of balance and tolerance in *wetu telu* constitute essential foundations for fostering effective collaboration in multicultural teams. Balance emphasizes the significance of equilibrating personal and group interests, which aligns with collaborative conflict management theory. In practice, this value encourages employees to consider not only individual achievement but also contribution to the collective benefit of the team. Concurrently, tolerance underscores the importance of appreciating differences and embracing diversity as an asset rather than a source of conflict. For example, in a team comprising employees from diverse cultural backgrounds, tolerance can mitigate prejudice and enhance receptiveness to collaboration. Multicultural teams can cultivate more harmonious and productive work dynamics by integrating balance and tolerance.

Wetu telu values are relevant in the local context and can be adapted to address global and contemporary challenges in conflict management. According to cultural adaptation theory (Berry, 2013), local values can be integrated into global practices if adapted to the broader context. For instance, three-dimensional harmony can be adapted to create an inclusive work environment in multinational corporations, where employees from diverse countries collaborate. Furthermore, these values can serve as a solution to address the moral degradation and individualism increasingly prevalent in the modern era. By emphasizing the importance of togetherness, balance, and tolerance, *wetu telu* values can contribute to restoring work ethic and collaboration in multicultural teams. As such, these values are not only culturally relevant but possess significant global application potential. This context extends the cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede et al., 2010) that elucidates how cultural values influence individuals' perceptions and responses to conflict. Consequently, *wetu telu* values, such as balance and tolerance, can counterbalance dominant cultural values in multicultural teams, fostering a more harmonious working environment, particularly in managing conflict and enhancing intercultural communication.

Based on the research findings, conflicts in multicultural teams frequently arise due to differences in communication styles, norms, and work expectations, such as the preference for group work in collectivist cultures versus independence in individualist cultures. *Wetu telu* wisdom values, including harmony, tolerance, and togetherness, have demonstrated efficacy in reducing tensions by promoting openness to other cultural perspectives, increasing concern for team interests, and supporting the achievement of organizational goals. Moreover, adapting *wetu telu* values, encompassing three-dimensional harmony (harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature), balance, and tolerance, offers a holistic and inclusive approach to conflict management in multicultural teams. This approach addresses intercultural conflict and fosters a harmonious, collaborative, and sustainable work environment, which is relevant in both local and global contexts. The findings corroborate that integrating local wisdom values can serve as an innovative and effective solution in addressing complex challenges in the era of globalization.

6. Discussion

Conflict in multicultural team organizations often arises from differences in communication styles, norms, and work expectations. For example, the difference between collectivist and individualist cultures can create tension when group work preferences clash with individual achievement. These findings underscore the importance of understanding cultural dynamics in multicultural teams, especially in the context of globalization where intercultural interaction is intensifying. *Wetu telu* values, such as harmony and tolerance, can be a solution to

bridge these differences by creating an inclusive and respectful work environment. Poorly managed dynamics and conflicts have an impact on decreased productivity, team cohesion, and increased turnover intention, which shows the urgency to adopt an effective approach to conflict management. The values of *wetu telu*, especially the principles of balance and collaboration, offer a holistic framework for resolving conflicts. For example, the concept of ‘three-dimensional harmony’ (harmonious relationships with God, fellow human beings, and nature) can be applied to balance individual and group interests in multicultural teams. By integrating these values, organizations can reduce tensions between collectivist and individualist cultures, while promoting more effective collaboration. This finding is in line with Conflict Management Theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative strategies in resolving conflict. The values of *wetu telu*, such as togetherness and tolerance, support a collaborative approach that allows each team member to contribute according to their strengths. This not only helps to reduce intercultural miscommunication but also strengthens team cohesion. In the context of globalization, where multicultural teams are increasingly common, the adaptation of local values such as *wetu telu* can be an innovative solution to optimize intercultural communication and conflict management. Thus, the integration of local wisdom into modern management practices is not only relevant but also important for creating a harmonious and productive work environment.

The values of harmony, tolerance, and togetherness embraced by *wetu telu* not only help reduce intercultural tensions but also create a more inclusive and collaborative work environment. Harmony, as a core principle of *wetu telu*, encourages individuals to find common ground in differences, which is particularly relevant in the context of multicultural teams where cultural differences are often a source of conflict. For example, the value of tolerance allows team members to accept and appreciate different perspectives, reducing the potential for miscommunication and conflict. This is in line with intercultural communication theory which emphasises the importance of cultural understanding to enhance collaboration. The value of togetherness in *wetu telu* also has significant implications for conflict management. This principle encourages team members to put the interests of the group above personal interests, which is in line with the collaborative approach in conflict management theory. In multicultural teams, the value of togetherness can help reduce individual egos and facilitate more effective cooperation. For example, employees from individualistic cultures can learn to be more open to input from colleagues, while employees from collectivist cultures can feel more valued when their contributions are recognized by the team. Thus, the value of togetherness helps to reduce conflict while strengthening team cohesion, which ultimately supports the achievement of organizational goals. The integration of *wetu telu* values in conflict management also has a positive impact on organizational sustainability and success. According to cultural adaptation theory, the ability of individuals and groups to adapt to different cultures is key to creating a harmonious work environment. The values of harmony and tolerance can be adopted by employees from various cultural backgrounds, thus increasing the effectiveness of intercultural communication and reducing conflict. In addition, an inclusive and harmonious work environment can increase employee motivation, reduce turnover intention, and encourage innovation. Thus, the values of *wetu telu* are not only relevant as conflict resolution but also contribute to the achievement of organizational goals in an era of globalization that is full of cultural diversity and market competition.

Three-dimensional harmony—which includes harmonious relationships with God, fellow human beings, and nature—provides a distinctive framework for creating balance in multicultural teams. For example, harmony with fellow human beings encourages empathy and tolerance for cultural differences, while harmony with nature reminds us of the importance of creating a sustainable and conducive work environment. The approach helps to resolve interpersonal conflicts while paying attention to spiritual and environmental aspects, which are often neglected in conventional approaches. Thus, the values of *wetu telu* offer a more in-depth and comprehensive perspective on conflict management. The values of balance and tolerance in *wetu telu* are also an important foundation for effective collaboration in multicultural teams. Balance, which emphasizes the importance of balancing individual and group interests, is in line with collaborative conflict management theory. In practice, this value encourages employees to not only focus on personal achievement but also to contribute to the team's collective goals. Meanwhile, tolerance plays a key role in reducing prejudice and increasing acceptance of cultural diversity. For example, in a team with diverse cultural backgrounds, tolerance can help reduce tension and increase openness to cooperation. By integrating these values, multicultural teams can create a more harmonious and productive work dynamic. In addition, the findings also show that the *wetu telu* values are not only relevant in a

local context but can be adapted to address global challenges in conflict management. According to cultural adaptation theory, local values can be integrated into global practices if they are adapted to a broader context. For example, the concept of three-dimensional harmony can be adapted to create an inclusive and conducive work environment in multinational companies, where employees from different cultures can collaborate. In addition, *wetu telu* values such as togetherness, balance, and tolerance can be a solution to overcome the increasing moral degradation and individualism in the modern era. By emphasizing the importance of these values, *wetu telu* not only enriches the cultural dimension but also has significant global application potential in improving intercultural communication and conflict management.

7. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that conflicts in multicultural teams, which frequently arise due to differences in communication styles, norms, and work expectations, can be effectively addressed by integrating *wetu telu* local wisdom values, such as harmony, tolerance, and togetherness. These values mitigate intercultural tensions and foster openness, collaboration, and the achievement of organizational goals. *Wetu telu*'s holistic approach, encompassing three-dimensional harmony (harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and nature), balance, and tolerance, offers inclusive solutions that are pertinent in the context of globalization. The findings underscore the importance of exploring local wisdom as a source of innovative solutions to conflict management and intercultural communication challenges in the contemporary era. Although this research makes significant contributions, there are several limitations, such as being confined to one company or organization, necessitating cautious generalization of the findings to a broader context.

Adapting *wetu telu* values may require further adjustments in a substantially different organizational culture. Furthermore, this research primarily focuses on qualitative perspectives, necessitating complementary quantitative data to objectively measure the impact of integrating *wetu telu* values. The practical implications of this research are significant for multicultural companies and organizations. Firstly, *wetu telu* wisdom values can be integrated into training programs and human resource development policies of organizations or companies comprising multicultural teams to enhance intercultural communication and conflict management. Secondly, the *wetu telu* holistic approach can be the foundation for creating a more inclusive and harmonious work environment, subsequently increasing employee productivity and retention. Thirdly, the findings encourage companies to consider local wisdom as part of their organizational development strategy, particularly in the context of globalization. Finally, future research can continue exploring the adaptation of other local wisdom values in conflict management and intercultural communication, employing a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) to measure the impact of local values integration more comprehensively. Longitudinal studies can also be conducted to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of local wisdom-based approaches.

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Weaver Stories: Organizing and Communication Dynamics Among East Sumba Ikat Weavers

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Abstract

East Sumba ikat weaving represents a significant cultural heritage, embodying artistic excellence and deep-rooted social values. Despite a formal organizational structure, weavers engage in independent craftsmanship while establishing intricate work networks based on necessity and trust. This research explores the dynamics of communication and organizational processes within informal weaving groups, applying Karl Weick's organizing theory with a particular emphasis on enactment, selection, and retention. This research uses a qualitative, phenomenological approach that involves ten experienced ikat weavers with a minimum of five years of expertise. The findings reveal that these weaving groups emerge organically, shaped by geographic proximity, social relationships, and the complementary distribution of skills among artisans. Although no formal hierarchy governs their interactions, weavers develop highly adaptive mechanisms for collaboration, including work exchanges and specialized labor arrangements. From an organizing theory perspective, enactment manifests as weavers actively construct their work environment through habitual interactions and experiential learning. Selection is evident in their strategic choices regarding work practices, favoring establishments and trust-based collaborations. Retention, in turn, ensures the transmission of practical techniques and organizational patterns across generations, reinforcing continuity in traditional ikat production. This study underscores the role of informal organizing as a resilient and adaptive strategy within traditional craft communities, enabling them to navigate socioeconomic shifts while preserving cultural authenticity.

Keywords: East Sumba, Ikat Weaving, Organizational, Informal Weaving Group, Weavers

1. Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Problem

East Sumbanese ikat weaving is one of the rich and profound cultural heritages, representing the local community's identity because it is often used in various socio-cultural events of the East Sumbanese community. Each piece of ikat woven cloth has high artistic value and symbolizes stories and traditions passed down from generation to generation. Making this ikat weaving is complicated and requires special skills (Ndima, 2007;

Prijosusilo, 2017). The complexity of making ikat weaving includes using natural materials from the forest, whose availability depends on the season, and making patterns that must reflect the local community's philosophy and the weavers' different skills, creating a dependency between weavers. Due to the various needs of weavers, weavers generally work individually in their respective homes. However, to complete a long and complex production process, a weaver often needs help from other weavers. Therefore, cooperation only occurs when they need the expertise of other weavers. This phenomenon creates a network of weavers' skills and gives rise to communication between fellow weavers, both those related to family and close friends who are already trusted, and this is in line with the findings of Dias et al., who stated that weaving activities can provide social support to families and communities (Dias et al., 2020). East Sumba ikat weaving artisans tend not to recognize the concept of formal groups in their crafts, although, in practice, they always rely on certain people for each stage of cloth making.

The increasingly rapid changes of the times and the demands of the global market have made many weavers face a dilemma between maintaining tradition and adapting to new, more efficient methods (Asinyo et al., 2021; Patichol et al., 2014). This phenomenon is evident in the findings presented by Scrase, who states that in Indonesia, modernization in the traditional textile industry has created unemployment for more than 400,000 traditional weavers, especially in the dyeing section (Scrase, 2003). The decreasing number of weavers threatens the inheritance of ikat weaving (Buckley, 2016). By maintaining existing informal communication networks, weavers keep their skills and ensure the survival of the art of ikat weaving (Chantamool et al., 2023). Through communication and cooperation, they can maintain the quality and relevance of East Sumba ikat weaving. Organization is the key to keeping weavers alive even though no official structure or rules bind them to work together (Saleh, 2016). Therefore, this article will use the lens of Karl Weick's organizing theory to dissect the communication activities implemented by the weavers so that they can survive working on ikat weaving in informal groups. Organizing allows individuals to share the same beliefs, values, and assumptions, thus encouraging them to build a shared understanding that mutually reinforces their actions and the actions of others (Weick, 1995). Three concepts of organizing theory are used to discuss field findings: enactment, selection, and retention. Enactment occurs when individuals and groups react to the environment and create their environment through their actions and interactions. Selection occurs when, after the environment is "created" through enactment, the group must interpret and give meaning to the information that appears. This process involves filtering information to determine which is relevant and which is not. Retention occurs after a pattern of interpretation is considered valuable; the group will store it in procedures, rules, or norms that can be used in the future (Weick, 1979, 1995, 2009).

2. Method

This type of qualitative research uses the phenomenological method. Phenomenology reveals the conscious experience of communication actors in a phenomenon (Manen, 1990; Moran, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Thus, this study highlights the specificity and identifies a phenomenon individuals feel in a situation. Based on this explanation, the informants in this study are ikat weaving craftsmen who are directly involved in making ikat weaving. The selection of informants was carried out purposively with the criteria of ikat weaving artisans with a minimum work period of five years, with the hope that a network of cooperation between weavers has been formed so that they can tell their experiences in detail when relating to the ikat weaving group. The weavers in this study numbered 10 people spread across the ikat weaving center of East Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Furthermore, the identity of the informants in the research results is stated with Informant 1 (I-1) to Informant 10 (I-10). This research is limited to the experience of weavers in making ikat weaving at the main stages of making East Sumba ikat weaving, starting from the thread arrangement and continuing until it is ready to be marketed. These stages are thread arrangement, motif making, coloring, weaving, and locking the thread.

3. Results

Based on field findings, researchers found that the ikat weaving group can be studied from several elements. These elements are the form of the group, the role of members, and the form of group cooperation. East Sumba ikat weaving reflects the beauty of culture and the socioeconomic dynamics of its weavers. This group of

weavers was formed informally without a clear organizational structure. They work independently in their homes and collaborate based on needs and geographical proximity. No leaders or formal rules exist, but their ties are formed through shared interests in completing ikat weaving. In a group, the role of weavers is divided into owners of ikat woven fabrics and supporting weavers. The fabric owner has the initiative and control over the production process, while the supporting weavers have the unique skills needed for specific jobs. They cooperate by exchanging jobs or hiring experts based on trust and social relations. With this mechanism, the network of weavers remains alive and growing, reflecting the dependency and flexibility in making East Sumba ikat weaving. An explanation of these three things will be described in more detail in the sub-titles below:

3.1 Group Form

Any institution does not organize ikat weaving artisans in East Sumba, but is naturally connected between one craftsman and another because they need cooperation to complete the work. Each weaver has expertise, so they must cooperate with other weavers with different expertise to produce one piece of woven cloth. These weavers do not have a clear membership structure like groups; for example, there is a leader or group member. There is also a common goal, but the built interactions usually occur repeatedly, so informal relationships are formed between weavers. In addition, these weavers who are connected are among others because they already know each other and also because of the proximity of the location. Based on this description, the researcher found that the form of the ikat weaving group is informal. For example, I-2 and I-5 said they work alone at home and rely only on other family members, including their children. When their children come home from school, they can help with light work, such as rolling the thread and arranging the woven cloth. No one regulates them, so they become leaders for themselves in completing the ikat weaving. In contrast to the informants above, I-4 said that apart from his family, he also usually collaborates with other weavers he trusts.

The ikat weavers work on their weaving independently in their respective homes. If there is a particular stage that they do not master, then they look for other weavers to complete the stage. In interacting with fellow weavers, they have the same interest: completing their ikat weaving. However, they do not have a regular structure, do not have a common goal, do not have an official bond as a group, and are formed only based on proximity. Thus, only interests unite them. This finding was conveyed by Weaver I-1, among others, that the stages of work that he mastered, he did first independently and then gave them to other weavers to complete the stages that he did not master. Likewise, I-3 and I-7, who mastered almost all stages, said that they did work independently at home but sometimes accepted work from other weavers who did not have the same expertise. I-9 said that she prioritized quality, so for the parts that she did not master, he was willing to be done by other weavers whose work reputation was trusted.

3.2 Member Roles

The uniqueness of ikat weaving is that it has a long chain of work involving many weavers, but the process of each stage is done independently. This chain of work means a dependency between ikat weaving artisans. Another weaver can fill the shortcomings of one weaver. Each weaver eventually becomes an expert only at certain stages. If these weavers' expertise is combined, then ikat weaving can be completed. There are two findings about the role of individuals in the group, namely as owners of ikat woven cloth and supporting weavers.

In the context of the group, the owners of the ikat woven cloth can be said to be the leaders. As leaders, the initiative to make ikat weaving comes from them, so they have the power and capacity to determine who they work with. Although talking about ikat weaving is related to specific knowledge and expertise in making ikat weaving, the power held by the owner of the cloth is not necessarily higher than that of other weavers involved in making ikat weaving. Specific skills are scarce, so the fabric owner has few choices when choosing another weaver to complete his ikat weaving. On the contrary, because of interdependence, the owner of the cloth who has more knowledge can even become a member of other cloth owners who do not have the same cognition. Field findings show that as the owner of the ikat woven cloth, a weaver is the primary decision maker and manager of the ikat weaving process. I-1, I-2, and I-6 revealed that the initiative to make ikat weaving started

them, but if there were obstacles in making the weaving, they could stop working without waiting for their own decision. The role of the decision maker during this process is an advantage compared to being an employee or working for someone else. Although they rely on others to complete certain stages of weaving, it is flexible. If they have money, they can immediately use the labor of other weavers, but if there are financial constraints, they can take a break from work. I-4 and I-10 also said the same thing applies if they lack raw materials, especially in making dyes, or experience physical constraints due to the large amount of work at one time.

Among the weavers who are the owners of the cloth, there are also weavers whose role is to complement the expertise or support weavers for the cloth owners. These weavers work on ikat weaving with certain expertise specifications so that the cloth owners will always use them to finish their ikat woven cloth. Some of these weavers have more than one knowledge; some live in specific locations and have mastered certain knowledge and expertise in making ikat weaving for generations. Their position in making ikat weaving is that of co-workers and expert weavers at certain stages that the owners of the woven cloth do not master. Together with these supporting weavers, the group network expands beyond just the family circle. I-8, an expert in the weaving section, and I-10, an expert in the thread end locking section, said they often become supporting weavers for other weavers because of their expertise. Weavers from various ikat weaving center areas usually use their services in the weaving and thread end locking sections. A similar thing was also confirmed by I-9, who shared her experience of often sending semi-finished woven cloth to other weavers outside her village for the coloring stage, which she had not mastered. These stories show that supporting weavers have an essential position in the chain of ikat weaving completion as a response to the work patterns established so far because no single weaver has mastered the entire ikat weaving process from start to finish.

3.3 Forms of Group Cooperation

The long and complex chain of ikat weaving seems to be the basis for the work of ikat weaving, which cannot be done by one weaver alone. One weaver with different knowledge and expertise will depend on other weavers with different knowledge and expertise in making a piece of ikat weaving. The connection between weavers is naturally built based on needs and socioeconomic relations. The cooperation in the ikat weaving group can be explained by exchanging work and hiring supporting weavers.

Exchanging jobs and social relations between weavers make expertise one of the binding forces of cooperation between them. This teamwork is evident where another weaver can overcome expertise one does not possess by exchanging jobs. This job barter is sometimes unbalanced from an economic perspective because the services offered between one weaver and another are not balanced. However, the lack of expertise and the fact that not everyone can be made a partner to exchange jobs makes weavers ignore this imbalance and prioritize the cooperative relationship that has been running so far. These weavers focus more on completing ikat woven fabrics based on mutual agreement between them. For example, I-2 shared her experience of exchanging jobs with other weavers. She worked on the coloring stage for another weaver who could not do the stage, but in return, the weaver would weave I-2's ikat woven fabric. Likewise, with the experience of I-3 and I-7, who made pattern ties on the woven fabrics of other weavers, they could not do it at the weaving stage; the other weaver would complete it. The weavers said this job exchange option benefited them, especially those with financial limitations. The option of working by relying on complementary energy and expertise like this is seen as a solution that benefits all parties. The weavers emphasized that mutual agreement and financial constraints were the main reasons they carried out job exchanges between ikat weaving artisans with different skills.

Another option for completing ikat weaving besides exchanging jobs is to hire people with different skills. The weavers explained that they hire the same people even with the rental system. Trust in the weavers' abilities is the reason for hiring similar weavers, resulting in a chain of groups. There are several main reasons for this rental, namely because of the high demand for ikat weaving, the relationship between weavers who are not too close, the financial ability, there is a barter system, and it depends on the work results of specific weavers. I-8 revealed that she has a regular weaver who has used her services since becoming a weaver. Likewise, I-6 and I-7 met during the interview and worked on ikat weaving and belonging to other weavers. I-4 also said that his expertise in the coloring stage, which is indeed difficult in East Sumba ikat weaving, often allows him to get

much coloring work from other weavers. However, because of the long-standing relationship, he told the weavers who frequently use his services to prepare the raw materials that he only provides his human resources and expertise to help them. He says this is much cheaper and helps fellow weavers in his cooperation network.

Based on the answers of these informants, it is seen that the ikat weaving artisans, although informally networked with different knowledge capacities, believe that this method is quite adaptive amidst their various limitations as ikat weaving craftsmen who are the spearhead of the guardians of East Sumba culture. A detailed description of the form of the group, the role of members, and the form of member cooperation is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Ikat Weaving Group

Ikat Weaving Group	Findings	
a. Form a Group	Informal Group	a). Does not have a group structure
		b). Not having a common goal
		c). There is no official bond between weavers
		d). Have common interests
		e). Formed based on closeness
b.Role of Members	1). Owner of Ikat Woven Fabric	a). Decision makers in the manufacture of ikat weaving
		b). Management of the ikat weaving process
	2). Supporting Weavers	a). Co-workers
		b). Expert weavers
c.Form of Group Cooperation	1). Exchange Jobs	a). Mutual agreement
		b). Financial limitations
	2). Hire Supporting Craftsmen	a). High demand
		b). The relationship is not too close
		c). Have Capital
		d). Focus on specific weavers

Source: Researchers Processing, 2025

4. Discussion

The weaving craftsman groups in East Sumba are informally formed and driven primarily by work-related needs and strong social relationships among their members. Formal structures do not regulate these working relationships but develop organically through social networks built on trust, geographic proximity, and family ties (Dias et al., 2020; Siriphon, 2018). The absence of hierarchical organization allows artisans to collaborate flexibly, relying on interdependence and shared expertise (Weick, 2009). This informal system encourages efficiency in producing ikat weaving, as artisans mutually exchange labor and knowledge. As a result, their interconnectedness supports the production of ikat textiles and the preservation of traditional crafts and cultural heritage (Etten, 2010).

Group dynamics and communication are fundamental to understanding how individuals interact in various social and cultural contexts. In the context of ikat weaving artisans in East Sumba, groups form naturally without formal structures with no formal leaders or fixed membership. The ikat weaving craftsman groups in East Sumba show a unique work pattern, where their interactions are informal and based on needs. These craftsmen tend to work independently in their homes, but at certain stages in the production process, they require the expertise of other artisans. These working relationships are built on practical needs and trust that develops over time. Communication in ikat weaving groups is straightforward and focused on the practical needs of getting the job done. There is no formal communication protocol, and weavers interact as needed. Meanwhile, communication in culturally diverse work groups involves more complex adjustments (Keyton, 2006).

However, knowledge management occurs orally and through direct observation in the context of ikat weaving artisans. Knowledge is transferred through direct practice and social interaction. This phenomenon shows that

knowledge management relies more on interpersonal relationships than formal systems in traditional societies. Knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through active participation in the ikat weaving production process, not through formal training or written documentation. In addition, culture plays a significant role in shaping traditional group dynamics. In ikat weaving groups, local cultural values such as cooperation and community solidarity are the foundations for collaborative work patterns. Kinship relationships and geographical proximity also contribute to maintaining the stability of this work network, which is one of the findings in the research on ikat weaving groups.

This review of the ikat weaving group is also relevant to Weick's view, which reveals how individuals and groups create meaning from everyday experiences to manage uncertainty (Weick, 2009). In the ikat weaving group, this process is seen in how the weavers understand their roles, identify their respective expertise, and build informal networks based on practical needs. Although they do not have a formal organizational structure, sensemaking occurs naturally through repeated interactions, observations, and shared reflections. This phenomenon illustrates that in an uncertain and limited situation, the ikat weaving artisans can still manage the existing situation so that the making of ikat weaving can continue. This situation aligns with the concept of organizing, where uncertain or problematic conditions are responded to be understood and lived with appropriate actions (Robson, 2021; Weick, 1995). In this case, three concepts in the theory of organizing, namely enactment, selection, and retention (Weick, 1979, 1995, 2009), occur among ikat weaving artisans as an effort to preserve the ikat weaving tradition.

The implementation that occurs is shown; the weavers create their work environment through daily actions, such as choosing weaving techniques, organizing production flows, and interacting with fellow weavers they know. This work method is considered the most realistic if they want to continue producing ikat weaving. Relying on new relationships, not from kinship networks, will create increasingly endless uncertainty. Furthermore, selection refers to how weavers determine which practices are practical and worth maintaining. In the context of East Sumba ikat weaving artisans, relying on family ties and trusted people will be more effective because these relationships also have implications for other social moments outside of making ikat weaving. Furthermore, retention among ikat weaving artisans, namely knowledge and practices considered successful, such as job exchanges and rental systems as solutions to fill stages that a weaver does not master, will be integrated into the daily routine when making ikat weaving. Weavers tend to maintain work patterns that are proven efficient and follow their needs.

Based on the concept of enactment, the group environment is not objective but rather the result of social construction based on actions taken by the weavers. The results of this construction, through selection and retention, are then implemented as a reality accepted by the East Sumba ikat weaving artisans. They even believe that their predecessors have implemented similar patterns that have proven to make ikat weaving survive until now. This process is based on experience and informal evaluation that occurs repeatedly and will continue to be passed down to the next generation.

These findings show that the process of organizing ikat weaving work at each stage indirectly reflects the weavers' experience based on the enactment, selection, and retention processes that have taken place and have been practiced repeatedly among East Sumba ikat weaving artisans.

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Exploring the Impact of Job Demands and Job Resources on Job Satisfaction Among Early Career Academics at MSU-IIT: The Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

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Abstract

Faculty job satisfaction is a critical factor influencing the stability and quality of higher education institutions (HEIs). This study examines the impact of job demands (work overload) and job resources (autonomy and social support) on job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECAs) at Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model. The research also investigates the mediating role of emotional exhaustion to work overload job satisfaction. A structured survey was conducted with 110 ECAs, and data analysis was performed using correlation and mediation analysis. The findings indicate that work overload significantly increases emotional exhaustion, yet its direct impact on job satisfaction is not statistically significant. Similarly, autonomy does not show a significant relationship with job satisfaction, which contrasts with previous studies suggesting a positive correlation. This deviation may be attributed to cultural factors unique to the Philippines, where collectivism and strong social networks may moderate the influence of autonomy on job satisfaction. Unlike Western contexts where individual autonomy is highly valued, Filipino professionals often prioritize interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and community support in the workplace. This cultural nuance is further reinforced by the significant positive relationship observed between social support and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of workplace camaraderie and collegial networks in mitigating job-related stress. Moreover, emotional exhaustion does not mediate the relationship between work overload and job satisfaction, suggesting that Filipino ECAs may possess resilience or alternative coping mechanisms rooted in cultural values such as Bayanihan (collective support and solidarity). These findings contribute to the JD-R literature by offering context-specific insights and provide practical implications for HEIs in designing faculty support mechanisms tailored to cultural dynamics. Future research should further explore how cultural values shape the perception of job demands and resources and their long-term effects on faculty well-being and retention.

Keywords: Job Demands-Resources Model, Job Satisfaction, Work Overload, Autonomy, Social Support, Emotional Exhaustion, Faculty Retention, Philippine Work Culture, Collectivism

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines, the role of faculty members is instrumental in achieving academic excellence and quality learning. Faculty satisfaction and retention are crucial as these directly impact not only the educational experience but also the stability and growth of higher education institutions (HEIs). Among faculty members, Early Career Academics (ECAs) or those with under ten years of tenure represent a unique and pivotal segment of the workforce. Often, they face a blend of enthusiasm and challenges as they adjust to academic roles, balancing teaching, research, and service expectations within resource-limited environments. Understanding the factors affecting job satisfaction among this group is essential in sustaining a robust academic workforce, particularly within HEIs in regions like Mindanao, which aspires to be a hub for educational excellence.

From a management perspective, investigating job satisfaction and turnover intention within this cohort provides actionable insights into workforce stability and institutional capacity for talent development. The data derived from this study could guide HEI leaders in developing supportive policies, refining organizational practices, and implementing effective retention strategies tailored to meet the needs of early-career faculty members. Furthermore, identifying the underlying factors that shape job satisfaction can reveal areas for improvement in the academic work environment, thereby enhancing organizational commitment and overall faculty well-being.

This research is particularly relevant for the Philippine educational landscape, as HEIs in Mindanao and beyond are striving to align with global educational standards. Addressing these challenges through a localized study not only supports institutional resilience but also contributes to the broader goal of educational reform, enhancing the quality of education delivered to students, and fostering a conducive environment for faculty to thrive in their roles. By highlighting these elements, this study underscores the need for strategic HR practices in education management, aiming to build a sustainable and motivated academic community for the future.

The implications of this study extend beyond academic institutions. In a broader business context, organizations across sectors grapple with challenges related to job satisfaction and performance among ECAs relevant to business leaders. By understanding how to effectively balance job demands and resources, business managers can better design roles and work environments that foster job satisfaction and lower turnover. This study, therefore, contributes insights not only to the field of education but also to the wider discipline of human resource management, with practical applications in talent retention and employee engagement.

To address these factors comprehensively, this research applies the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model, a theoretical framework widely used to analyze how work environment characteristics influence job satisfaction. The JD-R model examines the balance between job demands, such as workload, and job resources, such as autonomy and social support. In the context of ECAs at MSU-IIT, applying the JD-R model allows for an in-depth analysis of how different factors—both supportive and challenging—affect their job satisfaction and likelihood to remain within the institution. By exploring these dynamics, this study provides actionable insights for HEI management in Mindanao, offering a foundation for strategic HR policies that enhance job satisfaction and foster long-term faculty engagement, contributing to the overall mission of delivering quality education to students. To address these factors comprehensively, this research applies the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model, a theoretical framework widely used to analyze how work environment characteristics influence job satisfaction. The JD-R model examines the balance between job demands, such as workload, and job resources, such as autonomy and social support. In the context of ECAs at MSU-IIT, applying the JD-R model allows for an in-depth analysis of how different factors—both supportive and challenging—affect job satisfaction. By exploring these dynamics, this study provides actionable insights for HEI management in Mindanao, offering a foundation for strategic HR policies that enhance job satisfaction and foster long-term faculty engagement, contributing to the overall mission of delivering quality education to students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, higher education institutions (HEIs) have recognized the critical role of faculty job satisfaction in ensuring educational quality and stability. Despite the vital role of early-career academics, limited research has explored the factors influencing job satisfaction, particularly within HEIs in Mindanao, such as MSU-IIT. A lack of understanding of these factors can lead to ineffective management practices, high turnover rates, and ultimately compromise the quality of education offered to students. This study aims to investigate the factors affecting job satisfaction among early-career faculty at MSU-IIT, using the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model to gain insight into both job demands and job resources that influence job satisfaction.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between job demand (work overload) and emotional exhaustion among ECA from MSU-IIT?
2. What is the relationship between job demands (work overload) to job satisfaction of ECA from MSU-IIT?
3. What is the relationship between job resources (autonomy and social support) to job satisfaction of ECA from MSU-IIT?
4. Does emotional exhaustion mediate the role between job demand (work overload) to job satisfaction?

1.3 Review of Related Literature

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model serves as a foundational framework for understanding the dynamics of job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECAs). This model posits that job demands—such as workload and role complexity can lead to strain and diminished job satisfaction, whereas job resources like autonomy and social support enhance engagement and well-being (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Recent studies have examined the interplay between job demands and emotional exhaustion, demonstrating that excessive workload significantly contributes to burnout among academics (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). A study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) found that increased workload was directly associated with emotional exhaustion in university faculty, reinforcing the concern that persistent job demands negatively impact psychological well-being. Given that emotional exhaustion is a key determinant of job dissatisfaction (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), understanding its role as a mediator is critical in academic work environments.

The relationship between job demands and job satisfaction has yielded mixed findings. While some studies suggest that high job demands directly reduce job satisfaction (Zacher et al., 2019), others indicate that this relationship is often indirect, mediated by burnout or exhaustion (Han et al., 2020). This study aims to clarify this dynamic in the context of ECAs at MSU-IIT, given the unique challenges they face.

Job resources, including autonomy and social support, are widely recognized as essential predictors of job satisfaction. Autonomy enables employees to exercise control over their work, promoting intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, some research suggests that autonomy alone may not significantly predict satisfaction if other stressors are overwhelming (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019). In contrast, social support has been consistently linked to higher job satisfaction, as it provides emotional and professional reinforcement (Nguyen & Connelly, 2021). Studies indicate that supportive work environments buffer the adverse effects of job demands, making social support a critical factor in mitigating workplace stress (Torp et al., 2021).

Emotional exhaustion has been explored as a potential mediator between job demands and job satisfaction. Research suggests that employees experiencing high job demands are more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion, leading to reduced job satisfaction (Huang et al., 2022). However, some findings indicate that this mediation effect may not always hold, depending on contextual factors such as institutional support and coping mechanisms (González-Romá et al., 2019). This study will further investigate whether emotional exhaustion plays a mediating role in the relationship between work overload and job satisfaction among ECAs.

By integrating these insights, this research contributes to the existing literature by examining the specific conditions under which job demands and resources influence job satisfaction. The findings will provide valuable implications for higher education institutions, particularly in developing strategies to enhance faculty well-being and retention.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, which explains how job demands and job resources influence employee well-being, performance, and job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) illustrates the relationships between work overload (a job demand), emotional exhaustion (a consequence of work overload), and job satisfaction, while also considering autonomy and social support as job resources that may impact job satisfaction.

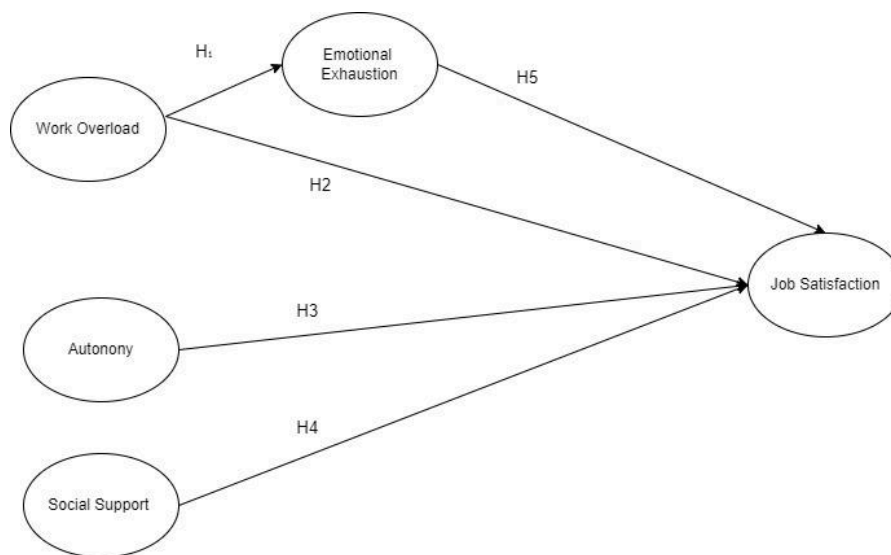


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Work Overload as a Job Demand

In the JD-R model, job demands refer to aspects of a job that require sustained effort and can lead to strain and exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). Work overload, as depicted in the framework, represents a key job demand that may negatively impact employees by increasing stress levels and reducing well-being. When employees face excessive workloads, they may struggle to manage their tasks efficiently, leading to emotional exhaustion (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Emotional Exhaustion as a Mediating Factor

Emotional exhaustion is considered a central component of burnout, particularly in high-demand work environments (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This framework suggests that work overload contributes to emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, negatively affects job satisfaction. Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion are likely to feel drained, disengaged, and dissatisfied with their work, leading to decreased motivation and performance (Bakker et al., 2005).

Autonomy and Social Support as Job Resources

The JD-R model also highlights job resources, which can buffer the negative effects of job demands. Autonomy refers to the degree of control employees have over their work tasks and decisions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Higher

autonomy has been linked to greater job satisfaction, as it enables employees to work more efficiently and maintain a sense of ownership over their roles (Saragih, 2011).

Similarly, social support from colleagues and supervisors serves as an essential job resource, helping employees cope with stress and maintain well-being (House, 1981). Supportive work environments foster positive employee experiences, reducing the impact of work overload and emotional exhaustion on job satisfaction (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

This conceptual framework highlights the dual influence of job demands and job resources on job satisfaction. It proposes that work overload increases emotional exhaustion, which subsequently lowers job satisfaction. However, autonomy and social support act as protective factors that can enhance job satisfaction despite the presence of job demands. Understanding these relationships provides valuable insights into how organizations can balance workload management and resource allocation to improve employee well-being and job satisfaction.

Based on the conceptual framework and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between work overload and emotional exhaustion among ECA from MSU-IIT.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between work overload as a job demand and job satisfaction among ECA from MSU-IIT.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between autonomy as a job resource and job satisfaction among ECA from MSU-IIT.

H₄: There is a significant relationship between social support as a job resource and job satisfaction among ECA from MSU-IIT.

H₅: Emotional exhaustion significantly mediates the relationship between work overload as a job demand and job satisfaction among ECA from MSU-IIT.

2. Method

This chapter presents the different methods and techniques that were utilized in this research to answer all questions. Specifically, this section describes the study's design, subject, scope and setting, research instruments, data collection techniques, methods of analysis, and ethical considerations. This also describes the appropriateness of the methods to be used in this study.

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a confirmatory research design to empirically test hypothesized relationships derived from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Specifically, the research examines how job demands (i.e., work overload) and job resources (i.e., autonomy and social support) affect job satisfaction among early-career academics. The model also incorporates serial mediation, where emotional exhaustion transmits the effects of the exogenous variables on job satisfaction.

2.2 Subject Scope and Setting of the Study

The study is conducted in Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT). MSU-IIT is an academic institution dedicated to academic excellence with a commitment to the holistic development of the individual and society. The university is composed of 528 faculty members committed to providing quality education to its diverse students from Mindanao and different parts of the country. MSU-IIT's impact has always been toward global competitiveness, which made it a world-renowned institution for higher learning. Additionally, MSU-IIT is one of the top-performing schools in the Philippines and currently made it into a world-renowned institution for higher learning, the institute has garnered a plethora of awards and titles under its belts such as Center of Excellence and Center of Development for different programs (MSU-IIT Website, 2024).

as well as recognitions in the national and international level. With this, it was selected as the research locale because it is the largest public institution in Iligan City with a significant number of faculty, additionally, its faculty and staff are accomplished experts and leaders in their fields and professions.

The study focuses on early-career academics (ECAs) at Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) in the Philippines. These individuals are uniquely positioned to provide insights into their work particularly to their job satisfaction. A convenience sampling approach was used to gather responses from the respondents coming from different departments and colleges in the university. The researcher collected 110 responses from the faculty members of each department in MSU-IIT.

2.3 Research Instruments

A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The instrument was divided into three (3) parts. The first part briefly introduces the researcher, the topic, and the purpose of the study. It also provides guidelines on how the respondents will go about the questionnaire and the ethical considerations in the conduct of the study. The second part contains items about the respondents' socio-demographic information. The third and last part contains items for every dependent, independent, and mediating variable that will be measured in a total of 47 items. The instrument consists of both a five-point and six-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire is adapted from different studies that have established credible questions that validate responses from respondents. The employee job satisfaction is measured by an 11-item "Teacher's Job Satisfaction" (Xiao, 2019). As for job demands, work overload is measured by a "Work Overload Scale" of 6 items (Viac & Fraser, 2020), while emotional exhaustion as the mediating variable with an 8-item Emotional Exhaustion Scale" from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, Jackson, Leiter Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1986). Moreover, the job resources are measured through the "PISA 2021 Teacher Questionnaire" with 7 items for autonomy and 10 items for social support (Viac & Fraser, 2020).

2.4 Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered from faculty members at MSU-IIT who met the criteria for Early Career Academics (ECA). A structured questionnaire was used to assess job demands (work overload), job resources (autonomy social support), and their relationship to emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction.

To facilitate data collection, the researcher submitted a Letter of Intent to the University Chancellor through the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (OVCAA), requesting permission to conduct the study and obtain a list of ECAs from each college. In response, the OVCAA advised the researcher to submit separate letters of request to the Dean's offices of the seven (7) colleges within MSU-IIT. Following this, the researcher personally visited each Dean's office and submitted formal requests for the list of qualified ECAs within their respective departments. Upon approval, the researcher was permitted to visit the faculty department offices to obtain the names of eligible ECA faculty members. However, the lists provided by administrative assistants were considered rough estimates rather than official records.

A census survey was then conducted across all faculty departments of MSU-IIT. Printed survey questionnaires were distributed and collected over a data collection period from December 2024 to January 2025. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 110 completed responses were collected. Some ECA faculty members were on study leave and did not respond to email invitations, while others declined to participate. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. Faculty members were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study, and no one was coerced into answering the questionnaire.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study used correlation specifically Pearson correlation and the normality assumption is satisfied by the data to examine the influence of job demands and job resource on job satisfaction. The same analysis will also be used to investigate the relationships between job demands and job resources. Hinai and Bajracharya, 2014 used correlation analysis to investigate the variables that influence higher education academic employees' job satisfaction in the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, the proponents of the JD-R model namely, Bakker, Demerouti, alongside Schaufeli (2003), used correlation and discovered a negative correlation between low job satisfaction and high job demands, including work overload. And lastly, the study will utilize mediation analysis using the free statistical software R.

In conducting research, it is essential to uphold ethical standards that ensure fair treatment, respect, and protection for all participants. A primary ethical concern in this study is the possibility of respondent discrimination, whether intentional or inadvertent, during data collection, analysis, and reporting. Discrimination can occur if certain groups of respondents are marginalized, underrepresented, or unfairly targeted based on characteristics such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, or other identifiers. This study actively seeks to prevent discrimination by implementing inclusive practices throughout the research process. For instance, the sample selection process is designed to promote diversity and ensure equal opportunity for participation. By using random sampling techniques or proportional representation, the research strives to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives that accurately reflect the population under study.

To further safeguard against bias, questions have been carefully constructed to avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory or biased. Sensitive language is used when discussing potentially controversial topics, and the research team has received training in cultural competence to approach participants with respect and awareness of diverse backgrounds. Respondents are also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, allowing them full control over their participation.

In data analysis, measures are taken to avoid biased interpretations or the reinforcement of stereotypes. Statistical methods are applied uniformly to ensure that findings are based solely on data, minimizing the risk of subjective influence that could unfairly categorize or misrepresent certain groups. Lastly, results are presented in a way that upholds the dignity and integrity of all respondents, with language that is neutral, respectful, and free from discriminatory connotations. By establishing these ethical standards, this study aims to ensure that all respondents are treated equitably and with respect, minimizing the risk of discrimination and contributing to the validity and reliability of the research findings.

2.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The researcher ensured the measures will be used are strong and precisely represent the theoretical concepts it intends to represent. A reliable measurement model ensures that the indicators consistently measure the underlying constructs, while a valid model confirms that the constructs are indeed capturing the intended aspects of the phenomena under investigation. Therefore, the data instrument underwent a reliability test using Cronbach alpha and a thorough assessment was done for each construct. Additionally, both discriminant and convergent validity were performed to the instrument and successfully met the criteria.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure research integrity, credibility, and the protection of respondents' rights and well-being. Ethical approval was obtained from MSU-IIT, and the research instrument was reviewed by the College of Economics, Business, and Accountancy (CEBA) - College Research Ethics Committee. Upon approval, an Ethics Clearance Certificate was issued, granting permission to distribute the questionnaire to the target respondents. Informed consent was provided to all participants, ensuring they had a clear understanding of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. They were assured that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained to protect respondents' personal information and responses. Additionally, transparency in reporting findings was ensured, with results presented

accurately and without fabrication or misrepresentation. By adhering to these ethical principles, the study upholds its validity, credibility, and reliability while safeguarding the welfare of its respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings with a focused discussion that addresses the study's research questions. It presents the structural model results, including direct and mediating effects, along with a comparison of the predictive performance of the PLS-SEM model against a naïve linear regression model. The ensuing discussion interprets these findings in the context of existing literature, offering insights into the interplay of work overload, emotional exhaustion, autonomy, social support, and job satisfaction among early-career academics.

Table 2A displays the direct effects obtained from the bootstrapping procedure. For each relationship, we report the original path coefficient, the bootstrap mean, the bootstrap standard deviation, the t-statistic, and the 95% confidence interval. Significant effects are identified when the confidence interval does not include zero.

Table 1: Structural Paths (Direct Effects) and Their Significance

Relationship	Original Est.	Bootstrap Mean	Bootstrap SD	T Stat.	2.5% CI	97.5% CI	Remark
Work Overload → Emotional Exhaustion	0.6215	0.6220	0.0635	9.7805	0.4939	0.7358	Significant
Social Support → Job Satisfaction	0.6979	0.6823	0.1549	4.5050	0.5166	0.8404	Significant
Autonomy → Job Satisfaction	0.2805	0.2231	0.2247	1.2488	-0.3309	0.4982	Not Significant
Emotional Exhaustion → Job Satisfaction	-0.0892	-0.0823	0.1659	-0.5377	-0.3625	0.1900	Not Significant
Work Overload → Job Satisfaction	0.0772	0.0493	0.1944	0.3972	-0.2061	0.2870	Not Significant

Based on these results, the following direct paths are statistically significant at the 5% level (as indicated by confidence intervals that do not include zero and high t-statistics):

- Job Demands → Emotional Exhaustion: The bootstrap mean of 0.6220 ($t = 9.78$, 95% CI [0.4939, 0.7358]) strongly supports that higher Job Demands are associated with increased Emotional Exhaustion.
- Social Support → Job Satisfaction: A significant positive effect is observed (bootstrap mean = 0.6823, $t = 4.51$, 95% CI [0.5166, 0.8404]).
- The researcher did not perform a mediation analysis on the mediating role of emotional exhaustion between work overload and job satisfaction because referring to Table 1, we see that the path of emotional exhaustion to job satisfaction is not significant. Therefore, we conclude that emotional exhaustion is not a significant mediator between work overload and job satisfaction.

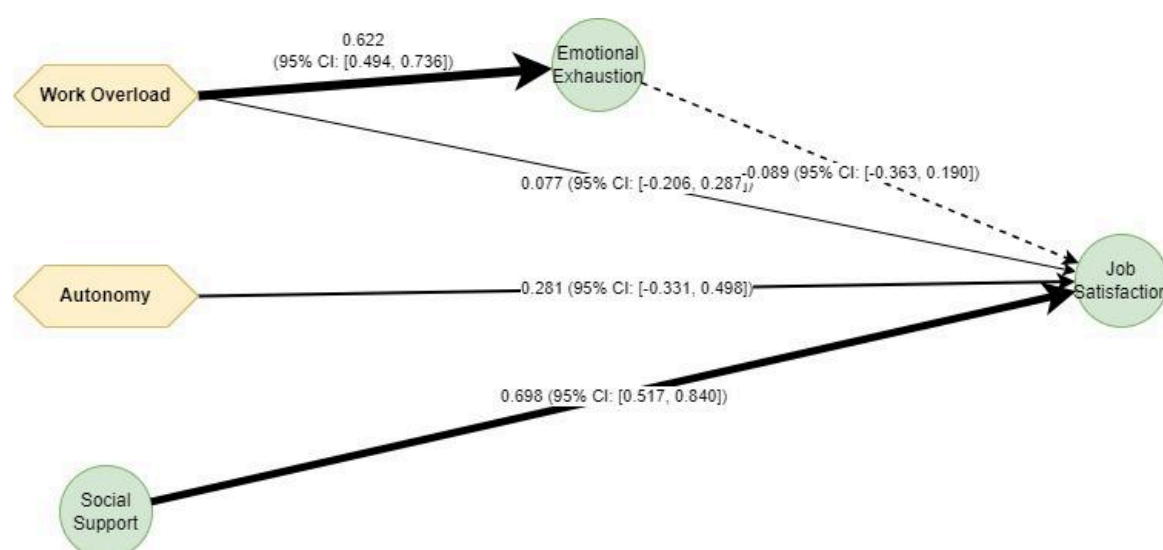


Figure 2: PLS-SEM Diagram

3.1 Relationship between Job Demand (work overload) and Emotional Exhaustion

The findings of this study reveal that job demand, specifically work overload, has a significant positive relationship with emotional exhaustion among early career academics (ECAs) at MSU-IIT. This result aligns with previous research emphasizing the adverse impact of excessive job demands on employees' psychological well-being. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posits that job demands such as work overload, time pressure, and role conflict are key predictors of emotional exhaustion, which is a core component of burnout.

Several studies further validate the significant relationship between work overload and emotional exhaustion. For instance, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found that excessive work demands in the teaching profession significantly contributed to teachers' emotional exhaustion, reducing their overall job satisfaction and increasing turnover intentions. Similarly, Winefield et al. (2003) emphasized that early career academics are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to their heightened exposure to heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, and publication pressures. The significant relationship observed in this study underscores the need for institutions like MSU-IIT to implement strategies that address workload concerns among ECAs. Providing adequate resources, promoting efficient task delegation, and ensuring access to emotional support systems can mitigate the adverse effects of work overload, ultimately enhancing the well-being and job satisfaction of early career academics.

3.2 Relationship between Job Demand (work overload) and Job Satisfaction

The findings of this study revealed that the relationship between job demand, specifically work overload, and job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECA) at MSU-IIT was not significant. While this result may seem unexpected given the extensive body of literature indicating a negative relationship between work overload and job satisfaction (Ali & Farooqi, 2014; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Dewi et al., 2021), several possible explanations may justify this outcome.

First, work overload is identified as a formative variable, meaning it comprises multiple dimensions such as workload intensity, task difficulty, and time pressure (Ali & Farooqi, 2014). Unlike reflective variables, which are influenced directly by their indicators, formative variables contribute to the construct in distinct ways, and their relationship with outcomes may vary depending on the context (Coltman et al., 2008). Therefore, the absence of a significant relationship in this study may imply that individual ECAs perceive workload differently based on their resilience, coping strategies, and support systems.

Another plausible explanation lies in the evolving nature of academic roles. As suggested by Kinman (2016), early career academics may perceive demanding workloads as part of their professional growth and career development, especially when supported by mentorship programs or collegial support. The presence of intrinsic motivation and passion for teaching or research may buffer the negative impact of workload, allowing employees to remain satisfied despite demanding conditions (Ghanbari & Eskandari, 2019).

3.3 Relationship between Job Resources (Autonomy) and Job Satisfaction

The result of this study presents that the relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECA) at MSU-IIT was not significant. While previous literature has frequently highlighted the positive link between autonomy and job satisfaction (Anual et al., 2023; Allan, 2019; Darso, 2021; Van Hoorn, 2016), this unexpected result may be explained by several factors.

First, it is important to note that job autonomy is a formative variable, meaning it is composed of multiple dimensions such as decision-making authority, task flexibility, and control over work methods (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Unlike reflective variables, formative variables contribute to a construct in distinct ways, meaning their effects may vary depending on the organizational context and individual circumstances. Thus, the non-significant result may reflect variability in how ECAs at MSU-IIT experience autonomy in their roles.

One possible explanation for this result is that while autonomy is traditionally seen as a positive resource, its impact may diminish if employees face overwhelming demands, limited resources, or unclear expectations. Wang and Liu (2015) found that in educational settings, excessive workload and administrative burdens can overshadow the benefits of autonomy, ultimately reducing its influence on job satisfaction. This aligns with the challenges faced by ECAs, who may struggle with balancing teaching, research, and administrative duties despite having some degree of independence. Furthermore, Gagné and Bhavé (2011) suggest that the effect of autonomy on job satisfaction is contingent on employees' readiness to manage independent work. For new or inexperienced employees, high autonomy without sufficient guidance may induce stress rather than satisfaction. Since ECAs are often in the early stages of their careers, they may require more mentorship and structured support to effectively benefit from their autonomy.

Moreover, Saragih (2011) found that the positive effects of autonomy are more pronounced in employees with high levels of self-efficacy and time management skills. If ECAs lack these traits or struggle with managing their workload, autonomy may fail to enhance their job satisfaction. Another potential factor is the institutional structure at MSU-IIT. According to Van Hoorn (2016), variations in academic autonomy may arise from organizational policies, administrative protocols, or governance frameworks. For instance, faculty members may have theoretical independence in their teaching methods but face bureaucratic constraints that limit their actual freedom in practice. Such conditions may reduce the perceived benefits of autonomy, thereby weakening its relationship with job satisfaction.

Lastly, cultural factors may also play a role. As noted by Aycan et al. (2000), employees in collectivist cultures (such as the Philippines) may place greater value on teamwork, collaboration, and social harmony over individual autonomy. As a result, employees may derive satisfaction more from strong interpersonal connections and supportive environments rather than independence in their work.

3.4 Relationship between Job Resources (Social Support) and Job Satisfaction

The findings of this study revealed that the relationship between social support and job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECA) at MSU-IIT was significant. This result aligns with previous literature and body of knowledge emphasizing the positive influence of social support in the academic sector (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Toquero, 2020; Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). The significant result highlights the crucial role that supportive work environments play in enhancing job satisfaction, especially for ECAs who are navigating the early stages of their academic careers especially in MSU-IIT.

It is worth highlighting that social support is identified as a reflective variable, meaning it reflects the overall perception of supportive interactions from colleagues, supervisors, or family members. To differentiate, unlike formative variables, reflective variables are influenced by their indicators and tend to capture the overall experience of social connectedness in the workplace (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). Given this, the significant impact of social support on job satisfaction may reflect the broader influence of positive social interactions, effective communication, and shared resources within MSU-IIT.

In the Philippine academic context, Campos and Distor (2022) emphasized that social support from colleagues plays a particularly vital role in reducing psychological distress and promoting job satisfaction. This cultural aspect highlights the value of interpersonal connections and collective support in Filipino work environments, where teamwork and collaboration are highly valued. Similarly, one known Filipino value and tradition is the *Bayanihan* or Community Spirit, where it emphasizes helping one another, especially difficult times. And this concept also highlights volunteerism, cooperation, and community unity.

3.5 Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion between Work Overload and Job Satisfaction

The result indicating that emotional exhaustion does not significantly mediate the relationship between work overload (a job demand) and job satisfaction among Early Career Academics (ECAs) at MSU-IIT presents an unexpected outcome. While existing literature often emphasizes the role of emotional exhaustion as a mediating factor that links job demands to reduced job satisfaction, this study's findings suggest otherwise.

One possible reason for this non-significant result lies in the complex nature of academic roles. While work overload can increase fatigue and stress, some faculty members may develop coping strategies or possess personal resilience, reducing the extent to which emotional exhaustion negatively affects their overall job satisfaction. According to Taris et al. (2001), employees with strong adaptive mechanisms, such as effective time management, peer collaboration, or goal-setting behaviors, may prevent work overload from escalating into severe emotional exhaustion. Consequently, these adaptive strategies may preserve their sense of job satisfaction despite demanding workloads.

Furthermore, García-Cabrera et al. (2018) found that in professional environments where employees experience intrinsic motivation — such as the fulfillment gained from teaching and research — emotional exhaustion may have a weaker influence on job satisfaction. ECAs who are committed to academic work may perceive heavy workloads as part of their professional growth, thereby limiting emotional exhaustion's negative impact on their job satisfaction.

The organizational environment at MSU-IIT may also play a role. Research by Bakker et al. (2005) suggests that institutions that foster positive organizational climates, provide adequate resources, and encourage collegial support can reduce the emotional toll of excessive workloads. In such settings, faculty members may experience fatigue without this necessarily diminishing their job satisfaction. This aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which emphasizes that positive work resources (e.g., peer support, autonomy, and leadership recognition) can mitigate the effects of job demands on employee well-being.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study provides an integrative understanding of how job demands and resources interplay to shape faculty job satisfaction. The evidence largely mirrors prior JD-R research while offering specific insights into the early-career academic experience. The most salient contribution is the empirical affirmation that emotional exhaustion serves as a key mechanism linking the pressures of academic work to critical outcomes like satisfaction and intent to leave. The theoretical implications reinforce the validity and versatility of the JD-R model, extending its applicability and highlighting the importance of including job satisfaction in the model's nomological network. The practical implications underscore that addressing job demands and nurturing

resources is not just beneficial but essential for universities aiming to maintain a healthy, satisfied, and stable faculty workforce. These findings set the stage for conclusions and recommendations, wherein academic institutions are encouraged to develop targeted interventions (grounded in JD-R theory) to improve faculty well-being and thereby enhance both individual and organizational outcomes. The study's contributions thus lie in bridging theory and practice, confirming core theoretical relationships in a new context and translating them into actionable guidance for higher education management.

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