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Public-Private Partnership Model of Correctional Institution: A Comparison Study in Various Countries

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Abstract

This study highlights that Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in correctional institution is not only represented by privatization or private, but is represented by various patterns of private involvement in correctional institution PPP models. Through an exploratory approach in the literature, this study identifies four correctional institution PPP models based on the experience of various countries, namely the "privatization" model, the "hybrid management" model, the "service infrastructure" model, and the "contracting out certain limited functions" model. The characteristics of the four correctional institution PPP models are identified through their similarities and differences based on the scope of private involvement in correctional institution construction and operation. Only the "privatization" model allows private involvement in all aspects of correctional institution development and operation, while the other three PPP models allow private involvement in certain aspects while still positioning the government to control management and custody aspects. The emergence of the three correctional institution PPP models other than "privatization" is the result of the adaptation of the consideration and/or application of the "privatization" prison PPP model.

Keywords: Correctional Institution, PPP Models, Privatization, Hybrid

1. Introduction

Public-Private Partnerships (hereafter PPP) continue to grow in popularity globally in the provision of infrastructure based on private finance (Hodge & Greve, 2017). PPPs have made significant inroads in certain public management sectors, including social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, correctional institution, etc (Bergere, 2016). Internationally, PPPs in correctional institution have been introduced by governments as an alternative procurement methodology to get better results from the construction, management and operation of prisons (Dixon, et al., 2005; Liu & Wilkinson, 2014). PPPs in correctional institution are not only popular among high- and middle-income countries, but also among low-income countries. Low-income countries have shown increasing interest in the potential benefits of PPPs in correctional institution over the past few years (Allen & English, 2013).

The most widely discussed form of PPP in correctional institution today is what is popularly called private correctional institution (Schneider, 1999). Several PPP's correctional institution studies have shown the existence of private correctional institutions or correctional institution privatization in countries that implement it such as the United States (Schneider, 1999; Gilroy, 2010) and Australia (O'Neill, et al., 2020). However, in fact, PPP practices in correctional institution implemented by various countries do not show a single characteristic. PPP practices are not only manifested in the existence of private correctional institution, which are usually built with PPP as a method of providing infrastructure based on private finance, but also in the provision of various correctional institution services. The boundaries between the public and private sectors have never been so sharply drawn, and even modern democracies in Europe have always relied on the involvement of some private actors in correctional institution services (such as catering) or long-standing cooperation with private companies that use and profit from correctional institution labor to produce goods on the premises (Daems & Vander Beken, 2018).

Although still very limited, there are some studies that examine alternative forms of PPP's correctional institution (other than private correctional institution). Leighton (2014), for example, describes the form of PPP's correctional institution in Japan that is different from private correctional institutions. According to him, the Japanese form of PPP's correctional institution provides for the government to retain control over correctional institutions. In their comparative study, Liu & Wilkinson (2014) examined two different PPP's correctional institution projects, namely design-build-finance-operate (DBFO) and design-build, finance-maintain (DBFM) projects. In DBFO projects, the private sector provides a full package of services related to correctional institution operations (including custody services), while in DBFM projects, the public sector remains responsible for providing core services (Liu & Wilkinson, 2014). The DBFO project mentioned by Liu & Wilkinson (2014) refers to a form of prison privatization represented in private prisons, while the DBFM project refers to other forms of PPP's correctional institution (other than privatization).

Among the still very limited studies on PPP's correctional institution, there is no study that presents the diversity of prison PPP forms comprehensively. Therefore, this study will present the existence of various models of PPP's correctional institution based on the experiences of various countries. The existence of various PPP's correctional institution models will be analyzed for similarities and differences based on the scope of private involvement in correctional institution construction and operations. In addition, the existence of various PPP's correctional institution models will be analyzed based on the beginning of the emergence of the PPP model.

2. Method

The method used in this research is a literature study. The author traces various literature sources (books, journal articles, theses, etc.) containing information related to Public Private Partnership (PPP) and correctional institution with an exploratory approach. Through content analysis, information on PPP's correctional institution from various sources is categorized based on patterns of PPP's correctional institution. The patterns of PPP's correctional institution are identified by this study as PPP's correctional institution models that have similarities and differences in characteristics. Then, the categorization of the PPP's correctional institution models is further explored by analyzing the initial emergence, spread and adaptation.

3. Results

3.1. PPP's Correctional Institution Practices in Various Models

Various PPP practices in correctional institution have been implemented by various countries, including the United States (Schneider, 1999; Stephenson, 2020), the United Kingdom (NAO, 2003), Australia (English & Baxter, 2010; Liu & Wilkinson, 2014; O'Neill, 2020), France (Bergere, 2016), Canada (Buitenhuis, 2013), and Japan (Leighton, 2014). Various PPP practices in correctional institution in these countries can be categorized into several PPP's correctional institution models that show alternative models of private participation in correctional institution services (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004; Cabral & Saussier, 2013) or private contracting models in correctional institution (Allen & English, 2013). In addition to mentioning the private contracting model in correctional institution, Allen & English (2013) also mention the spectrum of PPP's correctional institution.

The basis for categorizing the PPP's correctional institution model is the role of the private sector in correctional institution management or the provision of correctional institution services. The concept of PPP is used by these authors as a strategy for managing correctional institution or providing correctional institution services. Grimsey & Lewis (2004) discuss PPP in correctional institution with an explanation of the structure of cooperation agreements between the public (government) and the private sector in the provision of correctional institution services. In an article entitled "PPP in Prison Construction and Management," Allen & English (2013) clearly state that PPP is used in correctional institution construction and management. Then, Cabral & Saussier (2013) clearly confirmed that PPP is used in correctional institution management with their article entitled "Organizing Prisons through Public-Private Partnerships: a Cross-Country Investigation."

Alternative models of private sector participation in correctional institution services according to Grimsey & Lewis (2004) consist of: 1) the UK PFI "design-construct-maintain-finance" (DCMF) model; 2) the French mixed management "design-construct-finance" (DCF) model; and 3) the service infrastructure model. Models of private participation in correctional institution services according to Cabral & Saussier (2013) are: 1) correctional institution privatization in the US; 2) delegation of non-core activities in correctional institution services in France; and 3) the Brazilian experience which is a model between the US and France. The private contracting model or PPP spectrum in correctional institution according to Allen & English (2013) consists of: 1) full-scale model; 2) hybrid model; and 3) contracting out certain limited functions.

Based on the explanation of each type of PPP's correctional institution model according to the three sources, the researcher found that there are similar characteristics in several types of PPP's correctional institution models that are packaged in different terminology. The UK PFI "DCMF" model according to Grimsey & Lewis (2004) has the same characteristics as the American correctional institution privatization model according to Cabral & Saussier (2013) and the full-scale model according to Allen & English (2013). Similar characteristics are also shared by the French mixed management "DCF" model according to Grimsey & Lewis (2004), the delegation of non-core activities model in French prison services according to Cabral & Saussier (2013) and the hybrid model according to Allen & English (2013). However, the service infrastructure model and the model of contracting out certain limited functions have different characteristics. Therefore, based on the experience of various countries, PPP's correctional institution models can be categorized into four (4) types, namely: 1) "privatization" model; 2) "hybrid management" model; 3) "service infrastructure" model; and 4) "contracting out certain limited functions" model. The explanation of the four types of PPP's correctional institution models is as follows:

1) The "Privatized" PPP's Correctional Institution Model

The "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model (UK PFI DCMF model or full-scale model) is characterized by the transfer of all (full delegation of) prison services to the private sector and the management of correctional institution operations by private companies. Under the "DCMF" model, the private sector designs, constructs, finances and manages prisons (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004). Under the full-scale model, private companies are contracted to build and run the entire correctional institution where a private company or consortium finances, designs, constructs and manages the correctional institution for an agreed period of time, usually 25 or 30 years (Allen & English, 2013). According to Allen & English (2013), all staff (including custodial and security staff) are employed by the private company with the public sector's role limited to monitoring the company's compliance with the contract. The "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model has been used in the United States, the United Kingdom, and some Australian states.

In the UK context, Grimsey & Lewis (2004) describe some of the features that apply in the privatization model. There is usually a contract of up to 25 years between the Minister for Corrections and a company set up by a private entity as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to carry out the project. The SPV enters into fixed-price turnkey, fixed-term design and construction (D&C) contracts and also negotiates fixed-price, fixed-term operating contracts with prison operators. The capital cost of construction works is raised through non-resource debt on the basis of payments made by the government for the inmates handled. No payment is made until the correctional institution is put into operation and certain service standards are met.

2) "Hybrid Management" PPP's Correctional Institution Model

The "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model (mixed management "DCF" model or non-core activity delegation model) emphasizes that the core responsibility of the correctional institution in the management and control of corrections is the responsibility of civil servants (public sector). Under the "DCF" model, the private sector designs, constructs and finances correctional institution and manages limited correctional institution services, but excludes correctional institution operations and custody services which are the task of the public sector (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004). Grimsey & Lewis (2004) mention that specialized correctional institution services to be provided by the private sector include hostelry (food, hygiene, and cleaning services), reentry services, medical care. Cabral & Saussier (2013) mention industry, education, catering (including staff facilities), medical, maintenance, vocational training, and transportation as the scope of correctional institution services that can be provided by the private sector.

In the hybrid model, private companies finance the construction of new correctional institution and perform certain functions within them such as maintenance, health care, catering, or the provision of rehabilitation activities (Allen & English, 2013). Allen & English (2013) suggest that the cooperation arrangement in the hybrid model is governed by two contracts, one to build the correctional institution facility and the other to operate the correctional institution or to provide certain services. Private operators are initially invited to tender for the construction of new correctional institution on a design and build basis together with the operation of specialized correctional institution services (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004). Funds to pay for the construction of new correctional institutions are raised by the private sector and the state pays the capital costs periodically in addition to the fees charged by the private sector to provide the specified services (Allen & English, 2013).

3) The "Service Infrastructure" PPP's Correctional Institution Model

The "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model is described by Grimsey & Lewis (2004) developed by the State of Victoria (Australia) under the "Victoria Partnership" Program in 2001. The services provided by the private sector partner are infrastructure plus ancillary services, namely accommodation, security systems, environmental management, transportation and information systems management. The private sector is responsible for all aspects of the overall design and construction work, including structural integrity, circulation spaces, foundations, air conditioning and so on. Core services, under the control of the public sector and excluded from the cooperation contract, are billeting (cleaning/laundry/catering), industrial and custody operations. In addition to these core services, the services excluded from the contract are those potentially provided by the private sector, namely medical, education, employment and vocational training.

4) "Contracting Out Certain Limited Functions" PPP's Correctional Institution Model

In the "contracting out certain limited functions" prison PPP model, as described by Allen & English (2013), certain functions within the prison are delegated to private companies, for example catering, maintenance, provision of regime activities or transportation. Contracts are usually for a much shorter period (e.g. 5 years) than in the full-scale and hybrid models. Correctional institution construction (if new), security and custody functions remain the responsibility of the public sector. According to Allen & English (2013), this model is used in the Netherlands and various other European countries.

3.2. Mapping of PPP's Correctional Institution Models Based on Prison Construction and Operation

Based on the information about the four PPP's correctional institution models described earlier, it can be seen that there are similarities and differences between the four PPP models. These similarities and differences need to be further identified in order to provide a more comprehensive explanation. The identification of similarities and differences between the four PPP's correctional institution models can be done by mapping based on certain categorizations.

The basis of the mapping can refer to the categorization of infrastructure types presented by Yescombe & Farquhanson (2018). According to them, infrastructure consists of hard infrastructure, which takes the form of buildings and other supporting facilities; and soft infrastructure, which takes the form of services. Hard infrastructure can be provided through development activities, while soft infrastructure can be provided through

operations. For this reason, the mapping of the PPP's correctional institution model can be done based on the categorization of the construction and operation stages of the prison. The following are the mapping results:

Table 1: Mapping of PPP's Correctional Institution Models based on Construction and Operation

PPP's Correctional Institution Model	Private Role		Contract Characteristics
	Correctional Institution Construction	Correctional Institution Operation	
The "Privatization" Model	Designs, builds and finances the prison building	All services within the prison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated contract for the construction and operation of all services - Contract term is usually 25 or 30 years
The "Hybrid Management" Model	Designs, builds and finances the prison building	Building prison services except custodial services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hostelry services (food, hygiene, cleaning services) - health services - education - vocational and job training - reentry services - industry - transportation - building maintenance (facility management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 separate contracts (1 contract to build and maintain prison buildings; and 1 contract to operate the prison or to provide certain services) - Contract term of about 10 or 15 years
The "Service Infrastructure" Model	Designs, builds and finances the prison building	Building maintenance (accommodation services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 integrated contract for the construction and maintenance components of prison buildings - Contract term of about 10 years
The "Contracting Out Certain Limited Functions" Model	-	Certain limited functions, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - catering - building maintenance - provision of regime activities 	Shorter contract term (e.g. 5 years) than other PPP models

Source: author's processed results (2024)

Referring to the table above, there are 3 (three) PPP's correctional institution models that regulate the involvement of the private sector in the construction of (new) correctional institution, namely the "privatization," "hybrid management", and "service infrastructure" models. The three PPP's correctional institution models have similar characteristics in the aspect of correctional institution construction, including in terms of the characteristics of the contract for correctional institution construction. The contract for correctional institution construction in all three PPP's correctional institution models provides for the integration of the role of the private sector in constructing and maintaining prison buildings. Only the "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model does not regulate the involvement of the private sector in correctional institution construction. However, the "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model also regulates the involvement of the private sector in the maintenance of correctional institution buildings that are not integrated with its construction.

Then, among the four PPP's correctional institution models, only the "privatization" model regulates private involvement in the entire service provision (the entire operation of the prison). The other three PPP models differ in the type of services provided in the framework of the correctional institution operation phase. The "infrastructure services" PPP's correctional institution model only allows the private sector to be involved in the maintenance of correctional institution buildings (often referred to as facilities management). The "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model allows the private sector to engage in correctional institution building maintenance services, food services and the provision of certain activities. The "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model allows the private sector to be more involved in almost all correctional institution services, except custody.

3.3. Early Emergence of PPP' Correctional Institution Models

The existence of PPP's correctional institution, in its various models, can be traced from the beginning of its implementation by various countries. This can be illustrated by the early emergence of various PPP's correctional institution models whose characteristics have been described in the previous section. In order to elaborate on the emergence of the PPP's correctional institution model, it is very important to determine the initial time limit for its emergence. Since the 1980s, private profit-making (commercial) enterprises have played an increasing role in correctional institution systems around the world (Allen & English, 2013). Therefore, the time limit of the early emergence of the PPP's correctional institution model that the researcher determined is since the 1980s. All PPP's correctional institution models can be considered to have emerged since that time.

The "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model was implemented starting in the 1980s in the United States (Jing, 2010; Cabral & Saussier, 2013; Macaulay, 2013; Stephenson, 2020) in prisons known as private correctional institutions. The first experience of correctional institution privatization in America occurred in the State of Tennessee in 1983 (Cabral & Saussier, 2013) which was managed by a private company called Correction Corporation of America (CCA) (Kertner & Prior, 2012 in Macaulay, 2013). CCA reportedly offered to invest \$250 million in new (private correctional institution) facilities to receive \$170 million per year to manage the system which was the size (average) of the then state budget for correctional institutions (Schneider, 1999).

Following 1983, which was identified as the initial moment of adoption of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model in the United States, 1990 was identified by Sands, et al. (2019) as the initial moment of adoption of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model in Australia. The private correctional institution experience in Australia began in Queensland in 1990 (Moyle, 2000 in Sands, et al., 2019). Two years after Australia's initial momentum (Queensland) in implementing the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model in 1990, the UK began implementing the model at The Wolds Prison. In the UK, the first private correctional institution (The Wolds) opened in May 1992 with a capacity of 320 people managed by a private company called G4S (Harding, et al., 2019).

In 1990, while the "privatization" PPP's correctional institution model was first implemented in Australia (Queensland), the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model was introduced in France. The first correctional institution in France to use the hybrid management model was built in 1990 followed by others during the first decade of the 21st century (Cabral & Saussier, 2013). Referring to Daems & Vander Beken (2018) and Harding, et al (2019) that correctional institution in France that use a hybrid management model are called "semi-private correctional institution".

Referring to Allen & English (2013), the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model is not only applied by France, but also by Japan. In Japan, Mine Rehabilitation Program Center was the first PPP's correctional institution established in 2007 using the hybrid model (Byrne, et al., 2019). Mine Rehabilitation Program Center is the first type of correctional institution in Japan to be operated through cooperation between the public and private sectors using PFI (Private Finance Initiative), which is a method of utilizing private capital and expertise in the construction, maintenance and operation of public institutions. The scope of operations entrusted to the private sector includes inmate monitoring, vocational training and physical inspection. The central (national)

government remains the main service provider and assumes the entire responsibility of administrative tasks related to correctional institution management.

The "service infrastructure" prison PPP model, referring to Grimsey & Lewis (2004), was implemented after 2001 in the State of Victoria (Australia). The "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model, identified by Grimsey & Lewis (2004), has the same characteristics as the post-2000 Victorian PPP's correctional institution model according to English & Baxter (2010). The post-2000 Victorian PPP's correctional institution model utilizes a facility service agreement where the private contractor is only responsible for the construction of the correctional institution and the provision of limited services (maintenance) (English & Baxter, 2010). Referring to English & Baxter (2010), Sands, et al. (2019) and O'Neill, et al. (2020), the PPP's correctional institution that used or implemented the "service infrastructure" in the post-2000 period was Marngoneet Correctional Centre (also known as Lara) and Melbourne Remand Centre (also known as Ravenhall) commissioned under the Bracks Government.

Since 2006, referring to Buitenhuis (2013), the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model has been considered for implementation in the Province of Ontario (Canada). The characteristics of the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model can be found in Buitenhuis' (2013) description of an alternative PPP model for providing correctional institution under the Alternative Financing and Procurement strategy. The strategy allows the private sector to undertake the financing, design, construction and maintenance of prisons owned and operated by the government. Examples of prisons built under this alternative PPP model are the Toronto South Detention Center which opened in 2013 and the South West Detention in 2014 (Buitenhuis, 2013).

As for the PPP's correctional institution model "contracting out certain limited functions," as stated by Allen & Englsih (2013), it is implemented by the Netherlands. However, after conducting a further literature search, the researcher did not find any sources stating that the Netherlands applies the PPP's correctional institution model of "contracting out certain limited functions." Based on Reynaers & Panakker (2016) and Van Herck (2016), the PPP's correctional institution model applied in the Netherlands refers more to the "service infrastructure" where a private consortium is responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of correctional institution facilities. Design, Build, Finance, Maintain & Operate (DBFMO) is the most common contract type for PPP projects in correctional institutions used in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK where the letter O can represent different "options," which facility services only (Netherlands and Belgium) or also includes correctional institution guards and/or other staff (UK) (Van Herck, 2016). Excluded from the contract (PPP's correctional institution in the Netherlands) are supervision and application of sanctions; provision of psychological or physical assistance; and provision of daily activities (Reynaers & Panakker, 2016).

However, there is information that the PPP's correctional institution model of "contracting out certain limited functions" is used in the State of Victoria (Australia). Prior to implementing the "privatization" PPP's correctional institution model in 1996, as stated by Sands, et al (2019), Victoria had actually implemented the "contracting out certain limited functions". Prior to the election of the Kennet Government in 1992, several corrections programs, including correctional institution industries, health services, dental health, education, recreation and personal development programs, had been outsourced to various service providers that included the private sector, not-for-profit agencies and contractors (Sands, et al., 2019).

In addition to Victoria (Australia), the UK was also identified as having implemented a PPP's correctional institution model of "contracting out certain limited functions." Since 2012, the UK has focused on an alternative model where key custodial functions would be retained by the public sector with rehabilitation and ancillary services contracted out through competition (Grimwood, 2014: 6). Penal Reform International (2015: 24) also states that the UK has recently moved from a "wholesale" privatization approach to outsourcing certain correctional institution components such as facility management.

Based on the information that has been submitted, it can be seen that the "privatization" PPP's correctional institution model has been used since the 1980s by the United States and since the 1990s by Australia and the United Kingdom. The "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model has been used since 1990 by France and since 2007 by Japan. The "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model has been used

since 2001 by the State of Victoria (Australia) and since 2013 by the Province of Ontario (Canada). The "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model has been used since before 1992 by Victoria (Australia) and since 2012 by the United Kingdom.

This information can be used as material for compiling the initial sequence of the emergence of various PPP's correctional institution models. Since the 1980s, the existence of PPP's correctional institution can be identified in a sequential model:

Table 2: Early Emergence of PPP's Correctional Institution Models

PPP Model Time Lapse Early Emergence First Country to Implement	PPP Model Time Lapse Early Emergence First Country to Implement	PPP Model Time Lapse Early Emergence First Country to Implement
"Privatization" model since the 1980s United States (State of Tennessee)	"Privatization" model since the 1980s United States (State of Tennessee)	"Privatization" model since the 1980s United States (State of Tennessee)
"Hybrid management" model Since the 1990s France	"Hybrid management" model since the 1990s France	"Hybrid management" model since the 1990s France
"Service infrastructure" model since 2000s Australia (State of Victoria)	"Service infrastructure" model since 2000s Australia (State of Victoria)	"Service infrastructure" model since 2000s Australia (State of Victoria)

Source: researcher processed results (2024)

Information on the "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model is not presented in the table above given that there is no valid information regarding the timing of the initial appearance. In the study of Sands, et al. (2019), there is indeed information that a PPP's correctional institution model (the characteristics of which lead to a specific limited function contracting out model) has been implemented by Victoria before 1992, but the certainty of the time before 1992 cannot be known. In addition, given the characteristics of the "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution model which only involves the private sector in certain functions (or services) and does not include the construction of new correctional institution infrastructure, it can be estimated that many correctional institutions in various countries have implemented this model.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Emergence of the PPP's Correctional Institution Model as a Result of Deployment

As previously noted, the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model is not only applied in the United States, but also in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. The emergence of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model in the UK, Australia and Canada cannot be separated from the process of spreading the model that has been applied previously by the United States. Thus, the existence of PPP's correctional institution can be reviewed through the dissemination process. The review can provide information on the contribution of the application of a PPP's correctional institution model in one place to another place. The context of different places can be interpreted within the same country or within different countries (cross-country).

After first being implemented in the United States (State of Tennessee) in 1983, the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model was widely implemented by various states in the United States. The spread of the application of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model has occurred in the United States with the increasing number of private correctional institution and prisoners housed in private prisons in the United States. At the turn of the century, only 19 of the 50 states in the United States did not have private correctional institutions (Newburn, 2010). There has been an overall increase in the number and proportion of prisoners in private correctional institution in

the United States with approximately 128,323 prisoners in private prisons, representing 8.5% of the total prison population (Kim, 2022). According to Newburn (2010), the rapid growth of private prisons in the United States is attributed to commercial lobbying in a large and diverse market.

Along with the spread of the implementation of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model to various states in the United States (other than the State of Tennessee), the spread also occurred to various countries outside the United States, including the United Kingdom. Within a decade of the emergence of American privatized facilities, the UK also began to allow the private sector to build and run correctional institution (Newburn, 2010). The UK was the first European country to use private correctional institutions (Daems & Vander Beken, 2018). The emergence of private correctional institutions in the UK, which occurred several years after private correctional institutions began to develop in the United States, was influenced by the involvement of Wackenhut (a private company) and other major players in the United States in the consortium surrounding the UK government in the 1980s and early 1990s, and the work of closely related think tanks (the Heritage Foundation in the United States and the Adam Smith Institute in the UK) in promoting the idea of private correctional institution to the UK Government (Newburn, 2010).

The growth of private correctional institution facilities in the UK has been relatively rapid (Newburn, 2010). There are 14 private correctional institutions in the UK which house around 15% of the country's correctional institution population, an even higher proportion than the United States which only houses 9% of prisoners in private prisons (Zedner, 2018). With the rapid growth of private correctional institutions, the UK soon caught up and overtook the United States in the commercialization of punishment (Wacquant, 2009). Wacquant (2009) notes that the state played a much more important role in determining the growth of private correctional institutions in the UK than in the US. Unlike in the United States, private correctional institutions in the UK are part of the same government regulatory regime that controls government-run correctional institutions (Newburn, 2010). From 1992 to 2012, correctional institutions were assigned to private or public entities following a "market test" that invited private and public entities to compete against each other for its management (Daems & Vander Beken, 2018). According to Newburn (2010), the rapid growth of private correctional institution facilities in the UK is due to the centralized nature of the system or much greater central control over correctional institution policy, rather than commercial lobbying in a large and diverse market as is the case in the United States.

In the UK, the PPP model of "privatized" correctional institution is not only applied to newly built private building, but also to existing correctional institution previously operated by the government. This was the case with Birmingham Prison which according to Liebling & Ludlow (2017) was transferred from public to private management (i.e. G4S Company) in October 2011. This was the first time an operating public correctional institution was privatized in the UK (Liebling & Ludlow, 2017).

The spread of the implementation of the PPP model of "privatized" correctional institution has also occurred in Australia with the emergence of a number of private correctional institution in various states. A key feature of the Australian private correctional institution experience is the use of PPPs to facilitate the establishment and expansion of private correctional institution (O'Neill, et al., 2020). Queensland's experience of applying the privatization model to its private correctional institution, as noted by Sands, et al (2019), was followed by New South Wales in 1993, South Australia in 1995, and Victoria in 1996. Among these Australian states, according to Sands et al (2019), Victoria has the highest proportion of prisoners in private correctional institution in the world.

Referring to O'Neill, et al. (2020), the PPP model of "privatized" correctional institution began to be implemented in Victoria during the Kennet Government which since 1983 has announced the offering of private correctional institution construction to the private sector. Deer Park Metropolitan Women's Correctional Centre was identified by Sands, et al. (2019) and O'Neill, et al. (2020) as the first private correctional institution in Victoria which opened in August 1996. Two other private correctional institutions followed, with Fulham Men's Correctional Centre opening in March 1997 and Port Philip Prison in September 1997 (Sands, et al., 2019; O'Neill, et al., 2020). The new private correctional institution were built on Crown land and the facilities were owned by contractors (English & Baxter, 2010).

The spread of the implementation of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model also reached Canada. Referring to Buitenhuis (2013) and Harding, et al. (2019), the Province of Ontario (Canada) opened its first private prison called Central North Correctional Centre (CNCC) in 2001. CNCC is operated by Management & Training Corporation, the world's third-largest US-based private adult correctional institution operator (Buitenhuis, 2013). According to Buitenhuis (2013), the private operation of CNCC was based on the direction of Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Service in 1999 who was previously the minister responsible for privatization) who had visited various private correctional institution in the United States and the United Kingdom to study best practices and business cases of private prisons.

Compared to other PPP's correctional institution models, information on the spread of the "privatized" is more easier to find in various sources. It is very difficult to obtain information related to the spread of PPP's correctional institution models other than "privatization." As stated by Allen & English (2013), the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model is not only implemented by the UK, but also by Japan. However, to date, there is no source that informs that the emergence of the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model in Japan is the result of the spread of the implementation of the model in France. The same applies to the spread of the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model. There is no information indicating that the emergence of the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model in Ontario (Canada) is the result of the spread of the implementation of the model in Victoria (Australia).

The spread of the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model is identified as occurring internally within the same country. This can be seen from the development of its application in France and Japan. Referring to Bergere (2016), in 2013, there were thirteen prisons in France that implemented the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model. Then Japan, referring to Leighton (2014), has four correctional institutions implementing the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model, one of which is the Shimane Asahi Rehabilitation Center. In addition to being implemented for the first time at Mine Rehabilitation Center (in 2007), the "hybrid management" PPP's correctional institution model in Japan has also implemented in three other prisons.

The spread of the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model was also identified to occur internally in Victoria (Australia). There is information indicating that Victoria (Australia) continues to implement the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model. In Liu & Wilkinson's (2014) study, the character of the "service infrastructure" PPP's correctional institution model can be found in Ararat Prison, which according to Liu & Wilkinson (2014) uses the Design-Build-Finance-Maintain (DBFM) model. Ararat Prison began construction in 2010 under the DBFM scheme where the state signed a project agreement with the Aegis Correctional Partnership consortium responsible for the design, construction and finance of the new building facility and facility management services for 25 years (Liu & Wilkinson, 2014).

4.2. Emergence of PPP's Correctional Institution Models as a Result of Adaptation

The emergence of a particular PPP's correctional institution model is related to the non-application of a previously considered or applied. This phenomenon occurs, both within the same country and across countries. The emergence of a particular PPP's correctional institution model is the result of adaptation to the consideration and/or application of other models. Based on the experience of various countries, the emergence of the "hybrid management," "service infrastructure," and "contracting out certain limited functions" PPP's correctional institution models occurred after considering the application of the "privatization" PPP's correctional institution model. Thus, it can be stated that the three PPP's correctional institutions models other than "privatization" are the result of adaptation of the application of the "privatization."

The practice of the United States in its private correctional institution is taken into consideration by France for private involvement in prisons. The basis for private participation in French correctional institutions was established in 1987 when the 13,000 Program was announced (Lazerges, 1997 in Cabral & Saussier, 2013). Initially, France aimed to adopt the correctional institution privatization model that had been implemented in America (Cabral & Saussier, 2013; Daems & Vander Beken, 2018) where 13,000 correctional institution beds

would be created and privately operated to deal with correctional institution overcrowding issues during times of budget constraints (Cabral & Saussier, 2013). However, due to some political discussions, France did not opt for the American model of correctional institution privatization, but an intermediary solution called hybrid management (Cabral & Saussier, 2013) or "delegated management agreement" (Bergere, 2016).

The French experience can be seen in the Japanese experience, which was also inspired by the PPP model of "privatized" prisons implemented in the United States. Japan studied US private correctional institutions, but the government wanted more control over correctional institutions (Leighton, 2014). For this reason, Japan did not implement a "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model, but that uses Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts where the government still controls the correctional institution. The characteristics of the PPP's correctional institution model lead to a "hybrid management" model. Referring to Leighton (2014), correctional institution in Japan that use the "hybrid management" model are PFI correctional institution. PFI correctional institution employees are government employees tasked with overseeing a team of government employees who monitor and enforce contracts with more than a dozen private businesses in the correctional institution (Leighton, 2014). According to Leighton (2014), the Japanese Government deliberately chose to avoid a monopoly and work with several private companies in the same correctional institution to provide their services, including rehabilitation and education programs.

Based on the experience of France and Japan in initiating the implementation of the PPP's correctional institution model, it can be seen that the results of the spread of the "privatized" from the United States to various countries do not necessarily lead to it. In the spread of the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model, model transformation can also occur. France and Japan both pay attention to or study the "privatized" PPP's correctional institution model implemented by the United States, but both do not necessarily apply the model. Unlike the UK, Australia and Canada, which replicated the US-style "privatized" model, France and Japan made adjustments and then implemented the "hybrid management" model.

The emergence of the "service infrastructure" model as a result of the adaptation of the implementation of the "privatization" model occurred in the State of Victoria (Australia). As previously noted, in 1996, the "privatization" model began to be used by the State of Victoria. Then, the State of Victoria implemented the "service infrastructure" model after the 2000s. The "service infrastructure" model, as stated by Grimsey & Lewis (2004), was implemented by the State of Victoria (Australia) developed under the Victoria Partnership in 2001. Under "Partnership Victoria," correctional institution services are divided into three groups (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004): 1) core services under the control of the public sector and excluded from the contract, namely billeting (cleaning/laundry/catering), industrial and custodial operations; 2) services provided by private sector partners (infrastructure plus ancillary services), namely accommodation, security systems, estate management, transportation, and information systems management; 3) services potentially provided by the private sector, but excluded from the contract from the outset, namely medical, education, employment and vocational training. Based on this division of prison services, the PPP's correctional institution model implemented in the State of Victoria Australia after 2000 (service infrastructure model) has narrowed the authority of the private sector.

There has been a marked contractual simplification in Victorian model in the post-2000 period with the government's decision to remove private sector responsibility for the delivery of core corrections services (English & Baxter, 2010). The "service infrastructure" model, which English & Baxter (2010) identify as the post-2000 model of PPP's correctional institution, uses a different facility service agreement than the correctional institution service agreement used in the "privatized" (pre-2000) model. In pre-2000 contracts, the private contractor is responsible for the design, construction and financing of correctional institution facilities and all aspects of prison services, whereas in post-2000 contracts, the private contractor is only responsible for prison construction and limited service provision (maintenance) (English & Baxter, 2010).

The emergence of the "service infrastructure" model, as a result of the adaptation of the implementation of the "privatized" model, also occurred in the Province of Ontario (Canada). The "privatized" model began to be implemented by the Province of Ontario in 2001. Then, in 2013, the Province of Ontario (Canada) began implementing the "service infrastructure" model. The Province of Ontario (Canada), referring to Buitenhuis

(2013), began implementing the "service infrastructure" model after ending the implementation of the "privatized" model at the Central North Correctional Centre (CNCC). The CNCC began operations in 2001 and ended in 2006 when a new Liberal government was elected under Dalton McGuinty (Buitenhuis, 2013).

The emergence of the "contracting out certain limited functions" model, as an adaptation of the "privatization" model, occurred in the UK. As stated earlier, the UK has been implementing the "privatization" model since 1992. However, there is information that the UK has implemented an alternative PPP's correctional institution model whose characteristics refer to the "contracting out certain limited functions" model. Since 2012, the UK has focused on an alternative model where key custodial functions would be retained by the public sector with rehabilitation and ancillary services contracted out through competition (Grimwood, 2014: 6). The UK has, more recently, moved away from a "wholesale" privatization approach to outsourcing certain correctional institution components such as facility management (Penal Reform International, 2015: 24).

5. Conclusion

The practice of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in correctional institution does not have a single pattern, but is diverse. The existence of a diversity of PPP's correctional institution patterns is shown in its application in various countries which are identified by this study. Based on the experience of various countries, PPP's correctional institution models consist of the "privatization" model, the "hybrid management" model, the "service infrastructure" model, and the "contracting out certain limited functions" model. The characteristics of the four PPP's correctional institution models are identified through their similarities and differences based on the scope of private involvement in prison construction and operation. Only the "privatization" model allows private involvement in all aspects of prison development and operation, while the other three models allow private involvement in certain aspects while still positioning the government to control management and custody aspects.

Based on the beginning of its emergence, the "privatization" model emerged since the 1980s, the "hybrid management" model emerged since the 1990s, and the "service infrastructure" model emerged since the 2000s. The emergence of the three PPP's correctional institution models other than "privatization" is the result of the adaptation of the consideration and/or application of the "privatization" model. The "privatization" model is not only applied in the United States, but also applied in various countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada through the process of spread. The "hybrid management" model is applied in France and Japan. The "service infrastructure" model is applied in the State of Victoria (Australia) and the Province of Ontario (Canada). The "contracting out certain limited functions" model is applied in the UK and is possible in many countries because it only involves the private sector in certain functions.

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From Bureaucracy into Political Office: How Regional Secretary Staging Up to Political Post in North Lombok

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Abstract

Bureaucrats are active political actors. Along with their administrative role, they have their own political interests. Through a qualitative-phenomenological approach, this research aims to discover the strategies of regional secretary in staging up its role from high administrative official to political post at the regional level. Primary data were collected through interviews with key participants, while secondary data was obtained through searching libraries, archives, and documents relevant to the research subject. The data obtained is then organized, sorted, selected, and analyzed both textural description and structural description through source triangulation methodology and member check validation. The research findings indicate that the regional secretary has political advantage due to its extensive authority that covers nearly all aspects of administrative governance. This authority serves as a fundamental foundation for shaping self-image and performance, particularly in the endeavor of transforming the position from high administrative officials to political roles. However, this position does not significantly impact the success of the transformation unless supported by key political actors.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Regional Secretary, Key Political Actors

1. Introduction

This research aims to examine the politicization of bureaucracy by the Regional Secretary. Since the discussions of bureaucracy politicization emerged in Indonesia, it has been revolved around how local leaders politicized bureaucrats to lead them to specific political locus, especially during the stages of elections. Generally, these studies have delved into the phenomena of conditioning, recruiting, directing, and mobilizing of the bureaucratic group to support specific election participants. Various forms can be observed, ranging from placing relatives in bureaucratic positions before and after elections (Effendi, 2018); assigning civil servants to the election organizing secretariat (Yamin & Agustino, 2014); regulatory politics (Firnas, 2016; Mahdiana & Wisnu, 2018); economic policy expansion before elections (Farhan, 2013); and utilizing bureaucratic resources for political party activities and/or election participants. This includes mobilizing state apparatus to enliven political campaign activities, promotions, mutations, and demotions of bureaucratic

positions based on political contributions (Firnas & Maesarini, 2011; Ratna, 2012; Wahiyuddin, 2014; Kusuma Budi, 2014; Hamid, 2011; Katharina, 2018; Gunanto, 2020; Chairullah, et al. 2022), and others.

The bureaucracy in those studies is assumed to be a passive object that either voluntarily or coercively carry out actions which are against the provisions of laws and regulations, such as attending covert socialization activities for the candidacy of incumbent regional heads, raising campaign logistics, mobilizing voter support, and the like. In fact, in the study of bureaucratic politicization, there is another study theme that is no less important, namely the utilization of bureaucratic politics by administrative officials for the benefit of power politics.

Among the various studies of bureaucratic politicization above, not many discuss in detail how the process occurs. Researchers tend to look at macro phenomena that occur, but do not explain in detail important bureaucratic actors, strategies built, bridging the interests of politicians with bureaucrats, and so on. In this context, the placement of regional secretary as research objects is important, considering that if you look at the regulations regarding the authority and duties of regional secretaries as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 72 of 2019 concerning Regional Apparatus which clearly states that district/city regional secretaries are tasked with assisting regents/mayors in formulating policies and administrative coordination of the implementation of regional apparatus duties and services Administrative, then the role of the regional secretary is obviously very vital. The authority of the Regional Secretary covers almost all aspects of government administration ranging from operating core elements to supporting staff. With this great authority, the regional secretary cannot be underestimated.

Because this study focuses on an object that has not received much attention, namely the bureaucratic politicization by the highest-level administrative officials which is carried out consciously, voluntarily, and deliberately for the electoral interests of themselves and/or other parties, the focus of this study is directed at the highest position of bureaucracy at the regional level, namely the regional secretary.

By capturing the regional secretary as the research focus, this study aims to convey that in the swift currents of bureaucratic politicization, bureaucrats remain a crucial political entity worthy of attention. The research is anticipated to enhance understanding of bureaucracy, portraying it not only as an administrative government manager but also as a political agent with vested interests, strategies, and an intriguing playing field to observe. This research was conducted in North Lombok Regency. The selection of this location was based on; first, it demonstrated the durability of the position of the regional secretary, extending beyond the normal term of office. This fact becomes even more intriguing when the social and political contexts in each area indicate competitive and dynamic scenes.

The provisions of Article 117 of the Civil Servants Law regulate that High Leadership Positions can only be held for a maximum of five years and may be extended based on performance achievements, competency alignment, and organizational needs after obtaining approval from the personnel management official and coordinating with the National Civil Service Agency (Komisi Aparatur Sipil Negara or KASN).

The Civil Service Development Officer (Pejabat Pembina Kepegawaian or PPK) is an official with the authority to determine the appointment, transfer, and termination of civil service employees, as well as the development and guidance of civil servants in government agencies in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations. At the provincial level, the Civil Service Development Officer is the governor, while at the district level, it is the regent. Referring to these provisions, the regent's approval in the process of extending the term of high-ranking officials, especially the position of the regional secretary, becomes an indispensable prerequisite that cannot be rejected. In other words, to continue serving as a regional secretary after completing the five-year term, an individual must convince the regent that they have no performance issues and can collaborate effectively with the regional head of the area where they work. Therefore, the ability of the North Lombok Regional Secretary to sustain his position for more than five years is an interesting phenomenon to be studied.

The North Lombok Regional Secretary, SU, managed to sustain the position for 10 years (2010-2020) until retirement as the North Lombok Regional Secretary despite two changes in political leadership within the North Lombok Regency Government. These changes involved two different coalition parties, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: The Dynamics of the Regent and Vice Regent Positions in North Lombok

No	Era	Candidates	Supporting Party
1.	2010-2015	DS – NA	Demokrat, PNI Marhaenisme, Hanura, PKS, PKB, PPPI, PDP
2.	2015-2020	NA – SAR	PDIP, Gerindra, PAN, PKB, PBB

Sources: data processed from various sources

Secondly, SU ran as candidate for vice-regent in the 2020 Regional Elections alongside the incumbent regent NA. After being officially declared as participants in the Regional Elections, SU resigned from the position of the Secretary of North Lombok Regency in July 2020, approximately six months before reaching retirement age.

Bureaucratic politicization is different from bureaucratic politics. Bureaucratic politicization is the replacement of ethical-objective qualifications such as public interest, personal capacity, personal competence, and individual and organizational performance with other preferences that are subjective and political. Meanwhile, bureaucratic politics entrusts bureaucratic involvement in the political process of decision-making and public policy within an ethical, normative, procedural, and objective framework. That is, bureaucratic involvement is motivated by public interest, based on clear legal provisions, moving in agreed mechanisms, and in line with the qualifications and competencies possessed.

Bureaucratic politics is carried out in two models, namely cooperative-collaborative and coercive-confrontational. The cooperative-collaborative strategy occurs when government administrative officials provide full support in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes of policies decided by political officials, including when political officials strive to win power struggles. On the other hand, the coercive-confrontational strategy takes place when bureaucratic leaders acting as administrative government managers ignore, oppose, or even sabotage policies decided by political officials who are both partners and superiors.

Modus operandi used in each strategy has various forms. Some modus used in the cooperative-collaborative strategy include idea politics, distribution politics of public services, budget allocation politics, and personnel policy politics. Idea politics, according to Mallarangeng (2000), is carried out by contributing ideas and thoughts for the initiation and innovation of policies aimed at improving organizational performance and enhancing the quality of public services. This can also be referred to as substantive politics. Distribution politics of public services, as described by Golden & Min (2013), is one of the bureaucratic political models performed by making political decisions to allocate specific goods, services, and public services to certain desired groups, while budget allocation politics involve making political decisions to allocate specific budgets for programs, activities, or support to specific parties or certain groups of the community. Fregetto (1997) refers to this modus as distributive politics. Meanwhile, personnel policy politics relate to the option of applying the principle of meritocracy in personnel management, whether it is applied purely based on free competition and competence or whether opportunities are given for affirmative policies that consider not only competence but also aspects of representing groups of society that are underrepresented and marginalized in government bureaucratic organizations (Kuipers, 2022).

Politics and bureaucracy are not two separate entities that are polarized firmly and tangibly, but are on a continuum that allows the administration/bureaucracy to also play a reciprocal political role, including by being involved in the process of policy formulation and implementation or even exercising discretion over existing and enacted policies. In this context, bureaucrats become actors as well as initiators in utilizing the administrative role of government by transforming their administrative roles for the benefit of power politics. High bureaucratic

officials exploit social, political, and economic resources under their control to then be used as basic capital to strengthen positioning and increase political support in regional elections, both for themselves and for others outside the bureaucratic structure.

Research that places bureaucrats as active political actors in the politicization of bureaucracy has been carried out, among others by Clerk (1972), Temple (1999), Hughes (1994), Huque & Rahman (2003), van Gunten (2012), Alamsyah (2003), Alfirdaus & Manalu (2020), and Saglam (2022).

Clerk (1972) says that the concept that administrators are only passive instruments in the process of public policy formulation not only oversimplifies the problem but is also unrealistic. Bureaucracy according to Temple (1999) is not a vacuum that only carries out the orders and directions of politicians but has its own will and power to determine attitudes and take action. In addition to not being in a vacuum, bureaucracy according to Hughes (1994) is also *inherent* in the political process, so fundamentally it can be said that the administrative process is at the same time also a political process.

Huque & Rahman (2003) in their research in Bangladesh found several preconditions that gave way to bureaucratic dominance in the political process, including the establishment of organizational structure, administrative experience, expertise in managing bureaucracy on the one hand, while at the same time the capacity of available political institutions is not strong enough, the experience of existing political leaders is still inadequate, and political stability has not been fully maintained. In this context, van Gunten (2012) specifically mentions expertise in the economic sector that places bureaucrats in an important position in the policy formulation process.

If Clerk says the idea of passive bureaucracy is unrealistic, then Alamsyah (2003) explicitly states it as utopian. Since individual bureaucrats have different values, views, abilities, powers, and interests, the idea that bureaucracy is only a passive instrument in the decision-making process can thus be dismissed as impossible. This thinking is reinforced by research conducted by Alfirdaus & Manalu (2020) which found that bureaucracy has proven to be actively involved not only in the momentum of power politics competition in the regions, but also during the implementation of public services. In other words, the politicization of the bureaucracy is not only aimed at winning over others but also protecting the interests of the bureaucracy itself.

The widespread politicization of bureaucracy in Indonesia is supported by many factors. Some believe in the influence of socio-cultural factors playing a role, while others emphasize the contribution of the government system that significantly contributes to the perpetuation of the practice of politicizing bureaucracy in Indonesia. Socio-cultural factors identified by researchers include spoil system (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019), patronage-clientelism (Wahyudi, 2014; Yamin & Agustino, 2014; and Pratama, 2017), and patrimonialism (Jati, 2012).

Aspinall and Berenschot state that the existence of the spoil system in Indonesian society has provided opportunities and sociological legitimacy for the winners of national elections (Pemilu) or regional elections (Pilkada) to reward electoral support within the government bureaucracy. This reward takes the form of job promotions within the organizational structure, granted to bureaucrats who provided electoral support during local leadership elections. Simultaneously, the system allows for the demotion of officials known to be political opponents at the same time.

Meanwhile, Wahyudi (2018), Yamin & Agustino (2014), and Pratama (2017) found that filling positions and appointing bureaucratic officials in the regions are still dominated by the spirit of transactional-material patronage and clientelism with nuances of social kinship. The same thing was found by Jati (2012) in his research related to the strategy of bureaucratic co-optation by Sultan Hamengkubuwono X who utilized the culture of patrimonialism in society to support the Sultan to become the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) in the discussion of the Draft Special Autonomy Law (RUUK) for the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY).

If the above-mentioned researchers identify socio-cultural factors, other researchers have found legal and governance factors contributing significantly to the proliferation of bureaucratic politicization. Firnas (2016)

asserts that the politicization of bureaucracy is triggered and sustained by the implementation of regional autonomy and direct regional elections, a conclusion in line with the research findings of Humau (2022) regarding bureaucratic polarization in North Central Timor Regency.

Building on Firms's study, alongside Humau, Wahyuddin (2014), Rakhmawanto (2017), Katharina (2018), and Hidayat (2021) found that bureaucratic politicization is difficult to avoid because the authority and responsibility for personnel development in the regions, such as transfer, promotion, and demotion of structural officials, are still held by political officials or, in this case, regional heads.

In line with that, Brierly (2017) in his research in Ghana on bureaucratic relations with politicians also found a condition where the bureaucracy cannot reject the wishes and aspirations of politicians even though it clearly violates rules and regulations due to the great influence of politicians in determining the careers of bureaucratic officials.

In addition, the existence of conflicting regulations between the obligation to maintain neutrality on the one hand and the obligation to obey the orders of superiors on the other often puts bureaucrats in a dilemmatic position (Hartini, et.al., 2014; Pananrangi & Nippi, 2021). While being discreetly neutral does not guarantee the security and sustainability of office positions, being one-sided becomes a rational choice for most bureaucrats (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019), especially at the same time supervision and enforcement of neutrality violations are still not optimally carried out (Firms, 2011; Sutrisno, 2019; Sari, 2021). In such situations and conditions, bureaucracy becomes vulnerable to politicization.

The fact that regional secretary ran as vice-regent candidates in the 2020 Regional Elections indicates that the transformation of administrative officials into political figures is an inevitability. However, not all administrative officials can successfully make this transformation. This study assumes that the positions of SU as high-ranking bureaucratic officials also contributed to the decision-making of political party coalitions to support them as vice-regent candidates in their respective regencies. Nevertheless, the study also assumes that the status of the regional secretary position is not the sole factor that ultimately convinces political parties to lend their support. Other factors, such as the effective utilization of the administrative role of the regional secretary, also contribute to electoral strengthening.

Based on this, the research aims to answer several questions: What is the added-value of regional secretary position in post-reform Indonesia? Does the position contribute to the political role played by the regional secretary? How does the bureaucratic politics played by regional secretary synergize with the political power of regional head? How does regional secretary manage its own interests as administrative government manager while simultaneously playing a role as political actor striving for political position when interacting or dealing with currently influential political figures? How does the politicization of bureaucracy pave the way for regional secretary as administrative government manager to transform into government political official? What factors influence the success and failure of this role transformation?

2. Method

This research employs a qualitative-phenomenological approach. The analytical units are individual, namely the Regional Secretary of North Lombok Regency for the 2010-2020 term. The research subjects are related to the strategic role of regional secretary in bureaucratic politics at the local level. The politics and politicization of bureaucracy that are of interest in this study involve the interactions between the regional secretaries, the regional heads, and the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in the region, which have implications for the local election process.

Data mining is carried out through interviews and documentary studies. Interviews are conducted with the regional secretary as the main participant and government officials directly involved in the regional head election processes, policy formulation, budgeting, and human resource placement within the local government organization.

Additionally, interviews are conducted with social and political activists at the level of North Lombok Regency as significant others.

Documentary studies are conducted through tracing local government archives/documentation related to the process of changing regional heads, policy formulation, budgeting, and the placement of bureaucratic human resources within the local government organization.

The data and information obtained are then processed by reduction, selection, compilation, and analyzed with interpretation techniques. The data that has been collected is sorted based on the degree of relevance, so that the data that is really appropriate and needed can be separated from the data that is not needed. All relevant data is then compiled systematically for further analysis interpretively to arrive at the conclusion of the study.

3. Results

The regional secretary serves as the head of the regional secretariat. The regional secretariat of a regency is one of the components of the regency's local government apparatus, along with other components such as the secretariat of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), inspectorate, agencies, boards, and districts. The supervision and control of the organization of regency local government components, including the regional secretary, are carried out by the governor, who serves as the representative of the central government in the region.

The position of regional secretary is classified as a high-ranking official position. In accordance with the provisions of Article 155 of Law Number 5 of 2014, the filling of high-ranking official positions conducted by PPK by first forming a selection committee. The committee selects three names of candidates for each high-ranking official position vacancy. Three names of the candidates for the selected pre-primary leadership office were presented to the PPK through the Authorized Office; The three selected candidates are submitted to PPK through the Authorized Official. The PPK selects one out of the three to be appointed and inaugurated as a high-ranking official. Specifically for high-ranking officials leading the regency secretariat, coordination is done with the governor.

The Regency PPK is the regent. The PPK is prohibited from replacing High-Ranking Officials for two years from the appointment of the High-Ranking Official, unless the High-Ranking Official violates the provisions of laws and regulations and no longer meets the specified job requirements. The replacement of high-ranking officials, both principal and intermediate, before two years can be carried out after obtaining the approval of the President. The process of filling the position of regency regional secretary begins with the regent acting as the PPK. The regent consults in writing at least three candidates for the position of regency secretary to the governor after considering the selection committee's recommendations. This consultation is conducted before seeking written approval from the chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of the regency. The results of the consultation are then conveyed in writing by the governor to the regent in the form of an official document. If within thirty days after receiving the written consultation request, there is no written response from the governor, the regent's proposal is considered to have been consulted.

The regency regional secretary can be dismissed from the position without prior consultation with the governor if the individual resigns, submits a request to resign as a civil servant, reaches the retirement age, is physically or mentally unfit as declared by a doctor, undergoes organizational streamlining, takes leave outside the state's responsibility, or is appointed to a state official position.

The regency regional secretary can be dismissed outside the aforementioned provisions by first consulting in writing with the governor, stating the reasons for the dismissal beyond the aforementioned provisions. Upon such proposal, the governor conveys their written recommendation to the regent.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that when candidates for the position of regency regional secretary go through the process of occupying and maintaining the position, they need to communicate with the regent, the head of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), and the governor. The ability to establish communication with these parties determines the likelihood of both candidates to occupy and maintain the position of regency regional secretary.

The regional secretary has significant access to the available resources in the region. Referring to the provisions of Article 29 of Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2016, as amended by Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2019 concerning Regional Apparatus, it is stated that the regency regional secretary is tasked with assisting the regent in formulating policies and administratively coordinating the implementation of duties of regional apparatus as well as administrative services. In carrying out these duties, the regional secretary is authorized to perform functions such as coordinating the formulation of regional policies, coordinating the implementation of tasks of Regional Apparatus Work Units (SKPD), monitoring and evaluating the implementation of regional policies, providing administrative services, and fostering civil servants in regional agencies, as well as implementing other functions assigned by the regent related to their duties and functions.

In the management of regional finances, the regional secretary performs the task of formulating planning, budgeting, implementation, bookkeeping, reporting, and accountability, as well as financial oversight on behalf of the head of the region. In this regard, the regional secretary serves as the Head of the Regional Government Budget Team (TAPD).

Apart from orchestrating SKPD, the regional secretary also acts as a 'bridge' connecting, communicating, and synergizing the vision and mission of the head of the region with the aspirations of the community through the legislative members. Therefore, every regional secretary is required to communicate effectively with the head of the region as the authority in managing regional finances and with the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) as a partner in the discussion of regional government programs, activities, and budgets.

The position of the regency regional secretary as a high-ranking official at the highest structural level in the regional bureaucracy, with all the inherent authority, entails two conflicting consequences, especially when they have the intention to run for the position of a regional head or deputy regional head. The position can be a blessing and a curse. It becomes a blessing when all the attributes associated with it can positively serve as a foundation to achieve a more esteemed position, such as holding a political position in the executive domain. Conversely, the position can invite misfortune when the prestige of the held office generates prejudice and discomfort from superiors with similar aspirations to run for the position of a regional head or deputy regional head.

Legal provisions state that the regional head is the PPK in the region. The PPK is an official who has the authority to determine the appointment, transfer, and termination of civil servants and the development of civil service management in government agencies in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations. At the provincial level, the PPK is the governor, while at the district level, it is the regent.

The provision in Article 117 of Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning State Civil Apparatus (Civil Servants Law) stipulates that the position of regency secretary as a High Leadership Position can only be held for a maximum of five years and may be extended based on performance achievements, competency suitability, and organizational needs after obtaining approval from The Civil Service Development Officer (regent) and coordinating with KASN.

Referring to the provisions, the regent's approval in the process of extending the tenure of high-ranking officials, especially the position of the regency secretary, becomes a prerequisite that cannot be rejected. In other words, to continue serving as the regency secretary after the five-year term, someone must convince the regent that they have no performance issues and can collaborate effectively with the head of the region where they work.

The data obtained through searches of mass media sources indicates that, following the implementation of the Civil Servants Law, at least two regency regional secretaries were dismissed due to having held the position for more than five years, namely Jaka Sawaldi in Klaten Regency and I Gede Adnya Muliadi in Karangasem Regency.

Unlike Jaka Sawaldi and I.G.A Muliadi, who were dismissed from the position of regional secretary for valid reasons, that is reaching the normal five-year term limit, some regional secretaries had to face dismissal before completing their normal term due to political factors.

The Regional Secretary of Cirebon Regency, Yayat Ruhyat, was transferred from his position before completing his normal term due to a dispute with the regent leading up to the regional elections. Yayat Ruhyat was transferred from the regional secretary to expert staff because it was revealed that he intended to run as the Vice Regent of Cirebon in the 2018 Regional Elections.

Kasrul Selang was dismissed from his position as the Secretary of the Provincial Government of Maluku by Governor Murad Ismail after holding the position for approximately 1.5 years. Governor Murad Ismail replaced Kasrul Selang shortly after receiving a reprimand from the Minister of Home Affairs, Tito Karnavian, for the low budget absorption performance in handling Covid-19. Kasrul Selang, who was appointed as the secretary by Governor Murad Ismail in February 2020, was terminated by the same person in July 2021 and reassigned to the position of Senior Expert.

The Pariaman City Regional Secretary, Indra Sakti, was reassigned from the position of city secretary to the position of Expert Staff for Economic, Financial, and Development Affairs of Pariaman City by Mayor Genius Umar on March 2, 2020. Approximately 3.5 years earlier, precisely on August 19, 2016, Indra Sakti assumed the position of city secretary after being inaugurated by Mayor Mukhlis Rahman.

Meanwhile, Syafrudin Sapsuha was dismissed from the position of Regional Secretary of Kepulauan Sula Regency for not providing a budget for the inauguration of the new Regent and Vice Regent, Fifian Adeningsi Mus and M. Saleh Marasabessy. It was previously known that Syafrudin Sapsuha was inaugurated by Regent Hendrata Thes on December 16, 2019. However, due to the perceived inability to demonstrate professional performance in providing a budget for the inauguration of the newly elected Regent and Vice Regent in the 2020 local elections, Sapsuha was dismissed by Regent Fifian on June 8, 2021.

The events described above serve as authentic evidence that the position of a regional secretary is susceptible to politicization. Furthermore, these facts also confirm that the regional secretary not only becomes the object of politicization but also actively plays a role as a subject involved in politicization.

This study examines the bureaucratic politicization events by the regional secretary in different background. Unlike Yayat Ruhyat and Herman Subaidi, SU did not experience reassignment from the position of regional secretary. He also did not challenge the incumbent, as Yayat Ruhyat and Herman Suabidi did. On the contrary, SU ran as a vice-regent candidate alongside with the incumbent regent NA.

SU is not affected by the five years limit of term regulation. He also had no performance issues as happened with Kasrul Selang, and did not suffer defeat consequences like Indra Sakti and Syafruddin Sapsuha.

SU is a career bureaucrat who has worked their way up from the bottom of the bureaucracy. He experienced a pivotal moment that elevated his profile to the main stage. SU became part of the Committee for the Formation of North Lombok Regency (KLU) in 2005, which successfully separated North Lombok Regency (KLU) from West Lombok Regency (KLB).

Despite being controversial, SU has a greater ability to comprehend with political dynamics. When there was a rift between Regent and Vice Regent, SU took a position on the side of stronger power. Since the regulation has placed the authority of surviving regional secretary under the governor, SU moved to align with Vice

Regent whose governor mostly preferred. This indicates that SU's decision to 'side' with Vice Regent was a rational decision, not an emotional one.

SU's bias towards Vice Regent was also evident through various program initiatives and activities that 'benefited' Vice Regent. This included awarding local government project contracts to individuals known to have connections with Vice Regent and could assist in the logistics of the local elections (Pilkada). Additionally, SU aided in the formulation of conceptual platform and initiated various community meetings for Vice Regent promotional purposes.

After Vice Regent was then elected as Regent of KLU for the 2015-2020 term, SU remained supportive of the implementation of the regent's vision. Observing many neglected and poorly managed local government assets, SU proposed the establishment of an agency to manage these assets, similar to the National Asset Management Agency (LMAN). The funding for this agency would come from a combination of government and private contributions. The purpose of this asset management agency was intended to help transform these assets into productive ones, contributing to the local government's revenue.

In addition, SU was also supportive of the implementation of the One Doctor One Village and Village Ambulance programs, as well as the establishment of a Front Office in every government office to improve the quality and convenience of public services. Regarding the appointment of bureaucracy officials, SU was always well-informed by the Regent.

Despite SU's stubbornness and rigidity to the members of the DPRD, the Regent continues to defend SU. He mentions that SU's rigidity is actually an effort to ensure that everything is always within the framework of regulations and not dominated by political considerations.

4. Discussion

The research findings present several implications: *first*, it reinforces the paradigm which believes that politics and administration are inseparable units and confirms their reciprocity relationship. *Second*, it proves that policies freeing the bureaucracy to express its political views as was the case during the independence era or supporting a specific political power during the Orde Baru era, are equally less ideal compared to regulations regarding the necessity for the bureaucracy to remain neutral during the Reform era. In fact, these policies have not been able to prevent the bureaucracy from getting involved in the bureaucratic politicization, either for its own interests or for the interests of others. Therefore, other alternative policy should be considered for initiation, that is to free bureaucrats from their voting rights.

Third, this research supports the statement that ethics go beyond the law. Normative law alone is not sufficient to realize a neutral bureaucracy. Strengthening the ethical awareness of the bureaucracy in the political power arena is also crucial to consider. In many instances of neutrality violations within the bureaucracy, wrongdoers often seek refuge and manoeuvre behind normative legal texts, either to avoid punishment or to manipulate violations. Therefore, ethical awareness needs to be integrated with normative legal awareness to prevent bureaucratic politicization.

Fourth, the proliferation of regional secretaries running for office as local government leaders raises speculation about the return of a bureaucratic politicization regime in the future. The recent phenomenon of many regional secretaries pursuing political positions through regional elections has sparked speculation about the return of a bureaucratic politicization regime in the future. This speculation gains strength when, at the same time, political democratization in Indonesia is declining, as stated by political scientists such as Mujani & Liddle (2021) and Warburton (2020).

5. Conclusion

The regional secretary holds a crucial position in the local government system. Normatively, they have extensive authority that covers almost every aspect of government administration, including the executing elements (operating core) such as regional offices, the supporting elements (technostructure) encompassing regional agencies, and supporting staff. In terms of regional financial management, the regional secretary is granted attributive authority based on legal regulations to coordinate TAPD, responsible for formulating programs and the regional government budget.

Such a position of the regional secretary significantly contributes to the political role played by the bureaucracy, both in cooperative-collaborative and coercive-confrontational forms. Cooperative-collaborative bureaucratic politics is evident in the politics of ideas, distribution of public services, budget allocation politics, personnel policy politics, and politics related to the provision of other technical support. Meanwhile, bureaucratic politics that is coercive-confrontational in nature is evident in the form of policy approval without protests (bureaucratic acquiescence) toward decisions made by superiors.

In general, this study does not observe any 'open conflicts' in relation to the implementation of the regent and vice regent's vision and mission, indicating no divergence between the regional secretary and the head or deputy head of the region.

This synergy is possible because initially, the regional secretary did not have the ambition to transform the position from a high administrative official to a political government official at the regional level. It merely performed its duties as regional secretary, equipped with the authority granted by regulations to manage government administration. Its entry into the political stage is more of a consequence of tested loyalty, achievements, and the advantages of the investment capital planted throughout its institutional and individual history.

The social and political benefits later provide the regional secretary with ease in the endeavor to navigate the transformation from administrative to political positions, at least until reaching the front door of political office, such as a candidate for vice regent. Its ability to pass the loyalty test, possess performance achievements, and historical investments become strengthening factors that instill confidence in key political figures in the region to promote them to political positions.

This research finds that the position of the regional secretary, with all its authority, plays a crucial role in building an individual's self-image and performance to strive for a transformation from a high administrative position to a political one. However, this position will not have a significant impact on the success of the transformation without the support of key political actors.

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Accountability of Fine Arts and Design Education Graduates in Indonesia in Responding to the Needs of the Job Market in the Second Decade of the 21st Century

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Abstract

The demand for an educated workforce is an interesting issue and needs to be discussed. Before the initiation of the link and match strategy, it seems that art education had made efforts to consider the outcomes of its graduates. Especially for art and design education, it is hoped that with the skills acquired, the graduates will be able to work directly in the formal and informal sectors. This is a further thought for the development of the independence of art and design education products. Basically, science and technology can consistently support art, especially for the development of its expression. With inward and outward-oriented development, which is based on the function of art education institutions and the challenges of external influences, art education should be able to solve various problems for the independence of its graduates. That is the alternative offered in this paper.

Keywords: Education, Fine Arts and Design, Graduates, Indonesian Job Market

1. Introduction

When the issue developed which stated that education cannot create social engineering, self-criticism immediately emerged. In this case, the approach applied is to change the educational paradigm, from empirical normative to prophetic transformative. It seems that this approach also gives rise to two main streams because in addition to having to create a marketable curriculum, it is also based on the function of educational institutions as organized intelligence, or the function of educational institutions as centers of study and development of Science and Technology.

In developing countries such as Indonesia, this approach can be justified, but it must also take into account the rate of productivity of the educated workforce, so that in this case an education balance is needed (Vaizey, 1967: 45). This strategy is actually an educational plan based on economic growth. However, because education is also a reflection of the different class structures of the population, education also functions as an integration factor.

The problem of art education does not only occur in Indonesia but has become a global phenomenon. In 2000 the Director General of UNESCO made an appeal to all member countries to make efforts to promote arts, education and creativity at the school level as part of developing a culture of peace. The refunctionalization policy, especially in arts education, needs to be postponed if it can be expected as a means of liberation (Freire, 1972: 71). As long as the development of science and technology seems to still have a coherent role in people's lives. Science and technology have the potential to convince and move human life, while art can provide elements of both. Art is a place and channel for expressing ideas or hopes in a concrete form in the form of works of art. A work of art can be a formulation of intelligence and emotion. Art must be different from science and technology because it does not involve material wealth and the influence of the outside world but is more transformative in the inner world.

The rapid development in the information age has caused the boundaries between science, art, philosophy, and other disciplines to disappear. Since art cannot be separated from many other disciplines, it is imperative to incorporate into our new classroom an approach that will combine and synthesize these various disciplines. Considerations for reformatting art education in universities will open the possibility of a rethinking of arts education in terms of methods, curriculum, and responsibilities. This raises a challenge to rethink arts education within the framework of new educational and philosophical theories. The philosophical challenge of educational rethinking and educational deconstruction is not done by changing, replacing, or abandoning education. On the other hand, the deconstruction attempt is first of all to undo the construction with infinite patience, to dismantle the system in order to understand all its mechanisms, to show all its foundations, and to reconstruct it on a new basis (Higgs, 2002: 175). This statement makes the need for rethinking what can be done for the enlightenment of art education. Although the philosophical approach may not provide a clear answer but it can help us to understand more about the meaning of enlightenment education as expected.

The philosophical approach in education is directly related to efforts to liberate students and lecturers from intellectual bonds and establish the assumption of the status quo. This is for the purpose of achieving liberation which is expected to eliminate the assumptions of the academic world about the correct and ideal way to conduct the teaching and learning process. Philosophical approach in education covers the process of learning and knowledge through a critical view. This is a way to begin to question the dynamics of teaching and learning. As Deborah Smith Shank said that the way we think is directly related to how we learn. When the learning process is understood as a thinking process then it is a process and not a product. This is a continuous process of investigation, which cannot be determined by the parameters of the lecture material (Smith-Shank, 1995: 236).

Not unlike other fields of study, art education will also be affected by external superstructure factors. The historical legacy of economic dualism in Indonesia, namely between traditional and modern economics (Boeke, 1953) may result in disparities between groups supporting education and art products. This always appears in relation to the dichotomy of art production, namely art products which are considered as a skill and pure artistic products, or according to Sanento Yuliman it is mentioned as lower art and upper art (Yuliman, 1984). This assumption often underlies the assumption that formal art education is not able to produce ideal artists. It can be said that an artist does not need to be educated but he will be born by himself. In connection with the importance of art education prospectively, a development strategy can be created for the arts education workforce (Buchori, 1995). This retrospective view was actually been carried out during the colonial government of the Dutch East Indies, namely with the establishment of the *Kunstnijverheid en Ambacht Scholen*, namely the arts and crafts school and the carpentry school because the arts at that time were considered to have taken root in the midst of the population (Hasselman, 1915: 116).

Based on the assumptions above, until now there is a problematic reality, namely the occurrence of a mismatch between the authority of art education graduates and the demand for labor. This is actually what needs to be considered from the start, namely that art education must be based on an inward and outward orientation. In this case the inward orientation is that art education must emphasize efforts to improve and improve, while the outward orientation is that art education must also involve itself in people's lives.

2. Research Methods

To find out about the accountability of art and design education graduates in responding to the needs of the world of work in the job market, a study using historical methods or historical research methods can be interpreted as a collection of systematic principles and rules. which is intended to assist effectively in gathering written historical source materials, assessing or critically reviewing these sources, and presenting a "synthesis" of the results achieved. This method is qualitative in the form of literature study using written sources from library collections in the form of books, journals, and other printed sources (Garrahan, 1957: 33).

In this study, qualitative methods were used to obtain data to be analyzed through quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are used for problems related to perception, interpretation and experience. Quantitative analysis was conducted based on a full review of the qualitative data. The interpretations of the findings were combined using the Denzin triangulation method (Denzin, 1978:7). Triangulation is achieved by using data from various sources and collection methods. Here, this includes face-to-face interviews, observation and literature study. These three evaluators play a role in looking for similarities in findings to assess their validity.

This study uses data collection techniques documentation, observation, and interviews. The documentation method is used to collect written documents for reference sources to be documented as reference material for reconstruction. The observation used is participant observation. Focused observations to obtain information from various places to be documented. The interview method used to obtain in-depth information from informants was carried out openly aimed at actors involved in the learning process in art and design education, as well as users of art and design education graduates.

Primary and secondary data collection techniques are carried out through literature studies conducted by visiting various libraries and agencies that store written material such as the archives of the Taman Ismail Marzuki art complex in Jakarta, the National Library of Indonesia and in the libraries of various Art Academies (student thesis), newspaper articles , catalogs of exhibitions, monographs about artists, and articles produced at the congress. In general, publications that are carried out are sponsored by private parties such as collectors, gallery owners and there are trends by the artists themselves. In addition, there are various publications published by academies, the Ministry of Culture, or the City Government. After the search for written material has been completed, the next step is to select and verify the data and compile it into writing (Iswahyudi, 2020: 800).

The research subjects include 50 students of art and design education, 30 students of art and design education who have graduated, 15 lecturers at art and design educational institutions in the city of Yogyakarta, Bandung, Jakarta. Interviews were conducted in two ways, namely directly through face-to-face meetings and indirectly through telephone and internet. This survey of respondent data was carried out in these cities for 6 months, from January to December 2020.

3. Inward orientation

Education is one way to modernize a nation. As long as the product is able to create various motivations that guarantee and support a strong social system, education is still seen as an ivory tower. One form of educational mismatch or mismatch between educational products and the labor market that causes a surplus of educated workers will cause a system to falter. This is not considered a disaster in the education system if there are continuous efforts to solve problems early. The link and match strategy is a good will offered, which is nothing but an adjustment between education productivity and labor demand.

Art education is an inseparable part of the development of every human being. Those who have studied the learning process for centuries, starting with Plato, have emphasized the importance of art in the educational process. Arts education refers to education in the fields of music, dance, theater, and visual arts. Studying art is an integral part of our society. They are part of the cultural heritage of every human being. Art is what makes us most human and most complete as human beings. Art cannot be learned through occasional or random exposures like math or science. Education and involvement in fine arts is an important part of the school curriculum and an important component in every student's educational program (Khan & Mohd. Muzaffar & Shaik Liyakath Ali, 2016: 67).

Art education actually offers free ways in its implementation. This concept before Indonesia's independence was developed by national movement figures such as Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, Moch. Sjafei and S. Sudjojono. Until now, because it has to adapt to Law No. 2 of 1989 which is rooted in the nation's culture, art education in Indonesia also needs to adapt to the concept of art education in the international world. The results achieved by art education reformers seem to refer to developments in terms of sensitivity and expression.

Art education based on visual culture learning requires a new curriculum, content, learning strategy to change the focus from a narrow field, changing the conventional approach to critical and creative inquiry with an open process. A new language is needed for art education that does not depend solely on pure art discourse. Ideally it should involve all visual arts discourses such as media studies, design education, cultural criticism, and visual anthropology. Art educators should be educated to involve residents (cities) of the various communities in which they live and work. They must strive to nurture communities so that they can bring pride in their cultural heritage and who are able to convey contemporary problems through artistic solutions (Hariyanto, 2015).

All art educators should teach the concepts and skills necessary for effective use in present and future democratic societies. Fine arts teachers are advised to undertake this task through an immersive visual culture that is as impactful as written texts. If students are involved in investigating various visual cultures with the guidance of lecturers, they will be able to actively discover meanings, multiple relationships, and enrich the sharing of possibilities for creation and criticism. The visual arts class should be conceptualized as a multi-tasking arena where images and objects intersect and are produced, discussed to guide students and lecturers through the investigation of ideas, issues, opinions, and conflicts.

Talking about visual culture cannot be separated from postmodern or contemporary conditions. Postmodernism is a crisis caused by modernism and modern culture which has failed its own visual strategy or in other words, is a crisis of visual culture. Visual culture is a tactic that can be used to examine the genealogy, definition, and function of postmodern daily life. The discontinuity and fragmentation of the culture that we call postmodernism are best visually imagined and understood. Western culture has consistently privileged written culture (spoken word) as the highest form of intellectual practice and views visual representations only as illustrations of (written) ideas. The emergence of visual culture is a subject that is opposed to the hegemony of written culture (words). Western philosophy and science now use pictorials rather than written texts as models of the world that have so far dominated intellectual discussions such as linguistic-based structuralism and post-structuralism (Hariyanto, 2015: 8).

The semiotic approach to teaching art and design at the elementary level allows students to have a "critical eye." For them, criticality in viewing does not merely refer to a deconstructive and always skeptical view given to every form of visual representation; rather, it is a readiness to disassemble and exceed face value. As Wang and S.C. Wang further proposed efforts to reawaken the critical eye of students studying art with at least two dimensions. One dimension is the process of "de-contamination" to restore the curiosity, alertness, and roughness of a young child's visual encounters as what 18th-century English empiricists termed the "blank slate." It is recognized that this restoration effort is a utopian proposal that is increasingly difficult to implement in today's spectacle society (Wang & S.C. Wang, 2004: 117).

As a particular frame of mind for experiencing ideas, deconstruction can change the nature of educational discourse significantly. Similarly, semiotics as the science of signs and structures offers a means to understand, think, and make connections in postmodern pedagogy. In terms of teaching core courses to new students, conceptual linkages serve as an ideal basis for raising semiotic questions. This semiotic pedagogy can direct the teacher's attention away from certain teaching parts of knowledge and focus on developing higher intellectual skills. It is believed that although semiotics is not the only view that can lead to this conclusion, it does provide certain conceptual tools for analyzing skills and intellectual insight on how to improve these skills (Smith-Shank, 1995).

If this concept is more detailed, it will be seen that there is an emphasis on local content factors and the importance of creativity. This is based on the fact that the arts are always related to the aspects of the five senses, so there is a need for semantics in the form of works of art that are used as objects of assessment. Various national consortiums

on the concept of art education until the end of this century seem to place more emphasis on fostering creativity. According to Munandar, this choice is considered the most appropriate because with the development of creativity, more emphasis will be placed on the process than in terms of technique and results (Munandar, 1977). If this is true then creativity is closer to the ability of art education because by receiving education in sufficient time, there will be an increase in the ability of expression (Eisner, 1972).

Creativity is the key and conventionally has become a common thing in art education. There is a limit that creativity only comes to innovation and not really as new and when compared to the achievement of scientific creativity there is also a difference. Art creativity is obtained by the process of intuition while scientific creativity is based on the logics of the mind which ultimately form concepts (Semiawan, 1984: 8).

Based on this thought, every student needs to have artistic experience. This experience can be obtained through creative creation activities and appreciation activities. These two kinds of activities can be pursued through the process of learning about art and through habituation to become more familiar with art. It's just that general education does not seem to lead to achievement because it is only a means to achieve educational goals in general. However, this also does not rule out the possibility for interested and talented students to be able to achieve achievements and the artistic profession.

The development of creativity has a single goal, namely expression activities. This approach is actually considered too heavy for students but it is the key to success in achieving artistic education productivity (Read, 1970: 8). As far as is known, the way of working to produce aesthetic expression is always done with deep reflection (Sutrisno, 1993: 23). This human expression for adherents of the ascetic school is not bound by the dimension of time because it can be done anywhere. For example, there are calligraphy paintings by Amri Yahya which are said to have been obtained through reflection with guidance from religion or no one is not surprised by Arswendo Atmowiloto, who after being released from prison turned out to be able to come up with fresh and convincing expression ideas.

The basic problems in fostering creativity may be obtained from external and internal factors. External factors are more related to the level of appreciation. It can be said that in the Balinese community, appreciation is not needed because the value of art is considered capable of fulfilling its social function. The internal factor lies in the scope of education due to the lack of extra-curricular lessons which in this case are still displaced by other subjects, such as computer science lessons. This can be proven by the many complaints from art education students, especially when they participate in field experience practice (PPL) in public schools. Such is the gap that has occurred in art education.

In terms of appreciation, it seems that the coaching has been quite effective, but has not shown ideal results. In this case, it is necessary to democratize art because basically appreciation is very much determined by the power factor. An example is the Surakarta style puppet art which through various communication media has been able to achieve a great success in its nationalization and demands for appreciation. This is different from, for example, the performances of the *Ketoprak* performing arts group, which although they are very liked, especially by the Javanese people, have never carried out intense coaching other than carrying out revitalization and renewal efforts (Dipoyono, 2018). Thus, the appreciation will emerge from the bottom stream because it represents the social structure without having to be aware of the extent to which it is positioned.

4. Outward orientation

At this time the world is a witness of the information age. The main source of content information is no longer lecturer lectures or textbooks. Learning is not limited to what we know but also depends on how to find and use that information quickly, creatively, and cooperatively. This situation and condition is described by Jensen as saying that: "We are in the twilight of a data-driven society. When information and intelligence become the domain of computers, society will place a new value on one human ability that cannot be automated, namely emotion" (Jensen, 1999: 84).

Students today have a lot of data but lack for meaningful learning. The demands of the workplace are that students are able to understand how to solve problems, what makes reasonable arguments, how to build teams and coalitions, and how to incorporate the concept of justice into everyday decisions. Students need to be thinkers, have skills, be problem solvers, show creativity and work as members of a team. In this case the learning that needs to be done is deeper learning about the most important things: order, integrity, thinking skills, curiosity, truth, flexibility, fairness, dignity, contribution, fairness, creativity, and cooperation. It is in this case that the work of art provides it all (Jensen, 1999).

Perhaps the most fundamental element for education to consider is the way we perceive and understand the world we live in. Effective art and design education helps students see what they see, hear what they hear, and feel what they touch. Involvement in fine art and design helps them to expand their minds beyond the confines of written texts or the rules of what can be proven. Art frees the human mind from rigid certainty. Envision the benefits of seeking, discovering, and developing solutions to the myriad problems facing our society today. These processes, taught through art lessons, help develop tolerance to overcome the ambiguities and uncertainties that exist in people's everyday lives. There is a universal need for words, music, dance, and the visual arts to express the innate impulses of the human spirit. Major organizations in today's corporate world recognize that human intelligence "takes from many wells" and art education provides access to the deepest well (Khan & Mohd. Muzaffar & Shaik Liyakath Ali, 2016: 69).

Communication skills at this time become very important. Proper coding determines the effectiveness of the communication skill level. Lecturers are people who guide the community and every individual who lives in the community. Communication is also a resource that allows students to express themselves properly. These resources make both positive and negative contributions to the future profession for students. In other words, students use their communication skills learned from teachers, family and close circle in carrying out their profession. Communication skills have a very important place in the field of teaching art and design as in any other art teaching. The ability to communicate strongly in mental, emotional, and behavioral areas plays an important role in equipping students with skills such as transferring information and so on. Empathy, empowerment, understanding approaches in collective and individual studies will always be factors that can increase success. Successful communication will make a positive contribution to students' freedom and confidence when they show their abilities. In addition, establishing a good relationship with parents and working with them, establishing proper communication with colleagues and teachers will increase professional success (Arici, 2018: 692).

An educational institution can also be considered as an institution that has a social exchange function and which interacts with both intrinsic and extrinsic influences. Intrinsic influence gives more authority to educational institutions, while extrinsic influence is given to output (Blau, 1964: 5). Based on this, theoretically inward view is an ideal application for outward development. However, the paradoxical thing in this case is not specifically caused by art education but rather socio-cultural influences that involve various aspects of life. If education is categorized as a means or factor of intentional change, it must also be able to accept the various consequences of these changes.

Phenomena that arise in social changes that affect the relationship between art and society show more on the consumptive aspect. This problem is also supported by the development of tourism which affects the tourism economy and also determines the type of tourism industry. Things related to this tourism art refer more to pseudo traditional art or ritual art which is not real because in addition to maintaining traditional values it has also been packaged for tourism purposes (Graburn, 1976: 6).

The unfavorable impact in the development of this tourism art is the occurrence of a monopoly from a group of art managers, as is happening in Bali at this time with the emergence of tie craftsmen. In addition, in fostering creativity, it can make it easier to fall into the embodiment of expression, although it is not as vulgar when compared to what has happened during the LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* = People's Cultural Institute) period in the 1950s in Indonesia where at that time art was used for political purposes. If you pay attention to this situation, it is possible to give the formulation of relative deprivation, namely with a vertical line in the form of expectations and a horizontal line in the form of an unbalanced reality.

This psychological imbalance will be able to bring about deviations and conflicts so that it can also destabilize the joints of state life. One of the ethical approaches is the proper application in educational institutions because it tends to maintain social balance. The various alternatives offered by this approach can be divided into three, namely firstly conducting early observations on the productivity of art education, secondly by re-functioning the institutional aspects of arts and thirdly by developing educational institutions as centers for the study and development of science and technology.

The first approach was initially based on the opinion that since 1990 many students who have graduated from higher education in the arts have deviated from the skills they already have. They tend not to like to work as teachers and tend to prefer to work as designers in various companies and business fields in big cities in Indonesia. In addition, there are also graduates who become designers at the Han Kook and Noritaki Ceramics companies in South Korea and the Sango Ceramics companies in Japan. This positive development for the arts education workforce also coincided with the flexible implementation of the High School Education Personnel Products (PTKSM) by the Institute of Teacher Training and Education (IKIP) Yogyakarta in 1992. This curriculum is based on the policy of the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare No.B-192/MENKO/KESRA/-VIII/1993 dated August 10, 1993. The purpose of this curriculum is so that educational productivity can be better able to compete vertically and horizontally (Djohar, 1994: 6). Positive developments for the art and design education workforce that have occurred since the 1990s until now continue to progress. This can be seen from what was reported in various big cities in Indonesia that in 2020 many large companies such as PT. Polyfilatex Bandung, Indo Food Group Purwakarta, CV.Cahaya Tunggal Santosa Bandung and CV.Success Multi Graphics Bekasi are currently in need of a lot of workers from art and design educational institutions, especially in the field of graphic design. Likewise with PT. Pusa Asa Makmur Jaya Bandung and PT. Tata Global Sentosa Tasen Bandung, requires a large workforce of model design graduates. Furthermore, PT. Saku Karya Indonesia Bekasi and PT. Gemilang Persada Boga Bandung requires a large number of graduates from Visual Communication Design ([http:// job street.co.id/id/job-search/arts-creative-graphics-design-jobs-in – java-west](http://jobstreet.co.id/id/job-search/arts-creative-graphics-design-jobs-in-java-west)- 2022).

The second approach is to re-function the institutional aspects of art. This approach seems to tend towards conservation efforts, whether it means maintenance or efforts to sustain life. If this reaches the level of cultural cosmology, the task given is very noble. It is undeniable that this task requires the role of minority groups who have expertise in the cultural spirit of the Xth century to the XVth century. In this case, the artists on the island of Bali are considered to have played a major role in saving ancient Javanese literary works from the Majapahit kingdom. Until now, we can still find various traditions of documents in the form of inscriptions on palm leaves and written using the *pengrupak* technique.

The task of preservation becomes very difficult for art education institutions so that this task is better if it is associated with various other disciplines such as literature, anthropology, and cultural history. Re-functioning in this case is more of an effort to show various practical and study activities in the midst of community life. If it has been programmed in the curriculum subsystem, courses such as Traditional Art Studies developed at the Faculty of Language and Arts Education (FPBS) of Yogyakarta State University are examples that deserve praise compared to other art education institutions. In this course there is an assignment for students to follow the traditional learning method (*nyantrik*) to experts or masters. So in this case there is a harmony in terms of strengthening the theory that has been obtained from the teacher on the one hand and from the experts who build it on the other.

Refunctioning other arts institutions can also be done by participating in the development of arts and crafts, especially those in rural areas. It seems that this is a humanitarian task because the arts and crafts have long lived in rural areas in an effort to meet subsistence needs. As a business in the informal sector and with a low educational background, the craftsmen in the villages lack the business nature of their products so that they become less knowledgeable about marketing and developing designs that meet consumer tastes. A short-term action that was programmed to establish a Design Center was also difficult to bring in craftsmen from the countryside. This is not because they can't afford to be nurtured, but because there is a reason that if they leave their village more and more for some time, they will lose their source of income to support their family.

As a follow-up to this program, there was a change because the Design Center had to actively come to the villages on its own. So in this case the Design Center becomes a kind of Mobile Design Center that must send instructors to rural areas. This problem is also more complicated because not many of them have problems in terms of timing. To overcome this obstacle, if possible, their role will be replaced by selected art education students, who have met the criteria to be deployed to the community. With this delivery, besides being able to develop their abilities, they will also gain experience in various things related to design materials outside of lectures.

The third approach is actually the culmination of the development of an inward orientation because it is more aimed at the function of higher education institutions, especially those related to the function of the Tridharma of Higher Education concerning academic development. This development is also based on the factor of art resources obtained in various parts of Indonesia which are in fact very complex. The alternative that may be offered is only that an assessment of various aspects of art is needed. This depends again on the factors of educational institutions, especially those with a major in Art, to be willing to try to think about establishing an art study institution. The first thing that should be initiated may be to establish an art museum and library. Micro art museums, for example, display selected alumni works since the 1970s. This art museum is a place for multi-study because it can be used for scientific development and ideal creativity. Then for the study of art, if there is a mutual agreement between the interested parties, of course, by looking at the quality of it, there is a great hope that it can be realized. The practice of art practice, research and seminars by bringing in speakers from various figures including experts, culturalists and artists requires sponsorship and very expensive costs. However, it is believed that the contribution of ideas in forms like this is something that is very useful for the further development of art.

5. Conclusion

Fine arts and design education accepts different suggestions for interpretation and their possible application will be able to provide new possibilities emerging from a wide variety of art forms, perspectives and worldviews. This approach that comes from post-structuralist, deconstructive, semiotic, and postmodern theories has influenced various fields in education and the arts. This discursive theory enables the practice of critical analysis which creates new responsibilities for teachers and students. Furthermore, it is hoped that students will be able to develop and organize their agenda and also make them active recipients of information.

The traditional way of thinking about art and design education is no longer adequate because the development of art and design has undergone rapid changes along with the development of information technology and economic and cultural globalization. Art and design education which is still influenced by the concept of progressive art education that prioritizes individual expression is no longer relevant. Various global cultural discourses and theories such as postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism, multiculturalism, pluralism, postindustrial, poshistory, posauratic, the end of art history, and so on have long seeped into public discussion spaces and influenced art and design workers as well as art and design educators.

Art and design education products, among others, are able to penetrate the job market, especially the informal sectors which are more easily accessible. This is an independence that is highly expected by various parties, especially by the higher education institutions of the arts themselves. This reality does not have to directly affect factors in education, including the subject of students. However, over time art education must also improve its quality along with the rapid development of science and technology.

One of the alternative developments with inward orientation and outward outward is based on the socio-cultural conditions of the community. This is a reduction and reproduction of the thoughts of experts both with a prospective and retrospective view as described above.

From this inward orientation perspective, there is an opinion regarding the importance of fostering creativity and expression for art education. This is also a description of the various consortia that are often initiated at this time. Then the view of outward orientation is one of the ethical solutions based on the problems that have been the experience of the teaching staff in the arts education institution. Thus, to meet the demands of interrelation and

equivalence, art education does not need to make structural changes, but only by increasing its effectiveness and efficiency.

Based on a series of interviews conducted with respondents, the main problems that hinder art education are largely due to the system of placing students into the curricular stream based on the results of the national exam. Second, support from the Ministry of Education is needed to reform the current curricular and learning system for the content of art education, especially in art and design education, where the learning syllabus must contain a fair balance between learning theory and technical skills in making art objects. In addition, more art-related programs, such as art talks, comparative studies of contemporary art galleries, are needed to broaden the horizons of art knowledge among students.

However, we still hope that the problems and problems that occur in art and design education in Indonesia can be resolved through support and assistance from the government. The researcher also believes that art education has the potential to contribute significantly to cultivating creative minds for the Indonesian nation's development agenda if given the same opportunities and interests as other types of education.

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Evaluating Brand Awareness of Tea Brand with the Case of Moc Suong Oolong Tea Brand Vietnam

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Abstract

The authors aim at evaluating the brand awareness of tea brand from customer perspective with the case of Moc Suong Oolong Tea Brand Vietnam. The paper administered 200 questionnaires to 200 current and prospective consumers of Moc Suong Oolong Tea. By conducting an analysis of the data collected, the researcher identified that Moc Suong has achieved specific accomplishments. Moc Suong's brand awareness may be adversely affected by its inadequate customer service system for its Oolong Tea. Additionally, certain convenience stores and businesses do not distribute Moc Suong Oolong Tea. The product's brand awareness may be diminished due to the infrequent apparition of Moc Suong Oolong Tea at convenience shops or stores in close proximity to residential areas. Furthermore, Moc Suong Oolong Tea's advertising is severely lacking in both visual aids and content quality. Based on these findings, the authors propose recommendations for Tea Brand in general as well as Moc Suong Oolong Tea Brand in particular to improve the brand awareness of customers.

Keywords: Tea brand, Customer's Awareness, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Establishing robust brands has become a top goal for numerous firms in today's fiercely competitive market due to the proven benefits it offers. Researchers and practitioners have established the phrase 'brand awareness' to quantify the total worth of a brand. Brand awareness pertains to the ability of people to remember or recognize a brand, as well as their existing knowledge of the brand. Brand awareness is directly linked to the potency of the brand's representation in memory, as seen by the customer's capacity to recognize the brand in various circumstances. Nevertheless, as Vietnam is attracting several tea and café enterprises from outside that are active in the same sector, Moc Suong is compelled to engage in competition with them in order to retain its customer base. Based on the company's report, its consumers are switching to other tea suppliers. Customers have a variety of options available to them at the moment. First and foremost, the limited financial resources of Moc Suong provide a challenge in carrying out marketing initiatives for their Moc Suong Oolong Tea product. Furthermore, the organization lacks a thorough understanding of the significance of enhancing brand recognition and instead

prioritizes short-term goals over long-term objectives. Additionally, an important element to consider is the disparity in brand promotion across various locations. Moc Suong's business plan is to increase the profit margin by enhancing brand awareness of the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand. buyers ascribe a certain level of quality or prestige to a brand, leading them to perceive the brand's products as having a higher value compared to those created by competitors. Consequently, buyers are prepared to pay a higher price for these products. Thus, the authors want to assess the level of brand recognition for Moc Suong Oolong Tea.

2. Theoretical Background on Brand Awareness

2.1. Overview of brand awareness

Awareness, in essence, refers to individuals' perception and cognitive response to a certain situation or occurrence. Awareness does not inherently entail comprehension, as it is a conceptual notion. Awareness can be directed towards an internal state, such as an innate sensation, or towards external occurrences like sensory experience.

Marton and Booth provide excellent illustrations of awareness: Individuals possess prior knowledge and are cognizant of a particular circumstance. They possess a comprehensive understanding of their identity, the contextual factors around their situation, their geographical location, the emotional connection to the place, the current season and day, and a clear plan for the remainder of the day. Brand awareness is the progression by which a brand transitions from being merely recognized to being elevated in the minds of people, ultimately becoming the foremost brand they think of.

Anchoring refers to the process of establishing a foundation upon which subsequent associations can be built. In the context of a new product, anchoring occurs when the product must actively strive to gain recognition, as most purchase decisions require some level of understanding about the product. Furthermore, without obtaining recognition, it becomes challenging to get knowledge about the qualities and benefits of the new product. Product identification facilitates the establishment of a novel connection with the object. Consumers do not require extensive knowledge of the company; but, if they possess favorable brand awareness, they are likely to purchase the product. Brand awareness and knowledge can be influenced by the specific buying situation and can greatly impact consumers' efforts during the purchasing process. The initial milestone to achieve is the evaluation of different brands. When purchasing goods, it is important to select a range of brand options to examine, sometimes known as a 'consideration set.'

Brand awareness mostly revolves around effective communication. In this thesis, the researcher utilizes Aaker's (1991) definition of brand awareness, which states that brand awareness is a progression from mere recognition of a brand to a point where consumers prioritize the brand and it becomes the foremost brand in their minds.

Brand awareness is dependent upon both the situation and the level of achieved awareness.

Unaware of Brand → ¹ Brand Recognition → ² Brand Recall → ³ Top of Mind

Figure 1: Levels of brand awareness

Source: Aaker (1991)

Brand awareness is crucial as many consumers associate a well-known brand with high quality. Moreover, while awareness is a crucial advantage for a brand, it alone cannot effectively drive product sales, particularly when the product is newly introduced (Aaker, 1991). There is ample evidence in the literature to support the notion that brand awareness has a significant impact on customer decision-making, particularly in terms of brand selection. In their study, Lin and Chang (2003) discovered that brand knowledge had the most significant impact on purchase decisions on low involvement products, particularly in cases of habitual behavior. Hoyer and Brown (1990) conducted a study on the impact of brand awareness on consumer decision making. Their findings revealed that brand awareness was a significant and influential aspect of the decision making process. The learning advantages

impact the consumer's ability to store brand associations, which contribute to the formation of the brand's image. Increasing brand recognition guarantees that the brand will be included in the list of options when consumers are making a purchase. Furthermore, a notable benefit is that a strong level of brand recognition can directly influence the selection of brands within the range of options being considered, ultimately leading to a purchase. Brand awareness is the primary element of the brand associative network, serving as the foundation for all subsequent brand connections (Franzen et al., 1999). Establishing brand awareness is essential for building brand equity.

2.2. Literature review on brand awareness

Here, research is included from 2009 to present. The reason for this is to identify some of the most recent contributions to the field of brand awareness that others may not be aware of yet. The researcher explains previous research in the field of brand awareness and build this thesis on their experiences.

Table 1: International studies on brand awareness

Article	Industry/Product category	Findings
Chi et al. (2009)	Electronics	The relations among brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty for purchase intention are significant and positive. Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand loyalty and perceived quality will mediate the effect between brand awareness and purchase intention and brand loyalty will mediate the effects between brand awareness and purchase intention.
Clark et al. (2009)	Personal computer industry in the U.S	Advertising expenditure have a significant positive effect on brand awareness, but no significant effect on perceived quality.
Subhani and Osman (2011)	FMCG	Brand recall and recognition have no effect on intention to buy and repurchase intention (random choice of milk when purchasing).
Huang and Sarigollu (2012)	Consumer-packaged goods	Positive associations between brand awareness and brand equity. Distribution and price promotions are important in building brand awareness in a consumer-packaged goods category. The findings suggest that brand awareness closely relates to customers overall attitude toward a brand.
Malik et al. (2013)	Service sector	Brand awareness and brand loyalty have positive association with purchase intention.
Aghaei et al. (2014)	Chain stores	A strong positive and meaningful relationship between brand equity dimensions and services marketing mix in chain stores.

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

The objective of the study conducted by Khuu and Luu (2016) is to identify the elements that influence the brand awareness of Lai Vung mandarin orange among customers in the Mekong Delta region. Data was acquired directly from 150 respondents for analysis. Hence, the author's primary objective was to offer remedies for enhancing the recognition of craft villages in Quang Binh.

Trinh and Bui (2018) argue that in the current market economy and with the growing international integration, it is crucial for Vietnam's agricultural products to focus on brand building and brand recognition in order to enhance competitiveness and get access to the market. Both worldwide and domestic studies on brand awareness reveal a multitude of research on various facets of this topic, including brand awareness in the domains of food and agricultural products.

2.3. Research model

Any factor that leads to the exposure of a brand to clients can contribute to the formation of brand awareness. Repeated exposure enhances clients' brand recognition and memory. Stores frequently arrange products according to categories, and the store atmosphere helps establish a connection between brands and their respective product categories. Distribution can facilitate the establishment of connections between the brand and the product category.

The decreased selling price is more likely to accurately reflect the genuine relative value, and this unfavorable price-quality inference is likely to reduce the appeal of the deal. Nevertheless, the initial impression that customers have of the item's pricing also impacts their expectations regarding the price. Implementing a strategy of initially offering a product at a reduced price and subsequently increasing it to its standard level may have a negative impact on future sales, as customers may see the discounted price as the right value of the product. Hence, augmenting advertising typically has minimal impact on enhancing brand awareness. For brands that are already well-known, advertising may need to convey novel or distinctive information about the items, such as new product development. Yoo et al. discovered a direct correlation between advertising and the level of brand awareness. Therefore, proponents assert that customers who are repeatedly exposed to brand advertising would not only build more brand awareness and associations, but also cultivate a more favorable perception of brand quality, ultimately resulting in enhanced brand equity.

2.4. Dimensions and attributes to analyze brand awareness

The five dimensions including distribution intensity, price promotion, symbol exposure, advertising and sponsorship to analyze brand awareness of Moc Suong Oolong tea brand can be broken out into attributes as mentioned above.

Table 2: Dimensions and attributes to analyze brand awareness of Moc Suong Oolong tea brand

No.	Dimensions and attributes	Source
I	Distribution intensity	Keller (2008)
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is available at many outlets and stores.	Srinivasan et al. (2010)
2	Moc Suong Oolong Tea goes together with a good customer service system.	Huang and Sarigollu (2012)
3	I do not have to travel long distance to buy Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	Huang and Sarigollu (2012)
4	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is also sold via online channels.	Yoo et al. (2000)
II	Price promotion	Yoo et al. (2000)
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea price is not too low to decrease the value of the brand.	Huang and Sarigollu (2012)
2	Price promotions for Moc Suong Oolong Tea are separated marketing events and one promotion does not overlap another.	Huang and Sarigollu (2012)
3	I pay much attention to price promotions to Moc Suong Oolong Tea when I go shopping.	Malik et al. (2013)
4	Moc Suong Oolong Tea often goes with price promotions.	Malik et al. (2013)
III	Symbol exposure	Aaker (1991)
1	Moc Suong logo is attractive, easy-looking and different from that of other competitors.	Park et al. (2013)
2	Moc Suong slogan carries out the company's marketing message, vision and mission.	Janiszewski and Meyvis (2001)
3	Moc Suong Oolong Tea packaging is neatly, compact and even friendly environmental, making good impressions for me.	Adir et al. (2012)
4	The name of Moc Suong is unique and memorable.	MacInnis et al. (1999)
IV	Advertising	Huang and Sarigollu (2012)
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea advertisement is visually appealing and engaging.	Radder and Huang (2006)
2	Moc Suong Oolong Tea advertising message is understandable and attractive.	Aghaei et al. (2014)
3	By advertising I feel convinced I should buy Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	Yoo et al. (2000)
4	Advertising time for Moc Suong Oolong Tea is neither too long nor too short.	Lange and Dahlen (2003)
V	Sponsorship	Aaker (1991)
1	Moc Suong uses advertising and other promotional activities to support its sponsorship.	Jalleh et al. (2002)

2	I often participate in events sponsored by Moc Suong on a regular basis.	Cornwell et al. (2001)
3	The team in charge of sponsorship for Moc Suong is professional and works enthusiastically.	Radder and Huang (2006)
4	Moc Suong really cares about addressing social issues such as children and women protection, fight against school violence, etc.	Jalleh et al. (2002)
VI	Brand awareness	Chi et al. (2009)
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is a brand I know to be trustworthy.	Malik et al. (2013)
2	When given the choice between Moc Suong Oolong Tea and other Oolong Tea products, I will choose Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	Subhani and Osman (2011)
3	I will recommend Moc Suong Oolong Tea to my friends and family.	Clark et al. (2009)
4	If Moc Suong Oolong Tea is not available, I will try to find it somewhere else.	Malik et al. (2013)

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

3. Research Methodology and Analysis

Desk research and statistic research methods were used in the paper with both primary and secondary data. Theoretical framework and a hypothesis were derived from the desk research method. The primary data was collected with the sample size comprised 100 existing customers and 100 potential customers through online questionnaires conducted in January 2024. The statistic method was used for processing data and figuring out the awareness of clients.

3.1. Evaluating current Moc Suong Oolong Tea Brand Awareness

Table 3: Respondents' profile

Personal characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	93	49.20
	Female	96	50.80
Time of using	< 3 years	59	31.21
	3 – 5 years	67	35.44
	5 – 7 years ⁷	39	20.63
	> 7 years	24	12.72
Occupation	Employee	51	26.98
	Manager	43	22.75
	Self-employed	48	25.39
	Housework	22	11.64
	Others	25	13.24
Firstly, having got to know about Moc Suong Oolong Tea by	Leaflets	38	20.10
	Directly contacted by sales staff of Moc Suong	26	13.75
	Trade fairs	42	22.22
	Social media	51	26.98
	Others	32	16.95

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

Both male and female respondents have nearly the same percentage. It shows the fact that customers who care about and buy Moc Suong Oolong Tea are from both genders, which is a positive sign because the brand seems interesting and attractive to both male and female.

This is the reason why there is only 12.72% of customers who use Moc Suong Oolong Tea for more than 7 years. It comes from the fact that brand awareness of Moc Suong Oolong Tea is still weak and cannot attract potential customers to turn them into loyal customers. It can be said that both existing customers and potential customers of Moc Suong Oolong Tea do many different jobs. However, especially, people doing housework do not have high

demand for Moc Suong Oolong Tea because they have low demand for buying gifts for co-workers or superiors to maintain good interpersonal relationships at work.

Table 4: Respondents' assessment towards Distribution intensity

No.	Distribution intensity	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is available at many outlets and stores.	3.45	0.487
2	Moc Suong Oolong Tea goes together with a good customer service system.	3.25	0.925
3	I do not have to travel long distance to buy Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	3.26	0.963
4	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is also sold via online channels.	3.87	0.891
	Average mean	3.45	0.816

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

There is also standard deviation. It is a statistic that measures the dispersion of a dataset relative to its mean and is calculated as the square root of the variance. It is calculated as the square root of variance by determining the variation between each data point relative to the mean. If the data points are further from the mean, there is a higher deviation within the data set; thus, the more spread out the data, the higher the standard deviation. Online shopping is increasing year on year and is being seen as a convenient method to purchase products, where customers can also buy any product at any time of the day. Additionally, e-commerce websites allow the company to employ a range of marketing and sales techniques to give people that extra reason to stay on the company website and buy its products.

Table 5: Respondents' assessment towards Price promotion

No.	Price promotion	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea price is not too low to decrease the value of the brand.	3.71	0.928
2	Price promotions for Moc Suong Oolong Tea are separated marketing events and one promotion does not overlap another.	3.14	0.901
3	I pay much attention to price promotions to Moc Suong Oolong Tea when I go shopping.	3.74	0.781
4	Moc Suong Oolong Tea often goes with price promotions.	3.21	0.765
	Average mean	3.45	0.843

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

It is able to see that standard deviations are all low, showing the fact that the data points are nearer from the mean. Two criteria: 'Moc Suong Oolong Tea price is not too low to decrease the value of the brand.' and 'I pay much attention to price promotions to Moc Suong Oolong Tea when I go shopping.' have quite high means of 3.71 and 3.74 respectively. It means that to increase brand awareness, Moc Suong has proposed out too many price promotion programs to attract customers to buy its Oolong Tea. This is also the reason for low mean of criterion: 'Price promotions are applied by Moc Suong to its Oolong Tea at a reasonable level to increase its brand awareness'. For Moc Suong, this means that it is continually selling its product at a lower price throughout the year and offering steeper discounts to woo customers back from the competition. Over several years, this continued discounting erodes margins significantly, which in turn erodes shareholder value. It means that bad things will happen if the company relies too much on discounting.

Table 6: Respondents' assessment towards Symbol exposure

No.	Symbol exposure	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong logo is attractive, easy-looking and different from that of other competitors.	3.72	0.763
2	Moc Suong slogan carries out the company's marketing message, vision and mission.	3.71	0.925
3	Moc Suong Oolong Tea packaging is neatly, compact and even friendly environmental, making good impressions for me.	3.26	0.791
4	The name of Moc Suong is unique and memorable.	3.74	0.682
	Average mean	3.60	0.790

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

Three criteria: ‘Moc Suong logo is attractive, easy-looking and different from that of other competitors’, ‘Moc Suong slogan carries out the company’s marketing message, vision and mission’ and ‘The name of Moc Suong is unique and memorable’. This shows the fact that the company is doing a good job of improving brand awareness through symbol exposure.

Its slogan also can present the values as well as the working philosophy of the company.



Figure 2: Logo of Moc Suong

Source: Moc Suong's website (2024)

It indicates the fact that Moc Suong Oolong Tea packaging is not helpful enough in improving brand awareness for this product. It is not friendly environmental at all because it is packaged into plastic bags, which does not much differentiation as compared to other Oolong Tea brands. Moc Suong Thuy Ngoc Oolong Tea even is packed into a green bag, which is nearly the same with Cozy Van Tien Oolong Tea. Therefore, brand awareness cannot be increased among customers if Moc Suong does not provide a differentiated package for its Oolong Tea products.

Table 7: Respondents' assessment towards Advertising

No.	Advertising	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea advertisement is visually appealing and engaging.	3.23	0.832
2	Moc Suong Oolong Tea advertising message is understandable and attractive.	3.38	0.725
3	By advertising I feel convinced I should buy Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	3.21	0.681
4	Advertising time for Moc Suong Oolong Tea is neither too long nor too short.	3.71	0.931
	Average mean	3.38	0.792

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

It is able to see that standard deviations are all low, showing the fact that the data points are nearer from the mean. Criterion: ‘Advertising time for Moc Suong Oolong Tea is neither too long nor too short’ has the highest mean of 3.71. The time for each advertising piece of the company for Oolong Tea is suitable so that customers can absorb its content as well as message needed to be conveyed. Too long or too short advertising time is not good and fortunately, the company advertises its products in general and its Oolong Tea in particular in a very suitable time manner.

Criterion: ‘Moc Suong Oolong Tea advertising message is understandable and attractive.’ also has a low mean of 3.38. Therefore, it is able to say that the advertising message conveyed by the company for its Oolong Tea is not very understandable nor attractive at all. The advertising message of the product cannot present that this is a product which can help customers enjoy great taste and is very good for their health. It seems to be the fact that Moc Suong invested in traditional advertising rather than modern advertising. Therefore, its advertisement just appears on advertising channels that are not attractive to young customers at all. Social media advertising is totally ignored by the company, and that is the reason why brand awareness of Moc Suong Oolong Tea is not so good and not many customers know about the brand.

In conclusion, the time for each advertising piece of the company for Oolong Tea is suitable so that customers can absorb its content as well as message needed to be conveyed.

Table 8: Respondents' assessment towards Sponsorship

No.	Sponsorship	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong uses advertising and other promotional activities to support its sponsorship.	2.27	0.486
2	I often participate in events sponsored by Moc Suong on a regular basis.	2.19	0.817
3	The team in charge of sponsorship for Moc Suong is professional and works enthusiastically.	2.45	0.651
4	Moc Suong really cares about addressing social issues such as children and women protection, fight against school violence, etc.	2.51	0.683
	Average mean	2.35	0.659

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

The fact that all criteria have very low means. Criterion: 'Moc Suong uses advertising and other promotional activities to support its sponsorship.' has low mean of 2.27. Brand awareness can now be evaluated by analysing the number of social media shares, capturing attendees' feedback through real-time questionnaires and measuring engagement during and after the event with the help of event app analytics. However, the team in charge of organizing sponsorship events or cooperating with third parties to sponsor their events are so unprofessional and does not have basic expertise in event sponsorship. They believe that the fact they invest money into an event will immediately boost the company's sales, increase its customer base and make the brand more recognisable. In such a case, Corporate Social Responsibility has become a mandatory requirement for any modern organisation including Moc Suong. In fact, CSR helps them to identify their brand purpose and create a personality that their customers can connect with on a deeper level. In other words, almost half of the company's reputation comes from the public response to what it is doing to support the current environment.

Table 9: Respondents' assessment towards Brand awareness

No.	Brand awareness	Mean	SD
1	Moc Suong Oolong Tea is a brand I know to be trustworthy.	3.45	0.358
2	When given the choice between Moc Suong Oolong Tea and other Oolong Tea products, I will choose Moc Suong Oolong Tea.	3.21	0.871
3	I will recommend Moc Suong Oolong Tea to my friends and family.	3.71	0.689
4	If Moc Suong Oolong Tea is not available, I will try to find it somewhere else.	3.38	0.741
	Average mean	3.43	0.664

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

This is the reason why they want to recommend the product to their friends and family, which is strongly helpful in further enhancing brand awareness in the future. 'When given the choice between Moc Suong Oolong Tea and other Oolong Tea products, I will choose Moc Suong Oolong Tea.' and 'If Moc Suong Oolong Tea is not available, I will try to find it somewhere else. It comes from the weaknesses and shortcomings of Moc Suong in the work of improving brand awareness of customers towards its Oolong Tea as analyzed above.

3.2. Summary of findings

Table 10: Summary of findings

No.	Factor	Average mean	Average SD
1	Distribution intensity	3.45	0.816
2	Price promotion	3.45	0.843
3	Symbol exposure	3.60	0.790
4	Advertising	3.38	0.792
5	Sponsorship	2.35	0.659

Source: Compiled from authors (2024)

From the table above, it is able to see that standard deviations are all low, showing the fact that the data points are nearer from the mean. Specifically, Symbol exposure is the factor which has the highest mean, showing that Moc Suong conducts well in symbol exposure for its Oolong Tea. It shows customers' assessment towards those two factors is not good at all. Firstly, Moc Suong clearly recognizes the importance of online sales in selling its Oolong Tea. Secondly, price of Moc Suong Oolong Tea is rather reasonable, and customers are attracted by price promotions of Moc Suong for its Oolong Tea, shown by the fact that they pay much attention to price support programs of the company. Thirdly, the company's logo is attractive and outstanding enough to be stick into customer mind. Its slogan also can present the values as well as the working philosophy of the company. The name Moc Suong is incredible and impressive. Moc Suong Oolong Tea is also not distributed in some certain convenient shops/stores. The low frequency of appearance of Moc Suong Oolong Tea at convenience shops or stores near residential areas may lower brand awareness of this product. Thirdly, Oolong Tea of Moc Suong is not friendly environmental at all because it is packaged into plastic bags. Moc Suong Thuy Ngoc Oolong Tea even is packed into a green bag, which is nearly the same with Cozy Van Tien Oolong Tea. Fourthly, advertisement of Moc Suong Oolong Tea is poor in both visual aids and content quality. Finally, the company has not yet paid enough and suitable attention to corporate social responsibility, while the way that customers interact with brands today is changing.

4. Recommendations

Based on the current brand awareness situation of Moc Suong Oolong Tea and the company's goals for the upcoming year, some significant recommendations to improve brand awareness in Vietnam for Moc Suong Oolong Tea were proposed.

Enhancing brand recognition by creating a website. To ensure that the Moc Suong website ranks high in web search results for Oolong Tea, one may either hire a search engine optimization business or learn the procedure alone. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are crucial for building brand recognition as they provide forums for consumers to engage in discussions and share their experiences, including their purchases and preferred products. When a consumer expresses their satisfaction with the Moc Suong product and spreads the word about it, they are engaging in unpaid efforts to enhance its brand recognition. Design compelling commercials that prominently showcase the Moc Suong product and effectively communicate its unique value proposition.

If Moc Suong organizes or participates in a philanthropic event, such as a golf tournament, the company has the opportunity to publicly showcase its products to affluent consumers. Furthermore, by having the name or emblem prominently displayed in front of these potential clients, the company and its products might be perceived favorably for their charitable contributions. Another effective technique for improving brand awareness is to engage in local partnerships. Collaborate with neighboring businesses to organize shared introductory seminars or festivals. Support local sports teams through sponsorship and contribute to charitable events. Promoting the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand extensively at festivals and events will significantly benefit the brand.

An effective and well-established approach to promote the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand is by utilizing a car wrap. Car wraps are bespoke designs that can envelop the entirety of a company's vehicle. They have the ability to garner a substantial level of attention, making it an excellent method to guarantee that wherever it is present, individuals are becoming increasingly acquainted with Moc Suong Oolong Tea. Adorn the company car of Moc Suong or even the personal vehicles of staff employed with the company. Imprint the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand name on koozies, pencils, Frisbees, and other promotional products, and distribute them as giveaways during local festivals.

Organize a social media competition where participants can submit a photograph or video, and other users can cast their votes to choose the winners. Contestants will distribute the link to their acquaintances and relatives in order to acquire additional votes, so enhancing the recognition of the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand.

Certainly, the organization has the option to establish its own blog and publish content there. However, it is essential for administrators to actively share and promote Moc Suong's writings once they are published.

In order for Moc Suong Oolong Tea to establish itself as a memorable brand, it is imperative for Moc Suong to commence with exceptional storytelling. If the company is able to generate emotionally evocative and captivating narratives that establish a profound connection with people, the name of Moc Suong Oolong Tea will be etched in their memory for a long time. Initiating the establishment's exclusive industry podcast through conducting interviews with industry experts is an excellent strategy to enhance the reputation of Moc Suong while simultaneously fostering connections with other professionals in the tea sector. However, in specialized businesses with limited presence in the media, such as the tea industry, the company has the potential to establish widespread recognition.

As the competition in SEO intensifies and the available space for organic Google rankings decreases, using PPC is a strategic approach to ensure visibility of the Moc Suong Oolong Tea brand on Google. By conducting precise keyword research, the organization has the potential to get top rankings on Google for relevant search queries. Remarketing is a professional method that enhances the efficiency of brand recognition. Remarketing is the practice of displaying advertisements to those who have previously visited Moc Suong's website but did not complete a desired action, such as making a purchase or filling out a form.

5. Conclusion

An influential and optimistic brand may significantly contribute to fostering consumer loyalty, which in turn plays a crucial role in achieving a larger market share. Hence, the brand plays a crucial role in the overall success of enterprises, including Moc Suong. At a plastic producer and provider such as Moc Suong, there is an increasing urgency to improve brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality, all of which contribute to brand equity.

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Colonization and Eugenics Renewed in International Migration

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Abstract

Latin American migration to the USA and Canadian labor markets has been historically determined by economic factors as the USA pays higher salaries compared to Latin American countries. However, since 2007, increases in violence, organized crime, insecurity, political intolerance and environmental disasters in Latin America, Africa and Asia have increased the number of forced displacements of large population groups of migrants from the Global South who have migrated to Latin America looking to cross the US border. The strengthening of the border controls has limited their aspirations and countries like Brazil and Mexico are now countries of transit and also of residence for migrants. The article adopts a methodology of integrative review of migration, colonization, slavery, eugenics and racism in Latin America to analyze how the history of colonization, racism and eugenics in the region is reproduced against large population groups of Black immigrants from Haiti and Africa, who are compelled to escape a second time due to the xenophobia and racism historically reproduced in these societies. Results indicate that eugenics, racism, and xenophobia have intersected in Latin America since the formation of national states, with the acceptance of the population miscegenation and homogenization, through population engineering projects of “The Cosmic Race” in Mexico and “Racial democracy” in Brazil, which are reproduced until current days with explicit xenophobia and racism against Black migrants and refugees.

Keywords: Eugenics, International Migration, Racism, Latin America, Mexico, Brazil, Borders Control

1. Introduction

The Europe and Asia are the most attractive regions for migrants in the world, and Latin America and the Caribbean are not numerically relevant regions in the international migration framework, although their number of immigrants has doubled from 7 to 15 million in fifteen years (OIM, 2024).

Latin American migration to the USA and Canadian labor markets has been historically determined by economic factors. Salaries in the USA are from 8 to 14 times higher on average, compared to Mexico (Mexicans from a bachelor to a high school education degree, respectively) (Vega et al, 2023), and the USA is the most important destination country for migrants in the world.

The countries that most supply labor migrants are India, Mexico, Russia, and China. Mexico is ranked second in the number of emigrants in the world and the main country of transit for youth and adult male migrants from Central and South America to the North — workers looking for better jobs and higher salaries than those available in their countries of origin, are followed by their relatives looking for family reunification.

However, since 2007, increases in violence, organized crime, insecurity, political intolerance and environmental disasters in Latin America, Africa and Asia have increased the number of forced displacements of large population groups. Instead of unemployed young men, now family groups represent more than a half of the total number of immigrants from Haiti, Venezuela, Honduras and Africa in transit through and living in Mexico (SEGOB, 2017; OIM 2023, 2024). These groups first migrated to Chile or Brazil, from where they felt compelled to escape a second time due to xenophobia and racism historically reproduced in these societies. This apparent contradiction, particularly in Brazil, a country where more than a half of the population is Afro-descendant, is the reason why this article analyses the relationship between migration and the eugenics legitimization in Latin American societies.

In the state of the art, several studies analyze how Africans slavery was legitimated by Catholic church was a way to supply the indigenous labor force decimated during colonization and an excellent business responsible for the UK economic accumulation, banks and financial system. (Darien, 1995; Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007; Keynes (1931) cited in Pecchi L, Piga L, 2008; Hall, 2020). Others analyze how, between the two world wars, eugenics shaped science, social and intellectual thoughts, policies and legislation in health, social behavior and immigration control (Stepan, 1991). Latin American studies show that the large majority of the population was formed by “Blacks, Indians, mestizos, and mulattoes” (Graham, 2006; Livi-Bacci, 2006; Goebel, 2016). And even Latin American elites were not eugenically pure, but racially miscegenetic, and the predominant indigenous and/or African features could not be hidden.

In this article, racism as a construct from colonial origins until modern republics has been reproduced, and that the racial heterogeneity of Latin American population challenged eugenics principles of racial purity in the ex-colonies. And how it was transplanted by European and USA scientific to the region as an academic elegant mean of domination, compared to previous explicit colonization means of domination. And the analysis shows how miscegenation was the main Latin America contribution to eugenics development, adaptation and updating.

The article concludes that race mixing miscegenation was a construct to represent a homogeneous population and identity of the new free nations. In Mexico ‘The Cosmic Race’ was built as a miscegenation as an ideal- Hiding indigenous and Afro descendants in the national population. In Brazil, the myth of Racial Democracy was useful for Brazilian elites to represent themselves as colorblind and merciful people, while Black people continue to be victims of racism and discrimination in all the spheres of the society.

As a result, eugenics, racism, and xenophobia are intersected in Latin America based on an ideal of whitening the population. And the new trends in immigration, with the predominance of migrants from Venezuela, Bolivia, Haiti and Africa is accompanied by several episodes of explicit and violent racism exposed in communication media, and it is visible in public life and institutions in Brazil, particularly against Black migrants from Haiti and Africa. The results are presented in three sections: the first analyses the trends in migration in the world and in Latin America — particularly in Brazil and Mexico — and the main changes in legislation in Brazil and Mexico which affect the numerous flows of migrants and displaced people in these countries, in a moment of strengthening of the controls over borders through the region, as an inheritance of the history of colonization and modern eugenics in the region. The second section presents the development and main features of eugenics in Latin America focusing on miscegenation in Brazil and Mexico, and the reproduction and updating of eugenics regarding perceptions, behaviors and regulations observed in Brazil and Mexico against migrants, and particularly against Africans and Afro-descendants. The third session presents the case of Haitian and African migrants moving through Latin America and how they are discriminated and victims of violence in Brazil due their skin color, reinforcing racism, xenophobia renewing old eugenic values and practices interiorized in Brazilian population.

2. Method

This study used a narrative or integrative review of literature on many empirical findings on migration and historical studies on colonization and eugenics to address a research overview of investigation in areas which are disparate and interdisciplinary. On the one hand, books, articles, OIM and government documents were analyzed to address changes in international migration and in border controls; on the other hand, a review of racism's origin, its reproduction and perpetuation from colonization and slavery to modern eugenics in order to analyze recent xenophobia, attacks and murders against Black immigrants in Latin America, in particular against Haitians and Africans in Brazil, the country with the second largest number of Afro-descendants in the world. Integrative review analysis is useful in this case to access a broader topic that has been conceptualized differently and studied within diverse disciplines and needs to be accessed based on a combination of perspectives and empirical data. The purpose of the integrative review is not to cover all articles ever published on each topic but rather to combine perspectives to create new analytical models, to map the development of diverse research fields over time and combine with data on other topics, based on a non-systematic review of research articles, books, and other published texts and official documents. This review allows the integration of the main ideas and relationships between migration and eugenics as a guide to analyze racism against Black immigrants (Snyder, 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Trends in international migration in a context of global colonization and eugenics

Europe and Asia are the most attractive regions for international migrants, receiving more than 80 million migrants in 2020, followed by North America (59 million) and Africa (25 million). The USA is the country with the highest number of immigrants, corresponding to 15% of its total population; followed by Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, UK, UAE, France, Canada, Australia, and Spain. In contrast, Latin America has the lowest number of immigrants in the world, along with Oceania, despite it having doubled from 7 to 15 million between 2005 and 2020 (OIM, 2023).

The high level of economic and social development, employment and salaries in the North explains their capacity to attract labor from Latin America, Africa and other less developed regions.

In 2020, the USA was the country with the largest foreign-born population in the world (15% of the total population), of whom nearly 341,000 are refugees and more than 1 million are asylum seekers, mostly from Latin America, and mainly from Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Canada hosted nearly 110,000 refugees and more than 85,000 asylum seekers, mainly from Nigeria, Turkey and Pakistan. In contrast, the main source countries are India (18 million), Mexico (11 million), Russia (11 million), China (10 million), Syria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ukraine, Philippines, Spain and Afghanistan. The corridor between Mexico and the USA is the largest in the world. Mexico has the highest number of emigrants in the world — 11 million, the second largest diaspora in the world, mostly living in the USA. The next largest diasporas are Indians and, in LAC, Venezuelans (5 million) and Colombians (3 million) (OIM, 2023).

Mexico is now a destination country for international migrants, who are living there, not only crossing the country to move to the USA.

3.1.1 From adult male job seekers to families escaping from violence and disasters.

From 2012 to 2018, most of the immigrants arriving in Mexico were temporal. After 2018, conflicts and disasters increased the proportion of permanent immigrants living in Mexico to 48%, which rose to more than 50% in 2019. The higher increases are observed among refugees and humanitarian asylum seekers, who are escaping from political conflicts in Haiti and Venezuela, or from organized crime in Colombia and El Salvador.

Mexico is the main country of transit for youths and adult male migrants from Central and South America to the North. Recent migration is increasingly composed of people displaced by violence or disasters (more than a half of the total), family groups, children and women, from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

As a result, Mexico is now not only a corridor for adult job seekers in transit to the USA, but also a country of residence for Latin American and African immigrants and their families.

3.1.2 Immigrants in Mexico are not mostly poor people from Latin America and Africa.

In Mexico, temporary licenses of residence are mostly given to North Americans (15,000), Europeans and Asians (around 8,000 each), countries of origin of 31 million immigrants living in Mexico, while South Americans (17 000) and Central Americans (3,900) total 21 million. By contrast, permanent licenses are mainly given to Central Americans (26,000) and South Americans (19,800), followed by North Americans (10,700), Caribbean people (8,574), Europeans (5,278) and Asians (4,140) (OIM, 2024).

Mexico is now the country of temporal and permanent residence for fifty thousand Latin Americans, who were in transit and found difficulties to live in the USA and decided to live in Mexico with their families. However, Mexico is also a place of residence for 23 million temporal immigrants from North America and Europe, who have never been seen as a problem; on the contrary, they are welcome, even though it is resulting in the gentrification of the most valued zones in the country like Mexico City.

The narrative about immigration as a “problem” is based on a discretionary criterion. The “troublesome immigrants” are labelled by nationality, country of origin, ethnicity, race, education, labor condition and culture, in brief, according to their inferior level of development and status, as established by eugenics laws since the beginning of the 20th Century.

Only half of the immigrants are considered to be part of the “troublesome” narrative — the 210,000 South and Central Americans in transit and at the US border, are in need of social policies, budgets and support. The other half of North Americans and Europeans have always been welcome (Pérez, 2012). Immigrants who need international protection because they are escaping from conflicts and politic persecution in their countries of origin are mainly Central Americans: 69% are from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Nicaragua; and 28% are from South America — Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, as well as Caribbean countries. Those needing humanitarian support after disasters are mainly Central Americans (59%), Caribbean people (25%), Haitians, Cubans and Dominican Republicans, and South Americans (16%, mainly from Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador) (OIM, 2023).

Irregular immigration from the Global South increased dramatically after COVID-19: from 82,000 in 2020 to 310,000 in 2021 and 441,000 in 2022; three out of four of them are adult men and one quarter is women, although women, adolescents and youths are increasing proportionally (ICMPD, 2024). They are mostly coming from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, Ecuador, and Colombia; but also from other countries very far from Mexico — India, Bangladesh, China, and Nepal, crossing multiple borders to escape from violence and disasters (OIM, 2023).

In 2020, after Syria, Venezuela had the second highest number of displaced people through borders in the world. Moreover, Venezuela also has 171,000 refugees and 4 million displaced people not recognized formally as refugees in neighboring countries. Colombia is the main receiver country for Venezuelans (1.7 million). There are also 450,000 asylum seekers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras living in other countries. Additionally, 106,000 Colombians and 114,000 El Salvadoreans were displaced from their country due to conflicts and violence in 2020 (OIM, 2024; ICMPD, 2024).

3.1.3 Irregular migration exposes migrants to criminalization, trafficking and slavery

Trafficking for forced labor predominates in all types of borders crossings, representing 83% of the total who pass through official border control posts. Depending on “polleros” or traffickers, migrants are submitted to practices similar to slavery and forced labor, as well as sexual exploitation. The main sectors using abuse against migrants and forced slavery are domestic employment (30% of the victims), construction (16%), agriculture (10%), manufacturing (9%) and hospitality (8%) (OIM, 2024).

3.1.4 Strengthening Border Controls

Since COVID-19, this migration crisis escalated and the USA hardened border closures and restrictions, leading migrants to postpone their trips, to become stranded in transit in Central America and Mexico, or to opt for more risky journeys, like the Darien Gap (Colombia-Panama), one of the most dangerous migration routes in the world. The employment of traffickers, mobility restrictions like the disrupting of asylum processes, and resettlement programs force migrants to remain in makeshift camps, and few countries facilitate the return and repatriation of those stranded abroad (Lucio et al., 2023).

The Mexican government has been forced to strengthen border controls in the North (Mexico/USA border) and in the Southeast (Mexico/Guatemala border). The use of military personnel at the border is growing, even detaining and expelling migrants with excessive use of force (SEGOB, 2017).

The authorities of Guatemala and Mexico returned 2,000 migrants to Honduras and the number of migrant arrests in Mexico increased from 8,500 in 2019 to 13,500 in 2020. The last decades have been characterized by regulations and policies to contain migration and a lack of effective protection for migrants (2001-2018).

A bilateral agreement between Mexico and the USA in 2000-2006 promoted the containment of migrants in transit and a new agreement from 2006-2012 established a policy based on two main goals: national security and the fight against the organized crime. Checkpoints were installed at the borders and the militarization of the southern border got stronger, with stricter control and the involvement of security forces.

The Mérida Initiative (2008), agreed with President Obama included an anti-immigrant policy, with equipment for registration of people at the border between Guatemala and Mexico, in what was considered an intervention in the international relations.

After denunciations of disrespect of human rights principles, between 2012-2018 a new national security paradigm of containment was implemented, influenced by the USA, based on two objectives: the management of migratory flows and the respect and guarantee of the human rights of migrants. However, in practice, the number of arrests and deported people increased, migrants' human rights were not respected, with the denunciation of several abuses and attacks, robberies, kidnappings, extortions, sexual violations, and murders against migrants.

In 2019, the current government assumed power in Mexico and the federal government's migration policy was included in regional development projects to generate employment and rights, to integrate migrants into the labor markets. Migrants who participated in caravans received a Visitor Card for Humanitarian Reasons (TVRH).

However, the implementation by the US government of section 235(b)(2)(c) of its Immigration and Nationality Act (SRE, 2018), established that asylum seekers in the United States must wait for their process in Mexico; a high number of foreigners detained by US at the border, crossing without documents, was the excuse to pressure the Mexican government with the threat of an increase in tariffs for all imports from Mexico, from five to 25 percent.

Mexico was forced to sign a “joint” declaration to take measures to reduce irregular migratory flows, deploying the National Guard on the border in the south, dismantling a caravan of Central American, Caribbean and African migrants, although respecting their human rights.

In Central America, migration from and through the northern areas became more difficult, due to restriction controls, economic insecurity, violence, crime and the effects of climate change. At the end of 2020, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador had nearly 900,000 forcibly displaced people living within or outside their territories. Of them, more than half a million had crossed several borders, and an enormous majority (79%) were living in the United States of America.

Since 2018 migrant caravans, cross-border collective flows of migrants by land have increased in number and frequency, increasingly comprised of families, women and children. In 2021 only, 226,000 migrants from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador arrived at the border with the USA in caravans, about 34,000 of whom were unaccompanied minors (Vega et al, 2003). The USA and Mexican governments strengthened their border controls and the military personnel at the border, detaining and expelling migrants. The same happened at the Southern border Mexico-Guatemala. The authorities of Guatemala and Mexico returned 2,000 migrants to Honduras, as well as the number of migrant arrests in Mexico increased from 8,500 in 2019 to 13,500 in 2020.

In the Caribbean, the corridor from Cuba and the Dominican Republic to the USA is one of the most important in the region — in 2020, there were 860,000 migrants. 200,000 Venezuelans lived in the Caribbean, in 2021: Dominican Republic (100,000), Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Curaçao (10% of the total population).

In South America, 80% of migrants are intraregional. More than 5 million Venezuelans emigrated since 2015, of whom more than 4 million moved to South America in an irregular situation to neighboring countries: Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Ecuador. The governments need to adapt their legislations; Colombia offered temporary protection for the next 10 years, Brazil and Peru granted humanitarian visas (OIM, 2023).

Violence fueled by paramilitary groups in Colombia caused more than 100,000 new displacements in 2020, with an increase of 177% in 2021. In 2020, rains in Brazil caused about three-quarters of the year's 358,000 disaster displacements. As a result, 80% of South American migrants are intraregional migrants and this is increasing, almost equaling the number of South Americans living outside Latin America, due to tightening immigration policies and increasing employment opportunities, proximity and reduced transportation costs.

The regularization of displaced Venezuelans is the major challenge for South American countries. Since 2015, more than 5 million Venezuelans emigrated, and more than 4 million have moved to other countries in South America as irregular migrants: Colombia (more than 1.7 million), Peru (more than 1 million), Chile (about 460,000) and Ecuador (more than 360,000) (OIM, 2023).

The large influx of immigrants has been a challenge for the issuance of visas and the granting of asylum. In 2020, Brazil and Peru were granting humanitarian visas to a substantial proportion of Venezuelans, but many remain in an irregular situation. Colombia offered temporary protection for the next 10 years to displaced Venezuelans. In Argentina and Chile, women outnumber South American migrant men, working predominantly in domestic service and caring for the elderly.

These new trends in the arrival of irregular immigrants from the region, Africa and Asia in transit and living in Latin America have challenged governments, institutions and the population. Politicians, the media and the societies have renewed old narratives about the foreigners as a security risk, a threat, and competitors in the labor market, adopting dehumanizing and abusive discourses and behaviors against them.

Haitians, Venezuelans, Hondurans and Africans first migrate to Chile or Brazil, but they must escape a second time due to Xenophobia and racism. This reaction against specific groups of immigrants renewed the eugenic assumption of racial inferiority and superiority, and the need to control and restrict the considered “problematic” immigrants — the genetically undesirable targeted ethnic-racial population groups and nationalities.

3.2 From colonization to modern eugenics, from European colonizers to privileged creole diaspora in modern States.

Latin America's racial mixture is a unique feature of the political and social landscape. Interracial descentance was necessary to reproduce the few colonizers, a minority of European single men (Pérez, 2012). During colonization, indigenous women were raped and kidnapped to produce mixed children with European origin and identity (Darien, 1995), alongside indigenous genocide and enslaved Africans being trafficked to Latin America for three centuries.

In the context of the Seven Years' War 1756/73, European Empires fought to establish control over Silesia, North America and India; France and Spain lost dominance to Britain, changing the European balance of power. Spain recognized the land ownership of the American Creoles (1759), but in sequence, the English colonial troops in North America invaded Dominica (1761), Havana, and other Caribbean islands. (Baugh, 2011).

Spain was progressively weakened and then, occupied by Napoleon troops (1808/1830) (Webster and Magdoff, 2024). Conflicts and rebellions for independence broke out in Venezuela and Mexico and then, inspired by the USA independency, spread throughout the region.

Antislavery and independence's leaders from the Creole elite (Navarro, 2023) mobilized the population to confront colonial forces and, in the second half of the 19th century, achieved independence -- the Haitian Revolution was followed by Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Central American countries, Bolivia, and Brazil. Mexican indigenous actively participate in the twelve years independence war (Von Wobeser, 2011).

The new independent nations continued influenced by the intellectual and philosophical movements in Europe and the USA. And the new liberal republics continued with economies based on mineral and agriculture exportation, deep inequalities and the majority of the population -- indigenous and Afro descendent groups, excluded from development and citizenship, although developing national identities based on diverse and original cultures, arts and traditions.

During the first two decades, marked by conflicts, the Great War (1914-1918), and the fall of three royal empires -- Austria (1918), Russia (1917) and Ottoman (1922), whose colonies were in conflict and achieving independence: Portugal, Mongolia, Albania, Tibet, Finlandia, Estonia, Islandic, Polonia, Hungry, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Right away, one of the deadliest pandemics (the Spanish flow 1918-20) and the economic depression broke out in Europe (1920-21), as well as the economic crash of 1929, and the 2nd World War. (Webster and Magdoff, 2024).

For two decades Europeans were escaping from war, destruction and poverty, moving to the ex-colonies (Pérez, 2012), recently rebelled and liberated in bloody wars against European domination. There is a general consensus that European emigration increased, above all, from a double impulse, the pushing European crisis and, on the one hand, the pulling America's economic growth.

In contrast to crisis, conflicts, wars and epidemics in Europe, Latin American new republics guaranteed stability and new opportunities. During the 18th century, migrations from Europe to the Ibero-American colonies grew significantly. A large European diaspora composed by thousands of Spaniards, Portuguese and other Europeans moved in search of enrichment, a better life and lands. Latin American population doubled between 1850 and 1900 (from 30 and a half million to almost 62 million). In 1920 there were about 2 and a half million Spaniards, the majority of poor origins and illiterate (Pérez, 2012; Goebel, 2016).

Despite the massive immigration, European and their descendants continued being a minority among large non-European hostile populations. Even as a minority, European men, even those who were part of the lowest occupational strata, were part of the dominant group in the colonial relationship, integrating Latin American elites, defining political, military and social transformations, or simply accessing discretionally the best professional

positions since the colonial time, as colonizers, until the independence process as creole, and in new republics as European descendants and new immigrants.

During this period, Europe progressively lost the profitable slavery commerce, colonies, and the colonial geopolitics power around the world, while developed the social Darwinism and positivism, (Stern, 2016). Eugenics was created in Britain and the USA as a pseudoscience and, in the early 19th century, was legitimated in Europe and exported to the colonies. In the early 19th Century, European intellectuals implanted the supremacist myth in Latin American universities and curricula, in policies, law and medicine, in intellectual and scientific environment and media. For decades Eugenics oriented the development goals of governments and elites through international diasporas and networks, as an efficient neocolonial tool of European dominance, reinforcing the narrative of inferiority to submit the majority – the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in the ex-colonies.

In the next session we discuss the eugenics history and legacy in Latin America, with focus on immigration, xenophobia and the selective and affirmative policy of privileges and quotas for European

3.2.1 Eugenic racial purity and cleaning populations

Racism against indigenous and Afro-descendant people was created in Europe in parallel with colonization, implemented directly by the Cristian churches, whose religious authorities legitimized the inhuman and soulless condition of the non-Europeans. In Modern Europe, while the colonizers were consolidating the values of equality, fraternity and liberty for all their citizens (Selfa, 2002), in America, the conquerors adopted strategies of war, slavery, and over-exploitation of the original populations, resulting in massive reductions in indigenous populations and even the extinction of some groups (Livi-Bacci, 2006).

To supply the indigenous labor force, since the first decades of the 14th Century, European kingdoms promoted the trafficking of millions of enslaved Africans — an excellent business responsible for the UK economic accumulation, banks and financial system consolidation and industrialization (Darien, 1995; Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007; Keynes (1931) cited in Pecchi L, Piga L, 2008; Hall, 2020). As a result, in some Latin American countries there were fifteen Africans to each European: in colonial Buenos Aires, Lima and Mexico City almost one half of the population was African, in contrast to the vast majority in the Caribbean and Brazilian plantation economies, where this population lived under cruel laws and treatment, forced inter-racial intercourse and marriages predominant in local practices (Darien, 1995).

In the 18th century, values of equality and rights inspired the American Independence and the French Revolution, in contrast with Africans' trafficking and slavery — the highly profitable business that could not be interrupted, but reframed. Instead of previous religious beliefs and values on the "soulless" Africans, the modern science of human races targeted non-Europeans as sub-humans, with inferior phenotypes, intellectual capacities and moral values. From 1860 to the first half of the 1900s, modern institutions, laws, curricula and policies were created to disseminate eugenics' values, criteria, classification and policies around the world (Selfa, 2002; Klein & III, 2007). From Hume and Thomas Jefferson in the United States to British intellectuals and decision-makers supplanted the medieval-Christian "royal blue blood" with the modern-scientific "upper racial blood" to legitimate social control and inequalities.

The eugenics' framework and policies aimed to "improve the innate qualities of the human race" through "creative selection," preventing the reproduction of the inferior people or "parasites" — through sterilization, isolation, prohibition of interracial marriage and offspring, as well as controlling immigration of the "bad species" — with bad physical and mental gifts, disabled, malformed, mentally ill, black, degenerate, immoral, criminal, and undesirables, who should be "gradually eliminated for the goodness of humanity and the future generations". (Galton, 1904; Kuhl, 2002; Black, 2003; Weiss, 1986; Taussing, 1911, as cited in Cohen, 2016).

In the USA, the "Lethal Selection" was cited in a book proposing the execution or destruction of people with infections or physical disability (Popenoe, 1918, as cited in Black, 2003), as well as the "lethal chamber" or gas chambers operating in public places. However, "the American society was not prepared for an organized lethal

solution” and, instead, many eugenic institutions and doctors adopted the old colonial practices used against the indigenous: offering milk from tuberculous infected cows to patients, neglecting the care of newborns, forced segregation, sterilization and restrictions on marriage (Black, 2003; Cohen, 2016).

Between the two world wars, after Hitler’s rise to power and radicalized policies to promote the pure and superior race while eliminating the bad-inferior races and elements, eugenics was legitimized and disseminated in the USA and Europe by international organizations and pressure groups, in connection with other modern values — nationalism, racism, sexuality and gender control, social hygiene, and modern genetics (Stepan, 1991).

In 1928, eugenics was an official discipline offered in 376 university courses at major schools in the United States to more than 20,000 students, and critics of eugenics were rare. (Kimmelman, 2007; Kuhl, 2002). As an international project of population engineering, by 1930, eugenics had been accepted by thirty countries under local scientific, cultural, institutional, and political conditions in all scientific disciplines. (Bowler 1984; Adams, 1990). With great public acceptance, eugenic legislation, policies, and curricula were officially reproduced by the elites of scientists, intellectuals, and decision-makers, as well as internalized by populations.

After the Second World War, Nazi crimes against humanity were condemned, eugenics fell into disgrace and came to be frowned upon, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was approved. However, after decades of scientific and popular legitimation, eugenics was already internalized in the political and intellectual elites and in the population, and continued to be reproduced in medicine and genetics, in laws and justice, in policies and communication media, in population beliefs, attitudes and practices.

3.2.2 Eugenics - a more civilized and pseudoscientific mechanism of colonization

In the ex-colonies, Eugenics was a modern, more civilized and elegant mean of domination, compared to previous explicit colonization means like war, rapes, slavery, and catechization.

In the first decades of the 20th Century, Italian and French eugenicists promoted Lamarckian eugenics in Latin America, training scientists and implementing sanitary systems, urbanization, public health, vaccination, child and maternal health. Some decades later, the Anglo-German eugenics or Mendelism (Stern, 2016) was financed and disseminated by the USA, and Harvard professors moved to regions to reform universities’ curricula mainly in Law and Medicine, followed by policies and laws.

Between the two world wars, eugenics movements were multiplied within the whole region, shaping science, social and intellectual thoughts, policies and legislation in health, social behavior and immigration control, as well as offering courses on genetics and the Pan American conferences until the 1940s. The International Latin Federation of Eugenics Societies was founded in 1935, followed by the creation of eugenics societies in Mexico, Peru and Brazil. Several delegates from twenty Latin American countries participated in an international meeting. Eugenic policies updated and renewed some colonizer privileges and imbalanced power over the local population through discretionary selection of immigrants accessing governments and positions in the economy, qualified employment, interracial marriage, land and housing expropriation.

3.2.3 Latin American mixing race is not eugenically pure: A mixed, but whitening population.

Latin American racial heterogeneity challenged eugenics principles of racial purity. In the new republics, the elites in power imagined and aspired to be Europeans and even Nordics. They made efforts to establish economic, social and family ties primarily with these regions, adopting liberalism and overpowering influence to survive as a minority, to achieve social mobility, and to justify their local dominance over a large majority of “Blacks, Indians, mestizos, and mulattoes” (Graham, 2006). Even Latin American elites were not eugenically pure, but racially miscegenetic, identifying themselves as a minority of superior European descendants managing numerous races in the ex-colonies.

A pure White supremacy was not immediately possible, the predominant indigenous and/or African features could not be hidden, and miscegenation was recreated from the past by force and racial agreements among different original population groups and multiple diasporas, always preserving European racial superiority and privileges.

The eugenic principle of racial purity must be put aside, and overcome with a proxy, a eugenic adaptation – a homogeneous mixed population but with an aspiration of purity in the future — something to be built in due course with engineering population policies. Eugenics was adapted to value miscegenation instead of racial purity, in a moment when the new nation-states and national identities were the main formative components after the independence. Latin America contributed to eugenics development, adaptation and updating (Stepan, 1991).

Race mixing miscegenation was a construct to represent a homogeneous population and identity of the new free nations. However, White supremacy should be preserved and reproduced in the eugenics engineering project and, for that, a racial mixing scale coexisted as a mechanism to continue building racial superiority and oppressing those perceived as inferior, remarking power limits and inequalities among classes and ethnic-racial groups. In the absence of racial purity, some racial mixtures are better than others: the most European is on the top, followed by mixed, indigenous and, on the bottom, Africans. The racial scale of preferences builds a homogeneous mixed population aspiring to progressively whiten in the future.

The same population policies were reintroduced with new faces: miscegenation privileging whiter offspring, selective population control to limit non-White reproduction, and migration of the “best” desired groups — Western Europeans.

Racial mixture in Chile, Argentina, and even in Brazil, claims to racial homogeneity and, also, to a superiority relative to the rest of Latin America.

3.2.4 The Mexican ‘The Cosmic Race’. Miscegenation as an ideal- Hiding indigenous and Afro descendants

The Mexican transition to independence was achieved by a twelve-year war. The first three decades were marked by several coups’ d’état, a monarchy with a self-proclaimed emperor, revolts, struggles for power between conservative and monarchy groups versus republicans supported by the United States, an intervention of the USA, and the constitution establishing a federalist republic. Mexico had two French interventions, one of them after the Independence, with a European emperor named by Napoleon.

During the following period, the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), intellectuals adopted positivism and social Darwinism to envision a Europeanized society looking for whiteness in phenotype and culture. Indigenous, African, or Asian ancestry were roadblocks to progress and should be excluded or wholly absorbed into a whitening body politic.

The revolutionary literati Andrés Molina Enríquez rejected the veneration of whiteness and instead elevated the mestizo as the superlative racial type.

The 1910 revolution had massive participation of indigenous people and women. Mexico started the 20th Century as a laic and secular post-revolutionary State, that faced the Catholic obstacles and resistance against political changes. Reconciled with the emergence of modern eugenics since 1920, the revolutionary government adopted the Vasconcellos’s vision of a homogeneous population, the mestizo as the “cosmic” race, born out of the fusion of Caucasian, Indian, and African peoples. Homogeneity resulted in an unofficial but real marginalization of the indigenous and non-acculturated mestizos. The indigenous population was assimilated into the homogeneous race and development project. Indigenous languages and cultures were hidden and seen to be inferior by the mestizo ideal of a homogenized race and development project (Stavenshagen and Carrasco, 1988). Moreover, Mexico was the only country in the region to adopt national health and sterilization policies and, since 1932, children have continuously received sex education at school (Adams, 1990). Although Mexico received the third largest group of enslaved Africans in America, this population group was denied in The Cosmic Race, and only since 2015 have they been identified in the census.

3.2.5 Brazilian Racial Democracy. A paradise for Whites, a burning hell for Black people.

Brazil has the largest and longest-lasting slavery system in the Americas, characterized by plantations economic system and, after abolition, Black people continued in subaltern positions. Until the 1950s Brazil was defined by scholars, governments, and international agencies (UNESCO) as a Racial democracy: “a racial system without any legal or institutional obstacles for racial equality... without prejudice or discrimination”.

Gilberto Freire identified racial “zones of confraternization,” using as example that White settlers had sex with Black enslaved women and, consequently, by miscegenation... “there were cases of pure confraternization between the sadism of the white settler and the masochism of indigenous and Black women”, that would decrease the social distance between Black and White people, promoting harmony between races and creating an inclusive democratic system — the racial democracy.

Brazilian elites used these ideas to represent the nation as a land of progress, where “advanced” inhabitants had eliminated “backward prejudices.” Brazilian elites portrayed themselves as colorblind and merciful people, who were even willing to have sex with “them”.

However, currently, Black people are still the main target of homicides: 75% of people murdered are Black, mainly youths. Violence against Black women in the country increased 54% between 2015 and 2020. White people represent 70% of the wealthiest Brazilians, while Black people represent 75% of the poorest ones. Structural racism is denied by the elites and explicit in everyday news, in all the institutions, and in daily family and social life.

3.2.6 Brazilian “racial democracy” denies racism.

At the end of the nineteenth Century Brazilian government financed the immigration from Europe. After the abolition of slavery, European workers arrived to work in the new economy in a process of technification and pre-industrialization, combined with a project of Eugenic engineering of whitening the nation. Eugenics was institutionalized and internalized universally in the intellectual networks, universities, in policies and among the population.

Until today Brazilians don't declare themselves as Black: only 5% in 1991 declared being Black and, after 30 years of affirmative policies, the proportion of self-declared Blacks has doubled and achieved only 10% in 2022. The proportion of people who declare themselves as mixed/pardo increased from 38% to 45%, and White self-declared decreased from 52% to 43%. Being Black is the worse situation on the social scale, and therefore, the population resists assuming black skin-color and phenotype.

During the military dictatorship (1964-1980), migrants were classified in the National Security law, considered invaders and dangerous. In 1980, a Foreigners Statute was approved considering migrants to be a security threat to the country, and only qualified migrants were welcome and authorized to live in the country.

After strong mobilizations and the approval of a new Migration Law, the terms “refugees” and “asylum seekers” were included in legislation, in concordance with the human rights approach. The new law substituted the term “foreign” by “immigrant” and established their right to access public policies, organizations, humanitarian support, following the international framework of the UN.

3.3 *Brazilian racial democracy, xenophobia and racism against indigenous and Afro-descendant migrants from Latin America and Africa*

With the increasing political conflicts and disasters around the world, Brazil assumed the role of both route of transit and destination for migrants from the Global South. Migrants were more numerous and facing inflexible border controls, criminalization, racism and xenophobia in the North, and escaping through Latin America and the Caribbean region. In the last two decades, the immigrants' profile changed: Caribbean people, Africans and Asians arrived, mainly Haitians, Venezuelans, Senegalese, Bolivians, Colombians, and Bengalis.

However, eugenics and the criminalization of Black people were internalized in the population, and xenophobia and racism have always been present.

After the coup d'état, in 2017, the authoritarian governments organized anti-immigration protests in Sao Paulo asking for a New Law of Migration, accusing immigrants of being rapists and bandits. In 2019, the migratory policy again adopted the perception of immigrants as a problem of national security, Brazil left the UN Global Agreement for a Secure Migration of the UN, and migrants were considered dangerous, when exposed to be summarily deported, renewing eugenic policies of discretionary acceptance and rejection of migrants, according to their country of origin and race.

3.3.1 The Haitian crisis, 2010 earthquake and current violence, moving to Brazil, Chile, Panama and Mexico.

After the earthquake in 2010 in Haiti, facing the destruction of infrastructure around the country and particularly in the capital, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced to live in refugee camps and several increased emigration flows to North and Latin America occurred. This trend continued and was reinforced with a recent crisis of political and civil violence. In 2020 there were 15,000 Haitian migrants at the US-Mexico border, suffering restrictions, coercion, and inhuman treatment. Thousands of people spent days under the bridge that connects the Mexican and US sides. As soon as the border restrictions of the pandemic were lifted, hundreds of thousands have spread across the Americas over the past 24 years: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Panama, even crossing the dreaded Darién Gap between Panama and Colombia. Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico have become receiving countries and granted humanitarian visas and residence visas to displaced people from Haiti, but Panama has strengthened the controls at the Darien border with Colombia and the proposal to build a wall to stop migration was an important topic in the elections in 2024.

3.3.2 *Haitians large transit in LAC to USA*

Haitians migrated firstly to Brazil, then from Brazil to Chile, then from Chile to Colombia, and then to Panama. In Colombia, Panama and other Central American countries, the governments and populations pushed them towards the north, supporting their trip to leave the country. That is the opposite situation, in contrast with the immigration of retired and investor immigrants from the north.

Haitians' invisible migrant status is tied to structural racism and discrimination, including Brazil or Chile, where migrants were also displaced, for a second time. Their double condition of being migrants and refugees implies a double or triple vulnerability of migrants of African descent.

It is not surprising that Haitians and Africans are discriminated against in Brazil, a country of which half of the population is of African descent. Xenophobia and discrimination are not due to language -- they speak neither Portuguese nor Spanish, nor is it because they aren't national citizens. The French have never been discriminated against in Latin America. African migrants also suffer discrimination due to their country of origin and because of their skin color – black (Cogo and Silva, 2019).

3.3.3 *Haitians cross several countries suffering racism and xenophobia.*

In the 2000s, Haitian, Congolese, Bengali and Senegalese accelerated immigration to Brazil.

A group of Senegalese lives in the city of Niteroi, State of Rio de Janeiro, where they built family and community networks supporting arriving and transiting Senegalese migrants with the integration process in the community, working in precarious jobs, finding a house, establishing social and institutional contacts, getting formal documentation, mediating tensions and contradictions, and facing racism. In the process of control and selectivity of the “desired immigrants”, according to their qualification and race conducts, Brazil reproduces eugenic policies and beliefs.

In 2012, Cuban doctors were contracted to work in marginalized communities, but at the airport, they were attacked by a group of Brazilian doctors who organized a violent protest, accusing the Cubans because they were Black and they “don’t look like doctors, but like domestic workers.”

Silva et al. (2024) identifies the phases of contact between the Brazilian and Haitian populations: In 2004, Brazil commanded a UN mission to stabilize Haiti – MINUSTAH, the 2010 earthquake started the greater migration process and Brazilian government opened opportunities with an easy legal registration of migrants.

4. Discussion

Cogo and Silva (2019) describe how racism is explicit in coverage by the Brazilian media, when analyzing six events related to Haitian immigration between 2014 and 2016, which relates the presence of Haitians in Brazil with veiled or explicit racism, selectivity in the treatment of different migratory groups in the country and the ties between racism and xenophobia, and between migrations and the domestic political situation.

UN analyses of cases of racism and xenophobia against Haitians in Brazil registered by communication media confirm this trend: In 2015 a Haitian was beaten in the street in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, when he was approached by a group of eight men who soon began kicking him, mainly in the face.

In 2017, a Haitian was killed in Porto Alegre with a knife in a guesthouse where he lived.

In 2019, a shop whose owner organized a support network for migrants was attacked with bombs in the city of Sao Paulo; and another man was beaten when he was working in the streets of Manaus. In 2020, a Haitian was beaten and killed in the State of Sao Paulo, and another was beaten to death in Manaus.

In 2024, 46,000 refugees live in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, most of them are Venezuelans, Haitians and Cubans. The heavy rains in this state displaced almost 10% of the population (850 422) in three hundred and forty-five municipalities, who moved to shelters provided by the government. Haitians and Venezuelans affected by the floods reported xenophobia and racist behavior in the shelters where they sought protection as victims of the disaster. The UNUR confirmed that these reports of xenophobia cases are not isolated: “Food is mainly being served raw... children who are not eating because the food is being raw. ...refugees receive only one toothbrush per family... Clothes and other hygiene materials are not equally distributed among the homeless. ...They are not giving bottles of water”.

Eugenics, racism, and xenophobia have intersected in Latin America since the formation of national states, with the acceptance of the population miscegenation and homogenization, through population engineering projects of ‘The Cosmic Race’ in Mexico and ‘Racial democracy’ in Brazil, which are reproduced until current days with explicit xenophobia and racism against Black migrants and refugees.

Several episodes of explicit and violent racism are exposed daily in the communication media, and it is visible in public life and institutions in Brazil, against migrants from Haiti and Africa.

Even in a situation where the federal government promotes equality and the law protects Black and migrant people from discrimination and racism, the population reproduces racist and eugenic behaviors, and some local officials adopt the eugenic logic of criminalization of migrants, in particular Afro-descendants who are not desirable in the whitening project of the nation.

The inheritance of colonization and slavery as well as modern eugenics has a continuity in the present, through the belittling and criminalization of Black people, that can be observed also against immigrants who are Afro-descendants, particularly against those with the darkest skin colors, who are not only a threat as foreigners, but also a threat against the eugenic project of mixing races, but only to improve the population through whitening the population.

5. Conclusion

Eugenics continues to reproduce the belittling of Black people inherited from colonization and slavery, but hidden behind a scientific base, not to be seen as explicitly cruel, but justified and legitimate in modernity with a new legitimization to do the same in democratic states. Black immigrants are targeted as foreign undesirable groups when crossing borders and countries in the region, where the history of colonization, slavery, racism, and eugenics survives in societies with speeches, perceptions, attitudes and relational behaviors against the “others” who are seen as a threat against the whitening eugenic population project and aspirations.

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A Brief Literature Review of Fatigue in Lower-income Countries: Afghanistan

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Abstract

Fatigue does not have a universal definition. In multiple medical literature, fatigue is described as a feeling of tiredness, weakness, and lack of energy. Fatigue has various types, and it is classified into multiple forms based on duration, nature, and cause. For example, fatigue can be defined as physical manifestations, mental fatigue, or a combination of physical and mental fatigue. People with fatigue may have different symptoms, including physical exhaustion, cognitive impairment, emotional instability, decreased motivation, and difficulties concentrating or performing daily tasks adequately. It is essential to manage fatigue appropriately. In lower-income countries like Afghanistan, fatigue can be caused by various factors, including inadequate sleep, excessive physical or mental exertion, stress, poor nutrition, medical conditions, medications, or lifestyle habits. Effective fatigue management involves addressing underlying causes, maintaining healthy lifestyle habits, prioritizing self-care, and seeking professional help to improve overall well-being and energy levels so people can function appropriately. The purpose of this review is to highlight the etiology, common types, and management of fatigue in lower-income countries like Afghanistan.

Keywords: Fatigue, Lower-Income Countries, Types of Fatigue, Etiology of Fatigue, Management of Fatigue

1. Introduction

In medicine, the term fatigue is used to describe a condition when an individual has difficulties performing an activity (subjective sense of weakness), diminished concentration, and experience subjective description of brain fog (UptoDate, 2024). In practice, in different cultures, patients might describe fatigue in situations where they feel excessive daytime sleepiness and lack of energy (Mota & Pimenta, 2006). According to Van't Leven et al. (2010), people can experience symptoms associated with fatigue that last for less than six months (short-term fatigue) or more than six months (chronic fatigue). Study results on the prevalence of fatigue vary from 4.9% to 67.9% among the general population (Moreh et al., 2010; Van't Leven et al., 2010). Variations in the prevalence of fatigue can be due to gender, age, socioeconomic status, and cultural differences (Galland-Decker, 2013). Once

fatigue is defined, it is necessary to investigate the possible etiologies of fatigue, specifically in low-income countries.

2. Etiology of Fatigue in Lower-income Countries

The etiology of fatigue in developing countries like Afghanistan is multifactorial, with its nature and influence resulting from various socio-economic factors specific to the culture and challenges found in lower-income countries (Smartt et al., 2016). For instance, a study by Sadeghniiat-Haghighi & Yazdi, (2015) on fatigue indicated that many lower-income countries like Afghanistan have labor-intensive industries with long working hours, poor working conditions, and inadequate health and safety standards, which can cause high levels of fatigue among workers, affecting their productivity, health, and overall well-being.

Other common causes of fatigue are infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, human deficiency virus, dengue fever, and parasitic infections, which are common in many lower-income countries (Chang et al., 2023; Coyle et al., 1994; Hickie et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2022). According to Rashid (2004) 43% of deaths from infectious diseases happen in lower- and middle-income countries like Afghanistan. Infectious conditions can lead to fatigue due to the body's immune response to infections, as well as the direct effects of the pathogens on energy levels (Yang et al., 2019).

Poor hygiene and lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities can lead to waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid fever. These conditions can cause dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, and fatigue (Gonzalez et al., 2019; Semrad, 2012). Moreover, in lower-income countries, a lack of proper diet results from inadequate access to food, poor dietary diversity, and micronutrient deficiencies, which are common causes of fatigue (Seligman et al., 2010). According to Fagbamigbe et al. (2022) the prevalence of underweight is 16% in urban areas and 30% in rural areas of lower- and middle-income countries. Poor diet and malnutrition can lead to fatigue, weakness, and reduced physical and mental energy levels in lower socioeconomic populations (Ma et al., 2022).

Another possible cause of fatigue may be iron deficiency anemia (IDA). IDA is widespread in lower-income countries, particularly among women and children (World Health Organization, 2024). According to the World Health Organization (2024) anemia is commonly prevalent in lower- and middle-income countries with 40% children, 37% pregnant women, and 30% women aged 15-49 years. IDA can cause fatigue, weakness, dizziness, and reduced capacity for physical activity due to the body's decreased ability to transport oxygen to tissues, causing fatigue in anemic population (Azzolino et al., 2020; Azzolino et al., 2021). See Table 1 for other causes of fatigue.

Table 1: Causes of Fatigue

Cause	Symptoms	Physical Exam	Laboratory
Congestive heart failure	Dyspnea on exertion, orthopnea, leg swelling	S3 gallop, inspiratory rales, elevated jugular venous distension, peripheral edema	Chest radiograph, echocardiogram
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	Dyspnea, chronic cough, sputum production	Evidence of hyperinflation, wheezing, rales	Chest radiograph
Sleep apnea	Snoring, interrupted breathing during sleep	Obesity, hypertension	Sleep study
Endocrinologic/metabolic			
Hypothyroidism	Cold intolerance, weight gain, constipation, dry skin	Bradycardia, goiter, slow deep tendon reflex relaxation phase	Thyroid function tests
Hyperthyroidism	Heat intolerance, weight loss, diarrhea, moist skin	Tachycardia, goiter, ophthalmopathy	Thyroid function tests
Chronic renal disease	Nausea/vomiting, mental status changes, decreased urine	Hypertension, peripheral edema	Renal function tests/ serum electrolytes
Chronic hepatic disease	Abdominal distention, gastrointestinal bleeding	Jaundice, palmar erythema, gynecomastia, splenomegaly, evidence of ascites	Hepatic function tests
Adrenal insufficiency	Weight loss, salt craving, gastrointestinal complaints	Hypotension, hyperpigmentation, vitiligo	Morning cortisol/ACTH, ACTH stimulation test
Electrolyte abnormalities			
Hyponatremia	Nausea, malaise, cognitive dysfunction	Generally normal exam	Serum sodium level
Hypercalcemia	Anorexia, polydipsia/polyuria, nausea	Generally normal exam	Serum calcium/albumin levels
Hematologic/neoplastic			
Anemia	Dizziness, weakness, palpitations, dyspnea	Tachycardia, pallor	Complete blood count
Occult malignancy	Weight loss, localized symptoms may be present depending upon type	Variable	Variable depending upon type
Infectious diseases			
Mononucleosis syndrome	Fever, sore throat, tender lymph nodes	Fever, exudate pharyngitis, tender cervical adenopathy	Complete blood/differential count
Viral hepatitis	Fever, nausea/vomiting, abdominal discomfort	Fever, jaundice, tender hepatomegaly	Hepatic function tests, viral hepatitis serologies
HIV infection	Weight loss, variable localized complaints	Variable physical findings	HIV serology
Subacute bacterial endocarditis	Fever/chills, night sweats, myalgias	Fever, new (regurgitant) murmur, peripheral manifestations	Blood cultures, echocardiogram
Tuberculosis	Fever/chills, night sweats, fatigue, weight loss	Cough, chest pain, dyspnea, hemoptysis	PPD/gamma-interferon assay, chest radiograph
Rheumatologic			
Fibromyalgia	Chronic diffuse muscle pain	Multiple "tender points" on palpation	None
Polymyalgia rheumatica	Aching/morning stiffness of shoulders, neck, and hips	Decreased range of motion of shoulders, neck, and hips	Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
Psychological			
Depression	Sad mood, anhedonia, altered sleep, cognitive dysfunction	Generally normal exam	Screening test (e.g., PHQ-2, PHQ-9)

ACTH: Adrenocorticotrophic hormone, HIV: *human immunodeficiency virus*, PPD: *Purified protein derivative*, and PHQ: *Patient health questionnaire*.

UpToDate (2024). Approach to the adult patient with fatigue. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/approach-to-the-adult-patient-with-fatigue?csi=12e40d0a-894b-4fed-9771-e793632e8204&source=contentShare>.

3. Types of Fatigue

In medical literature, fatigue is categorized into different forms. Some of the common types that are reviewed here are (a) physical fatigue, (b) mental fatigue, (c) emotional fatigue, and (d) compassion fatigue (Billones et al., 2021). It is important to appropriately categorize the cause of fatigue in order to understand its scope and posit potential interventions. Each type of fatigue has unique symptoms and may respond to unique interventions strategies.

Physical fatigue is characterized by a sense of physical weakness, heaviness, or exhaustion (Behrens et al., 2023). It can result from prolonged physical exertion, inadequate rest or sleep, poor nutrition, or underlying health conditions (Behrens et al., 2023). Physical fatigue can lead to muscle weakness, reduced coordination, and general weariness (Wan et al., 2017).

Mental fatigue is described as a feeling of cognitive exhaustion or mental weariness, and can result from prolonged periods of concentration, stressful decision-making, or overly intense cognitive tasks (Proost et al., 2022). Mental fatigue symptoms may include difficulty concentrating, memory problems, slower processing speed, and reduced mental clarity (Kunasegaran et al., 2023). Mental fatigue can be caused by factors such as stress, multitasking, and information overload (Kunasegaran et al., 2023; Proost et al., 2022).

Feelings of emotional drain, apathy, or burnout describe emotional fatigue. Emotional fatigue can result from prolonged exposure to stress, emotional turmoil, trauma or challenging interpersonal situations (Jin et al., 2020; Kunasegaran et al., 2023). Emotional fatigue symptoms may include mood swings, irritability, emotional numbness, or a sense of emotional depletion and can also lead to symptoms of depression and anxiety (Jin et al., 2020; Kunasegaran et al., 2023).

Compassion fatigue is a type of fatigue that is mainly experienced by people who care for or provide support to others experiencing trauma or suffering (Gallagher, 2013). Compassion fatigue is commonly seen in service

professionals such as healthcare providers, social workers, first responders, and caregivers (Gallagher, 2013). Service professionals may develop compassion fatigue from repeated exposure to others' pain and distress which may be amplified in lower-income populations (Gallagher, 2013). People with symptoms of compassion fatigue report emotional exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness, and a reduced ability to empathize (Lagher, 2013; Paiva-Salisbury & Schwanz, 2022).

4. Possible Causes of Fatigue

4.1. Poor Sleep Hygiene

Fatigue resulting from insufficient or poor-quality sleep is common for many individuals. According to study results, the prevalence of insomnia varies worldwide from 10% to 30%, and some study results suggest the percentage is even higher, from 50% to 60% (Buysse et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2007). A higher percentage of insomnia is common in older people with medical and mental health diseases (Buysse et al., 2008; Nguyen et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2007). Sleep deprivation, sleep disorders (e.g., insomnia, sleep apnea), irregular sleep patterns, and disruptions in circadian rhythms can all contribute to fatigue (Chotinaiwattarakul et al., 2009; Felden et al., 2015). In lower- and middle-income countries, high levels of psychological stress, smoking, poor quality of life, and food insecurity are positively associated with insomnia (Al Karaki et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2021; Jacob et al., 2023). In addition to suboptimal sleep hygiene practices in lower-income countries, environmental factors can significantly affect and contribute to fatigue symptoms.

4.2. Environmental factors

In many lower-income countries, people use solid fuels such as wood, coal, or biomass, leading to high indoor and outdoor air pollution levels. Globally, around 7.3 billion people are exposed to air pollutants containing tiny particles that are 2.5 microns or less in diameter, making them more invasive with widespread exposure of airborne and waterborne toxins to lower-income populations (Rentschler & Leonova, 2023). Eighty percent of these populations live in lower-and-middle countries like Afghanistan (Rentschler & Leonova, 2023). According to Hahad (2024) in 2019, air pollution in Afghanistan was associated with significant health impacts and contributed to 37033 deaths (14.72% of total deaths). Chronic exposure to poor air quality can lead to a number of health complications.

According to an analysis, from 1990 to 2019, lower respiratory infections, neonatal respiratory disorders, ischemic heart disease, stroke, COPD, lung cancer, and diabetes mellitus were the main causes of death and disease burden resulting from air pollution in Afghanistan (Hahad, 2024). Prolonged exposure to air pollutants and smoke can increase the risk of various diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, causing fatigue (Duan et al., 2020; Gall et al., 2013; Szymanska-Chabowska et al., 2021). To adequately address symptoms of fatigue, it is necessary to review potential factors involving the delivery of healthcare services to address the causes of fatigue related to either reduced access to healthcare or inadequate healthcare services in lower-income countries.

4.3. Factors Related to Health Care Services

In countries like Afghanistan, people have limited access to high-quality healthcare services, including diagnostics, medications, and medical providers, which can cause delays or inadequate treatment of underlying health conditions (Khan et al., 2022). In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and trauma can also contribute to physical fatigue and worsen overall health outcomes (Hawks et al., 2020; Orach, 2009; Peters et al., 2008).

Afghanistan's healthcare system is facing severe difficulties due to continuous conflict and political instability. Afghanistan ranks second lowest for health worker density within the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), with only 4.6 medical doctors, nurses, and midwives per 10000 people, well below the critical shortage threshold of 23 healthcare professionals per 10000 (World Health Organization, 2020). This reduced access to healthcare services can significantly affect the diagnosis and treatment of chronic fatigue symptoms.

Furthermore, pregnant women and young children in lower-income countries like Afghanistan are vulnerable to fatigue due to factors such as inadequate prenatal care, poor nutrition, and lack of access to essential healthcare services (Felden et al., 2015; Lin et al. 20009; Mohseni et al., 2023). Maternal fatigue can impact pregnancy outcomes, while childhood fatigue can affect growth and development (Crawley, 2018; Mortazavi & Borzoe, 2019). Study results indicate that fatigue and lack of physical activity in pregnant women can increase the risk of labor complications and postpartum depression, excessive gestational weight gain, hypertension, and gestational diabetes mellitus (Mortazavi & Borzoe, 2019; Syed Nor et al., 2022). Physical activity is also necessary for children's physical and mental growth and health, and fatigue and lack of physical activity during childhood can increase the risk of multiple chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Carson & Janssen, 2011; Gupta et al., 2012; Suchert et al., 2015).

Addressing the root causes of fatigue in lower-income countries is a complex task that requires a comprehensive approach. It is not enough just to treat the symptoms; we must also tackle the underlying impacts of social, economic, and environmental determinants of health.

4.4. Impacts of fatigue

Fatigue can have critical impacts on various aspects of human functioning and life, including physical health, mental well-being, cognitive performance, emotional stability, and overall quality of life (Maisel et al., 2021). Studies have investigated some key effects of fatigue on quality of life and performance of daily activity tasks. Recognizing these effects will allow for a more thorough diagnosis of the root cause of fatigue and its effect on health. Studies by Barroso et al. (2015) and De Raaf et al. (2012) suggest that prolonged fatigue can weaken the immune system, making people more vulnerable to illnesses and infections. Study results indicate that there is a causal relationship between fatigue and inflammation. For example, Brenu et al. (2014) indicated a lower activity of natural killer cells, increased regulatory T cells, and dysregulation in cytokine levels.

Fatigue can cause muscle pain, joint pain, headaches, and physical discomfort (Jaime-Lara et al., 2020). Study results indicated that hallmark symptoms of patients with chronic fatigue are new-onset headaches, regular exercises followed by feeling worse discomfort, and delays in recovery, commonly more than one day (Rowe et al., 2014). Salit (1997) states that patients might report flu-like symptoms. Besides impairing physical activity, fatigue also impacts mental health.

Effects of fatigue on mental health can include, increasing symptoms of anxiety, depression, irritability, and mood disturbances, leading to heightened stress responses and reduced resilience to life's challenges (Tylee et al., 1999). Moreover, patient populations with chronic fatigue syndrome have reported problems with attention, analyzing new information, and impairment in tasks that need working memory (Cockshell & Mathias, 2010).

Fatigue can impair cognitive functions such as attention, concentration, memory, and decision-making (Slimani et al., 2018). Mental fatigue can result in slower processing speed, decreased mental clarity, and difficulties with problem-solving tasks. Individuals may also experience lapses in judgment, reduced creativity, and impaired reaction times when fatigued.

Fatigue can significantly impact performance at work or school (Boksem & Tops, 2008). Productivity levels may decline, concentration may falter, and errors or accidents may increase when individuals are fatigued (Marcora et al., 2009; Wascher et al., 2104).

Fatigue poses safety risks in various settings, including workplaces, transportation, and healthcare facilities (Cunningham et al., 2022). Fatigue-related errors and accidents can have serious consequences, endangering individuals' safety and the safety of others (Van Cutsem et al., 2017; Wascher et al., 2016). In safety-critical industries such as aviation, transportation, and manufacturing, fatigue management is essential to prevent accidents and injuries (Tavakoli Kashani et al., 2022).

Fatigue-related absenteeism can also affect academic achievement (I. M. Ilić & M. D. Ilić, 2023; Kim et al., 2023). Knight et al. (2018) indicated school absenteeism and poor academic performance, suboptimal school-related life

quality, diminished participation in school activities, and less school connectedness among adolescents with chronic fatigue syndrome.

Fatigue can significantly impact an individual's overall quality of life. Persistent fatigue can lead to reduced engagement in social activities, hobbies, and personal relationships. Individuals may experience limitations in daily activities and a decreased sense of enjoyment and fulfillment in life due to fatigue (Leikas, 2020). In addition, fatigue can strain interpersonal relationships, leading to communication difficulties, emotional distance, and conflicts within relationships (Lampert et al., 2019). Partners, family members, and friends may struggle to understand or cope with a fatigued individual's needs and limitations, affecting the dynamics of their relationships, which negatively affects their overall quality of life (Murphy et al., 2021). See Figure 2



Figure 2: Impacts of Fatigue

5. Management of Fatigue: Practical Recommendations to Mitigate Symptoms

5.1. Sleep

Effective fatigue management involves a combination of lifestyle modification, stress reduction techniques, healthy habits, and self-care practices to address underlying factors contributing to fatigue. Ensuring adequate and restful sleep each night may be an effective initial strategy. Many guidelines recommend 7-9 hours of quality sleep to allow the body and mind to rest and recharge (Watson et al., 2015). People with fatigue due to poor sleep quality should establish a bedtime routine, create a conducive sleep environment, and avoid stimulants like caffeine and electronic devices before bedtime (Irish et al., 2015). Mitigation of sleep disturbance may be problematic in lower-income countries where housing insecurity may adversely affect sleep. Dealing with the root causes of housing insecurity is outside the scope of this paper and must be at the government policy level. In addition to housing insecurity, many lower-income populations experience food insecurity, lacking access to adequate nutrition, which can affect the levels of fatigue.

5.2. Nutrition

It is also essential to maintain a well-balanced diet rich in nutrients to support energy levels and overall health. Afghanistan remains one of the most fragile nations in South Asia, with a serious hunger crisis, ranking 103 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index (Rahmat et al., 2023). Afghanistan is also ranked 42 among 45 countries on the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HNCI), which assesses how committed governments are to combating hunger and malnutrition (Sharma et al., 2021). In 2021, 14 million Afghans were reported to not have access to adequate food supplies, with 95% of households not consuming enough food (3). It was expected that, in 2021, half of Afghan children under five years old would suffer from acute malnutrition, and at least 1 million children would die from severe malnutrition (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2021).

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2024), the Ministry of Public Health, affiliate organizations, international health agencies, public education programs, food aid programs, and subsidies should implement food enrichment and dietary supplementation that can boost overall nutrition. Moreover, it is essential to modify dietary practices, especially for infants, mothers, and other vulnerable groups, which is pivotal. Finally, increasing the availability of nutrient-rich foods will significantly improve the health outcomes of the Afghan population (Fahim et al., 2023).

It is better to abstain from excessive consumption of sugary or processed foods, which can lead to wide fluctuations in blood glucose which can lead to fatigue. Eating regular, nutritious meals can assist in sustaining energy levels throughout the day (National Guideline Center, 2021). In addition to providing essential nutrition, chronic dehydration can often lead to symptoms of fatigue, so it is vital for populations to stay hydrated (Shaheen et al., 2018), especially in hotter regions.

5.3. Exercise

Performing regular exercise and physical activity can boost energy levels, improve sleep quality, and reduce feelings of fatigue. It is critical to do aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility exercises to enhance physical fitness and stamina, starting with activities that are enjoyable and sustainable and then gradually increasing the exercise intensity (Larun et al., 2017). Other helpful strategies include stress-reducing techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing, yoga, or progressive muscle relaxation to alleviate mental fatigue and promote relaxation (Boehm et al., 2012; Puetz, 2006). Finally, identifying sources of stress in life and developing coping strategies to manage stress effectively can be helpful.

5.4. Work-life Balance

Maintaining a healthy balance between work, personal life, and leisure activities can decrease fatigue. It is essential in the management of fatigue to avoid overcommitment and learn to delegate tasks when possible as well as organize and prioritize responsibilities to prevent feeling overwhelmed and fatigued (Schjoedt et al., 2016). Managing work-related fatigue is essential to maintain productivity and job satisfaction. Study results recommend a number of strategies to mitigate and manage work-related fatigue such as taking breaks, maintaining healthy style, incorporating mindfulness techniques to decrease stress and improve focus at work (Wong & Swanson, 2022). In cases of persistent or severe fatigue it is fundamental to consult healthcare providers to establish a diagnosis and then manage underlying medical conditions such as sleep disorders, thyroid imbalances, anemia, or chronic fatigue syndrome (Sapra, & Bhandari, 2023). See Figure 3



Figure 3: Key Points in the Management of Fatigue

6. Conclusion

In lower-income countries such as Afghanistan factors such as infectious diseases, chronic malnutrition, anemia, air pollution, limited healthcare services, psychosocial stress, and maternal and child health issues all contribute to the prevalence and impact of fatigue among general populations. Addressing fatigue in lower-income countries such as Afghanistan requires a holistic and integrated approach that considers the multiple aspects of social determinants of health. Strategies such as improving access to clean water and sanitation, promoting healthy nutrition programs, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, providing occupational health and safety measures, addressing infectious disease burden, and implementing mental health support services are all crucial.

Sustainable solutions to combat fatigue can also involve investigating prevalent causes of fatigue locally and nationwide and creating evidence-based solutions to improve access to healthcare services, promote public health interventions, enhance nutrition programs, address infectious disease burden, provide occupational health protections, and increase awareness and resources for mental health support. By implementing comprehensive strategies and fostering collaboration between governments, healthcare organizations, non-governmental agencies, and communities in Afghanistan and other lower-income countries, it is possible to mitigate the burden of fatigue, enhance quality of life, and promote overall well-being. Only by adopting a holistic approach can we reduce the burden of fatigue and improve the well-being of individuals in lower-income countries.

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People's Political Participation: A Theoretical Exposition and Reality in Case of Bangladesh

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Abstract

People's participation is one of the central things in a parliamentary democracy. An effective democracy cannot be imagine without people's participation. In this respect, this research investigated the people's political participation in Bangladesh. For that the theories or models related to people's political participation are reviewed first. Then people's political participation in Bangladesh is analysed to see whether any theory or model best fit to explain it or not. The empirical analysis and findings are based on primary data collected using a field survey conducted in February-April 2018 using a structured questionnaire in the Rajshahi City Corporation area. In the case of theories related to people's participation, five models were found in the literature. They are the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), the Rational Expectation Model (REM), the Social Psychological Model (SPM), the Mobilization Model (MM), and the General Incentive Model (GIM). It is found that each of the models has some strengths as well as weaknesses to explain people's participation. On the basis of the framework we get from different models it is found that the Civic Voluntarism Model to some extent explains the people's participation in Bangladesh. This research provides an explanation of people's political participation in general as well as in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, People's Participation, Political Participation, Theory, Reality

1. Introduction

People's participation means people's close involvement in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives. People may participate individually or in a group. It may be goal-oriented, rational, observable and can be measured straightforwardly (Goel, 1980). Within the framework of a representative democracy, for example, people vote in the general elections, in order to support some parties or candidates, or to make sure others will not gain power. The outcome over which the participation occurs is generally a collective or public good – a good to be enjoyed even by those who have provided no help in bringing it (Back et al., 2011). However, participation also requires time, effort and sometimes even financial expenses. Even though, a large share of citizens of democratic countries choose to participate in at least some respect. Why is that? This paper is devoted to answer this question in relation to Bangladesh.

The aim of this paper is to explain people's political participation in Bangladesh. For that purpose a theoretical basis is needed that could explain people's political participation in general. Therefore a literature review methodology is used here to identify the theories first. Then in relation to these theories the people's participation in Bangladesh is analyzed here. For explaining people's participation in Bangladesh data from the survey are also used here.

There are several sections in this paper. In the first section, literature review is discussed. In the next section, data sources and the methodology used in this research are discussed. Findings and discussions are in the next which has two sub-section. Different theories or models related to people's participation are discussed where the strengths and weaknesses of each model are critically evaluated first. Then in the next sub-section, people's political participation is explained in Bangladesh on the basis of the theories or models that discussed in the previous section followed by conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The literature related to political participation as well as the Bangladesh perspectives were given focus here in broader perspective. A summary of the literature related to people's participation is as follows:

Blair (2000) analyzed the two topics of participation and accountability in democratic local governance. He studied in six countries such as Bolivia, Honduras, India, Mali, Philippines and Ukraine. This research finds that participation has a significant potential for promoting democratic local governance, though there are some important limitations.

Milbrath (1965) in his book analyzed the key problem of 'political participation' from different angles i.e., political participation as a function of stimuli, personal factors, the function of the political setting, the function of social position, etc. In conclusion the author has argued that high participation is not required for successful democracy. High participation levels would actually be detrimental to society if they trended to politicize a large percentage of social relationships. However, the author admits that it is difficult to prove the validity of the above argument. However, it varies from society to society and time to time.

Waheduzzaman (2010a) did a research on public participation in good governance focusing on rural development programs in Bangladesh. This study has investigated into the circumstances at the local level and barriers to the process of people's participation in local government bodies. Using qualitative approach, this research revealed problems related to the ineffectiveness of people's participation. Firstly, none of the actors (such as government officials, elected representatives, and local people) was aware of the value of people's participation. Secondly, the mechanisms of people's participation through different management committees found ineffective. Thirdly, there is no legal system to ensure people's participation at the rural level. Finally, lack of social capital is hindering true people's participation. Another research he concluded that the notion of good governance through people's participation has been imported from the developed countries through international aid and donor agencies remains in somewhat fashion is unclear and ambiguous in a country like Bangladesh (Waheduzzaman, 2010b).

Sarowardy (2000) in his dissertation, *'People's Participation in Bangladesh Politics: A Study of June 1996 Parliamentary Elections'*, has shown the nature and scope of people's participation in Bangladesh politics. The objective of this research was to examine the variables and influencing factors related to people's participation depending on different variables and influencing factors. The study also aims to observe the consciousness of the people and their attitude towards the politicians and towards the political system as a whole. However, this study does provide the status of people's political participation in Bangladesh.

Azad (2010) did a research on a limited scale to see democratic practices followed by political parties in Bangladesh. He studied to examine how far democracy works inside individual political parties of Bangladesh and to evaluate the role of political parties in strengthening democracy in the country. In his review he only concentrated on the practiced democracy in the parliamentary performance and analyzed that from the political party's perspective which is in power or in opposition.

Huntington (1979) in his famous work titled as *Political Order in Changing Societies* describes the violence, instability, and disorder of third world countries. The writer has made an effort to probe the condition of society and tried to identify the reasons for disruption. The indices of political order or its absence are qualified here. He pointed out that economic development depends on the relation between investment and consumption, political order and the development of political institutions and the mobilization of new social forces into politics. In this respect the political participation is very important to develop political participation. However, how political participation can be improved or minimize the gap between politicians and individuals has not been analyzed here.

Jahan (1980) in her famous book '*Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*' analyzed political experiences of Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is a collection of twelve articles where she discusses about the national integration crisis, independence movement and liberation war, post-independence problems like constitutional experiments, electoral participation and political development. These articles were originally written separately with different views and political participation issues are not been analyzed here.

Chowdhury (1995) attempted to analyze in her book '*Constitutional Development in Bangladesh: Stresses and Strains*' on the functioning of constitutional changes and their nature. She described and explained the principle organs of the state: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The author discussed constitutionalism in legislature side separate under Mujib, Zia and Ersad regimes. She also analyzed the interruptions and the breakdowns of the democratic process in the several periods when the legislature was either totally abolished, or the powers of the legislature were curtailed. Similarly the writer has discussed the evaluation of the executive system in Bangladesh under all the four regimes as well as the martial law periods in regard to the judiciary. It described the fact that without an independent judiciary, there cannot be any form of democratic government nor can people enjoy fundamental rights. She mostly concentrated her attention on the internal political changes through constitutional means. However, in this respect people's political participation has not been touched here.

3. Objectives

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons for people's political participation in parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. However, in a parliamentary democracy, people may participate directly as well as indirectly in the political activities. The dimensions of their participation may be seen from different perspective, such as in election campaign, in voting, in political party activities and even in parliament. In this research, people's participation is mainly analyzed here in general elections. However, before going into those, a theoretical basis for participation and explanation close to those in relation to Bangladesh are studied first. Therefore specific objectives for this research can be identified as:

1. To explore the theoretical models of people's participation
2. To explore the resemblance of the theory and practice in Bangladesh

4. Methodology and Data

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons for people's political participation in parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. However, in a parliamentary democracy, people may participate directly as well as indirectly in the political activities. The dimensions of their participation may be seen from different perspective, such as in election campaign, in voting, in political party activities and even in parliament. In this research, people's participation is mainly analyzed here in general elections. However, before going into those, a theoretical basis for participation and explanation close to those in relation to Bangladesh are studied first. Therefore specific objectives for this research can be identified as:

4.1 Research Approach

This study is based on empirical research where qualitative research strategy was employed. Although data is presented here in quantitative form and for the analytical purposes some descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and percentage) are used but, no causal relation and statistical significance is seen here.

4.2 Sources of Data Used

As the sources of data both secondary and primary data are used. The sources of secondary data included unpublished theses and published books, reports, journal articles, and newspaper analyses, gazette notifications, election commission reports, bulletin, parliamentary debates, proceedings of parliament, parliament website along with personal observations. Those secondary materials were reviewed thoroughly and the findings are discussed in accordance with the objective of this research.

Primary data was collected using field survey using structured questionnaire. For this purpose, field survey was conducted in Rajshahi City Corporation area. It has been purposively selected because of the convenience for the researcher and it is one of the politically active places in Bangladesh. Total 200 respondents were selected to collect the required primary data. Most of the cases purposive sampling procedure is followed but in some cases simple random sample is also used. Face to face interviews was conducted to collect the data from each of the respondents.

4.3 Sample Size and Selection Procedure for Primary Data

There are 30 wards in the Rajshahi City Corporation. It is quite difficult to cover all the wards. Although there is no rule in quantitative research, however 15% is quite reasonable to be representative. In this respect 5 wards among all 30 wards are selected randomly. These 5 wards are wards 1, 3, 17, 19 and 30. Because of time and resource constraint the total size of respondent as 200 was decided first. Then the sample number from each 5 wards is taken equally as 40. The sample size and the wards from where it is collected with the major area covered as well as the total voters in each ward is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size from Different Selected Wards

Ward Number	Main Area/Para Covers	Total Number of Voters	Sample Size
1	Kashiadanga, Shahajipara, Raipara, Guripara, Horogram	12099	40
3	Dashpukur, Baharampur, Bilshimla, Laksmipur	14874	40
17	Noadapara,	14622	40
19	Sheroil Colony, Hazrapukur, Chhoto Bongram	18807	40
30	Motihar, Mirzapur, Budhpara, Meherchondi	13636	40
Total Respondents			200

The population for our sample in each ward was all the voters residing in that ward. We could collect the voter list and select the respondent from that list following simple random sampling technique. However, in each ward there were more than 12 thousand voters and from that huge number only 40 respondent may not be representative. Moreover, in this research we are not trying to establish any causal relation and not doing any statistical analysis where random sample is strictly required. Therefore, in this research a unique procedure has been followed to maintain both randomness as well as representativeness of the data. First, the whole area of the ward was taken into consideration and there 40 spots were identified for respondent. The spots were identified in such way that it scattered all over the specific ward covering the whole area.

In each spot, after going there one respondent is taken randomly for the data collection. In selecting the respondent, it is strictly followed that the person reside near that spot and is a valid voter in that area. The respondents have been interviewed by the researcher himself and a trained interviewer. The field survey was conducted in February-April in the year 2018.

The data was collected using a questionnaire survey among the respondents. The structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with our research

objectives. However, it was finalized by conducting a pilot survey. From the pilot survey, the wording of the questions, their sequence and the options for the answers were finalized. For the pilot survey, 10 respondents from different areas of Rajshahi City Corporation were used and these data were not included in the final data.

4.4 General Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Table 2 shows the general characteristics of the sample respondents. Just to have a flavor of the distribution of the respondents, the respondent characteristics were seen from age, sex, occupation and educational background perspective. For the age we classified them young, middle and old people on the basis of age group as 18-35 years, 36-55 years and above 55 years respectively. It is seen that around 70 percent of the respondents are young and only a few of them are old. As majority of the respondents are young and active, therefore views regarding our research issues are expected to be much authentic. Because being young they are expected to be much more active and observing the political things here. Moreover, it is also seen that more than 90 percent of our respondents are male who are expected to be much more politically conscious, informed and active.

It is also seen from Table 2 that the respondents came from different occupational backgrounds from students to government service holders. The major portion of the respondents' occupations of daily labor, businessmen and students, more than 80 percent. These groups are independent and expected to be well-informed about political situation of the country. These groups are also expected to be politically active. Moreover, from the educational background perspective, the respondent composition is also diversified. However, majority of the respondent, more than 80 percent, were up to higher secondary level of education. The percentage of respondents having high level of education (Honours/degree and masters) is very low and they are also generally less active in politics. The opposite is expected of majority of our respondents.

Table 2: General Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	Young (18-35 Years)	140	70
	Middle Aged (36-55 Years)	57	28.5
	Old Aged (55+ Years)	3	1.5
	Total	200	100
Sex	Male	187	93.5
	Female	13	6.5
	Total	200	100
Occupation	Government Service	3	1.5
	Non-Government Service	5	2.5
	Business	53	26.5
	Housewife	14	7
	Farmer	9	4.5
	Daily Laborer	94	47
	Student	22	11
	Total	200	100
Education	Illiterate	36	18
	Primary	68	34
	Secondary	47	23.5
	Higher Secondary	19	9.5
	Honors/Degree	29	14.5
	Masters	1	0.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, February-April 2018

Figure 1 shows the political characteristics of the respondent. In this case multiple responses were also considered. It is seen that around 12 of the respondents are a member of political party. These number are not so big which is good for our research as their answer might be biased for our research. However, around 68 percent of respondents were members of any voluntary organization. This shows that they are independent and active. Moreover, around

99 percent of respondents acknowledged that they cast vote regularly. This is one of the main political participation through with people's representatives are elected.

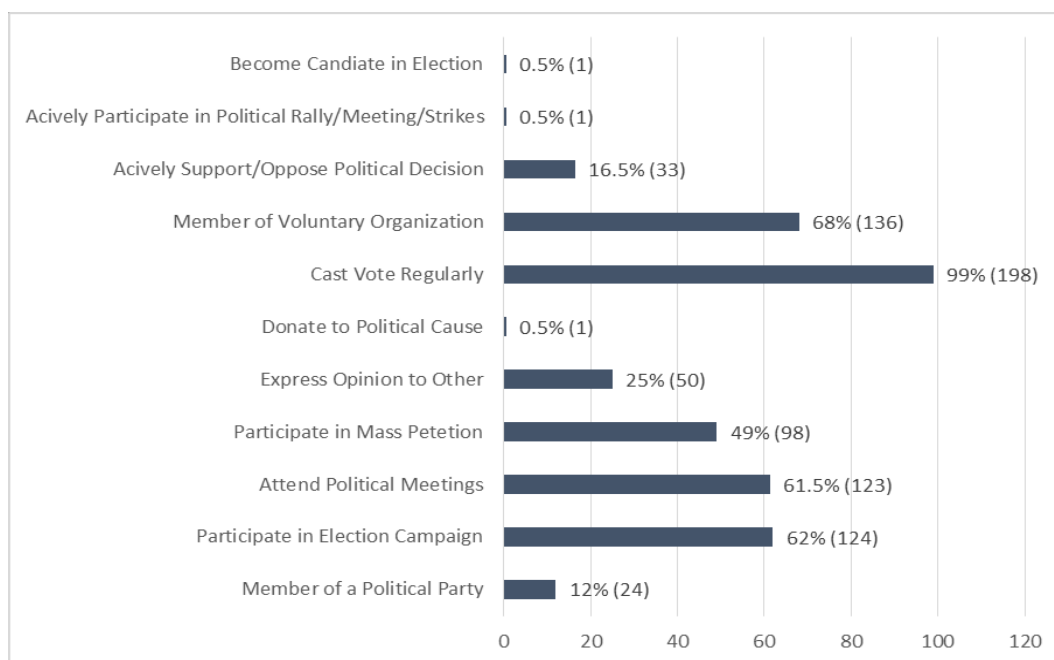


Figure 1: Political Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Source: Researcher's field survey, February-April 2018; Number in the parentheses shows the total number of responses in that category. For these categories multiple responses were there; Total respondent was 200.

Figure 2 also shows respondent characteristics from their participation in different activities. It is seen here that respondents acknowledged that they also *attend political meetings* (around 62 percent respondent), *participate in election campaigns*, (62 percent of respondents), *express opinions to others* (25 percent of respondents), and *actively support/oppose political decisions* (around 17 percent respondent). Moreover, few of them also *become candidates in elections*, *actively participate in political rallies/meetings/strikes*, *donate to political causes* and so on. The point here from the above discussion is that the respondents are very much well-informed and politically active people. Therefore, responses related to our research issues will be very much reliable.

5. Findings and Discussion

There are two sections here in accordance with the objectives of this research. Findings related to the theories of people's political participation are discussed first. Then empirically estimated them in the next section.

5.1 Theoretical Aspect of People's Participation

There are five theoretical approaches or models of political participation are found in the literature. They are known as '*the civic voluntarism model*', '*the rational choice model*', '*the socio-psychological model*', '*the mobilization model*', and '*the general incentives model*'. In the following sub-sections each of these approaches is discussed in brief. The aim is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, before estimating them empirically in next section.

5.1.1 The Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM)

The most well-known model of political participation in both theoretical and applied work is '*the Civic Voluntarism Model*'. This model was initially proposed and used by Sidney Verba and Norman Nie in 1972 in their research on political participation in the United States. Later on, Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady (VSB) developed this model and examined the process of political participation in America (Verba,

Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). The central ideas of the civic voluntarism model of participation are captured in the VSB's following quote:

*...conception of the participation process rests upon two main factors: the **motivation** and the **capacity** to take part in political life. A citizen must want to be active. In America, participation is voluntarily activity and, thus, involves choice. However, the choice to take part in a particular way is a constrained one. Various forms of participation impose their own requirements – the time to volunteer in a campaign, the money to cover a check to a political cause, and the verbal skills to compose a convincing letter. Thus, those who wish to take part also need the resources that provide the wherewithal to participate. We consider a third factor as well as. Those who have both the motivation and the capacity to become active are more likely to do so if they are asked. Therefore, we consider the **networks of recruitment** through which requests for political activity are mediated.*

(Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995, p. 3)

From VSB's interpretation, the central idea of civic voluntarism model is that people come voluntarily to participate actively in politics. However, the participatory process rests upon three main factors: the *motivation* to participate, the *capacity* to take part and the *network of recruitment* through which the political activities are channelized (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; p. 3). Therefore, this model tries to explain the factors that may answer why people do or do not become politically activist. According to this model, in order to participate in political activities, people need a certain level of motivation that, they want to participate voluntarily. People also need the capacity to be active – they must be able to participate. And finally, individuals who are both willing and able to participate are more likely to participate if they are requested to participation.

In explanation of the model VSB argued that people do not take part in politics “because they can’t; because they don’t want to; or because nobody asked” (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; p. 15). “They can’t” refers to the lack of necessary resources like time to participate, money to spend, and skills to use time and money effectively. “They don’t want to” refers to lack of willingness to political engagement, little interest in politics or little concern with public issues, a belief that activity can make little or no difference, and little or no knowledge about the political process, or other priorities. Lastly, through “nobody asked”, they refer to isolation from the networks of recruitment through which people are mobilized to politics.

In their research, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) used original survey data from 15,000 individuals as well as 2500 personal interviews. They found that all these three factors are helpful in predicting participation. They found that both access to resources, or capacity to take part, and motivation to take part are necessary for political participation. In relation to recruitment or requests for engagement in activity, they found that it acts as a catalyst for participation. They also claimed that capacity and motivation to participate in politics have their roots in non-political settings. In early stage, individuals develop these from family and school. In mature stage, the job, the church and non-political voluntary organizations help. These institutions also confer feelings of psychological engagement with politics. The causality direction goes from involvement in non-political institutions to political activities. Therefore, VSB claimed that people's involvement in family, school, work, voluntary associations, and religion has a significance impact on their participation as voters, campaigners, donors, community activists, and protesters.

Theoretically this model seems very appealing, but it is not free from criticism. Rubenson (2000, p. 17) argued that “the elements of the CVM are important for political participation – indeed they may be necessary for political participation to take place – but they are not sufficient explanation”. He criticized that the model places special emphasis on resources like money, time, and civic skill prior to the other two factors, engagement, and recruitment network. Rubenson (2000) argued that the direction from having resources to participation in politics is not always visible. Even if people possess the resources like time, money and civic skills, they still may be non-participants. He also argued that the political institutions or the setting where political participation takes place may be responsible for affecting participation. He also put emphasis on the different goals that individual participants have when they engage in political acts and the choices they make. Choices between various modes of participation and the choices between who they support may also have some answers for the reasons for participation.

5.1.2 The Rational Choice Model (RCM)

The core of *Rational Choice Model* (RCM) is that we the human beings are rational. A rational man is one who always: (1) makes a decision when confronted with a range of alternatives: (2) ranks all the alternatives facing him in order of his preference in such a way that each is either preferred to, indifferent to, or inferior to each other, (3) chooses from the possible alternatives among those which ranks highest in his preference ordering and his preference ranking is transitive¹. Therefore, the RCM of participation highlights the importance of the role of incentives in an individual's decision to participate (Whiteley, 1995). Individual prefers outcomes with higher utility to those with lower utility and choose actions to receive more highly valued outcomes. Therefore, if an individual participates in political activity that means the participation option is preferred than other available options.

However, the rational choice theory applied to the task of explaining political participation faces a key problem, the so called paradox of participation (Whiteley, 1995). It is argued with the proposition that rational actors will not participate in collective action to achieve common goals because the products of such collective action are public goods. Public goods have two properties; *jointness of supply* and *impossibility of exclusion*. Jointness of supply implies that one's consumption does not reduce the amount available to anyone else, and the impossibility of exclusion means that a person cannot be prevented from consuming the good once it is provided, even if he did not contribute to its provision.

The rational choice theory has played an important role in the analyses of political participation ever since Down's (1957) seminal work on party competition. Although rational choice theory has deep roots in economics, it has also been used in political philosophy which serves as a base to explain some individual political behavior (Oppenheimer, 2008). However, it is also clear that a purely rational choice account provides an incomplete explanation of political action.

5.1.3 The Social Psychological Model (SPM)

According to the social psychological model (SPM), individuals' psychological orientation such as political interest, political efficacy, trust in government, and civic duty are the important factors to influence political participation (Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999). This model argued that there are three kinds of variables that function as the basic determinates of behavior: (1) attitudes toward the behavior; (2) normative beliefs (both personal and social); and (3) motivation to comply with the norms.

Here the attitudes toward behavior are the product of individual's beliefs and the consequences of his behavior (Muller, 1979). Thus an individual may not get involved although he or she may expect high rewards from participation but their sense of political efficacy is low. Normative beliefs refer to an individual's justifiability of his behavior as well as his perception of other significant persons. Motivation to comply with the norms reflects factors like individual's personality and his perception. However, norms could be internal or private norms and external or public norms. Private norms are individual's own value that influence participation. For example, if a person feels that a law is unjust, then this will stimulate him to participate in protest activity designed to change the law. Such private norms are largely a product of socialization that operates over a longtime scale and are influenced by the early experiences of the individual. Public norms are determined by other people whose opinions they value. Hence other people whose views are important to them will further motivate them to be active.

Muller et al. (1991) criticized that in this model, equal weight is given to actions that benefit to society and to actions that benefit the individual. It is implicitly assumed that individuals will treat collective benefits in the same way as individual benefits. But in reality we know that how these variables can be antagonistic to one another. Muller et al. (1991) also argued that political efficacy plays an important role in this model, which is subjective,

¹ If A prefers to B, and B prefers to C then A prefers to C.

not objective in type. There is a big difference between subjective and objective political efficacy in influencing participation behaviour. Therefore, social psychological models provide an incomplete account of political participation. However, the SPM has been used with some success to account for unorthodox types of participation in various democratic systems.

5.1.4 The Mobilization Model (MM)

The mobilization model (MM) asserts that participation is a response to contextual environment and mobilization of the political campaign. Mobilization through political parties, campaign, campaign spending, groups, and political discussion are the reasons for people's participation (Leighley, 1995; Cox and Munger, 1989; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie, 1994; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Through formal institutional (e.g. party, campaign, group) mobilization or informal social mobilization (e.g. political discussion) people are more likely to engage in political behavior. Thus, mobilization acts as a mechanism that mediates the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation.

Although the mobilization model appeals very much to explain people's participation in political activities, it cannot explain the reasons for non-participation behavior. Rather it is argued that the mobilization model does assist the other three theoretical models of participation through mobilization phenomenon (Leighley, 1995). For example, in the rational choice model when individuals are deciding whether they are going to participate, then mobilization would only help the rational actor to decide about participate if it provides new information relevant to the cost benefit calculation of choice. However, it is not clear why some mobilization activities (e.g. canvassing) should induce individuals to participate, as most of the cases it provides highly biased information from strangers. In the conclusion, it can be said that the mobilization model highlights that of why people should change their behavior in response to the efforts of others to persuade them to do so. But overall the mobilization model cannot provide a complete theory of participation.

5.1.5 The General Incentives Model (GIM)

The *General Incentives Model* (GIM) of participation tries to explain the participation from the incentive perspective. The essence of the model is that individuals need incentives to ensure that they participate in politics. Some argued that high-intensity types of participation, such as canvassing, attending meetings, and running for office could explain this model properly (Back, Teorell and Westholm, 2011). However, Back et al. (2011) argued that the GIM has considered a wider array of incentives than narrowly defined individual incentives that appear in rational choice models. In that sense, this model is a synthesis of rational choice and social psychological accounts of participation.

It can be seen that a number of incentives exist to promote political participation, which are independent of each other. Broadly, they are *collective* and *selective* incentives. Back et al. (2011) argued that the collective incentives are based on the provision of collective goods, the policy goals of a political party. For example - individuals motivated by collective incentives may believe that their party will reduce unemployment, improve health service, defend the nation, promote the interests of people like themselves and generally implement policies that they favor. Collective incentives to join or be active in a political party are of two kinds: positive and negative. People will participate not only because they want to promote a particular policy goals but also because they oppose the policy goals of other parties. Thus positive incentives involve promoting collective goods, whereas negative incentives involve opposing collective 'goods'.

The *selective incentives* refer to motives concerned with goals that are private rather than collective, and these may be important for understanding why some people join and become active in a party. Selective incentives are of three types: *process*, *outcome* and *ideological incentive*. For some people, the political *process* is interesting and stimulating in itself, regardless of the outcomes or goals. For some people high intensity participation is way of meeting likeminded and interesting people. Tullock (1971) argued that this type of selective incentive may have entertainment value. Citizens who vote, campaign, lobby or demonstrate may find the activity exiting or enjoy the company of other participant (Back, Teorell and Westholm, 2011). Opp (2001) even argued to release discontent

is one's incentive being involved in political protest. *Outcome* incentives refer to motives to achieve certain personal goals. For example, an individual participant might wish to become local councilor/mayor/leader/party representatives. Yet others might be interested in business connections that party membership can bring, particularly in areas where the party is strong in local government. Lastly, selective incentives is ideology that is derived from the law of curvilinear disparity proposed by John D. May (1973). In the context of motives of involvement this argued that individuals join a party because of their ideological beliefs. Joining a party allows them to interact with like-minded people.

5.2 People's Participation in Bangladesh

From the above discussion, we have seen about the theoretical explanation of people's participation. Now here from the survey data it is been trying to see what is in reality happening in Bangladesh regarding people's participation.

5.2.1 Reasons for People's Political Participation

Figure 2 shows the reasons for people's participation in political activities in Bangladesh. It is seen here that around 37 percent of the respondents did not participate in political activities. Therefore, around 63 percent of respondents were acknowledged to participate in political activities. They have been asked regarding the reasons for participation. In response, the reasons acknowledged by the respondents are a *citizen's duty*, *influenced by friends*, *to collectively change the country*, *to support a political party*, and *for the country*. However, a few of them acknowledged that *just for curiosity* was the reason to participate in political activity. It is found that majority of those who are active participant are acknowledging that this is they are doing because *for the country*. The second highest portion acknowledging to *support a political party*. We can say if someone supports a political party that means he/she supports the ideology, workings, and manifestos of that party. And we can assume that these are believed to be good for the country. Moreover, if we add the reasons *as citizen's duty* and *collectively change the country* then, we can see that for more than 80 percent of political activist the reason for political participation is *for the country*.

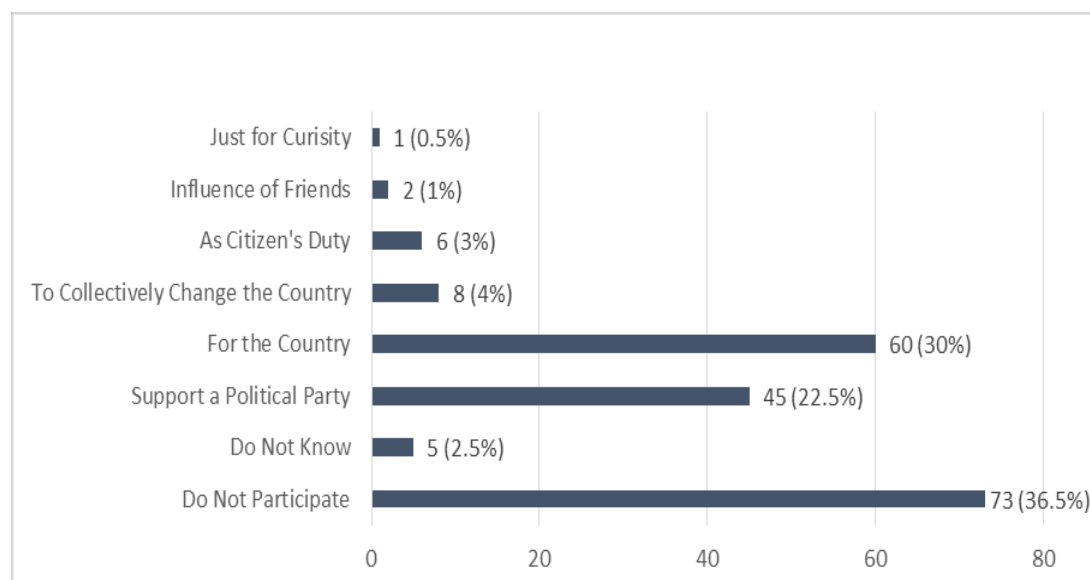


Figure 2: Reasons for Peoples Participation in Political Activities

Source: Researcher field survey; N=200,

From the above discussion, we may derive that it is the people's belief about the consequence of their participation influence them to participate in political activities in Bangladesh. The belief that their participation may help to change the country, develop the country or in general it is for the country. Therefore, from our theoretical models that we have, we may say that the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) is very much close to explaining the people's political participation among the respondents. In our case here, for the respondents, the evidence on *motivational*

and *recruitment* factors is clearly seen. However, let us see what reasons identified by the respondent who do not participate.

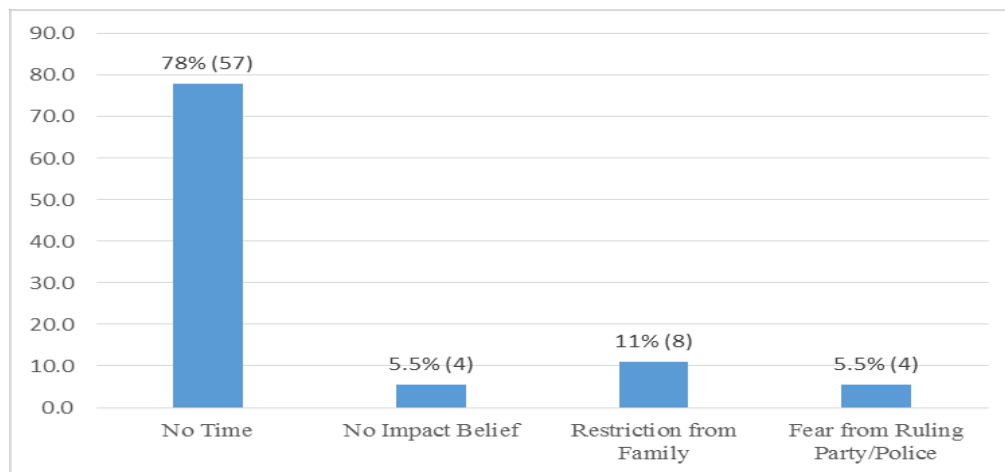


Figure 3: Reasons for Non-participation in Political Activities

Source: Researcher field survey

5.2.2 Reasons for People's Non-Participation

Figure 3 shows the reasons for not participating identified by those respondent who did not participate in political activities. They have identified four main reasons that refrain from political participation. Those reasons are as *no time*, *no impact belief*, *restriction from family*, and *fear from ruling party/police*. It is also seen here that majority of the non-participants, around 80 percent, have identified as they do not have time to do participate in political activities. In relation to the CVM, people do not take part in politics *because they cannot* which we found here. Moreover, other reasons are also indicated to either motivation or capacity factors. The *no impact belief* is related to motivation whereas *restriction from family* and *fear from ruling party/police* are related with restricting *capacity* to participation. Therefore, in this respect also our findings suggest that the Civil Voluntarism Model is explaining the political participation in Bangladesh.

5.2.3 Reasons for People's Casting Vote

We have tried to investigate a particular political activity, casting vote, which is a bit difficult to explain according to the literature discussed above. Figure 4 shows the factors that people considered while casting vote. People were asked questions regarding this and allowed them to respond with multiple responses. It is found that the factors that people consider while casting vote are *candidate's quality only*, *political party only*, *both party and candidate*, *money gain from candidate*, and *heavy campaign*. Among these, majority of the respondents considered first three factors for casting vote. That means people consider the candidate, the party to which he belongs, and both.

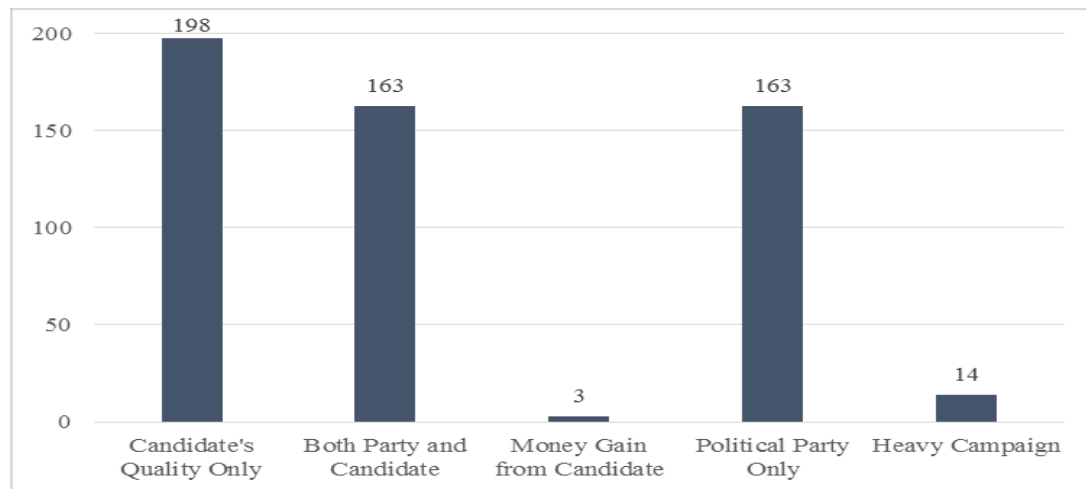


Figure 4: Factors People Considered while Casting Vote

Source: Researcher's field survey

People were also asked to identify the main/factors among the factors that they considered while casting vote. The Table 3 shows the people's responses regarding the main factors that they consider while casting vote. From this it is again seen that as the main factor majority of the respondents, 70 percent, consider both candidates as well as the party to which the candidate belongs. It seems that people might believe that the candidates or the party can bring the change or do well whatever they are supposed to do and that is why they are casting votes. It is the motive that influences people to cast vote for a candidate. Therefore, again we found the evidence of the CVM to explain the casting vote. Although money gain and heavy campaigns are found as factors but only a few, negligible number of respondents said about them.

Table 3: People's Main Consideration while Casting Vote

Consideration	Frequency	Percentage
Candidate's Quality Only	53	26.5
Both Candidate's Quality and Party	140	70
Money Gain from Candidate	2	1
Political Party Only	5	2.5
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's field survey

In this respect, Figure 5 shows the respondent voting behavior toward political party. The idea was to see the motivation toward political behavior in respect to liking of the political party. It is found here that majority of the respondents, more than 80 percent (163 out of 200 respondents), *likes a political party*. That means people individually like the ideology or the activities of a particular party. It shows that this likeness gives them a *motivation* to participate and the *network of recruitment* that helps people to participate in political activities. Moreover, in support of political party, the respondents acknowledged that although they consider the other aspects (like quality of the candidate) but most of the cases majority of them, around 96 percent, cast their vote for their favorite political party's candidate. Therefore from this perspective, we may also derive that the political participation is explained through the CVM.

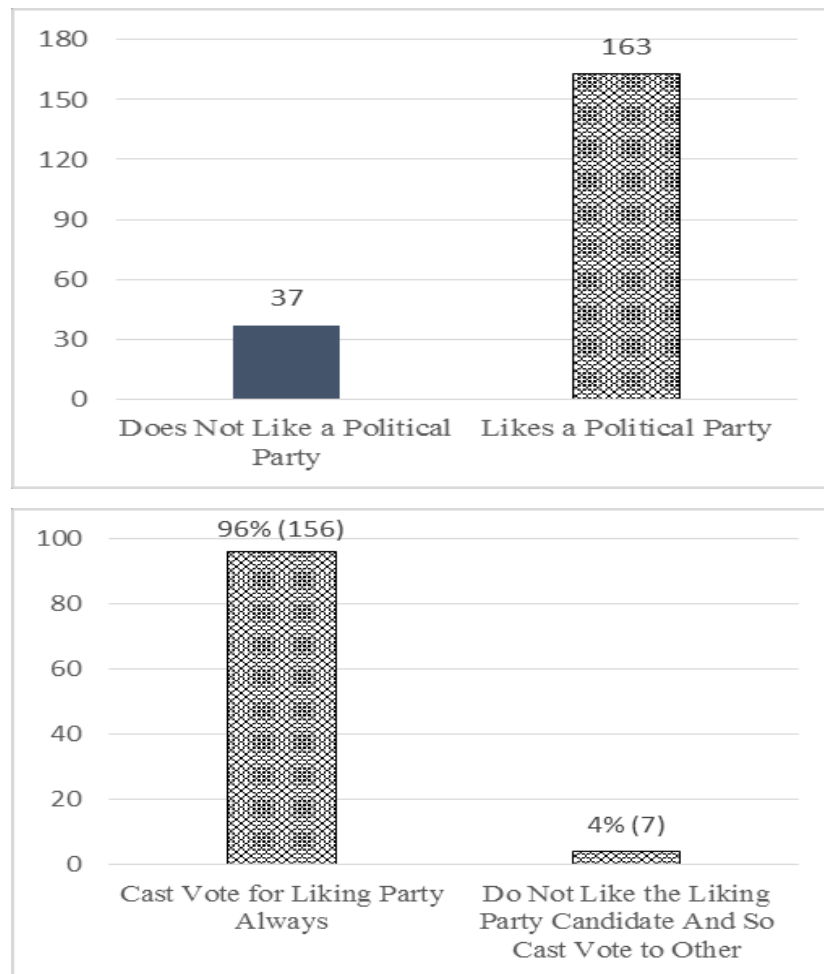


Figure 5: Voting Behavior towards Political Party

Source: Researcher's field survey

5.2.4 Reasons for People's Not Casting Votes

Figure 6 shows the reasons for not casting vote that the respondent acknowledged in our survey. It is the main reason respondent identified for which they did not cast their vote in any previous election. It is seen that majority of respondents did not go for voting because of *fear of violence or prevention caused by some group*. In explanation of the CVM, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) argued that people do not take part in political activities 'because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked'. Therefore, in our case *fear to go or prevention to go to vote* is nothing but '*they cannot*' go for participation, which is related with the CVM. Similarly, another reason identified by respondent as *didn't manage time* is also refers to '*they cannot*' or *capability* reason of CVM. Moreover, the other reason identified as *no impact belief* refers to lack of willingness to engage political activity from a belief that activity can make little or no difference which is also *motivational* reason of CVM.

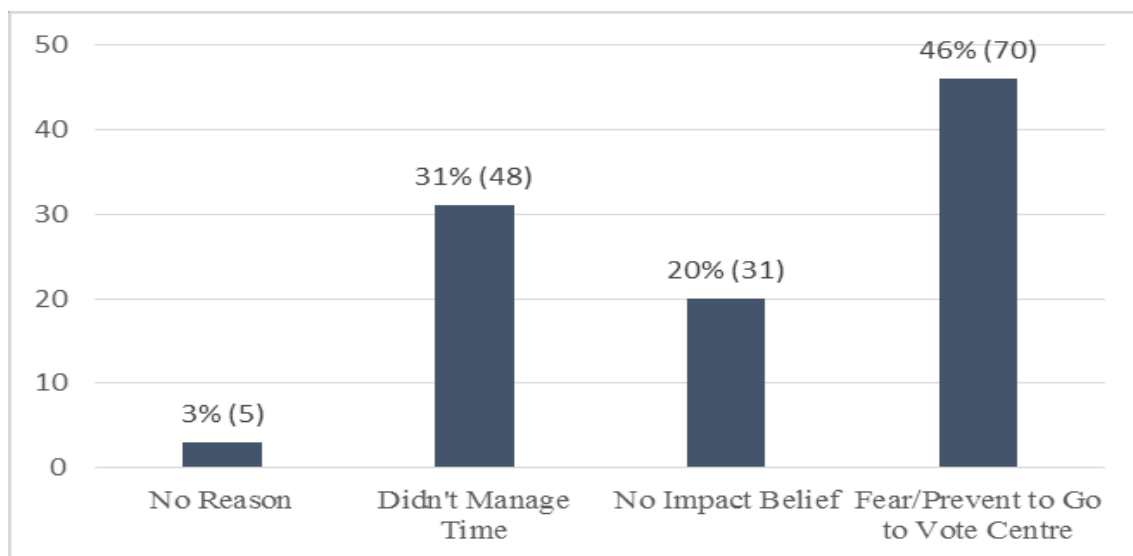


Figure 6: Reasons for Not Casting Vote (n=154)

Source: Researcher's field survey

6. Conclusion

This paper is about the explanation for people's political participation. For that purpose, different theories explaining the people's participation are reviewed first. Then, we tried to explain the participation in Bangladesh using the survey data from the respondents on the basis of framework we get from different models. In the case of theories related to people's participation, five models were found in the literature. They are *the Civic Voluntarism Model* (CVM), *the Rational Expectation Model* (REM), *the Social Psychological Model* (SPM), *the Mobilization Model* (MM), and *the General Incentive Model* (GIM). It is found that each of the model has some strengths as well as weaknesses to explain people's participation. On the basis of framework we get from different model it is found that the Civic Voluntarism Model to some extent explains the people's participation in Bangladesh.

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Traditional Ghanaian Oral Storytelling in the Modern Communication Landscape

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine Traditional Ghanaian Oral Storytelling in the Modern Communication Landscape. The study adopted the mixed method approach and gathered data with the aid of a questionnaire and interview guide. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 24 participants and the convenience sampling was used to select 400 respondents to participate in this study. The questionnaire was administered to respondents through an online survey while the interview guide was administered through face-to-face interviews with participants. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze quantitative data while thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The study found that the majority of Ghanaians have a positive perception towards traditional oral storytelling. The study also found that the modern communication landscape presents both opportunities and challenges to Ghanaian traditional oral storytelling. The study concludes by making recommendations to preserve and promote traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling amid the modern communication Landscape.

Keywords: Ghana, Media, Modern Communication, Storytelling, Traditional Stories

1. Introduction

The rich and captivating tradition of Traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling has played a pivotal role in shaping Ghana's cultural landscape. This artistic practice involves passing down spoken narratives from one generation to the next (Choo et al., 2020). As highlighted by Dujmović (2006), oral storytelling involves the act of narrating a

story from memory rather than relying on written text. Similarly, as noted by Hsu (2015), oral storytelling encompasses the use of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and interaction to establish a connection between the narrative and its audience. Consequently, storytelling represents an interactive engagement between the storyteller and the listeners, necessitating the storyteller to employ techniques that prompt feedback from the audience.

Oral storytelling has traditionally served as a medium for transmitting stories that function as a repository of knowledge, values, and cultural traditions, nurturing a profound sense of community and cultural identity (Choo et al., 2020). The practice of oral storytelling in Ghana is a thriving and dynamic tradition that has had a significant impact on shaping the nation's cultural landscape (Kwakye-Opong and Gharbin, 2017). Over centuries, these narratives, handed down from one generation to the next, have acted as a reservoir of wisdom, values, and cultural customs, fostering a deep sense of community and cultural identity (Kwakye-Opong and Gharbin, 2017). In Ghana, oral storytelling extends beyond mere entertainment; it stands as an integral element interwoven into the very fabric of Ghanaian society. Devi and Mishra (2021) noted that Ghanaian oral stories are typically narrated under the moonlight or amidst dancing flames, serving as a means to pass down traditional customs from one generation to the next. Adjei and Ansah (2022) added that the tradition of oral storytelling in Ghana includes a diverse range of narratives, spanning from animal fables and trickster anecdotes to historical chronicles and mythical legends. Thus, it could be inferred from the foregoing that oral storytelling highlights the potency of spoken language, preserving history, and conveying life lessons through compelling narratives.

However, the rapid evolution of the communication landscape, dominated by digital media and technology, poses unprecedented challenges to the preservation and transmission of this rich oral tradition (Shishko, 2022). Though modern communication technologies provide new storytelling avenues, they have also brought about a shift in cultural consumption patterns (Shishko, 2022). The allure of social media, video games, and other digital entertainment forms has captured the attention of younger generations, potentially diminishing the appeal of traditional oral storytelling (Potter, 2021). This shift raises concerns about the potential loss of cultural heritage and the erosion of traditional values and knowledge embedded within these oral narratives. The media ecology theory, developed by Marshall McLuhan, recognizes the interaction between media, technology, and culture (Landes, 2021). Thus, the media ecology theory assumes that the introduction of modern communication technologies impacts the ecosystem of Traditional Ghanaian Oral Storytelling.

The foregoing suggests that notwithstanding the challenges brought about by modern communication technologies, by adapting to contemporary trends and utilizing digital platforms, oral storytelling can reach a broader audience, both within Ghana and globally. Storytellers can leverage the power of social media, podcasts, and online video platforms to share their tales, ensuring that this rich tradition remains accessible and relevant to younger generations. However, the review of empirical literature shows that there is a dearth of studies to this effect. Studies such as Adjei and Ansah (2022) investigated the traditions of storytelling within a trilingual community, specifically Larteh in Southeast Ghana, West Africa. Abdulai et al. (2023) also focused on Indigenous Communication Systems (ICSs) within the Tolon District of Ghana, examining their utilization as spaces for cultural expressions and platforms for disseminating information to contribute to rural development. Amoah (2022) also examined the approaches for integrating indigenous stories into early childhood education pedagogy and elucidated how teachers can implement indigenous stories as effective pedagogical strategies in their classroom activities. Thus, this researcher observes a knowledge gap in the literature on how the modern communication landscape influences traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling in the modern communication landscape. The findings of this study thus fill the gap in the literature provide an understanding of how modern communication technologies impact oral storytelling and suggest strategies that can be employed to adapt traditional oral storytelling to the modern communication landscape.

2. Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of Ghanaians towards traditional oral storytelling practices?
2. What opportunities does the modern communication landscape present traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling practices?

3. What challenges does the modern communication landscape pose to traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling to the current communication landscape?

3. Theoretical Review

3.1. Media Ecology Theory

The media ecology theory, originally developed by Marshall McLuhan during the 1960s and subsequently refined by scholars like Neil Postman, provides a framework for comprehending the complex connections between communication media, technology, human consciousness, and the environment (Landes, 2021). At its core, media ecology suggests that media should not be viewed merely as tools or conduits for information transmission; rather, they serve as dynamic environments that actively mould and impact human behaviour, perception, and cultural norms (Landes, 2021). McLuhan's famous proclamation, "the medium is the message," underscores the theory's focus on the profound influence of a medium's inherent characteristics on both individuals and society, often eclipsing the importance of the actual content it conveys (Scholari, 2012). Thus, the theory proposes that advancements in communication technologies steer social and cultural transformation.

The Media Ecology Theory is suitable for this study because it provides insight into the adaptation and evolution of traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling in the contemporary communication landscape, highlighting the complex relationship between media, culture, and society. The media ecology theory recognizes that oral storytelling may have undergone a metamorphosis to thrive in the digital era, harnessing emerging technologies and platforms to both extend its reach to broader audiences and safeguard its cultural core. The digital age, presenting new possibilities for preserving and disseminating oral traditions, revitalizes interest and secures their transmission to future generations. Nonetheless, it also presents challenges stemming from the abundance of digital content and the global spread of culture, which could potentially lead to a standardization of storytelling traditions. Thus, based on the media ecology theory, this study argues that the future of Ghanaian oral storytelling hinges on achieving a delicate equilibrium between tradition and innovation, embracing new media while preserving its cultural authenticity, which further underscores the need for this study.

The media ecology theory has been used by other researchers such as Strate (2014) to examine the media ecology approach and narrative as a medium of storytelling. The study found storytelling continues to evolve during technological advancement. Also, Novikova (2023) used the media ecology model to examine transmedia storytelling in education. The study found that the advancement in technology demands changes in transmedia education. Thus, the findings of these studies affirm the argument of the media ecology theory. It is thus, appropriate for this study to adopt the media ecology theory to examine traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling in the modern communication landscape.

4. Conceptual Review

4.1. Traditional Ghanaian Oral Storytelling

Storytelling is subject to diverse interpretations. Gere (2002) defined storytelling as the use of language and expressive gestures to vividly depict sequences. Another definition posits that storytelling is a captivating means of sharing experiences to gain insight into our present reality. Stories foster connections, provide glimpses into others' lives, and may offer self-reflection opportunities (Choo et al., 2020). According to Dujmović (2006), it is the art of recounting a tale from memory rather than reading it. Similarly, Hsu (2015) defines storytelling as the utilization of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and interaction to establish a connection between the storyteller and the listeners. In essence, storytelling is a reciprocal process of exchange between the storyteller and the audience, requiring the storyteller to employ the skills of storytelling to elicit feedback. The practice of storytelling is continually subject to change, influenced by factors such as memory, talent, and the intended purpose of the storytellers (Anderson and Mack, 2019).

Traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling in Ghana represents a lively and long-lasting cultural expression, involving weaving narratives, morals, and societal values into a vibrant tapestry (Osei-Tutu, 2022). Sackey (1991) defined

traditional oral storytelling as a dynamic and interactive practice, which is usually led by the storyteller, commonly referred to as the "Okyeame," who enthral audiences with captivating tales complemented by rhythmic expressions, songs, and gestures. Mensah et al. (2023) added that at the core of Ghanaian oral storytelling lies the concept of "Anansesem." Anansesem is a concept derived from the trickster spider-god Ananse, housing a collection of fables and allegorical tales that convey life lessons and societal values. Ghanaian traditional stories that are told orally feature animal characters, and communicate messages about morality, social norms, and the consequences of actions, fostering a sense of community and shared values (Sackey, 1991). It could thus, be inferred that traditional oral stories are told to communicate nature, educate the individual about the environment, impart heritage to the next generation and imbibe moral values to the younger ones. For example, Amoah (1997) posited that Ghanaian oral storytelling goes beyond mere entertainment; it functions as a crucial instrument for cultural preservation, facilitating the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and promoting social cohesion. Thus, the tradition of oral storytelling acts as a repository for historical accounts, ancestral wisdom, and cultural practices, ensuring their enduring legacy across successive generations.

It could be inferred from the foregoing that traditional oral storytelling can be of great value and significance to society. However, the prevalence of digital media and globalization threatens its preservation. For example, Addo (2022) posited that traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling stands as a testament to the enduring potency of spoken narratives, serving as a cultural cornerstone, an educational tool, and a source of entertainment. Its adaptability and resilience in the face of modernization can influence its profound significance in Ghanaian society, guaranteeing its continued relevance for generations to come.

4.2. Modern Communication Landscape

Communication has played a crucial role in human interaction throughout history, and technological advancements have brought about substantial changes in the communication landscape (Tomasello, 2010). Time-honoured communication modes like face-to-face discussions, written letters, and landline calls have given way to contemporary methods such as digital communication, mobile phone conversations, and video conferencing (Tomasello, 2010). In the past people heavily relied on face-to-face interaction, written correspondences, and landline calls for communication (RoAne, 2009).

The advent of technology has revolutionized communication through the widespread adoption of digital communication, mobile phones, and video conferencing (Onyejelem, 2018). Digital communication platforms like email, instant messaging, and social media facilitate instant messaging irrespective of location (Onyejelem, 2018). Mobile phone communication, encompassing voice calls and text messages, allows for on-the-go communication, while video conferencing facilitates remote meetings (Seargeant, 2019). Modern communication has substantially enhanced speed and convenience. Although traditional methods provided a more personal touch, modern approaches have prioritized swifter, more accessible, and personalized communication (Seargeant, 2019). The immediacy and convenience of modern methods enable communication with anyone, anywhere, at any time, improving global connectivity. However, the personalized and human connection aspects have been somewhat compromised, as digital communication lacks the intimate nature of face-to-face interactions (Šejtanić and Džafić, 2017). The communication landscape has undergone significant evolution, with traditional methods supplanted by modern ones. The advancement in communication can influence traditional oral storytelling which is usually communicated through traditional means.

5. Research Methodology

This study made use of the mixed-method research approach. The mixed method enables an in-depth examination of a specific incident, circumstance, organization, or social phenomenon (Cresswell, 1999). This approach is frequently employed when a researcher seeks a more thorough comprehension or explanation in terms of the quantity and quality of a phenomenon occurring within a specific context (Cresswell, 1999). The mixed method research approach enabled the study to blend qualitative and quantitative techniques to offer a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon under study, providing the cultural depth of traditional storytelling and its adjustment to the modern digital context (Malina et al., 2011).

The research employed purposive and convenience sampling methods to choose participants for the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling was employed to select individuals with expertise in traditional oral storytelling, cultural knowledge, academia, and digital media practice. This approach was chosen because the researcher was of the view that these individuals had particular qualities that would enable them to offer valuable insights in line with the study's goals (Guarte and Barriers, 2006). Convenience sampling was used to select respondents from the general Ghanaian audience (Etikan et al., 2016). The study made use of an interview guide and questionnaire to gather data from the study participants. The questionnaire comprised nine (9) items patterned after the five-point Likert scale and was adapted from Ahmad and Yamat (2020) while the interview guide was self-made. The research instruments were administered through face-to-face interviews by the researcher with the respondents. Through the point of saturation, the study interviewed 24 participants. According to Wilson (2019), 400 respondents were deemed appropriate for a population greater than 100,000. Consequently, 400 respondents were selected to respondents to the questionnaire used in this study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data for the study with the aid of SPSS version 26. While thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data.

6. Findings

6.1. Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics included in this study are age, gender, educational level and the location of respondents. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	23	5.8
	26-35	115	28.8
	36-45	173	43.3
	46-60	75	18.8
	more than 60 years	14	3.5
Gender	Male	250	62.5
	Female	150	37.5
Educational Level	No formal education	1	.3
	Basic education	71	17.8
	Secondary education	173	43.3
	Tertiary Education	155	38.8
Location	Urban	239	59.8
	Rural	161	40.3

Source: Online Survey (2023)

In terms of age, the data reveals that the largest segment of individuals falls within the 36 to 45 age range, accounting for 43.3% of the group. The subsequent most significant age group is between 26 and 35, making up 28.8% of the participants, while the smallest age category is individuals over 60, constituting only 3.5%. Concerning gender, the group is predominantly composed of males, constituting 62.5%, while females make up the remaining 37.5%. When it comes to educational background, it's apparent that the majority of participants have secondary education (43.3%), closely followed by those with tertiary education (38.8%), and a very small fraction consists of individuals with no formal education, representing just 0.3%. In terms of location, 59.8% of the group resides in urban areas, while the remaining 40.3% are located in rural areas. To summarize, this table provides a succinct overview of the demographic attributes of a specific group, serving as a valuable tool for comprehending its composition and enabling comparisons with other groups.

6.2. The perceptions of Ghanaians towards traditional oral storytelling

The research aimed to explore the perceptions of Ghanaians regarding traditional oral storytelling. Survey participants were provided with a set of nine questionnaire items and were instructed to assess their level of agreement or disagreement using a scale ranging from one to five, where 1 denotes "strongly disagree," and 5

signifies "strongly agree." To interpret the mean scores, the following criteria were employed: Scores between 1 and 1.49 were categorized as "Strongly Disagree," scores falling between 1.50 and 2.49 were considered "Disagree," scores from 2.5 to 3.49 were viewed as "Neutral," scores ranging from 3.5 to 4.49 were deemed "Agree," and scores between 4.5 and 5.0 were classified as "Strongly Agree." The outcomes are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceptions of Ghanaians towards traditional oral storytelling practice

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I enjoy doing the storytelling activities.	400	1.00	5.00	3.5900	.87109
2. I give my full attention during the storytelling activities.	400	1.00	5.00	3.5625	.92370
3. I give my full attention during the storytelling activities.	400	1.00	5.00	3.4475	.98217
4. I could imagine the characters, time, places and/or activities taking place	400	1.00	5.00	3.5725	.99106
5. Storytelling activities help me to understand issues of life better.	400	1.00	5.00	3.6775	1.08464
6. Storytelling activities make me feel confident and feel part of the society	400	1.00	5.00	3.4425	1.01946
7. I can learn and understand our culture during the storytelling activities.	400	1.00	5.00	3.2450	1.06433
8. It is easy to participate in the storytelling activities.	400	1.00	5.00	3.6075	1.06597
9. I would like to participate in future storytelling activities.	400	2.00	5.00	3.8000	.79787
Overall Mean	400	2.33	4.56	3.5494	.37018

Source: Online Survey (2023)

The mean values in the table offer insights into the general perceptions of respondents concerning traditional oral storytelling practices in Ghana. On average, the majority of the respondents agreed (Mean = 3.59) that they enjoy oral storytelling activities. They also tend to give moderate attention during storytelling sessions, as indicated by a mean of approximately 3.45. Most of the respondents agreed (Mean = 3.57) that they can vividly imagine the characters of the oral stories. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed that they perceive storytelling as beneficial for understanding the issues of life better, with a mean of roughly 3.68, while they moderately agree that storytelling boosts confidence and social inclusion, as suggested by a mean of around 3.44. Respondents had a neutral feeling that storytelling plays a role in cultural learning, with an average mean of about 3.25. The majority of the respondents, however, indicated that also find it relatively difficult to participate in storytelling activities, as indicated by a mean of approximately 3.61. There's a relatively strong desire among respondents to participate in future storytelling activities, with the highest mean at 3.80. The overall mean score of 3.5494 implies that, in general, Ghanaians hold a favourable view of traditional oral storytelling practices. This indicates that they typically derive enjoyment from storytelling activities, consider them captivating, and perceive them as advantageous.

6.3. Opportunities presented by the modern communication landscape to traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling practices

6.3.1. Digital Storytelling Platforms

It was revealed that the emergence of digital storytelling platforms has had a profound impact on the age-old Ghanaian tradition of oral storytelling. The majority of the participants indicated that contemporary

communication technologies, such as websites, blogs, podcasts, and social media, have opened up fresh avenues for traditional storytellers to convey their tales. These digital mediums have not only broadened the reach of traditional narratives but have also revolutionized how these stories are conveyed and encountered.

For example, one participant stated;

“That digital platforms serve a means to preserve traditional stories, comparing the internet to a global campfire that allows stories to transcend local boundaries.”

Another participant also emphasized that

“Modern communication tools like podcasts and social media have transformed oral narratives into multimedia experiences, blending tradition with technology for dynamic storytelling.”

Thus, traditional storytellers are increasingly harnessing these platforms to adapt to the changing landscape of communication, which is instrumental in safeguarding and rejuvenating their storytelling legacy.

6.3.2. Preservation and Renaissance

The study observed that contemporary communication technologies and practices are contributing to the safeguarding and resurgence of traditional Ghanaian storytelling. Most of the interviewees emphasized the role of digital tools like audio and video recording, online archives, and virtual storytelling platforms in documenting and perpetuating endangered stories and traditions. For example, one participant stated;

Digital tools are vital for safeguarding traditional stories in a changing world. They act as powerful safeguards against the erosion of oral traditions, preserving them for future generations.

Another also opined that,

“The digital era revitalizes storytelling traditions, focusing on rejuvenation, not just preservation. Online platforms spark interest and engage the younger generation in sharing ancestral stories through technology”.

This theme emphasizes technology's role in protecting Ghana's rich oral heritage from fading into obscurity.

6.3.3. Global Reach and Cultural Exchange

Most of the interviewees expressed that the internet plays a major role in fostering cross-cultural exchange and global appreciation of Ghanaian narratives. The participants underscored how digital interconnectedness erases geographical boundaries, empowering Ghanaian storytellers to share their cultural heritage globally. For instance, one participant stated;

“The internet globalizes traditional storytelling by reaching a varied global audience through online platforms and social media, increasing cross-cultural appreciation of local culture.”

Another also said

“I've connected with storytellers and enthusiasts worldwide through online storytelling communities. This exchange has enriched our storytelling traditions and provided new perspectives on our stories.”

6.3.4. Collaborative Storytelling

The study also found that digital tools are reshaping the way traditional stories are narrated and disseminated through collaborative endeavours involving storytellers, artists, and the audience.

One participant emphasized the transformative element, saying,

“Collaborative storytelling extends beyond solo narration; it's a collective undertaking. Digital tools enable us to interlace a range of voices and viewpoints, breathing new life into ancient narratives”.

These platforms have transformed the storytelling process, fostering a collective sense of ownership and creativity in the preservation and dissemination of traditional narratives.

6.4. The challenges posed by the modern communication landscape to traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling

6.4.1. Digital divide and access barriers

One prominent theme that emerged was the digital divide and access barriers. Most of the participants highlighted the significant challenges posed by disparities in digital access and technology literacy, particularly in the context of rural areas and marginalized communities.

A participant from a rural community emphasized this challenge, stating,

"Many of our elders and community storytellers lack access to the internet and digital devices. They struggle to adapt to the new methods, which limits the transmission of our traditional stories to the younger generation."

Another quote from a respondent emphasized the issue of technology literacy, saying,

"In some marginalized communities, the lack of digital literacy hinders the use of online platforms for storytelling. Traditional storytellers are often unfamiliar with the technology, and this creates a significant barrier to reaching wider audiences."

6.4.2. Authenticity and Cultural Preservation

Another critical theme that surfaced was the challenge related to "authenticity and cultural preservation. Some of the participants lamented the complex hurdles associated with preserving the authenticity and cultural integrity of traditional stories in the digital age.

For example, a participant from a cultural preservation organization pointed out;

"Adapting traditional stories for digital platforms can sometimes lead to a dilution of their cultural significance. The pressure to make stories more appealing to modern audiences can sometimes result in altering the original narratives."

Another respondent highlighted,

"The digital age has led to a demand for shorter, snappier content, which can be at odds with the rich and elaborate nature of traditional storytelling. In adapting to these preferences, there's a risk of losing the depth and cultural context that makes these stories so meaningful."

6.4.3. Competition and Distraction

Competition and distraction are other prominent themes that emerged. This theme highlights the notable challenges posed by the abundance of digital content and entertainment options, particularly in terms of capturing and retaining audience attention and interest in traditional storytelling. For example, one respondent asserted that;

"With the surge in online platforms, social media, and streaming services, audiences are bombarded with a plethora of content options. Traditional storytelling competes with video games, streaming, and viral trends for attention, making it more challenging to keep audiences engaged."

Another participant remarked;

"The modern communication landscape offers instant gratification and quick entertainment. Traditional storytelling, which often requires time and patience, sometimes struggles to hold the attention of today's audience accustomed to short, fast-paced content."

6.4.4. Copyright and Intellectual Property

Another key theme that emerged was copyright and intellectual property. Most of the participants revealed the multifaceted issues associated with safeguarding traditional stories and the protection of intellectual property rights in the digital age. A respondent with expertise in cultural preservation stressed,

"The digital era has led to concerns about the unauthorized use and distribution of traditional stories. Without proper mechanisms for protecting these narratives, there's a risk of exploitation and misappropriation."

Another participant emphasized;

"Balancing the need to share traditional stories with the necessity of preserving their cultural and intellectual integrity is challenging. There's an increasing need for legal frameworks and copyright protection to address these concerns."

These highlight the complex and critical challenges regarding traditional oral storytelling in the digital era. The views expressed by participants showed that the modern communication landscape presents challenges to traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling. These findings underscore the need for urgent measures to be taken to preserve Traditional Ghanaian oral storytelling in the modern communication landscape.

7. Discussion

The findings of this study show that Ghanaian traditional oral storytelling is popular among the Ghanaian population. In other words, most Ghanaians have a positive perception towards traditional oral storytelling. The findings also revealed that the modern communication landscape presents several opportunities for the preservation and advancement of Ghanaian traditional oral storytelling. It is also found that the emergence of the modern communication landscape presents some challenges to Ghanaian traditional oral storytelling.

The findings of these studies resonated with the media ecology theory. Thus, modern communication technologies have provided a dynamic environment that actively moulds and impacts human behaviour and perception towards Ghanaian oral traditional storytelling. The findings of the study also resonate with the findings of other empirical studies on modern communication and traditional oral storytelling. For example, Kwakye-Opong and Gharbin (2017) found that storytelling holds a significant role in Ghana as an ancient art form utilized for centuries to impart moral values and offer entertainment. It was found that the architecture of theatres has been shaped by storytelling performances, featuring an open central space, the courtyard, surrounded by enclosed rooms. This underscores the importance attached to traditional oral storytelling in Ghana. Also, studies such as Mireku-Gyimah (2016) and Adjei and Ansah (2022) indicated that storytelling is a practice rooted in the memory and remembrance, of most Ghanaian societies especially among the Akan. Thus, the finding of this current study further affirms the acceptance and positive perception of Ghanaians towards oral traditional storytelling.

Also, the negative challenges posed by modern communication technologies on oral traditional storytelling have been highlighted by studies such as Abankwah and Abankwah (2017) and Okpewho (2009) who emphasized the influence of globalization in diminishing significance of Ananse stories and the waning presence of traditional storytelling in African societies. These studies indicated that modern communication technologies have not been effectively harnessed to improve traditional oral storytelling. For example, Abankwa and Abankwa (2017) indicated that the majority of Ghanaians residing beyond the borders of Ghana, especially in Botswana, exhibit less familiarity with Ananse stories compared to those raised in their native language. However, the opportunities presented by modern communication technologies have been observed by Eze et al. (2021). Eze et al. (2021) found that despite the introduction of modern telecommunication systems in Nigeria, African verbal artists and their craft continue to maintain relevance. Traditional African communication methods persist in serving various purposes, including entertainment, information dissemination, advertising products and services, as well as addressing psychological, social, and economic needs within the communities where they are practiced. These studies collectively recognize traditional oral storytelling as having a deep cultural significance. The findings of the empirical studies also agreed that the modern communication landscape presents both opportunities and challenges to oral traditional storytelling, prompting the necessity for further studies to be conducted to provide further evidence on the nature of traditional oral storytelling amid the modern communication landscape.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on “Traditional Ghanaian Oral Storytelling in the Modern Communication Landscape” has provided significant insights. Ghanaians hold a favourable view of traditional storytelling, yet grapple with digital-age challenges. The evolving communication landscape presents chances for broader reach and cultural preservation, albeit accompanied by difficulties in accessibility, preserving authenticity, and adapting to evolving audience preferences. It is crucial to acknowledge these challenges and seize the opportunities to sustain the enduring relevance of traditional storytelling within Ghana's cultural fabric.

9. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. Initiate Digital Literacy Programs: Launch digital literacy initiatives, especially in rural and less privileged areas, to bridge the digital divide and equip storytellers with the skills to adapt to contemporary communication methods.
2. Advocate for Preservation and Adaptation: Encourage the utilization of digital platforms for preserving traditional stories while preserving their cultural essence. Storytellers should modify narratives to suit modern preferences without compromising their cultural core.
3. Develop Audience Engagement Approaches: Create strategies for engaging audiences that align with evolving expectations. Incorporate multimedia and interactive elements while retaining the fundamental aspects of traditional storytelling to engage modern audiences effectively.
4. Strengthen Copyright and Intellectual Property Protections: Implement legal frameworks and awareness campaigns to safeguard traditional stories and the intellectual property rights of storytellers in the digital era, protecting against unauthorized use and exploitation.
5. Foster Collaborative Initiatives: Promote collaboration between traditional storytellers, cultural preservation entities, and digital content creators to explore innovative methods for sharing traditional stories through modern platforms, reaching wider audiences while preserving cultural traditions.

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Causes of Conflict, Proposed Strategy and Mediation: The Case Study of TOMY of the 3rd Health District, Greece

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Abstract

Aim of the research was to study the causes of conflicts in the TOMY (Primary Health Care Centers) of the 3rd Health District, the proposed strategy to deal with conflicts and the effect of demographic and professional profile on employee's views. A primary, quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, and comparative between subjects was conducted using the reliable and valid questionnaire of Tengilimoglu & Kisa for the causes of conflicts ($\alpha=0.777$). The research involved 143 employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. Data analysis was performed at a significance level of 5% using independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA. Taking orders from more than one manager and not clearly defined duties by statutory regulations would affect negatively the employee's production. Inadequate rewards according to job performance and differences in education level would lead to communication problems between different professional groups. The causes of conflicts were recognized more by health professionals, with longer experience. Cooperation and mediation emerged as the most appropriate strategies for dealing with conflicts. The improvement of organization via the meritocratic management of personnel, the division of tasks and the immediate recruitment of personnel of all specialties in all departments, is expected to reduce the phenomena of conflicts.

Keywords: Causes of Conflicts Human Resources, Mediation, 3rd Health District of Greece

1. Introduction

The goal of every organization is to create an environment where employees will be satisfied and work effectively. Nevertheless, conflicts in the workplace are an inevitable event (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020). Contributing factors that lead to conflict include a) Structural factors such as specialization, common resources, goal differences, roles and expectations, authority relationships and jurisdictional ambiguities and b) Personal factors (Abiodun, 2014; Carment & James, 2000; Whitlam & Cameron, 2012).

In particular, in the health sector, since administrative staff should engage in interaction with people from different professions, including doctors, nurses and medical technicians, in the process of providing differentiated and complex medical services to patients, conflicts will arise, thus exacerbating work stress and reducing emotional intelligence (Han et al., 2022). Regarding the causes of these conflicts, they often stem from poor staff management, inadequate planning, execution and inspection of key aspects of hospital management. Therefore, the roles of the staff are not sufficiently recognized in relation to the problems presented in the various departments. Health professionals are required to make various decisions through coordination and management of conflicting interests between various departments in a health organization (Pitsilidou et al., 2018).

Collaboration is one of the most important factors for the effective functioning of an organization (Fountouki et al., 2009). However, the need for interdisciplinary collaboration in a hospital also increases the level of interaction between healthcare professionals and the level of interdependence between departments. It is therefore natural that, with the increase of such interactions, the possibility of conflicts also increases (Papadopoulou, 2014). Establishing communication and collaboration (17.7%), respecting individual rights and clearly dividing responsibilities (13.4%) were the most common recommendations made by participants for conflict resolution in the Cyprus hospital environment (Pitsilidou et al., 2018).

In addition, mediation is preferred by the employees, as they can address specific needs of healthcare disputants in a number of ways (Thrope, 2011):

- Mediation is more confidential and private than courts and is reviewed in private proceedings. Of course, it is preferable to confrontations in courtrooms.
- Any form of mediation that takes place much more quickly should be done more quickly than recourse to the court system.
- Mediation procedures allow for the use of dispute resolution professionals with applicable dispute resolution expertise, plus relevant regulatory, health care science knowledge.
- Mediation processes provide an opportunity for thoughtful resolution of emotional and charged disputes.
- Mediation can provide a forum for re-resolution of disputes between multiple parties-individuals, who may not always be parties to the same litigation (Thrope, 2011).

As Triantari (2018) points out, two key advantages of mediation are the conciliatory nature of the process and cost savings. Privacy is another very important feature in mediation. Mediation is preferred by professionals as a solution to dispute resolution as it minimizes the threat of unwanted publicity.

Units with assertive employees are expected to have more conflict. People who are assertive are expected to recognize problems more effectively and result in goal achievement, increasing organizational outcomes in handling conflict (Ma & Jaeger, 2010). In organizational settings, assertive individuals are seen as more powerful and can adopt more favorable situations. High levels of assertiveness can bring significant rewards and short-term achievements; however, they can be costly when considering long-term relationships, leading to conflict (Ames & Flynn, 2007).

In research on the use of mediation/conflict resolution in social work practice, it is reasonable to assume that both social work and conflict resolution are linked in that “the employees regularly take on the role of interventionist in almost all aspects of social work” (Mayer, 2013, p. 419). Mayer (2000) indicates that there are five general types of services that social workers provide related to mediation/conflict, such as, “prevention, conciliation, decision-making, procedural assistance, and substantive assistance” (p. 312).

Conflicts are inevitable but, with effective management they can be used as a springboard for dialogue. Such conflicts can also promote changes in practices and situations enhancing the optimal functioning of the organization (Pitsilidou et al., 2018).

In the national health system, there is a strong need for interdisciplinary collaboration (Liaropoulos, 2010), which was a key component of the establishment of Local Health Teams in 2017. The collaboration of teams consisting of different specialties increases the risk of conflicts (Stathopoulou, 2006). Human emotions, such as anger, stress,

apathy, depression, nervousness, questioning, are the result of conflicts and make it difficult for services to function properly (Papadopoulou, 2009).

It is the first time to conduct research in TOMY in the field of Human Resources Management and specifically on the causes of conflicts and in mediation, as the most appropriate strategy for dealing with them.

The findings can inform employees about conflict management issues and induce management to develop special staff training programs. This research will form a basis for future research contributing to the enhancement of knowledge.

The aim of this research is to study the causes of conflicts in the TOMY (acronym for Local Health Team) of the 3rd Health District, the proposed strategy to deal with conflicts and the effect of demographic and professional profile on employee's views. The research questions are formulated below:

- 1) To what extent are the causes of the conflicts organizational and related to the expectations of the employees in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District?
- 2) What is the best strategy for dealing with conflicts in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District?
- 3) How do the views of the employees in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District differ regarding the causes of conflicts depending on their demographic and professional profile?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The present research is primary, quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, and comparative between subjects. Primary, cross-sectional research is suitable for assessing the opinions of research participants in a specific period of time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), i.e., in the present research for the assessment of the opinions of employees in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, at 2020 regarding the causes of conflicts. Quantitative research was used as the concepts under study (causes of conflict) are measurable (Creswell, 2013). The research is comparative as the views of different groups defined by the demographic-occupational profile on the causes of conflict were compared. Comparative analyzes are used in quantitative research using statistical techniques on numerical data, in order to generalize the results to the research population through the inductive approach (Fowler, 2014).

2.2 Procedure

The research began after the approval of the corresponding proposal by the University of the researcher. The proposal was characterized as interesting, useful and beneficial for the scientific community. Then, permission to conduct the research was requested from the administrations at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District and as soon as the request was accepted, data collection began. The questionnaires were completed in paper form at an agreed time at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. Employees were informed about the aim of the research, to answer honestly and that their participation is anonymous and voluntary. The researcher observed the necessary ethical issues related to scientific research but also to the psychology of the participants participating in it (APA, 2010). The research was conducted in March 2020.

2.3 Questionnaire

At the 16/02-09-2021 meeting of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Macedonia in Greece, the approval to conduct the research with protocol number 5/2022 was recommended. A questionnaire of demographic and professional characteristics was used with 9 closed-ended questions regarding gender, age, marital status, duration of work, education level, if they hold a coordinator position, if they have ever been

informed about conflict management issues during the studies, the specialty and what kind of approach the coordinator uses to resolve conflicts.

The causes of conflicts were measured with the questionnaire used in the research of Tengilimoglu&Kisa (2005) which includes 1 closed-ended question about what behavior they display when in conflict (claim, compromise, avoidance, acceptance, cooperation, mediation) 8 five-point Likert scale questions (1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3=Moderate, 4=A lot, 5=Absolutely), about organizational causes of conflict, 5 five-point Likert scale questions about causes related to employee expectations and 1 open-ended question on future proposals for conflict resolution.

The reliability of the conflict causes was high with a value of $\alpha=0.777$ using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient (McLeod, 2007). The validity of the tool results from the validity of the content, that is, that the questions cover the possible causes of conflicts (McLeod, 2013).

2.4 Population-Sample

The population of the research is considered to be all the employees in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District in the period 2021-2022. Regarding this sample, it consists of 143 employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, which was collected using opportunity sampling (Creswell, 2013).

The majority of the sample consisted of women (79.02%, N=113), aged 18-45 years old (84.50%, N=120), married (57.34%, N=82), holders of bachelor degree (63.64%, N=91), general doctors (25.17%, N=36), nurses (25.17%, N=36) or administrative staff (22.38%, N=32), with more than 3 years of work (81.82%, N=118) who do not hold a coordinator position (90.85%, N=129) and have not ever learned about conflict management issues during their studies (60.14%, N=86). Participants stated that TOMY coordinator uses problem solving (52.48%, N=74) or approach compliant with current legislation (24.82%, N=35) to resolve conflicts on a personal or group level. (Table 1).

Table1: Demographic characteristics

Demographics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	30	20.98%
	Female	113	79.02%
Age	18-35	49	34.50%
	36-45	71	50.00%
	46-67	22	15.50%
Marital Status	Unmarried	47	32.87%
	Married	82	57.34%
	Divorced-Separated-Widower	14	9.79%
Duration of work	0-3	25	17.48%
	4-6	36	25.17%
	7-10	37	25.87%
	>10	45	31.47%
Educational level	Bachelor	91	63.64%
	Master	46	32.17%
	PhD	6	4.20%
Do you hold a Coordinator Position?	No	129	90.85%
	Yes	13	9.15%
Have you ever learned about conflict management issues during your studies?	No	86	60.14%
	Yes	57	39.86%
What specialty do you have in TOMY?	Pediatrician	7	4.90%
	General doctor	36	25.17%
	Social Worker	18	12.59%
	Nurse	36	25.17%
	Visitor	14	9.79%
	Administrative	32	22.38%

What kind of approach does the TOMY coordinator use to resolve conflicts on a personal or group level?	Authoritarian	9	6.38%
	Liberal	14	9.93%
	Problem solving	74	52.48%
	Compliant with current legislation	35	24.82%
	He stands for the majority	9	6.38%

2.5 Data Analysis

Data coding was done in Microsoft Office Excel 2016 software and statistical analysis in IBM SPSS 24 program. Descriptive measures such as percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations were used. Normality for causes of conflict was checked with the Shapiro Wilk test and it was confirmed ($p=0.065$). The parametric independent samples t-test and One-way ANOVA were used to compare mean values for 2 and 3 or more independent samples correspondingly (Field, 2017).

3. Results

Generally organizational causes of conflict were moderately supported. Employees were a lot or absolutely satisfied personally and professionally with the roles and tasks assigned (44.8%, $M=3.41$), believe that their salary is enough to motivate them satisfactorily according to their workload (49%, $M=3.29$) and would not be happier, calmer and more productive if they worked in a different profession than the one, they have now ($M=2.53$, 44.1%). However, the 47.4% ($M=3.21$) feel negative effect on their productivity when taking orders from more than one manager and 37.8% ($M=2.80$) feel that statutory regulations do not clearly define their duties and help them perform efficiently (Table 2).

Table 2: Organizational causes of conflict

Questions	M	SD	Not at all	A little	Moderate	A lot	Absolutely
1. How satisfied are you personally and professionally with the roles and tasks assigned to you? [R]	3.41	0.83	1.4%	9.8%	44.1%	36.4%	8.4%
3. Do you think your salary is enough to motivate you satisfactorily according to your workload? [R]	3.29	0.95	7.7%	8.4%	35.0%	45.5%	3.5%
6. Is taking orders from more than one manager negatively impacting your productivity?	3.21	1.29	14.0%	15.4%	23.1%	30.8%	16.8%
4. Does your current job look anything like your impression of your ideal job? [R]	3.04	1.04	9.9%	15.5%	43.0%	24.6%	7.0%
8. To what extent is the allocation of resources fairly between departments? [R]	2.88	0.88	7.8%	18.4%	55.3%	14.9%	3.5%
7. To what extent do you feel that statutory regulations clearly define your duties and help you perform them efficiently? [R]	2.80	0.97	9.1%	28.7%	37.8%	21.7%	2.8%
2. Do you think your workload is heavier	2.76	1.23	22.4%	14.0%	37.1%	18.2%	8.4%

compared to the workload of other professional groups?

5. Do you think you would be happier, calmer and more productive if you worked in a different profession than the one you have now?	2.53	1.19	27.3%	16.8%	37.1%	13.3%	5.6%
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Similarly causes related to employee's expectations were moderately supported. The 47.6% (M=3.32) feel that to high degree the promotion and career development relate to their expectations. However, the 53.9% (M=2.47) feel that the management of the 3rd Health District, is not aware about their contribution to the provision of health services, the 42% (M=2.70) do not feel they are getting the rewards according to their job performance and the 40.6% (M=3.11) think that differences in education level lead to communication problems between different professional groups (Table 3).

Table 3: Organizational causes of conflict

Questions	M	SD	Not at all	A little	Moderate	A lot	Absolutely
6. How much does promotion and career development relate to your expectations? [R]	3.32	0.99	5.6%	12.6%	34.3%	39.2%	8.4%
2. Are your messages understood and your professional expectations shared with other professional groups? [R]	3.15	0.86	2.1%	19.6%	44.8%	28.7%	4.9%
1. To what extent do differences in education level lead to communication problems between different professional groups?	3.11	1.11	9.8%	18.2%	31.5%	32.2%	8.4%
4. Do you think there are fair rewards between different professional groups? [R]	2.88	1.05	13.3%	18.2%	39.2%	25.9%	3.5%
3. Do you feel you are getting the rewards according with your job performance? [R]	2.70	1.06	14.0%	28.0%	37.8%	14.7%	5.6%
5. How aware is the management of the 3rd Health District, about your contribution to the provision of health services? [R]	2.47	1.11	22.0%	31.9%	27.7%	14.2%	4.3%

Regarding behavior in conflict, employees use cooperation (25.53%) or claim (25.53%), followed by avoidance (16.31%) and compromise (15.60%). Better organization via personnel management, division of tasks and recruitment is proposed to resolve problems of conflict (43.55%, N=54) (Table 4).

Table 4: Behavior in conflict and suggestions for conflict resolution

Question	Category	N	%
What kind of behavior do you exhibit when you are in conflict?	Claim	36	25.53%
	Compromise	22	15.60%
	Avoidance	23	16.31%
	Acceptance	5	3.55%
	Cooperation	36	25.53%
	Mediation	19	13.48%
Suggestions for conflict resolution	Fair distribution of resources	4	3.22%
	Communication and cooperation	12	9.68%
	Both sides should be heard	9	7.26%
	Fair approach	10	8.07%
	Conducting meetings	14	11.29%
	Clear division of responsibilities	10	8.06%
	Less political expediency in the workplace	5	4.03%
	Respect for individual rights	6	4.84%
	Organization (personnel management, division of tasks, recruitment)	54	43.55%

Causes of conflict were higher rated by employees of more than 3 years of work duration ($M=3.03$, $p=0.020$). Coordinator should use problem solving or approach compliant with current legislation to reduce causes of conflict ($M=2.92$, $p=0.010$) than using authoritarian, liberal or standing for majority approach ($M=3.20$). Cooperation or mediation strategy ($M=2.85$) would reduce causes of conflict ($p=0.005$) better than using claim ($M=3.17$) (Table 5)

Table 5: Effect of variables to causes of conflict

Variable	Category	N	M	Statistic	p
Gender	Male	30	3.07	$t(141)=1.048$	0.296
	Female	113	2.95		
Age	18-35	49	2.97	$F(2,139)=0.010$	0.990
	36-45	71	2.97		
	>45	22	2.99		
Marital Status	Unmarried	47	3.07	$F(2,140)=1.436$	0.241
	Married	82	2.91		
	Divorced-Separated-Widower	14	3.05		
Duration of work	0-3	25	2.75	$t(141)=2.344$	0.020
	>3	118	3.03		
Educational level	Bachelor	91	2.95	$F(2,140)=0.304$	0.739
	Master	46	3.03		
	PhD	6	3.01		
Do you hold a Coordinator Position?	No	129	2.98	$t(140)=0.291$	0.771
	Yes	13	2.93		
Have you ever learned about conflict management	No	86	2.99	$t(141)=0.383$	0.702
	Yes	57	2.96		

issues during your studies?						
What specialty	Pediatrician	7	3.32	F(5,137)		0.092
do you have in	General doctor	36	2.98	=1.939		
TOMY?	Social Worker	18	3.05			
	Nurse	36	3.08			
	Visitor	14	2.72			
	Administrative	32	2.86			
Kind of	Authoritarian-	32	3.20	t (139) =2.625		0.010
coordinator	Liberal-Majority	109	2.92			
approach	Problem solving-					
	Legislation					
Kind of	Claim	36	3.17	F(3,137)		0.036
behaviour in	Compromise	22	3.05	=2.935		
conflict	Avoidance-	28	2.93			
	Acceptance	55	2.85			
	Cooperation-					
	Mediation					

4. Discussion

Aim of the research was to study the causes of conflicts in the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, the proposed strategy to deal with conflicts and the effect of demographic and professional profile on employee's views. The research involved 143 employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, mainly women, married, 26-45 years old, doctors, nurses or administrative staff, holders of bachelor's degree with more than 3 years of work, who do not hold a coordinator position and have not been informed never about conflict management issues during their studies.

The most important organizational causes of conflict were the negative effect on their productivity when taking orders from more than one manager and that statutory regulations do not clearly define their duties and do not help them perform efficiently, results that are in agreement with Abiodun (2014), regarding authority relationships and uncertain lines of responsibility. Moreover, Carment and James (2000) stated that a) internal sources, those factors inherent within an organization, are a cause of conflict especially when there is a power relationship between them and b) external sources conflicts occur on the part of the government through the policies and legislative frameworks it formulates.

The health professionals stated that the management of the 3rd Health District does not have a high degree of awareness of their contribution to the provision of health services. Healthcare professionals are required to make various decisions through coordination and management of conflicting interests between various departments in a healthcare organization. Conflicts often stem from poor staff management, inadequate planning, execution and inspection of key aspects of hospital management. Therefore, the roles of the staff are not sufficiently recognized in relation to the problems presented in the various departments (Pitsilidou et al., 2018).

In addition, they do not feel they are getting the rewards according to their job performance, as Pitsilidou et al. (2018) highlighted. Furthermore, differences in education level, lead to communication problems between different professional groups. Abiodun (2014) pointed out that conflicts arise in an organization due to the fact that some have specialized knowledge and others have general knowledge.

Assertive and cooperative behavior is usually chosen by half of health professionals to deal with conflicts. Collaboration is one of the most important factors for the effective functioning of an organization (Fountouki et al., 2009; Pitsilidou et al., 2018), but the increase in staff interactions also increases the likelihood of conflicts (Papadopoulou, 2014). Ames and Flynn, (2007) emphasized that high levels of assertiveness lead to conflicts. Collaboration and mediation emerged as the most appropriate strategies for dealing with conflict, a finding that is consistent with the literature (Thrope, 2011).

Regarding the proposals of the employees for the resolution of the conflicts in the TOMY area, the majority of them included the merit-based management of the staff, the division of tasks, the immediate recruitment of staff of all specialties in all departments, the improvement of the organization and the implementation meetings. The training of the staff and the corresponding sensitivity on this matter by the administration is also expected to contribute positively to the creation of a peaceful working environment in the TOMY. Conflicts are inevitable, but, with their effective management, they can promote changes in practices and situations enhancing the optimal functioning of the organization (Pitsilidou et al., 2018).

In addition, the causes of the conflicts which are related to the expectations of the employees as well as the organizational ones were mentioned by health professionals with 4 or more years of service. This is to be expected, as health professionals with more experience usually have a longer career path and increasing experience increases employees' expectations of the organization (Panahi Tosanloo et al., 2019).

The TOMY coordinator for conflict resolution at the personal or group level must use the problem-solving approach as well as the one that is in accordance with the applicable legislation and regulations for health professionals. In research on the use of mediation/conflict resolution in social work practice, it is reasonable to assume that both social work and conflict resolution are linked in that the employees regularly take on the role of interventionist in almost all aspects of social work (Mayer, 2013, p. 419).

5. Conclusion

Taking orders from more than one manager and not clearly defined duties by statutory regulations would affect negatively the employee's production. Few awareness of the contribution of employees to the provision of health services was observed. Inadequate rewards according to job performance and differences in education level would lead to communication problems between different professional groups. The causes of conflicts were recognized more by health professionals, with longer experience. Cooperation and mediation emerged as the most appropriate strategies for dealing with conflicts. The TOMY coordinator for conflict resolution at the personal or group level must use the problem-solving approach as well as the one that is in accordance with the applicable legislation and regulations for health professionals. The improvement of organization via the meritocratic management of personnel, the division of tasks and the immediate recruitment of personnel of all specialties in all departments, is expected to reduce the phenomena of conflicts.

The generalization of the results is limited to the employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, mainly for doctors, nurses, social workers or administrative staff, women, aged 26-45 years, in married family status, with more than 3 years of work, who do not hold a coordinator position and they have never been informed about conflict management issues during their studies. The causes of conflicts were studied as a single factor as moderate reliability was shown in the individual ones.

Future quantitative comparative research using stratified sampling across different structures is suggested for greater representativeness. The sample size should be limited according to the population size (Creswell, 2013). The use of Factor Analysis consists of a sample of at least 300 people to confirm the validity of concepts. It is suggested to use a different multidimensional tool for the causes of conflicts or to pilot test the existing one. The use of qualitative research using semi-structured interviews is expected to provide more information on the causes of conflict (Willig, 2014) and increase the validity of the results (McLeod, 2013).

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The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Chinese Immigrant Students

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Abstract

Racial microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, and indirect forms of discrimination or insult directed at people based on their race or ethnicity. They can manifest as comments, behaviors, or environmental factors that convey negative stereotypes or biases. Asian Americans (AA) represent the fastest-growing population in the United States, with their numbers expected to continue increasing rapidly. However, the diversity within AA groups is often overlooked or inadequately described due to the pervasive model minority stereotype. The purpose of this study is to examine the racial microaggressions experienced by college students of Chinese descent. The outcomes of this research could help in understanding the social environment in which young Chinese immigrants live and could contribute to improving the environment to enhance their personal growth. This study has two research questions: 1) Does the perception of microaggressions among Chinese immigrants increase or decrease the longer they live in the U.S.? 2) Do women experience more microaggressions than men?

Keywords: Racial Microaggressions, Chinese Immigrants, Students

1. Introduction

Racial microaggressions can be categorized into three main types: microinsult, microassault, and microinvalidation. Sue and colleagues (2007) identified nine categories of microaggressions with distinct themes: stranger in your own land, intelligence attribution, color blindness, criminality/assumption of criminal status, denial of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, second-class status, and environmental invalidation. Figure 1 visually depicts the three broad classes of microaggressions, the classification of issues under each category, and their relationship to each other (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 278, Figure 1).

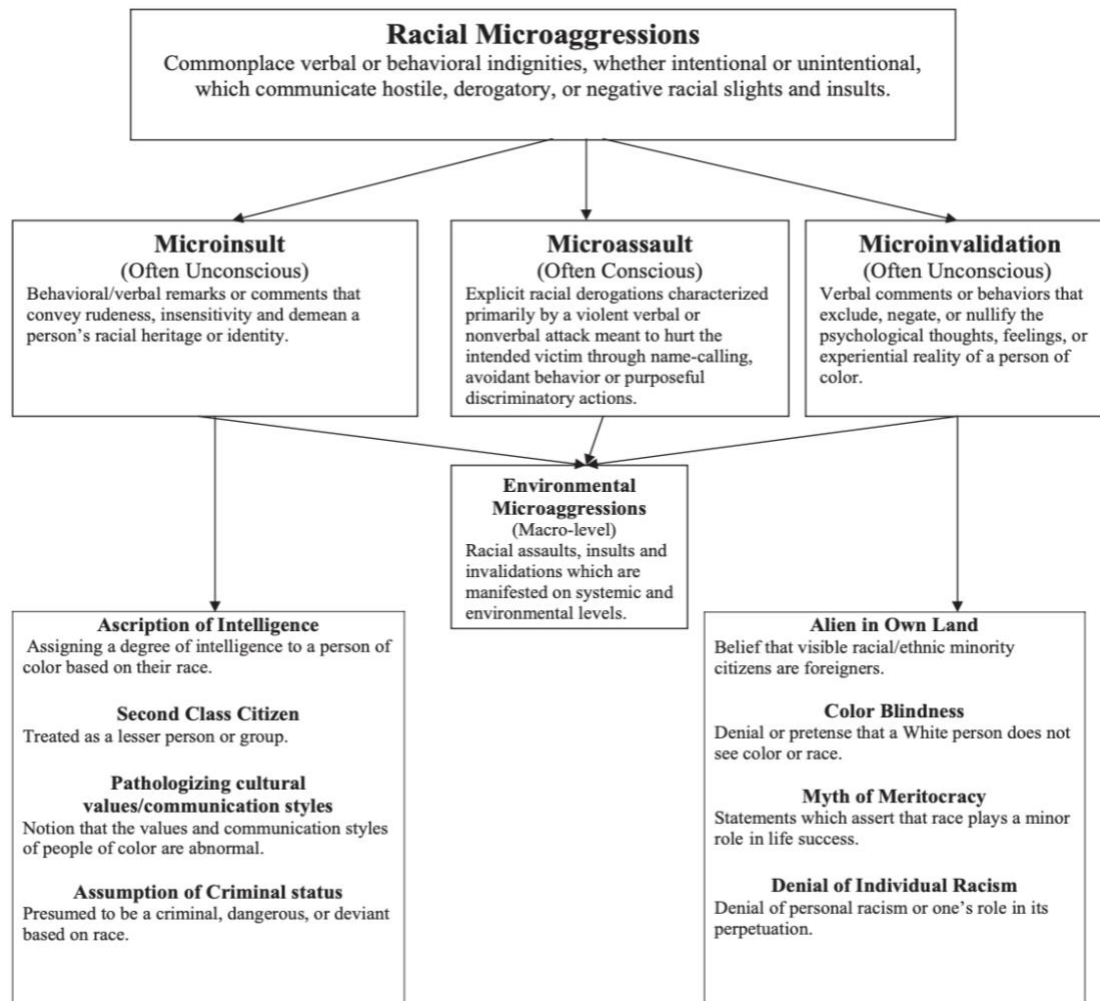


Figure 1: Categories of and Relationships Among Racial Microaggressions

Source: Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 278, Figure 1

The study found that Chinese students perceived more racial microaggressions the longer they stayed in the United States, with female students perceiving more than their male counterparts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural and Identity Factors

2.1.1. Model Minority Stereotype and Foreignness

Microaggressions related to the “model minority” stereotype and perceptions of Asians as foreigners are associated with poorer self-rated health among Asian Americans (Nicholson et al., 2020). Participants often face microinsults when expected to have extensive knowledge about their ancestral cultures or when asked to cook Asian food or provide ethnically specific advice (Endo, 2015). Because most of the participants in this study are Chinese international students or recent immigrants, they do not perceive their portrayal of Chinese culture as a micro-attack on their identity. It is assumed that for the second generation and above, Chinese Americans who are more American in their identity would feel uncomfortable being seen as foreigners.

2.1.2. Intersectionality

The Intersectional Prototypicality Model (IPM) elucidates how the intersection of racial and gender stereotypes influences perceptions and treatment of Asian American men and women. Hypo-prototypicality leads to marginalization, while hyper-prototypicality results in dehumanization and objectification (Wong & McCullough, 2021). This framework highlights experiences such as the exclusion of Asian American women in professional settings and the objectification of Asian women in media.

2.1.3. Gender Differences in Experiences

Gender also plays a crucial role in the experiences of racial discrimination. The different experiences of Filipino American males and females across various regions highlight the importance of considering both geographic and gender factors (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). The Intersectional Prototypicality Model (IPM) further explains how the intersection of racial and gender stereotypes affects the experiences of Asian American men and women, leading to different discriminatory encounters based on hypo-prototypicality and hyper-prototypicality (Wong & McCullough, 2021).

2.1.4. Asian American Women's Experiences

Intersectional discrimination, both explicit and implicit, significantly contributes to adverse mental health outcomes among Asian American women, including body shame, disordered eating, depression, and suicidality. Coping mechanisms include avoidance, shifting, proactive coping, and reliance on support networks (Forbes et al., 2023). Increased gendered racial microaggressions during the COVID-19 pandemic have been linked to higher levels of shifting, which mediates the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and perceived racism (Gamst et al., 2023).

2.2. *Role of Social Support*

Social support is crucial in mitigating the effects of discrimination. Higher levels of discrimination combined with lower social support correlate with more health problems. Conversely, strong social support can buffer the negative effects of discrimination on depressive and physical symptoms (Lee & Waters, 2021). For Korean American youth, strong ethnic identity and social support from peers, adults, and ethnic communities are linked to reduced depression (Kim et al., 2024).

2.2.1. Coping Strategies

Asian American women employ various coping mechanisms in response to gendered racial microaggressions, including shifting their self-presentation to counter perceived racism. This strategy partially mediates the relationship between gendered racial microaggressions and perceived racism (Gamst et al., 2023). Strong ethnic identity also serves as a protective factor against depression, with Korean American youth experiencing reduced depressive symptoms through social support (Kim et al., 2024).

2.2.2. Family Influence

Family messages conveying racial mistrust contribute to increased depression and social anxiety among Asian Americans. In contrast, preparation for bias can mitigate negative outcomes by reducing avoidant coping strategies and stress-induced behaviors (Kim & Hogge, 2021). One interviewee shared that his parents' strategies toward microaggressions are "avoidance and indifference," while the interviewee himself "never experienced racial microaggressions." He believes that family messages can help buffer some of the aggression, but do not solve the underlying problem. An interviewee expressed a similar sentiment, sharing that her parents advised her to ignore certain incidents. Even though they offer emotional support, it doesn't fully help her because, as international student, her parents aren't physically present to assist her.

2.3. *Asian International Students*

Asian international students at predominantly White institutions frequently encounter negative biases toward other minority groups, influenced by U.S. societal factors such as media portrayals. Asian American students often feel uncomfortable and fearful of being mistaken for international students due to derogatory comments and racial slurs from White domestic students (Yeo et al., 2019). Additionally, they face specific microaggressions in therapy settings that impact their mental health (Kim & Hogge, 2021).

2.4. *Geographic and Demographic Influences*

2.4.1. Regional Differences in Microaggressions

Research indicates that geographic location significantly influences the experiences of racial microaggressions among Asian Americans. For instance, a study found that Filipino American males on the West Coast reported more frequent discrimination than females on the East Coast. Compared to all other groups of men and women, a lower percentage of East Coast female college students say they are expected to experience racism and discrimination (44%). One reason may be the subtle or covert nature of racism and discrimination today, which this group in particular may find it difficult to recognize (Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). Conversely, Asian Americans on the West Coast generally experienced fewer microaggressions compared to those in the Northeast and Midwest, likely due to the larger and more established Asian American communities on the West Coast (Nadal, 2011a). This underscores the necessity for more nuanced studies comparing major cities on both coasts, such as New York and San Francisco.

2.5. *Psychological Impact and Coping Mechanisms*

2.5.1. Stress and Self-Esteem

The race of the perpetrator significantly affects the psychological impact of racial microaggressions on Asian Americans. Microaggressions from White perpetrators cause more stress and lower implicit self-esteem compared to those from Asian American perpetrators (Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2017; Wong-Padoongpatt et al., 2020). Additionally, racial microaggressions are linked to sleep disturbances, especially for individuals with high stigma consciousness, exacerbating the negative impact on sleep quality and duration (Ong et al., 2017).

2.5.2. Impact on Mental Health

Higher educational attainment among Asian Americans is associated with increased perceptions of microaggressions, possibly due to greater interactions with White individuals and heightened racial awareness (Nadal et al., 2015). In therapeutic settings, Asian international students face specific microaggressions, such as environmental microaggressions and culturally insensitive treatment plans, which hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021). Additionally, daily microaggressions predict increases in somatic symptoms and negative affect (Ong et al., 2013). Cultural mistrust mediates the relationship between racial microaggressions and well-being, with microaggressions leading to increased cultural mistrust and, consequently, negative impacts on well-being (Kim et al., 2017).

2.6. *Educational and Workplace Contexts*

2.6.1. Educational Settings

In academic environments, minimizing or denying racial issues can exacerbate discrimination's impact, leading to feelings of invisibility and increased psychological distress among Asian American students (Ahn & Keum, 2021). Asian international students often experience specific microaggressions in therapy settings, such as culturally insensitive treatment plans, which can hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021).

Asian American medical students often refrain from reporting microaggressions due to fears of retaliation and other obstacles, which negatively impact their mental health (Zhang et al., 2023).

2.6.2. Workplace Experience

Workplace microaggressions, such as being stereotyped for math competency and diligence, lead to negative outcomes like frustration and burnout, despite these stereotypes appearing positive on the surface (Nguyen et al., 2024). Positive attitudes towards Asian Americans can influence perceptions of workplace microaggressions, making blatant microaggressions seem more harmful, while subtler forms often remain underrecognized (Kim, Block, & Yu, 2021; Kim, Block, & Nguyen, 2019). Since the participants were college students, few had

workplace experience. However, no participants in my research reported encountering unfair work distribution in group assignments at NY colleges.

Racial microaggressions against Asians in the U.S. vary based on geographic, demographic, and contextual factors. These subtle forms of discrimination can have significant psychological impacts and are influenced by broader societal stereotypes and cultural assumptions. Understanding and addressing these issues requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges the diversity within Asian American communities and promotes inclusive practices across various domains.

3. Research Methods

With approval from the Eureka Review Board, participants for this study were recruited from both private and public colleges in New York, including NYU, Purdue, Cornell, Baruch, CCNY, and SUNY Albany. The 22 Chinese students were recruited through personal social networks. Table 1 provides details about the participants, including their gender, year of birth, years in college, and countries they have lived in.

Table 2: Information on Participants

Gender		Year of Birth		Year(s) in higher education		Countries lived in \geq 1 month	
Female	13	2006	1	1	3	U.S.	22
Male	9	2005	1	2	3	China	18
		2004	2	3	4	France	3
		2003	1	4	8	Canada	1
		2002	2	6	3	England	1
		2001	1	10	1		
		2000	1				
		1999	1				
		1998	1				
		1997	2				
		1995	2				
		1993	2				
		1991	2				

	1990	2		
	1986	1		

The questionnaire incorporates demographics, the *Everyday Discrimination Scale* (short version) (Williams et al., 1997), and the *Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale* (Nadal, K. L., 2011). The first scale encompassed terms such as microinsult, microinvalidation, and microassault, while the second scale categorized these terms into six distinct themes, mirroring those identified by Sue (2007): Assumption of Inferiority, Second-Class Citizenship and Assumptions of Criminality, Microinvalidations, Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, Environmental Microaggressions, and Workplace/School Microaggressions.

Interview participants received compensation in the form of a gift card. Three female students and one male student were selected for recorded interviews from the pool of survey participants who consented. The three women have graduated from four-year colleges in New York, with one having also completed graduate school and attended a boarding high school in the U.S. The male student is currently a junior in college and has been in the U.S. for one year. Each interview lasted 25 minutes and was conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews were recorded, manually transcribed, and, where necessary, translated from Chinese to English. Survey participants had the option to choose a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

4. Findings

Questionnaire and survey results provide valuable insights into the cultural, societal, and psychological challenges Chinese international students encounter due to microaggressions.

4.1. General Trends

General trends are found from the *Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale (REMS)* and individual questions from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*. Microaggressions are frequently experienced during freshman year, decrease sharply during sophomore year, continue to decrease slower during junior year, but spike during senior year, surpassing freshman year frequency. Specifically, the type of microaggression from the Everyday Discrimination Scale that shows a similar trend is **microinsults** - subtle demeaning actions that convey rudeness or insensitivity, often reflecting implicit bias.

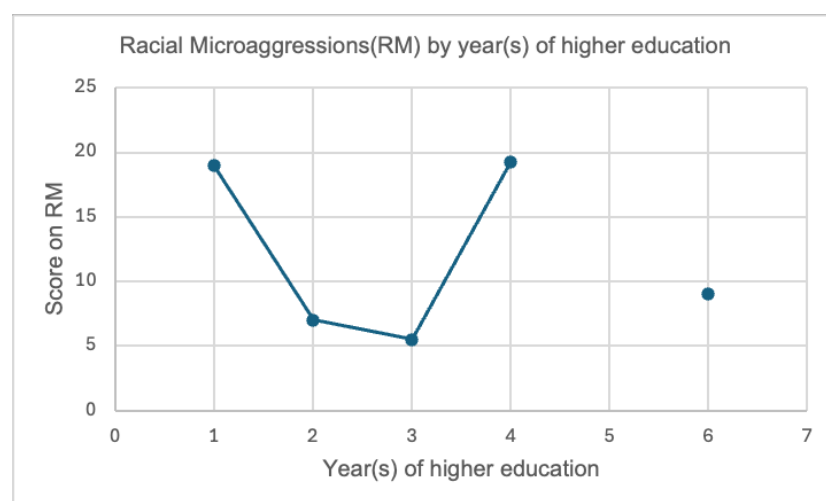


Figure 2: Racial Microaggression(RM) by year(s) higher education

Figure 2 shows the frequency of racial microaggressions from the *Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale (REMS)*; score ranges from 3 to 31.

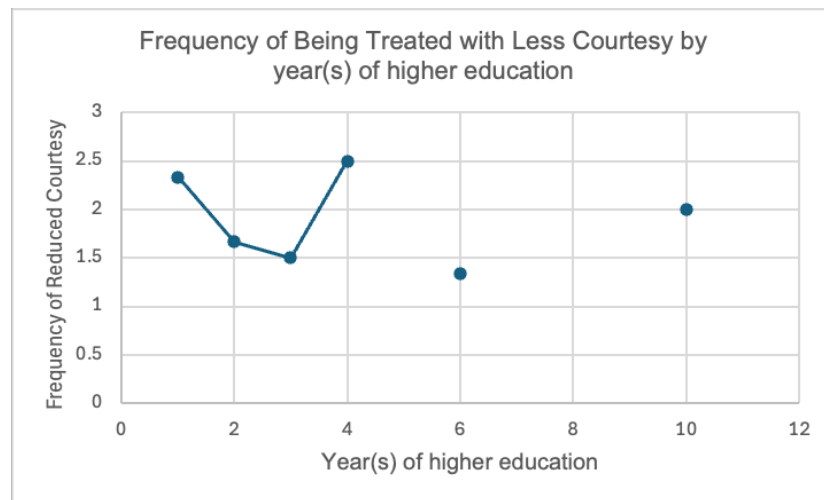


Figure 3: Frequency of being Treated with Less Courtesy by year(s) of higher education

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of “You are treated with less courtesy than other people” on the *Everyday Discrimination Scale* of 0-never, 1-less than once a year, 2-a few times a year, 3-a few times a month, 4-at least once a week, 5-almost every day.¹

The trends in **preventive strategies** against racial microaggressions differ from those concerning microinsults: both avoidance behavior and anticipation of potential microaggressions decrease from freshman to sophomore year, spike in junior year, and then slow again in senior year. Despite this pattern, seniors report greater social restrictions and mental burdens than freshmen. Notably, the average frequency of responses to both “trying to avoid certain social situations and places” and “thinking in advance about potential problems” remains consistent across all college years.

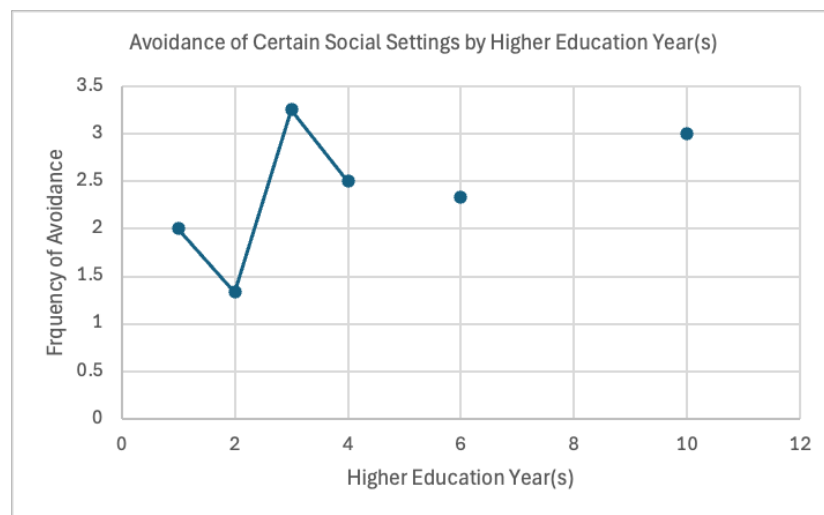


Figure 4: Avoidance of Certain Social Settings by Higher Education Year(s)

Figure 4 shows the frequency of “trying to avoid certain social situations and places” from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*.

¹ 10 years of college in the graph means 6th year of doctorate.

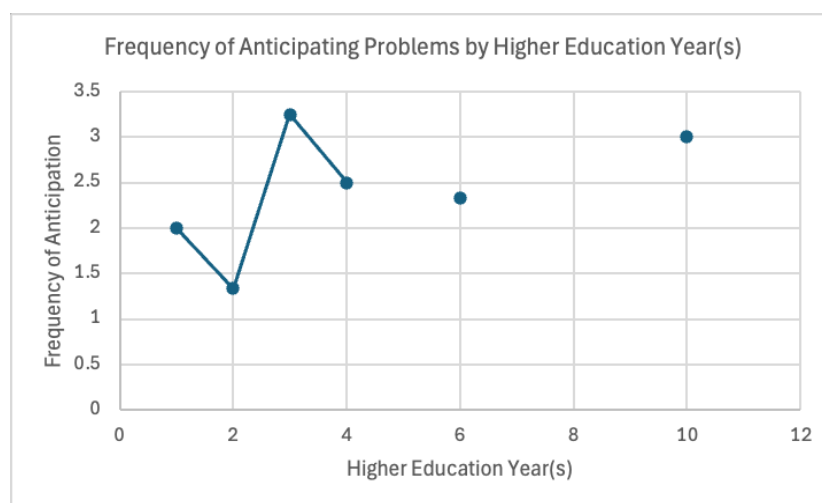


Figure 5: Frequency of Anticipating Problems by Higher Education Year(s)

Figure 5 shows the frequency of “think in advance about the kinds of problems you are likely to experience” from the *Everyday Discrimination Scale*.

4.2. Geographic Factors

Given that survey and interview respondents are primarily college students in New York, many lack firsthand experience living on the West Coast. Even an interviewee who studied at UCLA before moving to New York mentioned that she couldn’t provide a concrete comparison. She noted, “There are more Asians on the West Coast, but there are also racial microaggressions within the Asian community, such as Chinese Americans toward Chinese international students.” Another interviewee echoed this sentiment, stating, “Many American-born Chinese look down on international students.” This perspective challenges Nadal’s 2011 research, which suggested that racial microaggressions can exist even within more established communities.

On the West Coast, racial microaggressions towards Asians are generally less common due to a more diverse Asian population. However, microaggressions can still occur within the Asian community among American-born Chinese (ABC), older immigrants, new immigrants, and international students, potentially diminishing the protective effect of a strong ethnic identity. This sentiment is also shared with African international students and their social interactions with African Americans (Constantine, M. G., Anderson, G. M., Berkel, L. A., Caldwell, L. D., & Utsey, S. O., 2005).

In my study, using the Racial and Ethnic Aggression Scale, the top three themes of racial aggression experienced by females were Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, microinvalidations, and assumptions of inferiority, with an average score of 14.79. For males, the primary themes were Environmental Microaggressions and Exoticization/Assumptions of Similarity, with an average score of 9.20. This suggests that female college students in New York face approximately 1.6 times more racial microaggressions than their male counterparts. This finding contrasts with Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s study, which reported that, compared to other groups of men and women, a lower percentage of East Coast female college students (44%) expected to experience racism and discrimination. In my study, this percentage would be approximately 70.84%, indicating a significant increase.

One interviewee shared that during a month-long visit to the West Coast, she found people there to be friendlier, more inclusive, and better-mannered than those in New York. She also observed that the Asian population on the West Coast was much more diverse than on the East Coast. This observation contrasts with Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s explanation that the West Coast is less friendly to the Asian population compared to the East Coast. This discrepancy may be attributed to the unique political history of Filipino Americans, the focus of Bergano & Bergano-Kinney’s study, on the West Coast, where segregation was prevalent before 1965. In contrast, on the East Coast, Filipino Americans, particularly professionals, were less affected by racism due to their financial resources

and a more positive public image (Cordova, 1983; Bergano & Bergano-Kinney, 1997). This contrast highlights differences within the Asian population; although the Chinese population on the West Coast has also faced a long history of discrimination since the Chinese Exclusion Act, they have generally experienced better treatment than Filipino immigrants.

Another reason for this discrepancy could be the timing of the studies: Bergano & Bergano-Kinney's research was conducted in 1997, while my research was conducted in 2024. The Filipino population on the West Coast may not have been as established and thriving in 1997 as it is in 2024. From 1990 to 2024, the Filipino population in California increased by 93%, from 61.6 million to 119.1 million (Macrotrends, 2024).

4.3. Gender

Supporting Wong & McCullough's finding on how hyper-prototypicality leads to dehumanization and objectification, several female interviewees in my study expressed feelings of being perceived as stereotypically sexualized Asian women, which aligns with the concept of hyper-prototypicality (Wong & McCullough, 2021).

One interviewee described herself as "a petite Asian woman who fits into the stereotypical submissive yellow fever fetish." She noted that she is almost "constantly aware of the male gaze and objectification." Her experience underscores the hyper-prototypical portrayal of Asian women, who are often objectified as hypersexual partners. Another interviewee mentioned that women are significantly more likely to be "catcalled" on the streets. The stereotype of Asian women as "easy" partners for white men, combined with the fetishization and biased perceptions that some white men may hold, has made her reluctant to consider dating a white partner. Unlike some Asian women who may prefer white male partners, she stated, "My principle is to avoid dating white men." These biased perspectives not only create discomfort but also contribute to a deeper sense of physical unease.

4.4. Social Support

Unlike Kim's study (2024), which reports that Korean American youths feel supported by a strong sense of ethnic identity and community approval, my research presents a different perspective. One interviewee noted that, although her social network mainly consists of Chinese and Asians with similar backgrounds, their conversations about current social news on racial microaggressions tend to increase feelings of hopelessness about the broader environment, rather than making a positive impact within the community. Furthermore, racial microaggressions can also occur within the Asian community itself, such as between American-born Chinese (ABC) students and international students or between long-time immigrants and newer immigrants. This suggests that a strong ethnic identity might not necessarily shield Chinese college students from experiencing racial injustices.

Inner-ethnicity racial microaggressions are also observed among Black international students and Black Americans. In a study by Constantine and colleagues, a Kenyan male student reported that a Black woman he asked out told him he was "too Black" for her. Chrystal A. George Mwangi conducted research on African and Caribbean international students at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) in the Mid-Atlantic region. Her findings indicated that some Black international students arrive in the U.S. with preconceived notions—both negative and positive—about Black Americans. These perceptions are often shaped by media portrayals, particularly the negative stereotypes about the high rates of Black Americans in prison and on government assistance. Similarly, the complex U.S.-China relationship may contribute to Chinese and Asian Americans forming preconceived notions about Chinese international students. Such notions could lead to alienation within the Chinese community in America, pushing Chinese international students to have no alliance with either the white-dominated school community or their Chinese community. This could be detrimental, as instead of fostering genuine diversity, colleges and universities, by incorporating international students, may inadvertently increase the risk of tokenism and implicit bias towards various communities and individuals.

Kim & Hogge's 2021 study posits that family messages preparing individuals for racial bias can mitigate the stress caused by racial discrimination. However, this concept was not fully tested in my research, as most Chinese students reported their parents' indifference to these issues. One interviewee described his parents' approach to

microaggressions as “avoidance and indifference,” noting that while he personally “never experienced racial microaggressions,” he felt that family messages might provide some buffer but do not address the root of the problem. Similarly, another interviewee shared that her parents advised her to ignore certain incidents. Although her parents offer emotional support, it does not fully address the impact of these experiences, particularly because, as international students, they are not physically present to assist her.

4.5. Ethnicity and Culture

A respondent at Cornell University noted, “At Cornell, the student body is quite diverse, so I haven’t encountered many racial issues. However, there is a noticeable distinction among Chinese immigrants. Some try to downplay their heritage to fit in, while others proudly share their ‘motherland’ culture, even if they were born in America.” This perspective aligns with Yeo’s study, suggesting that some Chinese students may distance themselves from international students to assimilate. However, it also slightly contrasts with Yeo’s findings (Yeo et al., 2019), as some Chinese Americans at Cornell appear to embrace their heritage, potentially due to the university’s diverse environment. An interviewee suggests that microaggressions in the Chinese community may be caused by historical reasons, such as the injustices and inequalities experienced by Chinese American elders.

One survey respondent also shared her experience of micro-invalidations as an international student: “When I go to the grocery store with my White roommate, even if I ask a question, the sales associates will answer my White roommate, not me, the person who asked the question.” Although not overtly racist, this microinvalidation is both harmful and problematic. When asked if she believes this behavior is intentional, the respondent replied, “I think the sales associate assumes I don’t understand, rather than intending to insult me.” She feels the sales associate is undereducated on this issue and did not recognize this invalidation as a form of racial microaggression at the time. If it occurred again, she says she “might make fun of the sales associate for talking to the wrong person.” Her response indicates an indirect approach to addressing microaggressions.

Reinforcing Nadal’s finding (2015) that higher education attainment is positively correlated with greater perception of racial microaggression, an interviewee expressed that she “didn’t learn about this concept until [she] was in college, and [her] college friends are also very aware of the microaggressions [she] experienced.” This perspective was shared by an interviewee who moved to America from high school through to graduate school: “Initially, I wasn’t aware of racial microaggressions. It was only after spending more time here and learning about various incidents that I began to notice them. In school, racial microaggressions were rarely discussed, with the focus in high school primarily on Black and Latino communities, and little mention of Asians. In college, there weren’t specific courses on the topic; most of my understanding came from conversations with friends or following the news.”

Similarly, individual questions on the Daily Discrimination Scale and the REMS scale show that older Chinese international students at New York colleges report experiencing more racial microaggressions. This may be due to their increasing awareness of race and ethnicity in America, concepts that are less prominent in social conversations in China. There is a positive correlation between the length of time spent in the U.S. and the level of microaggressions experienced: as Asian international students remain in the U.S. longer, they become more attuned to microaggressions. This lack of awareness when initially migrating to America is shared with African and Caribbean students (Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, and Peralta, 2014).

This suggests that in Asian countries where discussions about race and ethnicity are less common or entirely absent, Asian immigrant students may be less aware of the racial microaggressions they encounter in America.

4.6. Mental Health

In therapeutic settings, Asian international students face specific microaggressions, such as environmental microaggressions and culturally insensitive treatment plans, which hinder effective counseling (Kim & Hogge, 2021). An interviewee shared the same sentiment that she felt scared to report racial microaggressions to school authorities, especially during conflicts with other people of color. She believed that school therapy and counseling

might not support her because of her identity, leaving her feeling voiceless in these situations. What stopped her from seeking help from the dorm manager was her fear of being labeled as discriminatory toward Black people, worrying that her concerns might be perceived as racist. Additionally she shared that generally her “school isn’t really interested in helping you; they just want to make sure you don’t end up in a fatal situation like suicide.”

When discussing responses to microaggressions, one interviewee explained, “It depends on the situation and the person involved; I usually choose a response that avoids causing me harm, which could range from a bitch face to a written report.” She noted that, contrary to fears of retaliation, “most complaints end up going nowhere, and the person who raises the issue is often labeled a snitch.” This indicates that reporting microaggressions may lead to further invalidation and alienation from one's social circle.

5. Discussion

Based on responses to questions on the Daily Discrimination Scale and the REMS scale, older Chinese international students at New York colleges in my study reported experiencing more racial microaggressions. This may be due to their increasing awareness of race and ethnicity in America, concepts that are less prominent in social conversations in China. There is a positive correlation between the length of time spent in the U.S. and the level of microaggressions experienced: as Asian international students remain in the U.S. longer, they become more attuned to microaggressions.

For new immigrants and international students, the longer they stay in the United States, the more they encounter racial microaggressions. One reason is their increased awareness. In their home country of China, concepts like race and ethnicity are rarely discussed, so while they may feel uncomfortable at first, they gradually stop noticing microaggressions. However, after about three years, as they become accustomed to the local environment in the U.S., they begin to feel strongly about the presence of racial microaggressions. The microaggressions that show a clear trend are microinsults, such as “being treated with less courtesy” and “being neglected by sales associates.”

According to responses to my survey, Chinese women living in New York experience about 70% more racial microaggressions than men. This is because many sexualized stereotypes about Asian women, such as “docile,” “tame,” and “industrious,” cause many Chinese women to experience a subtle male gaze. Although Asian men also face certain stereotypes, they are less likely to be perceived by Chinese men. Female students feel more targeted due to stereotypes, while male students are less concerned, attributing this to the growing number of policies supporting women’s rights.

Limitations of this survey include a small sample size, a narrow population focus (intended to target Chinese Americans and new immigrants but primarily gathered data from international students), and participant noncompliance with a key instruction. In the demographic section, the question “Please list the countries you have lived in and the years during which you lived in each country for at least a month” was often partially answered, with many participants omitting the years they had lived in the U.S. and other countries. This omission hindered the ability to assess the hypothesis that the longer Chinese immigrants reside in the U.S., the greater their perception of microaggressions. Additionally, three participants consistently selected either “I have experienced this event” or “I have not experienced this event” throughout the REMS scale, indicating a lack of engagement. Their responses for the REMS were excluded from the final analysis.

This study is purposely chosen to concentrate on racial microaggressions, but it is important to acknowledge other types of microaggressions as well. Gender, sexual orientation, and disability microaggressions may have equally powerful and potentially detrimental effects on women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals, and disability groups. Further, racial microaggressions are not limited to White–Black, White–Latino, or White–Person of Color interactions. Interethnic racial microaggressions occur between people of color as well.

6. Conclusion

While racial microaggressions most often occur on an individual level, the increased perception of them increases harm and mistrust on a collective level. For Chinese students in college, cross-cultural adjustment creates cultural conflicts and challenges. This can adversely affect mental health and academic performance.

To address these challenges, policies and practices should focus on implementing comprehensive support systems that promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within college campuses. While students gain diversity through their peers, faculty members should also provide tailored assistance to help minority students better integrate into new environments. Targeted mental health resources should be offered to Asian students, ideally by faculty who share similar experiences. Additionally, schools should provide cultural competence training for both teachers and students and develop programs that foster cross-cultural understanding and integration. This would prevent students from remaining in racially segregated social circles, which can reinforce existing biases. Future research could explore the long-term impact of racial microaggressions on the academic performance, mental health, and subsequent career choices of Chinese students, such as why they choose to remain in the U.S., return to China, or seek employment in other countries. Moreover, investigating the role of peer support networks and their effects on mitigating the negative impacts of microaggressions could provide valuable insights for enhancing student well-being.

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Financial Socialization in Vietnam: Are Students and Pupils Well Prepared for Facing with Global Economic Fluctuation?

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Abstract

The current economic fluctuations show no signs of cooling down globally not only leaving negative consequences for the macro economy but also creating difficulties for students and pupils as they have limited financial management experiences. This phenomenon happened all over the world, including Vietnam; therefore, this article aims to contribute to the study of the state of financial socialisation in Vietnam through the clarifying of the impact of social sources including Family, Peers, Media, and Education, as well as evaluating how they enhance personal financial management behaviours of students and pupils. Data in the study were collected from 821 observations, using linear structural modelling (PLS-SEM) to test hypotheses, including the relationship of all potential variables. Our findings underscore the mediating role of financial literacy in the relationships between financial socialization from peer, education and personal financial management behaviours. In light of these insights, we propose targeted recommendations aimed at enhancing the financial landscape for the higher student community in Vietnam.

Keywords: Financial Socialisation, Financial Literacy, Financial Management Behaviour, Economic Fluctuations

1. Introduction

In the context of global integration, economic fluctuations in one country can extend to others, characterised by GDP declines and economic recession (Boyce et al., 2018). These fluctuations have a direct impact on consumers' financial health, leading to a loss of stability in their daily lives. University students and pupils, in particular, represent a growing and significant consumer segment, often experiencing financial independence without parental supervision for the first time (Sari et al., 2018). This renders them particularly vulnerable to the repercussions of economic fluctuations, such as job loss, reduced income, and unforeseen challenges including decreased ability to afford daily living expenses and social inequality (Clench-Aas & Holte, 2018). The root cause of this issue for students and pupils can be attributed to a lack of financial knowledge and skills in financial management and planning, complicating their lives, creating various pressures, and reducing satisfaction with daily life (Trang et

al., 2024). This issue is particularly prevalent in several developing countries in Asia, with Vietnam serving as a prime example with the students' and pupils' financial knowledge and skills are not yet widespread, with an average financial literacy score of only 24 points, lower than the Asian average of 34 points (Karakurum-Ozdemir et al., 2019; Xiao, 2020).

Research on financial literacy, financial socialization and financial management behaviour in the context of economic fluctuation has been done a lot before. However, several gaps remain unaddressed. Firstly, although the relationship between financial education and financial literacy has been explored by Sohn et al. (2012), this study has not elucidated which aspects of financial education most strongly impact financial literacy, particularly during the university years. Secondly, previous research has indicated a relationship between financial literacy and financial behaviour, but results have been inconsistent in assessing the role of financial literacy in specific financial behaviours (Lusardi & de Bassa Scheresberg, 2013; Mudzingiri et al., 2018). Moreover, these studies have not clarified the connection between financial knowledge and financial practices during the university years.

Recognizing the importance of improving students' and pupils' financial socialization and existing gaps, this study aims to investigate, identify, and compare the factors within financial socialization that influence financial literacy, as well as to compare the financial behaviours of students and pupils to enhance their financial well-being. With this aim in mind, our research question can be formulated as follows: Can Financial Literacy mediate the relationship between Financial Socialization and Financial Management Behaviour?

To answer the research question and contribute to this topic, our research paper is presented with the following structure: **Part 2** will present the literature review and hypotheses development; Methodological approach in **Part 3**; research findings along with discussions based on the results in **Part 4**. Finally, the study concludes with sections on policy implications and overall conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Novel Theory

Gudmunson and Danes (2011) *financial socialization theory* provides a broad lens through which to examine the origins of financial socialization and its outcomes. Some financial socialization activities occur explicitly within the family; however, most teaching and learning about financial behaviour occurs when family members observe others' behaviours (Gudmunson & Danes, 2011). In Moschis (1987) theoretical model of **Consumer Socialization**, the theory provides a framework describing the socialization agents influencing youth, such as parents, education, peers, and media. The outcomes of socialization can be both psychological (e.g., attitudes towards financial behaviour) and behavioural (e.g., intended or actual financial behaviour) (Moschis, 1987; Ward, 1974). Combined with the perspective of the Family Financial Socialization model, the current study examines early financial socialization (financial socialization) through sources such as Family, Peers, Media, and Education (Fazli Sabri et al., 2012; Moschis, 1985). Consequently, financial socialization efforts will lead to improved financial literacy, including enhanced knowledge, perspectives, and financial control capabilities of individuals (Gudmunson & Danes, 2011).

Ultimately, accumulated financial knowledge is related to financial behaviours, which eventually results in personal financial well-being (Gudmunson & Danes, 2011). In financial behaviour, Gudmunson and Danes (2011) identified two types of financial behaviours: the first includes savings and cash-flow management behaviour; the second involves credit management and investment behaviour. Based on this, in the current study, personal financial behaviour can be described as a learning process in establishing and acting according to plans to meet individual or family needs (Asandimitra & Kautsar, 2019), through four common financial behaviours including savings, cash-flow management, credit management, and investment behaviour (Sina & Noya, 2012). Thus, the relationship between financial literacy and financial behaviour can be explained through the ability of individuals to use financial knowledge to create financial behaviours according to their personal needs (Brüggen et al., 2017; Cheah et al., 2015).

2.2 Mediating role of financial literacy in the relationship between financial socialization and financial management behaviour

Financial socialization of education refers to the process by which individuals improve their understanding of financial products and knowledge, and develop the skills and confidence to become more aware of financial risks and opportunities (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2007). The impact of education has been shown to significantly enhance financial literacy across generations throughout their lifetimes (Hastings et al., 2013; Martin, 2007). Specifically, Xiao (2016) highlights the pivotal role of financial socialization in that financial courses in schools provide children with essential financial knowledge, which builds foundational skills in budgeting, saving, and prudent financial decision-making.

Financial socialization of parents refers to the effect of parents in the process by which children learn about money and develop financial management behaviour, often incidentally (by observation and participation) but also through lessons delivered intentionally by parents (Moneva et al., 2020; Webley & Nyhus, 2006). The positive impact of early financial socialization by parents on improving children's financial literacy has been demonstrated by Serido and Deenanath (2016); Jorgensen and Savla (2010). The role of parents in shaping their children's financial knowledge and skills is often studied as a process of financial socialisation. Parents and family serve as the primary socialisation agents through which children acquire and develop values, attitudes, standards, norms, and knowledge that contribute to individual financial viability (Danes, 1994). Among these, modelling is one of the most common financial socialisation methods used by parents (Serido & Deenanath, 2016). When parents pay bills or save money for emergencies, they model financial norms, attitudes, and behaviours, thereby laying the foundation for their children's financial values. When parents save, children understand that saving is good (Buccioli & Veronesi, 2014).

Media, encompassing social media, print media, and electronic media, has been demonstrated to play a crucial role and wield profound influence in shaping and impacting financial literacy among consumers, particularly university students and pupils (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2007; Putri & Wijaya, 2020). The financial socialization of media refers to the impact of media means in terms of facilitating access to information, filtering information, creating new information about financial products and services (Ahern & Peress, 2022). Media serves as essential conduits through which students and pupils can engage directly in discussions about financial markets from anywhere (Cao et al., 2020). This unrestricted access to formal financial information not only broadens their knowledge base but also cultivates critical thinking and develops appropriate attitudes towards finance (Forte, 2009).

Peer influence is defined as instances where one person affects, or is affected by, one other or multiple others who are similar in age (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). The impact of peers on the adoption of technologies and social behaviours is the main focus of a large body of empirical literature on social behaviour, with financial activities receiving significant attention over the past decade (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Yanto et al., 2021). Banerjee (1992) and Ellison and Fudenberg (1993) indicated that peers might mimic the financial behaviour of their partners because this behaviour provides useful information related to their advantages. Additionally, the effects of peers offer information about social norms, social responses, identity considerations, and strategic complements for activities related to personal finance (Benjamin et al., 2010).

Recognizing the importance of financial literacy is essential for adjusting financial management behaviour, which has led to an increase in research on how much financial knowledge impacts students' and pupils' financial management behaviour (Lusardi, 2012; Humaidi et al., 2020). Furthermore, supported by Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, financial literacy (a cognitive factor) can influence financial management behaviours (a behavioural factor). This mechanism has been supported by studies developed from the aforementioned theoretical model, such as those by Zulfaka and Kassim (2023), Rafik and Rahayu (2020), and Renmud (2010). Thus, we hypothesize:

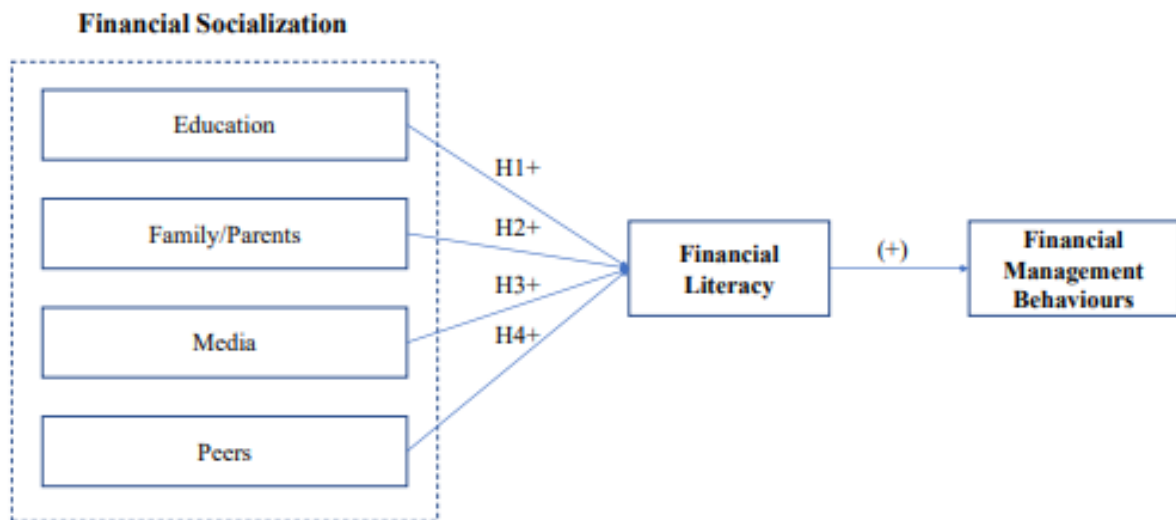
H1. Financial literacy mediates the relationship between Financial Socialization from Education and Financial management behaviour

H2. Financial literacy mediates the relationship between Financial Socialization from Parent and Financial management behaviour

H3. Financial literacy mediates the relationship between Financial Socialization from Media and Financial management behaviour

H4. Financial literacy mediates the relationship between Financial Socialization from Peer and Financial management behaviour

2.3 Conceptual Model



Source: Authors's development

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Before creating the questionnaire, we conducted qualitative research to validate the topic and questionnaire with young professionals and residents. We interviewed 10 financial and Fintech experts as well as 24 individual Fintech users in Hanoi. Most experts believe that poor financial management stems from a lack of financial knowledge and selective information absorption. Experts also note that different sources of financial socialization lead to different financial health outcomes. Based on these insights, we conclude that improving financial health in Vietnam requires identifying effective educational sources that have a positive impact on financial well-being.

3.2. Measurement

The first part of the questionnaire includes three demographic information suggested from the study by Widyastuti et al. (2016). The second part of the questionnaire includes: Financial Socialization from Peer (FSP) includes 3 items; Financial Socialization from Family (FSF) includes 3 items; Financial Socialization from Media (FSM) includes 3 items; Financial Socialization from Education (FSE) includes 3 items by Radianto and Suryanto (2023); Financial literacy (FL) includes six items by Widyastuti et al. (2016); Financial management behaviour (FMB) includes seven items by Ndassi et al. (2023). In this part, we apply a 5-point Likert scale to measure the level of understanding of survey participants with level (1) Strongly disagree, and level (5) Strongly agree.

3.3. Sample and sampling method

Regarding sample size, we chose to survey in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hai Phong of Vietnam for both pilot and actual. In terms of sampling method and data collection, we chose a convenient sampling method. Besides, we distributed questionnaires using interviews and paper distribution. In addition, our questionnaire was also

translated into Vietnamese to ensure that respondents could fully understand the content of the study. Besides, we paid each person who answered the survey questions to thank them for their contribution.

4. Finding

4.1 Data collection

Our data were collected from 1321 observations, of which 1213 responses were used in this study. The remaining observations were omitted because they contained duplicate responses, were untargeted, or lacked some necessary information. Demographic characteristics of the 613 observations are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	710	58.56
	Female	503	41.44
Income per month	< 275 USD	615	50.73
	275 - 365 USD	406	33.44
	366 - 456 USD	162	13.38
	> 456 USD	30	2.45
Education level	Have not completed high school	18	1.47
	Completed high school	588	48.45
	Completed university/college	413	35.56
	Completed postgraduate programs	176	14.52

Source: Authors's calculation

The data table above provides information about a population sample of 613 students and pupils, divided into 3 main variables: gender, monthly income and education level. Regarding gender, the data show that the population sample is 58.56% male and 41.44% female. Regarding monthly income, the majority of students and pupils have income below 275 USD, accounting for 50.73%, while there are a few students and pupils with income over 456 USD (accounting for 2.45%). Regarding educational level, the majority have high school degrees (48.45%) and university/college degrees (35.56%), while the proportion of students and pupils who have not graduated from high school is very low (1.47%). This data table provides an overview of the distribution of variables in the study population sample.

4.2 Measurement model reliability and validity assessment

4.2.1 Indicator reliability, Internal consistent reliability and Convergent validity assessment

Data were processed according to the PLS-SEM procedure proposed by Hair Jr et al. (2020), consisting of indicator reliability, internal consistent reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity assessment. Firstly, we tested the indicator reliability test with the outer loading coefficients and then tested the internal consistent reliability and convergent validity test. The results of these three tests are summarized and are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Indicator reliability, Internal consistent reliability and Convergent validity report

Construct	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Financial Literacy	FL4	0.729	0.818	0.821	0.633
	FL5	0.856			

	FL6	0.778			
Financial Management Behaviour	FMB1	0.813	0.863	0.864	0.686
	FMB2	0.866			
	FMB3	0.732			
	FMB4	0.893			
	FMB5	0.857			
	FMB6	0.772			
	FMB7	0.891			
Financial Socialization from Education	FS_E1	0.755	0.706	0.714	0.672
	FS_E2	0.744			
	FS_E3	0.763			
Financial Socialization from Family	FS_F1	0.847	0.809	0.818	0.639
	FS_F2	0.805			
Financial Socialization from Media	FS_M1	0.713	0.733	0.834	0.685
	FS_M3	0.762			
Financial Socialization from Peer	FS_P1	0.738	0.733	0.736	0.589
	FS_P2	0.712			

Source: Authors's calculation

Based on table 2, all the items of the measurement model did meet the regulations (Outer loading > 0.708) except FL1; FL2; FL3; FIF3; FIM2; FIP3. Thus, after cleaning the items that do not meet the conditions, we continue testing the other tests. Besides, all the variables did meet the condition that CA, CR > 0.7 and AVE > 0.5.

4.2.2 Discriminate validity

We test the discriminant validity to ensure there are no multicollinearity problems or potential discriminating factors based on appraising the Heterotrait-monotrait ratio. The result is demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Discriminate validity

	FL	FMB	FS_Education	FS_Family	FS_Media	FS_Peer
FL						
FMB	0.458					
FS_Education	0.215	0.121				
FS_Family	0.063	0.108	0.064			
FS_Media	0.196	0.134	0.055	0.017		
FS_Peer	0.060	0.056	0.226	0.302	0.052	

Source: Authors's calculation

Based on the results in Table 3, all variables have a satisfactory Heterotrait-monotrait ratio coefficient of less than 0.85. Thus, the measurement model met the conditions required to enter the hypothesis testing part.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

After all variables in the study's measurement model are guaranteed to be reliable and valid, our research team performs the Bootstrapping method to test the proposed hypotheses. Results The bootstrapping process can be performed as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Hypothesis result

No	Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	P values	Evaluation
H2a	FS_Education -> SB -> FWB	0.138	0.027	Supported (Full mediation)
H2b	FS_Family -> CFM -> FWB	0.067	0.049	Supported (Full mediation)
H2c	FS_Media -> CMB -> FWB	0.003	0.291	Unsupported
H2d	FS_Peer -> IB -> FWB	0.014	0.251	Unsupported

Source: Authors's calculation

Based on table 4, H1a; H1b and H2.1; H2b were supported with P-value <0.05. Nevertheless, the remaining hypotheses which are H1b; H1c; H2c; H2d were not supported at the 95% CI. The result of hypothesis testing or bootstrapping result was summarized in Figure 2.

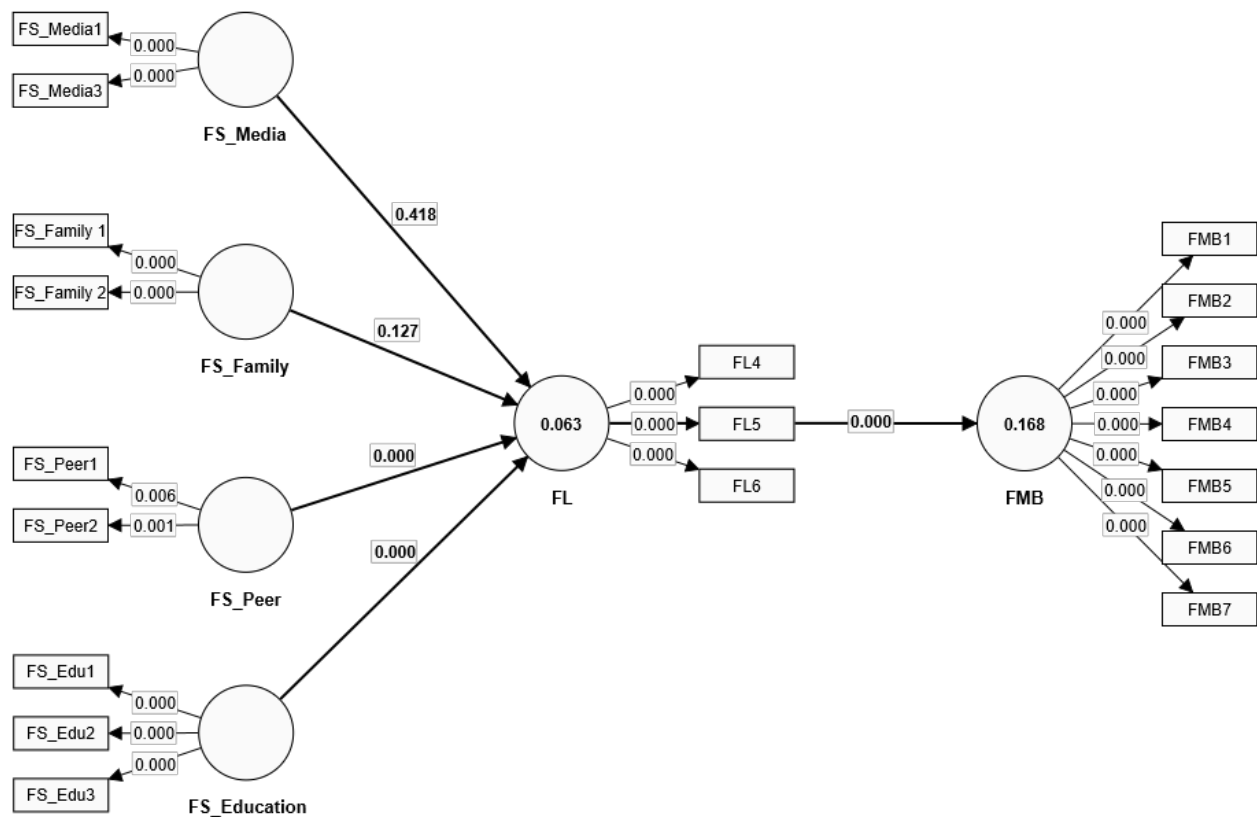


Figure 2: Bootstrapping results

Source: Authors's calculation

5. Discussion

Our research results have answered **RQ1** through 4 hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4.

With our research results, **H1** is supported, this research result is agreed by some studies such as Lusardi (2012); Humaidi et al. (2020); Zulfaka and Kassim (2023). However, compared to the results of the Zulfaka and Kassim (2023) study, our results have a lower impact coefficient (0.138); To explain this problem, we believe that the problem lies in the educational methods of current educational institutions in Vietnam. In the research of Khuc The Anh (2020), it was also mentioned that currently, in Vietnam, access to financial socialization from the school

side has not been promptly supplemented with market fluctuations and the speed of updating. The update of knowledge in curricula is not coupled with the developments in financial technology applications. This leads to a problem: although the knowledge from books is useful, the applicability is not high. Specifically, for example, today, trading and trading virtual currency is one of forms of speculation that yield huge profits. The above argument can answer why the impact coefficient between these three variables is low.

With **H2**, we cannot prove that financial literacy is a mediator in the relationship between financial socialization from family and financial management behaviour. This result is not supported by the studies of Serido and Deenanath (2016); Moneva et al. (2020). To explain this difference, we believe that it comes from the trends and spending methods of households in Vietnam in general and the studied areas in particular. In Khuc The Anh (2020) research on financial literacy in Vietnam, it was also mentioned that households often tend to consume frugally, they consider saving to be the best method, from That leads to a culture of risk aversion. This limits access to and understanding of diverse financial instruments. In addition, traditional thinking also strongly influences this result. In Vietnamese families, values such as formal education, ethics and life skills are given priority, which leads to financial knowledge such as debt management, investing, and long-term financial planning methods are not taught to the next generation. In addition, the social and economic environment has changed drastically, making the financial knowledge of parents no longer suitable for the present time, leading to the next generation being unable to apply it.

With **H3**, we also cannot prove that financial literacy mediates the relationship between education from media channels and financial management behaviour. The results of this study contrast with the results of Putri and Wijaya (2020). To explain this problem, we believe there are many reasons, but based on the research results of Morgan and Trinh (2019) on the issue of financial literacy and Fintech in Vietnam, we draw the following conclusions. First, many students and pupils lack basic financial knowledge, making it difficult for them to access and understand complex information from the media. In addition, consumer habits and financial culture are not clearly defined, along with media content that sometimes lacks appeal and reality, reducing the effectiveness of transmitting financial knowledge. Trust in the source of information also plays an important role; if students and pupils do not believe in the accuracy and objectivity of information, they will not apply that knowledge in life. The formal education system is limited in teaching personal finance, and access to technology for some segments of the population is still low. In addition, the level of economic development is uneven across regions along with a lack of practical training programs, making it more difficult to improve financial literacy.

With **H4**, we demonstrate that financial literacy mediates the impact of financial socialization from friends/colleagues on financial management behaviour. This research result is agreed by Nguyen and Nguyen (2020); Yanto et al. (2021). However, when compared with the above research results, we see that the impact coefficient of previous studies is stronger than the level of 0.277 calculated in our study. In other words, compared to previous studies, our results are not good. To explain this difference, we can consider the general level of financial literacy in Vietnam. First, financial literacy in Vietnam is still quite low. Many students and pupils lack basic knowledge about personal financial management, including budgeting, saving, investing and understanding financial products. This makes it difficult for them to effectively absorb and apply financial knowledge from friends and colleagues. Second, consumer culture and financial management in Vietnam have not yet developed strongly. Many students and pupils still have the habit of consuming on impulse and do not have a long-term financial plan. This culture affects their ability to apply financial knowledge in real life, even if it is taught by those around them. Third, the level of access and trust in financial information from friends and colleagues is limited. In many cases, students and pupils tend to trust official sources of information more than acquaintances, especially when these students and pupils may also lack solid financial knowledge. This reduces the effectiveness of financial socialization for those around you. Finally, the educational environment and financial training system in Vietnam do not pay enough attention to teaching financial knowledge early. The lack of systematic financial socialization programs in the formal education system prevents students' and pupils' financial knowledge from being improved systematically and sustainably. All of the above factors contribute to explaining why our results show that the impact coefficient of financial socialization from friends and colleagues is lower than previous studies in other contexts.

Based on our research results, we make some recommendations to improve the effectiveness of financial socialization and improve financial literacy in Vietnam. First, it is necessary to improve the formal financial socialization program by integrating financial socialization into the curriculum at all levels from elementary school to university, developing courses and learning materials on management. Personal finance management, investing and saving. Besides, it is necessary to encourage family financial socialization through programs that educate parents on how to impart financial knowledge to their children and create educational materials specifically for households. To improve the effectiveness of financial socialization through media, it is necessary to develop more attractive, easy-to-understand and realistic financial communication programs and strengthen communication campaigns on social networks and media platforms. other, ensuring information is transmitted from reliable sources and improving content quality. In addition, it is necessary to take advantage of the power of the network of friends and colleagues by organizing seminars and short-term courses on finance in the work environment and community, developing online communities and forums. online to share financial knowledge and experiences. Develop practical training programs and leverage technology, such as mobile apps and online platforms, to provide flexible and accessible finance courses. Finally, raise awareness about the importance of financial behaviour by promoting awareness campaigns on maintaining healthy financial habits, encouraging students and pupils to apply management principles Personal finances like budgeting, regular savings, and smart investing. These recommendations, if implemented, could significantly improve financial literacy in Vietnam, thereby improving personal financial well-being and creating a stronger and wiser financial community.

6. Conclusion

Based on the research results, out of the 4 hypotheses proposed, 2 were supported, the remaining were rejected. The most important point in this study is to demonstrate that (1) financial socialization in education can have a significant positive impact on financial management behaviour through the mediating role of financial literacy; (2) financial socialization from peers can have a significant positive impact on financial management behaviour under the mediating effect of financial literacy (3) financial socialization from parent and media has no impact on financial management behaviour.

We acknowledge some limitations of the current study. The most remarkable one is that financial literacy can be considered a combination of financial attitude, financial knowledge, and financial ability. Nevertheless, this study has not evaluated the value of these edges. Further research could build on this limitation.

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Child Marriage Issue in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam: Current Situation and Solution

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Abstract

The paper introduces a study on the child marriage crisis in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam. A central research question identifies what sociocultural and economic components allow these practices to continue after numerous national-level campaigns against them. This study uses a qualitative research design that draws on secondary data sources (including policy documents, statistical reports, and community-based program evaluations). The key findings are that average child marriage rates remain alarmingly high, especially among the Hmong community, with 94% of all cases reported occurring within this group. The child marriages reported during 2021–2023 totaled 478. Of these, significantly fewer males (38) were involved compared with female child brides (74), with a predominant age between 14 and 15 years for girls and 18 and 19 years for boys. The study argues that a multipronged approach is necessary to combat child marriage in this state, which involves engaging communities by raising awareness, promoting sociocultural change, and emphasizing quality education. The study concludes that cultural change must be part of any long-term effort to ensure equal access for everyone, and achieving this will largely depend on what happens with educational funding and policy at all levels. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can eliminate the practice of child marriage, thereby reducing associated risks and promoting both gender equality and sustainable human development in Vietnam.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Ethnic Minorities, Education, Socio-Economic Factors, Gender Equality, Lao Cai Vietnam

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

In Vietnam, for decades, child marriage has been a persistent issue, especially among the country's numerous ethnic minority groups. Even though Vietnam has made giant steps in development and human rights, child marriage rates have not dropped. The situation of child marriage and consanguineous people in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas has been one of several issues that concerned researchers as well as managers at all levels of branch sectors to seek out solutions for solving the child marriage problem.

Early marriage is also portrayed as a kind of rite of passage or boost to social status in most minority ethnic communities. Women and girls in Vietnam are often subject to patriarchal discrimination, whereby a young girl is perceived as only a temporary member of her parent's family (Nui, 2024). This gender bias, deeply rooted in their system, stifles their ability to obtain an education or financial freedom and confines them to feeling like getting married early is a suitable option.

The research has provided scientific and practical documents that allow for combating child marriage risk, pregnancy, and consanguineous marriages by 2030 in Lao Cai. Lao Cai is a province northwest of Vietnam, a mountainous territory with an area of 6364.03 square kilometers of natural conditions. Lao Cai is a territorial area, and it was divided into high mountain ranges with steep slopes that were difficult to transport. In ethnic minority areas, there are 141,683 households with a population of 570.7 thousand people from 25 ethnicities. As of April 1, the population in the province was 730,420. The general population density is 115 individuals per square kilometer. The province comprises 25 ethnic groups who have lived and defended their forests for generations, and the way to settle up accounts for each qualitative period. The Kinh ethnic group accounts for 35.9%, the Hmong for 22.21%, and other groups, including Tay (15.84%), Dao (14.05%), Giay (4.70%), and Nung, make up the rest.

1.2 Literature Review

In Vietnam, economic impoverishment, along with a lack of education and deeply ingrained cultural customs, drives child marriages. Families marry off their daughters at a young age out of poverty to reduce the burden or mitigate financial security. Education is another crucial issue, as the rate of child marriage goes down by 6.5% with each year a girl stays in school beyond five years old (Field & Ambrus, 2008). It is critical to support and empower girls to stay in school through the flagship scholarship program, which keeps them there until they complete secondary (and beyond) or tertiary education. Ingrained cultural and gender-related norms additionally contribute to a vicious cycle.

A study was conducted to present the situation of child marriage and consanguineous marriage, as well as discuss why the issue happens more often in the region (Bao & Trung, 2019). In Vietnam, poverty is among the leading reasons a child will be subjected to early marriage. Impoverishment forces girls to marry impoverished or older, affluent males who can provide financial security for their immediate and extended family (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2018).

In Vietnam, girls remaining in education—particularly in secondary and tertiary-level schools—is a deterrent to child marriage (Nguyen & Cho, 2024). The elimination of education in early-age partnerships is perceived differently in the conceptual framework of young marital relationships (Dung, 2020). "Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage among Ethnic Minorities" has raised the alarm about child marriage among Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the province (Manh, 2017). The situation is dangerous to human development, causing an impact on areas' social-economic development.

Child marriage is also pervasive in minority ethnic communities due to entrenched cultural norms and practices. One such example is the Hmong ceremony of 'bride kidnapping' at 13 or 14 years old (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2018). However, child marriage is a problem that affects all communities, not just minorities. A high proportion of Kinh women (the majority ethnic group in Vietnam) were also married before they turned 18 years old. Tackling gender bias and ensuring education for all are universal keys to stopping child marriage, regardless of community.

While the drivers of child marriage are delineated in the case of females, there is a lack of research about factors leading to early marriages among males. Nguyen and Cho (2024) offered one such analysis of the depths to which polluting wealth extractivism can seep, with child marriage rates above 50% for Hmong girls in Vietnam's northern mountainous regions as a result. The study investigates factors affecting time spent in child marriage among both boys and girls, illustrating the importance of gender-specific intervention approaches.

Preventing child marriage by involving the community and providing schooling or economic opportunities to girls, also upholding legal sanctions against those who engage in such practices. UNICEF and UNFPA (2018) have already proposed a broad package of measures to prevent child marriage by tackling its social determinants as well as addressing girls' health and education. Solotaroff and Pande (2014) also emphasize the need to modify social norms so that girls can exercise their agency in marriage. Partnerships are a must to reach out to a broader audience, keep girls in schools with financial and economic opportunities, and enforce the laws; crucially, laws that make the minimum age of marriage 18 need to be enforced (Ton, 2020). If a multi-sectoral approach is implemented, the target to end child marriage in Vietnam by 2030 will be achievable.

The paper hopes to shed light on the myriad factors influencing child marriage in Lao Cai Province and suggest more plausible pathways. The study aims to bring attention to the sociocultural and economic roots of the issue, intending to further focus on policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders invested in preventing child marriages. The results of this study will provide insights into the barriers and enabling factors in tackling child marriage, which learners can utilize as a basis to work on eliminating child marriage in Vietnam.

1.3 Study Purpose

The cohabitation era of minorities brings along the diversity and identity of a cultural backdrop in Lao Cai; however, outdated conventions hinder local sustainable development. Child marriage will be a burden on society in the days to come due to its health hazards and human resources having no quality among child marriages. In conclusion, assessing essential information to understand the current situation and causes of effectively graduating child marriage will help reduce and prevent this custom from being effectively practiced within Lao Cai Province.

2. Methods and Materials

The study utilizes a qualitative research design mainly based on a review of secondary documents to address the child marriage problem in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam. It is meant to be a holistic approach, as it seeks a deep understanding of socio-cultural dynamics around child marriage and provides the best suggestions for its prevention.

2.1 Data Sources

Multiple data resources were used to obtain sufficient information for the study. The research pools data from an extensive collection of secondary source material, including policy documents, laws, and policies at the national or regional level on addressing child marriage, legal frameworks, and mechanisms to implement these. The documents of the province-level (Lao Cai) government that are relevant to the research were scrutinized to comprehend the present legal framework and policy interventions. The socio-economically reviewed report's data on the socio-cultural characteristics of ethnic minority groups in Lao Cai were studied to recognize cultural traditions and customary practices that elevate child marriage rates. Statistics on child marriage rates in Lao Cai Province were used as primary data from the provincial ethnic committee and some national databases. The information serves as quantitative results, providing a more intricate understanding of this phenomenon. Several reports on experiences with child marriage prevention initiatives in Lao Cai were reviewed. These reports explore community-based programs, awareness campaigns, and education-related initiatives as strategies to reduce child marriage.

2.2 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis process that identifies patterns or themes related to child marriage was conducted. The results from Lao Cai were compared with datasets and reports to highlight common problems and promote success stories in combating child marriage in Vietnam. The synthesis sought to add depth by developing a thematic and comparative understanding of child marriage and consanguineous marriage in the context and issues surrounding these practices more broadly in Lao Cai. This synthesis adopted the view that this issue is very complex as it is

shaped by many factors: socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and boundaries around the age of consent, which are exacerbating some existing interventions.

2.3 Limitations

Although this study contributes a perspective on child marriage in Lao Cai, some caveats are worth mentioning. The biases within the sources could restrict the use of secondary data, and the findings might not encompass every experience or view of those who have been victimized by early marriage. Furthermore, social norms and policies are dynamic—changing over time—and the context for decisions about long-acting reversible contraception can be anticipated to shift as well. The process underscores the need for continued research that tracks trends in beliefs and policies related to long-acting reversible contraception so that interventions address current needs.

3. Results

3.1 The role of government levels

Since 2015, the Vietnam Prime Minister has issued many decisions to address the child marriage issue in Vietnam (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023). Some of the crucial decisions are Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015, approving the proposal "Minimizing Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage in Ethnic Minority Areas for the Period 2015-2025"; Decision No. 1721/UBDT-DTTS on December 9, 2020, by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, which was an essential step in implementing; and Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015, by the Prime Minister for the period 2021-2025 (Phase II). The crucial part of Subproject 2, Project 9, under the "National Target Program for Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for 2021–2030".

From 2021 to 2025, Lao Cai Province has issued many policies, resolutions, and documents to minimize child marriage and consanguineous marriage. Decision No. 2278/QD-UBND on July 2, 2021, established the Steering Committee for the Prevention of Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage in Ethnic Minority Areas in Lao Cai Province; Decision No. 351/QD-UBND on February 22, 2023, changed the members of the Steering Committee for the Prevention of Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage in Ethnic Minority Areas (the Steering Committee consists of 23 members, with the Vice Chairman of the Provincial People's Committee as the Head, members are leaders of several relevant agencies and units, and the People's Committees of districts, towns, and cities); Plan No. 83/KH-UBND on March 1, 2021, to implement the Proposal to Minimize Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage in Ethnic Minority Areas in Lao Cai Province for the period 2021-2025; Document No. 988/UBND-NLN on March 18, 2021, to implement Decision No. 498/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2015, by the Prime Minister (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023; Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023a; The People's Committee, 2023)

The comprehensive data for Lao Cai Province through the end of 2023, recorded by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs of Lao Cai Province, showed that the rate of child marriage in 2023 decreased by 30% compared to 2022 (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023a). Also, the rate of first-time childbirth by ethnic minority women under 18 years old in 2023 decreased by 20% compared to 2022, and from 2021 to 2023, there were no cases of consanguineous marriage in Lao Cai Province. However, the consequences of child marriage still negatively impact the health quality of the population and also increase the risk of poverty and backwardness in ethnic minority areas in the province.

3.2 Situation of child marriage in Lao Cai Province

According to statistics from the People's Committee (2023), during the period 2021–2023, there were a total of 478 ethnic minorities involved in child marriages in Lao Cai (Table 1). The number of child marriages has fluctuated from year to year. However, consanguineous marriages have remained zero since 2021 (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023a).

In 2023 alone, the total number of ethnic minorities involved in child marriages was 112 (accounting for 2.87% of the total number of ethnic minority marriages and decreasing by 1.47 times compared to 2022), of which 74 were female (mainly aged 14–15), and 38 were male (mainly aged 18–19). There were 51 cases in which one person was underage and 61 cases in which both individuals were underage. The Hmong ethnic group accounts for 94% of the total number of ethnic minority child marriages (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023a; The People's Committee, 2023).

Table 1: Child Marriage in Ethnic Minorities in Lao Cai Province in 2023

City/ District	Child Marriage Situation				Child Marriage Age of Male, and Female						Categorization by Ethnicity					
	Total number of ethnic minorities getting married	Total number of ethnic minorities in child marriages	Child marriage when one person is underage (person)	Child marriage when both people are underage (person)	Male			Female			Mong	Dao	Giay	Tay	Nung	Other Ethnic ities
					From 13-14 years old	From 15-17 years old	From 18-19 years old	13 years old	From 14-15 years old	From 16-17 years old						
Lao Cai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bao Thang	306	6	6	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	4	1	1	0	0	0
Bao Yen	438	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sa Pa	432	37	17	20	1	10	3	6	12	5	37	0	0	0	0	0
Van Ban	581	6	2	4	0	0	2	0	1	3	6	0	0	0	0	0
Muong Khuong	358	12	7	5	0	0	2	0	3	7	11	0	0	0	1	0
Bac Ha	1040	13	4	9	0	0	5	0	3	5	10	2	0	0	1	0
Bat Xat	280	22	12	10	0	0	9	0	13	0	22	0	0	0	0	0
Si Ma Cai	462	15	2	13	0	3	3	0	7	2	15	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3897	112	51	61	1	13	24	7	40	27	105	3	1	0	3	0

Source: Report No. 360/BC-BDT, December 12, 2023 of the Lao Cai Committee for Ethnic Minority

3.3 Child Marriages in Lao Cai Province

Firstly, child marriage for females is always higher than children marrying off in the first few years and happens mainly at the age of 14–15 (UNICEF, 2021). It showed excellent gender disparity among ethnic minorities, demonstrating that the main access bottleneck is at work (households invest less in female education) and also not allowing women more time to pursue higher studies since the majority of girls stop their education upon graduating from lower secondary school in order to get married and start a family.

Secondly, the ethnic minorities living in remote districts in Vietnam are not alone in suffering from child marriage. On the other side of the region, close to Lao Cai city center and with better life conditions, the Sa Pa district (Bao Thang) also faces the same issues (UNICEF, 2018). The public awareness and understanding of population issues, reproductive health, and family law in relation to marriage remain low all around the region.

Thirdly, the tradition of early marriage is firm among the Hmong people, the second-largest ethnic group in Lao Cai (UNICEF, 2018). For them, the tradition is deeply rooted; outdated customs and traditions are in the lives of the Hmong community.

3.4 Reasons for child marriage in Lao Cai

Child marriage originates, first and foremost, from archaic habits (Parsons et al., 2015), then tribally. The traditions of minorities also have and are deep in human knowledge, becoming a religious force affecting people's daily lives and activities. Moreover, among the ethnic minorities, or at least Hmong people, for this matter, marriage requires

mere approval from village leaders (mainly men), and both family sides would agree to it without any reason for law enforcement issues or being tied by current laws. The belief is that more children recognize prestigious honors, and on the other side of the village, honorary guests approve the decision. This belief has allowed the child marriage issue to persist in Lao Cai Province (Hossain & Miah, 2016). Second, parental and school supervision of children has not been maintained routinely; many parents are light with their kids while supervising students in high schools or ethnic boarding classes is also loose (Field & Ambrus, 2008). This has come to bite the students as a result of information development, using social media, and having more exposure to foreign cultures, which tends to lead them to live experimental lifestyles filled with nonsexual experiences, leading students to drop out of school due to early unintended pregnancies and ending up married at their tender ages. Third is the inefficient or improper dissemination of information (Nguyen & Cho, 2024). Even though legal education about child and consanguineous marriages did exist, it needed to be more comprehensive and practical enough, particularly for adolescents.

3.5 Propaganda work

From 2021 to 2023, the agencies, units, and localities in Lao Cai Province have carried out propaganda to prevent child marriage and provide legal education to officials, party members, civil servants, commune-level officials, reputable individuals, and ethnic minority communities. This has led to a clear shift in the awareness and actions of officials and ethnic minorities, increased awareness of combating and reporting crimes, fighting against outdated customs and superstitions, and reduced child marriage and consanguineous marriage.

Various diverse and rich forms of propaganda have been used with key and focused content, such as Organizing 4,706 propaganda sessions for 383,851 participants, including village officials, reputable individuals, youth, women, students, and the public; distributing 785 news articles on media platforms such as provincial radio and television, Lao Cai Newspaper, and district and commune broadcasting systems; covering topics such as Marriage and Family Law; the consequences of child marriage and consanguineous marriage; administrative and criminal regulations related to child marriage and consanguineous marriage; and solutions to help prevent and reduce child marriage and consanguineous marriage. More than 30,000 Vietnamese bilingual flyers on the harms of child and consanguineous marriages were prepared and printed for ethnic minority communities. Additionally, 231 training and dialogue conferences were organized for 14,545 participants on the skills and knowledge to advise and persuade ethnic minority communities to change their attitudes towards marriage, improve outdated customs, and promote gender equality.

Provincial agencies and units have developed 17 models, and district-level units have developed 70 models; all are managed by communes with 199 model programs having various names, such as "Say No to Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage," "Youth Say No to Child Marriage and Consanguineous Marriage," "Parents Support Their Children in Saying No to Child Marriage," and "Combat Child Marriage," which are implemented in communities with high rates of child marriage, contributing to a reduction in child marriage among ethnic minority communities.

3.6 Restrictions in Propaganda Work

Ethnic minority populations mainly reside in remote mountainous areas. The natural terrain, with many steep hills in Lao Cai Province, is one factor causing difficulties in travel for implementing propaganda activities and accessing information for the people.

The effectiveness of propaganda work was low and is still limited because of several factors, such as language barriers (many people still do not know how to speak and read documents in standard Vietnamese), low literacy levels, limited participation from adolescents, and a lack of funding for organizing activities leading to an uneven understanding of the law and the consequences of child marriage and consanguinity marriage among ethnic minority groups across regions.

The attention and direction of the local authorities and coordination with political organizations at the district and commune levels are inconsistent. Local authorities' intervention and prevention regarding child marriage and consanguinity marriage are not thorough and lack decisiveness. The sanctions must be more robust and strictly enforced in some areas.

The work of inspecting and reviewing child marriage and consanguinity marriage in the localities also has many shortcomings. In some places, because of concerns about the recognition of clean and strong party organizations, they are reluctant to report complete data on child and consanguinity marriages.

4. Discussion

The Study on Child Marriage in Lao Cai province contains lessons for ending child marriage, and it also illustrates essential achievements with the potential to be taken to scale by government mechanisms together with community engagement. However, despite these gains, the enduring problem of child marriage, especially among minority communities, suggests that more needs to be done, including in terms of sustaining and scaling up successful interventions. The sections discuss what these findings mean for the policy governments put in place and interrogate and intervene instead of merely describing the work. Efforts and a synthesis of lessons from programmatic effectiveness in child marriage work together to build on one final piece about what it takes concerning factors, including solutions for this issue.

In 2015, the Vietnamese government took some action to prevent child marriage and inbreeding among ethnic minorities with Decision No.498/QĐ-TTg on solutions for the prevention of ending child marriage as well as (preventing) endogamy marriages amongst the socio-ethnic groups. Starting from this decision, the Vietnam Government has made efforts directly through Decision 2278/QĐ-UBND, "Approved the Establishment of Steering Committee for Child Marriage and Consanguineous at Locality". The decrease of 30% in child marriage registered as an indicator that these programs were positively functioning (Committee for Ethnic Minority, 2023). The results echoed the call to support measures that address the root causes responsible for child marriage.

Legal frameworks were also underscored in research on the efficacy of laws and state commitment to address child marriage (Parsons et al., 2015). The policy's effective implementation to ignite positive outcomes would be tough if the local authorities and community leaders were excluded while shaping the policies. Despite notable policy initiatives, local culture and practices support early marriage, with the Hmong community accounting for 94% of child marriages in Lao Cai (Humanium, 2023).

For Lao Cai, a range of socio-cultural norms and beliefs, more generally amongst ethnic communities, have contributed to its refusal to relinquish child marriage in rural society. Early marriage enhances labor ability and family stability in many settings. This view is frequently confirmed by long-established burdens that provide family permission to precede statutory demands, making registration significantly looked over while child marriages pass without regard. (Nguyen & Cho, 2024) Additionally, the gender imbalance indicated by numbers underlines a more significant problem of lack of equality between sexes within this sector. This often comes at the expense of a girl's education, enabling them to perform only domestic duties, trapping girls into poverty, and restricting their career options from an early age (UNICEF, 2018). The results corroborate the literature on child marriage and education, showing that educational access can be instrumental in reducing rates of child marriage (Field & Ambrus, 2008).

Despite published reports on positive results, the implementation of child marriage prevention strategies faces several challenges. The geographically isolated, mountainous Lao Cai province also poses particular challenges for outreach and information access (Parsons et al., 2015). Language barriers are also a stumbling block since most policies, plans, and legal documents related to anti-child marriage are in the Vietnamese language, so many ethnic minority populations in Vietnam do not have much knowledge or understanding of the language (UNICEF, 2018). Low literacy rates and a lack of education funding have further reduced the impact of awareness campaigns. Not all sections of the population, particularly adolescents, are reached by programs disseminating information about child marriage (Hossain & Miah, 2016). The government and some local organizations conducted propaganda

sessions, however inadequate, as these ethnic minorities have been repeatedly documented to have an uneven grasp of laws and consequences, further suggesting a need for more culturally sensible targeted educational endeavors (Chuyen et al., 2008).

Future interventions recommended build upon progress and tackle the challenges of our community engagement, localized educational resources, promoting gender equality programs, and addressing socio-economic factors. Community engagement through key opinion leaders and other local influencers in awareness campaigns will enhance trust, foster discussion, and raise collective understanding of how child marriage harms children—involving knowledgeable figures within the Hmong society to dispute traditional beliefs and practices. Create educational material for ethnic minorities that is culturally relevant and translated into their languages. Including bilingual resources and traditional practices in educational content can provide translation to improve comprehension and help the message resonate. The increase in collaboration between local authorities and campaigning organizations promotes proactive law enforcement efforts by local governance and requires sustained monitoring and reporting systems that achieve compliance with national policies. The program implementation focuses on advocating for gender equality through the education and training of girls, as increased access to education can cut child marriage rates (Hoang, 2020).

The introduction of economic programs that provide financial support for families mitigates the economic burdens driving child marriage. Programs supporting sustainable livelihood initiatives can help reduce poverty and the perceived need for early marriage.

5. Conclusion

An analysis of the research paper on child marriage among ethnic minorities in Lao Cai Province, Vietnam, highlights underlying socio-cultural drivers as well as economic determinants. The results illustrate that, despite substantial governmental interventions and community mobilization to address child marriage, the issue is still salient among ethnic minority groups. The cultural traditions and economic factors within the region support early marriage as an initiatory practice, especially among ethnic minorities such as Hmong. The situation feeds into the pervasive generational poverty being maintained by intergenerational early marriage, in part driven by girls dropping out of school.

The study shows significant disparities between the genders, with girls more likely to be married early on and regarded as temporary members of their families. Meanwhile, patriarchal norms in these communities mean early marriage continues to be seen as a viable option for girls (or, at worst, their families), with the result that they are robbed of any opportunity to develop personally or professionally. The consequences of this gender bias—both in the lives of individuals and ultimately in community development and economic growth across the region—are detrimental.

Studies show that education has a significant impact on decreasing child marriage rates. Educational interventions in the form of girl-centric education and community-level programs intended to raise awareness of the importance of education have certainly become necessary. Such policy implications include enforcing existing laws, improving educational opportunities, and empowering girls economically. Longitudinal research and qualitative studies are needed to benchmark the effectiveness of interventions over time, especially with boys as well as girls affected by child marriage. It is important to understand why men marry early; then, it will help in developing gender-specific interventions that address the problem at its root cause.

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The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Proposed Strategy at Conflicts: The Case Study of TOMY of the 3rd Health District, Greece

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Abstract

Aim of current study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavior in conflicts between employees and coordinators at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. A primary, quantitative, cross-sectional comparative research, between participants was accomplished. The valid and reliable ($\alpha \geq 0.781$) WLEIS questionnaire was used to measure emotional intelligence. The sample was conducted by 143 employees, mainly women, married, 26-45 years old, doctors, nurses or administrative staff, holders of bachelor's degrees with more than 3 years of work, who do not hold a coordinator position and have not been informed never about conflict management issues during their studies. Half of employees use the strategies of claim (25.53%) and cooperation (25.53%) to resolve conflicts. TOMY coordinator to resolve conflicts prefers to use problem solving (52.48%) or approach compliant with current legislation (24.82%). Different levels of emotional intelligence across employee behavior at conflict were observed in factors "Expressing Personal Feelings" ($p=.028$) and "Emotional control" ($p=.005$). Different levels of emotional intelligence across the coordinator approach at conflict, were observed in factor "Emotional regulation" ($p=.008$), and "Emotional control" ($p=.010$). Employees at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District presented high levels of emotional intelligence and used cooperation and claim, to resolve conflicts, avoiding the beneficial mediation strategy. TOMY coordinator uses problem-solving or is compliant with the current legislation strategy. Higher levels of expressing personal feelings and emotional control were related to the cooperation or mediation strategies to resolve conflicts.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Conflicts, Coordinator, Strategy, 3rd Health District

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It is an essential skill in conflict resolution as it enables individuals to navigate complex social interactions and build strong relationships (Başoğlu & Özgür, 2016). The key components of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Nurul et al., 2017). Assessing emotional intelligence among healthcare employees can have significant implications for communication, patient care, and job performance. This is especially important in healthcare environments where high-stress levels are common (Psilopanagioti et al., 2012).

The root of almost all conflicts can be traced back to emotions, as conflicts arise from the beliefs of individuals or organizations regarding threats to their interests. Conflict resolution is an essential concern in the global healthcare sector. According to Pitsilidou et al. (2018), the most frequently suggested courses of action for conflict resolution in the hospital setting of Cyprus were the establishment of effective communication and collaboration, recognition and respect for individual rights, and the clear demarcation of responsibilities among all parties involved. Moreover, employees tend to favor mediation and arbitration for resolving healthcare disputes, as these processes can cater to their particular requirements (Thrope, 2011). Loke (2013) also asserts that professionals prefer mediation for resolving disputes since it reduces the risk of undesirable publicity.

Emotional intelligence has been considered an important factor in conflict management and customer relationship management, while emotional intelligence may also play a significant role in conflict resolution between employees (Aseery et al., 2023). A meta-analysis of emotional intelligence and conflict management showed that emotional intelligence plays a moderating role in conflict resolution strategies and organizational citizenship behavior, and that it may also be positively related to organizational citizenship behavior in workplace conflicts (Zia, Saeed & Khan, 2018). It has been observed that individuals possessing high emotional intelligence are not only cognizant of their limits and obligations, but they are adept at regulating their emotions as well (Latsou et al., 2022). Moreover, in Lee's (2018) study, it was found that employees who possess a higher level of emotional intelligence tend to perform their job responsibilities with greater efficiency. Additionally, these employees actively seek out conflict resolution by utilizing methods such as cooperation and mediation.

Furthermore, the importance of emotional intelligence in effective leadership cannot be overstated, as it has become one of the most crucial qualities a leader can possess. Coordinators in the health sector who possess emotional intelligence can motivate and inspire their colleagues to achieve objectives that may have otherwise been unattainable (Kemerer & Cwiekala-Lewis, 2017). However, high-emotional intelligence coordinators can utilize this ability to comprehend and regulate their emotions in a way that benefits themselves and others. Kemerer and Cwiekala-Lewis (2017) showed that the ability of a nurse leader to resolve interpersonal conflicts in a therapeutic manner is positively correlated with emotional intelligence. According to Muhurji & Yussef (2017) the majority of nurse leaders and coordinators could identify their emotions as they occurred, were aware of these emotions, and understood why their emotions changed. However, a smaller proportion of nursing leaders believed that they had control over their emotions. Belasen and Belasen's (2016) research also underscores the crucial role played by coordinators in healthcare service delivery. Coordinators achieve this by ensuring compliance with laws and regulations and by removing any hindrances that may impede problem-solving and the effective implementation of strategic changes. Also, based on Assery et al.'s (2023) research, it seems that emotional intelligence could potentially have an impact on how personnel interpret the conflict resolution techniques employed by coordinators.

Empirical evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies in healthcare professionals (Kitsios et al., 2022; Lee, 2018; Latsou et al., 2022; Zia, Saeed & Khan, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the importance of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution to improve outcomes in the health sector. Emotional intelligence skills can lead to improved conflict resolution and overall job performance in healthcare professionals. By utilizing methods such as cooperation and mediation and incorporating emotional intelligence into performance management systems (Lee et al., 2018; Pitsilidou et al.,

2018), healthcare professionals can develop the necessary skills to effectively manage conflicts and improve their overall emotional intelligence (Tyczkowski et al., 2015). The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavior in conflicts between employees and coordinators at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. This study contributes to the ongoing advancement of knowledge in the field of emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies.

It is the first time to conduct research in TOMY in the field of Human Resources Management and specifically in the emotional intelligence of healthcare professionals in relation to conflict resolution strategies. The emergence of the concept of mediation in the field of health in relation to emotional intelligence is also original in the research. The strategy of mediation helps the individual to satisfactorily join the organization and contributes to his healthy relationship with the organization and the working environment (Triantari, 2018). This research will form a basis for future research contributing to the enhancement of knowledge.

The aim of the current study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the behavior in conflicts of employees and coordinators at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. The research questions are formulated below:

- 1) Does the emotional intelligence of employees affect their behavior in conflicts at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District?
- 2) Does the emotional intelligence of employees affect the way they perceive the coordinator's behavior in conflicts at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

A primary, quantitative, cross-sectional comparative research between participants was accomplished. The cross-sectional primary research is considered appropriate to investigate directly the levels of emotional intelligence of employees at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District in a particular period (Creswell, 2013). According to previous studies, emotional intelligence is a concept that can be measured accurately (Wong & Law, 2002), thus quantitative research via Likert-type questions is the appropriate research design (DeVellis, 2016). The comparative between participants design was chosen to compare the different levels of emotional intelligence across the behaviors in conflicts as well as according to the coordinator different strategies to solve conflicts, using statistical methods in numerical data (Coolican, 2014). The dependent variables of study are the behavior in conflicts of employees and coordinator and the independent variable the emotional intelligence. Great advantage of quantitative design is that results can be generalized for the study population, due to the inductive approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

2.2 Procedure

At the 16/02-09-2021 meeting of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Macedonia in Greece, the approval to conduct the research with protocol number 5/2022 was recommended. The research procedure began after this approval. Current subject was considered interesting, useful and be beneficial for the scientific community. The research gap that this study aims to fulfill is that no previous study has examined the way that employees perceive the coordinator's strategy to resolve issues, based on their emotional intelligence. Researcher asked for the permission of administrations at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District to share questionnaires with corresponding employees and the data collection began after the permission was given. Employees were informed about the general framework of the research; the research aim and that their answers will be used only for research purposes. Confidentiality of personal data was reassured. Participation in the current study was anonymous, voluntary and with the written consent of participants, confirming the necessary ethical issues that are related with the psychology of participants and the nature of a scientific research (BPS, 2014). The right to withdraw from the research was clarified at any reason, without explaining the reason or having any

consequences. Data were selected in hard-copy questionnaires and then answers were coded in Microsoft Office Excel 2016. The research was conducted from 2021 to 2022.

2.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire of current study involves 3 sections which are: 1) Demographic and job characteristics, 2) Behavior at conflict, 3) Emotional intelligence. Regarding the 1st section of demographic and job characteristics, totally 8 closed-type questions were used which refer to gender, age, marital status, working experience, level of education, the coordinator position, the information about conflict management issues during the studies and the specialty. The 2nd section involves 2 closed type questions regarding the kind of approach-behavior-strategy that employees and the coordinator use to resolve conflicts.

The 3rd section measures the emotional intelligence with 16 Likert type questions from 1-7 (1=Disagree strongly, 2=Disagree much, 3=Disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Agree, 6=Agree much, 7=Agree strongly), from the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002). Questionnaire involves 4 factors (4 questions each) which are a) "Expressing Personal Feelings", with questions such as "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time", b) "Understanding of others' emotions", including items e.g. "I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others", c) "Emotional regulation", involving questions such as "I would always encourage myself to try my best" and d) "Emotional control", with questions such as "I have good control of my own emotions".

The factors of emotional intelligence were tested for their reliability, using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient which measures the reliability of internal consistency with satisfactory values to be those greater than 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Reliability analysis presented satisfactory results (*Table 1*). "Expressing personal feelings" indicated reliability $\alpha=0.877$, "Understanding of others' emotions" $\alpha=0.781$, "Emotional regulation" $\alpha=0.835$ and "Emotional control" $\alpha=0.838$. The validity of questionnaire on emotional intelligence is guaranteed by manufacturers via construct validity, using factor analysis which indicates specific factors (McLeod, 2013). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used in current research which confirms the factor construct. KMO coefficient was high (0.886) (Kline, 2014) and the CFA indicated 4 factors which explain the 71.31% of the total variance (*Table 2*).

Table 1: Reliability analysis of factors

Factor	Questions	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Expressing personal feelings	1,5,9,13	0.877	High
Understanding of others' emotions	2,6,10,14	0.781	Satisfactory
Emotional regulation	3,7,11,15	0.835	High
Emotional control	4,8,12,16	0.838	High

Table 2: Factor Analysis for WLEIS, using varimax rotation

Items	Factors (KMO=0.886)			
	1	2	3	4
SEA_9	0.835			
SEA_1	0.733			
SEA_5	0.718			
SEA_13	0.685			
ROE_4		0.814		
ROE_8		0.719		
ROE_12		0.686		
ROE_16		0.633		
UOE_11			0.769	
UOE_3			0.739	
UOE_15			0.671	
UOE_7			0.424	

OAE_2				0.845
OAE_6				0.845
OAE_14				0.825
OAE_10				0.186
Eigen value	3.170	2.850	2.741	2.650
Variance (%)	19.81%	17.81%	17.13%	16.52%

2.4 Population-Sample

The employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District are considered the population of study. Sample was conducted by 143 employees using convenient sampling, as researcher gathered data from employees she knows personally (Creswell, 2013). Considering demographic characteristics, most of participants are females (79.02%), 18-45 years old (84.50%), of a bachelor educational level (63.64%, N=91), while more than half are married (57.34%). Regarding job characteristics, the main specialties that were observed are general doctors (25.17%), nurses (25.17%) and administrative staff (22.38%). In addition, the vast majority have more than 3 years of work experience (82.52%), are not coordinators (90.85%) and during their studies have not ever learned about conflict management issues (60.14%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Demographic and job characteristics

Demographics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	30	20.98%
	Female	113	79.02%
Age	18-35	49	34.50%
	36-45	71	50.00%
	46-67	22	15.50%
Marital Status	Unmarried	47	32.87%
	Married	82	57.34%
	Divorced-Separated-Widower	14	9.79%
Duration of work	0-3	25	17.48%
	4-6	36	25.17%
	7-10	37	25.87%
	>10	45	31.47%
Educational level	Bachelor	91	63.64%
	Master	46	32.17%
	PhD	6	4.20%
Do you hold a Coordinator Position?	No	129	90.85%
	Yes	13	9.15%
Have you ever learned about conflict management issues during your studies?	No	86	60.14%
	Yes	57	39.86%
What specialty do you have in TOMY?	Pediatrician	7	4.90%
	General doctor	36	25.17%
	Social Worker	18	12.59%
	Nurse	36	25.17%
	Visitor	14	9.79%
	Administrative	32	22.38%

2.5 Data analysis

Statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 26 of IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) was used for the analysis of data. In the descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation and percentages were used. Inferential statistics was performed with significance 5%. Factors were tested for normality using the most accurate Shapiro Wilk test (Razali & Wah, 2011). Parametric test one-way ANOVA was used to compare mean differences between 4 or 5 independent samples that are normally distributed, and values were presented with mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Non-parametric test Kruskal Wallis was used to compare

median differences between 4 or 5 independent samples that are not normally distributed, and values were presented with median (Mdn) and interquartile range (IR), using Post Hoc Analysis Bonferonniin case of statistically significant median differences (Field, 2017).

3. Results

Half of employees use the strategies of claim (25.53%) and cooperation (25.53%) to resolve conflicts while the minority uses the mediation strategy (13.48%). TOMY coordinator to resolve conflicts prefers to use problem solving (52.48%) or approach compliant with current legislation (24.82%) (*Table 4*).

Table 4: Behavior in conflict

Question	Category	N	%
What kind of behavior do you exhibit when you are in conflict?	Claim	36	25.53%
	Compromise	22	15.60%
	Avoidance	23	16.31%
	Acceptance	5	3.55%
	Cooperation	36	25.53%
	Mediation	19	13.48%
What kind of approach does the TOMY coordinator use to resolve conflicts on a personal or group level?	Authoritarian	9	6.38%
	Liberal	14	9.93%
	Problem-solving	74	52.48%
	Compliant with current legislation	35	24.82%
	He stands for the majority	9	6.38%

Considering emotional intelligence, employees presented high levels of expressing personal feelings ($M=5.54$, $SD=0.98$) as they agree that they have a good sense of why they have certain feelings most of the time (86.1%), always know whether they are or not happy (85.4%), have good understanding of their own emotions (79.8%) and really understand what they feel (79.1%). Similarly, high were the levels for the emotional regulation ($M=5.30$, $SD=1.01$) as participants agreed that they would always encourage themselves to try the best (83.3%), set goals for themselves and then try their best to achieve them (78.4%), are self-motivated persons (72.8%) and always tell themselves that they are competent persons (68.6%). In addition, others emotional appraisal was rated high ($M=4.99$, $SD=0.93$), with employees agreeing that they are sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others (70.7%), have good understanding of the emotions of people around me (69%), are a good observer of others' emotions (65.8%) and always know their friends' emotions from their behavior (65.8%). Emotional control was rated moderate to high ($M=4.83$, $SD=1.10$). Participants agreed clearly, only in the statement that they have good control of their own emotions (70%) (*Table 5*).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence

Statement	M	SD	DS	DM	D	N	A	AM	AS
I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time.	5.73	1.11	0%	1.4%	2.1%	10.5%	19.6%	40.6%	25.9%
I always know whether or not I am happy.	5.71	1.07	0%	0%	3.5%	11.2%	21.0%	39.2%	25.2%
I have good understanding of my own emotions.	5.40	1.21	0%	1.4%	7.7%	11.2%	27.3%	34.3%	18.2%
I really understand what I feel.	5.30	1.18	0%	1.4%	7.7%	11.9%	32.9%	30.8%	15.4%
Expressing personal feelings	5.54	0.98							
I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others.	5.14	1.35	1.4%	1.4%	10.5%	16.1%	23.8%	32.9%	14.0%
I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me.	4.97	1.18	0.7%	2.1%	7.7%	20.4%	34.5%	26.8%	7.7%

I am a good observer of others' emotions.	4.93	1.18	0%	4.2%	5.6%	24.5%	30.8%	28.7%	6.3%
I always know my friends' emotions from their behaviour.	4.92	1.16	0.7%	2.1%	5.6%	25.9%	36.4%	20.3%	9.1%
Understanding of others emotions	4.99	0.93							
I would always encourage myself to try my best.	5.59	1.14	0%	0.7%	4.2%	11.9%	25.2%	34.3%	23.8%
I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.	5.37	1.27	0.7%	2.1%	4.9%	14.0%	28.7%	29.4%	20.3%
I am a self-motivated person.	5.17	1.22	0.7%	1.4%	6.3%	18.9%	30.8%	28.0%	14.0%
I always tell myself I am a competent person.	5.05	1.31	0.7%	4.2%	6.3%	20.3%	26.6%	30.8%	11.2%
Emotional regulation	5.30	1.01							
I have good control of my own emotions.	5.00	1.33	1.4%	4.2%	6.3%	18.2%	32.9%	25.2%	11.9%
I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry.	4.85	1.42	1.4%	4.9%	9.9%	23.9%	22.5%	25.4%	12.0%
I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally.	4.80	1.31	0.7%	5.6%	7.7%	25.2%	29.4%	23.1%	8.4%
I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions.	4.65	1.30	1.4%	5.7%	7.1%	29.1%	34.0%	14.2%	8.5%
Emotional control	4.83	1.10							

DS: Disagree strongly, DM: Disagree much, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, AM: Agree much, AS: Agree strongly

Normality of factors was accepted only for "Understanding of others emotions" ($p=0.057$) (Table 6).

Table 6: Normality test

Factor	W (143)	p-value
Expressing personal feelings	0.950	<0.001
Understanding of others' emotions	0.982	0.057
Emotional regulation	0.959	<0.001
Emotional control	0.975	0.009

Different levels of emotional intelligence across employee behavior at conflict were observed in factor "Expressing personal feelings" ($p=.028$), with the median value of employees who use cooperation or mediation to resolve conflicts ($Mdn=6$, $IR=0.75$) to be higher than the median value of employees who use compromise ($Mdn=5.38$, $IR=1.13$, $p=.006$) and claim ($Mdn=5.50$, $IR=1.25$, $p=.035$). In addition, different levels of emotional intelligence across employee behavior at conflict were observed in factor "Emotional control" ($p=.005$), with the median value of employees who use cooperation or mediation to resolve conflicts ($Mdn=5.25$, $IR=1.25$) to be higher than the median value of employees who use claim ($Mdn=4.50$, $IR=1.25$, $p=.002$), compromise ($Mdn=4.88$, $IR=1.56$, $p=.035$) and avoidance or acceptance ($Mdn=4.50$, $IR=1.25$, $p=.011$) (Table 7, Figure 1).

Table 7: Emotional intelligence across personal behavior in conflict

Factor	Claim	Compromise	Avoidance-Acceptance	Cooperation-Mediation	p-value
Expressing personal feelings	5.50 (1.25)	5.38 (1.13)	5.75 (1.38)	6.00 (0.75)	0.028
Understanding of others' emotions	5.09 (1.09)	4.84 (0.96)	4.76 (0.69)	5.10 (0.93)	0.336
Emotional regulation	5.63 (0.94)	5.25 (1.38)	5.00 (1.94)	5.75 (1.25)	0.075

Emotional control	4.50 (1.25)	4.88 (1.56)	4.50 (1.25)	5.25 (1.25)	0.005
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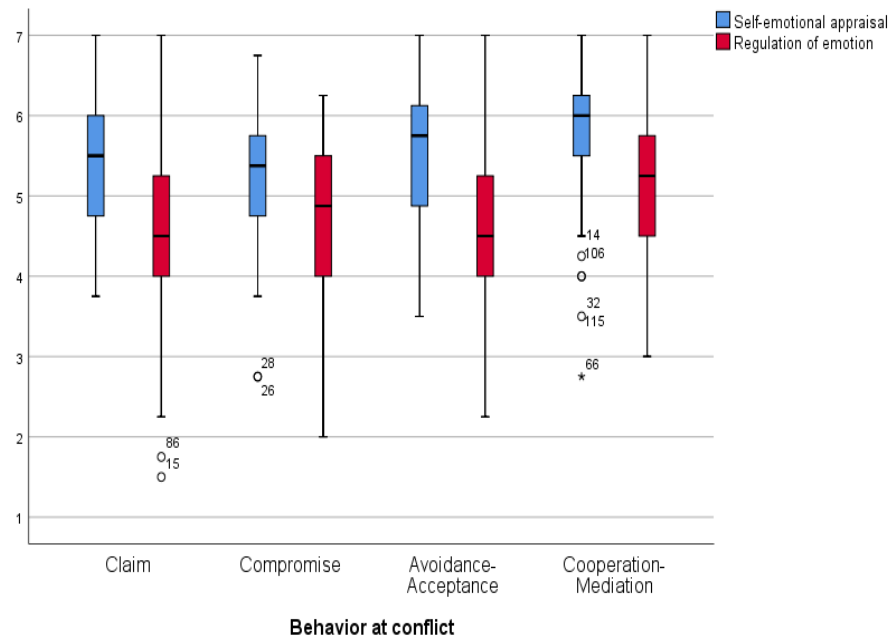


Figure 1: Emotional intelligence across personal behavior in conflict

Different levels of emotional intelligence across the coordinator approach at conflict, were observed in factor “Emotional regulation” ($p=.008$), with the median value of employees who think that coordinator uses problem-solving to resolve conflicts ($Mdn=5.75$, $IR=1.25$) to be higher than the median value of employees who think that coordinator uses liberal approach ($Mdn=4.25$, $IR=2.19$, adj. $p=.001$), or majority ($Mdn=5.25$, $IR=1.50$, $p=.049$). In addition, in the factor “Emotional regulation”, median value of employees who think that coordinator uses legislation strategy ($Mdn=5.50$, $IR=1.25$) is higher than median value of those think that coordinator uses liberal approach ($Mdn=4.25$, $IR=2.19$, $p=.011$). Furthermore, different levels of emotional intelligence across the coordinator approach at conflict were observed in factor “Emotional control” ($p=.010$), with the median value of employees who think that coordinator uses problem solving ($Mdn=5.00$, $IR=1.50$) to be higher than the median value of employees who believe that coordinator uses liberal ($Mdn=4.13$, $IR=2.13$, $p=.036$) and majority approach ($Mdn=4.00$, $IR=1.75$, $p=.008$). Moreover, in factor “Emotional control” the median value of employees who believe that coordinator uses legislation approach to resolve conflicts ($Mdn=5.00$, $IR=1.50$) was higher than the median value of employees who think that coordinator uses liberal ($Mdn=4.13$, $IR=2.13$, $p=.031$) and majority approach ($Mdn=4.00$, $IR=1.75$, $p=.007$) (Table 8, Figure 2).

Table 8: Emotional intelligence across the coordinator approach to conflict

Factor	Authoritarian	Liberal	Problem solving	Legislation	Majority	p-value
Expressing personal feelings	5.50 (1.38)	5.25 (2.06)	5.75 (1.06)	5.75 (1.00)	4.75 (2.38)	0.076
Understanding of others' emotions	4.81 (1.19)	4.54 (1.07)	4.96 (0.87)	5.26 (0.89)	4.92 (0.92)	0.140
Emotional regulation	5.25 (1.13)	4.25 (2.19)	5.75 (1.06)	5.50 (1.25)	5.25 (1.50)	0.008
Emotional control	4.25 (1.67)	4.13 (2.13)	5.00 (1.50)	5.00 (1.50)	4.00 (1.75)	0.010

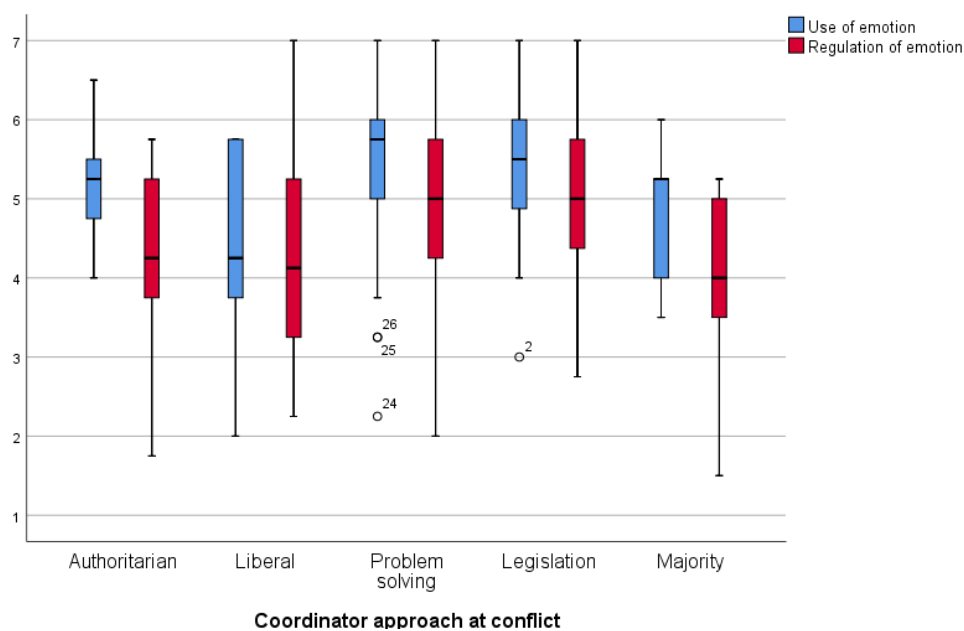


Figure 2: Emotional intelligence across the coordinator approach in conflict

4. Discussion

Aim of current study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavior in conflicts between employees and coordinators at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District. Sample was conducted by 143 employees, mainly women, married, 26-45 years old, doctors, nurses or administrative staff, holders of bachelor degrees with more than 3 years of work, who do not hold a coordinator position and have not been informed never about conflict management issues during their studies.

The most frequent strategies that employees use to resolve conflicts are cooperation and claim. Pitsilidou et al. (2018), in their study, also indicate that the participants frequently suggested collaboration as the most popular method for resolving conflicts within the hospital environment in Cyprus. Although mediation strategy is beneficial (Loke, 2013; Trope, 2011), the minority of employees choose this approach to resolve conflicts. Regarding TOMY coordinators the most frequent strategies are problem solving or approach compliant with current legislation. Also, in the research conducted by Belasen and Belasen (2016), it is emphasized that coordinators play a significant role in enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare service delivery. They achieve this by adhering to the laws and regulations to ensure compliance and by eliminating obstacles in the way of problem-solving and the implementation of strategic changes.

Employees at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District presented high levels of emotional intelligence considering self and others emotional appraisal, as well as the emotional regulation and medium to high levels of emotional control. According to Tyczkowski et al. (2015), the emotional intelligence levels of employees in the healthcare sector are considerably high. Moreover, it has been noted that employees with high emotional intelligence are not only aware of their limits and responsibilities, but also possess the ability to regulate their emotions effectively and are more flexible and adaptable to changes and demands (Latsou et al., 2022). On the other hand, according to Muhurji & Yussef (2017) the majority of health professionals are aware of these emotions, but a smaller proportion of them believe that they control over their emotions.

As far as the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavior in conflict is concerned, employees with higher emotional intelligence regarding expressing personal feelings and emotional control choose cooperation or mediation strategies to resolve conflicts. According to Lee (2018), employees who possess a greater amount of emotional intelligence are prone to performing their duties more efficiently. Furthermore, they often attempt to seek conflict resolution through the means of cooperation and mediation.

Regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and the perceived strategy that coordinator uses to resolve conflicts, employees with higher emotional intelligence, considering use and emotional control, believe that the coordinator uses the strategies of problem-solving and compliant with current legislation to resolve conflicts. The study of Assery et al. (2023) suggests that emotional intelligence may play a role in how employees perceive the conflict resolution strategies used by coordinators.

5. Conclusion

Employees at the TOMY of the 3rd Health District presented high levels of emotional intelligence and use cooperation and claim, to resolve conflicts, avoiding the beneficial mediation strategy. TOMY coordinator uses problem-solving or compliant with current legislation strategy. Higher levels of expressing personal feelings and emotional control were related with the cooperation or mediation strategies to resolve conflicts. Employees with higher use and emotional control believe that coordinator uses the strategies of problem-solving and compliant with current legislation to resolve conflicts.

Results refer to employees of the TOMY of the 3rd Health District, mainly general doctors, nurses or administrative staff, women, aged 26-45 years, with more than 3 years of work, who do not hold a coordinator position and they have never been informed about conflict management issues during their studies. Sample size was not large enough to use parametric tests and to ensure the sufficient statistical power (Cohen, 1988). Another limitation is that current study was performed during the pandemic period and this possibly affected the answers as different kinds of conflicts possibly occurred, comparing pandemic and normal periods, taking into account and the increasing workload those employees faced.

Future research could examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflicts strategies, in different health centers and hospitals, using stratified sampling to achieve high representativeness and a sample size of 300-400 employees (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, future research can compare the results between health centers of private and public sectors or between employees and supervisors.

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Informed Consent Statement/Ethics approval: All subjects gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study anonymity is assured, why the research is being conducted, how their data will be used and if there are any risks associated.

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Review of Russian Foreign Policy (1991-2024): From Western Cooperation to Great Power Identity

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Abstract

Russian foreign policy is a piece of conundrum which is covered by its national interest. The policy has been changed timely following pragmatic approach. The study examines in the initial phase of the post-Soviet period, Russia endeavored its hard and sole to integrate with the “civilized” Western world. But this integration did not achieve Russia’s national interest which led Russia to an anti-west-centric approach, the multi-polar world. In the stage Russia strategically engaged with Asia and the Middle East to reconstruct its post-soviet transitional period’s subdued image. In relation to former post-soviet republics, Russia gained modest profile in terms of security and economic. However, for showing great power identity, Russia directly betrothed in Syrian and Ukraine war which demands Russia needs a seat in great power table.

Keywords: Russia, Post-Communist, West-centric, Anti-west, Great Power

1. Introduction

The Russian communist regime was founded as the result of Russian revolution of 1917 and remained until its ultimate dissolution in 1991. However, the process of dissolution and mass reformation was initiated at the end of 1990. After around 70 years of totalitarian communist regime Russia became an independent and sovereign country in 1991. Throughout the transition period, Russia’s primary focus was to safeguard the territorial integrity, assure primacy of Russian borders, protect nuclear weapons, foster economic development, and aspire to become a technologically advanced democratic industrial nation on the global stage (Lynch, 2002, p.162). A pragmatic approach was implemented by- the newly established democratic administration to restructure its foreign policy. After approximately seven decades of a totalitarian communist regime, there was a significant amount of reconstruction. It was contended that the government should implement the most advanced reforms on the premise of liberal democracy and market economy otherwise, the new Russian federation would not be visible as the civilized state in the world. The study examines why and how did Russia accept the West as their friend in the interim period of post-communist Russia and then after post-soviet decade why and how did the Russian foreign policy shift to a great power identity?

2. Road to Pro-Western Foreign Policy and Kozyrev doctrine

Russia's road to Western policy could be considered by pragmatic approach. Pragmatic approach is an approach which is practical approach relies on real-world phenomena (Cochran, 2019, pp.1-12). Following the collapse of the communist dictatorship, the Soviet people urged that the government must undertake a comprehensive restructuring of the communist system of governance and move forward to market economy and liberal democratic government. In the expansive, Gorbachev provided some major reforms namely Glasnost and Perestroika. After the fall of the communist regime, Andrei Kozyrev designed a pro-western liberal foreign policy which is comparable with Francis Fukuyama's (1989, p.4) observation, as he mentioned, it's possible that what we're seeing the end of history in general, rather than only the cold war or a specific epoch of post-war history; specifically, the culmination of humankind's intellectual development and the spread of western liberal democracy as its ultimate form. Fukuyama claimed, the end of the Cold War was the end of history and following ideological evaluation process liberal democracy and market economy reached at the final stage of human history.

It is worthy that, Russia's pro-western or road to liberal foreign policy was rooted in Gorbachev's effort. He endeavored to frigate the hostile relations between the USA and the Western world. He believed peace and harmony should be established in the international system (Kumar, 2018, p. 213). He signed INF, CFE and START arms control treaty in late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s with the USA and the Western World. Later from communism to democratic transition period, Yeltsin government did not have an ambitious foreign policy aimed at dominating global politics. The policy can be described as a modest policy shaped by Western liberalism, which Kozyrev worked hard to implement during the transition period.

Kozyrev doctrine promotes Russia's integration with the West. The doctrine argues Russia is a part of the West but its liberal values were eradicated by the authoritarian communist regime. (Tsygankov, 2016, pp. 65-66). Russia should merge with Western politics and economic order. Kozyrev pointed out that our country's has a natural affinity with the USA and other Western democratic nations, but they were seen as adversaries by the totalitarian USSR. (Tsygankov, 2016, a, p.59). He advocated Russia should strengthen its inherent partnership with Western nations and strive to attain a prominent stature analogous to that of France, Germany, and the US within the next 10-12 years.

According to him, natural partnership with the West would be increased by the mass membership of the Western organization, radical market oriented economic reform and isolation from the soviet values. His pro-western liberal foreign policy was essentially designed to align with the nation's interests. President Yeltsin and his pro-western reformist team: Gennady Burbulis, Boris Nemtsov, Yegor Gaidar, Andrei Kozyrov and Anatoly Chubais were supposed that new government's neo-liberal reforms like free market economy, and free trade system led to getting strong economic assistance from the west (Tsygankov, 2016, b, p.214). It was claimed that economic assistance and partnership with the West would promptly rejuvenate Russia's economy. In the way national interest was amalgamated with the integration of the West following foreign policy objectives. In June 1992 Russia joined IMF and World Bank, and the following month it also became a member of the G-7. During the initial stages of Western integration, there was conjecture about the possibility of Russia becoming a member of the Western security alliance NATO. In the stage President Yeltsin and his foreign minister Kozyrev requested substantial foreign investment from Western countries. During the G-7 conference in July, Yeltsin declared the \$24 billion stimulus program would not be adequate to save Russia rather, Russia would require several hundred billion dollars of foreign direct investment to protect its economy. (Tsygankov, 2016, c, p.74). But the Western countries were in a fear of Russian political situation to invest billions of dollars. Later, in order to attract a large influx of foreign investment from Western countries, Kozyrev devised the Strategic Democratic Initiative (SDI). But SDI did not achieve its desire goal. Following political instability, the West invested to Russia less than post-communist European countries.

Table 1: External Aid and Investment: Russia and Other Recipients, 1990

Country	World Bank Lending Divided by GDP in 1990 (%)	Direct Investment Divided by GDP in 1990 (%)
Hungary	5.1	32.2
Czech Republic	2.0	12.6
Poland	6.6	11.0
Estonia	1.5	8.6
Turkmenistan	0.4	7.7
Kazakhstan	1.4	1.8
Azerbaijan	0.8	1.1
Russia	0.8	0.6

Source: M. Steven Fish, "The Determinants of Economic Reform in the Post-Communist World," *East European Politics and Societies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 38.

During the Tokyo G-7 Summit in July 1993, President Bill Clinton of the USA announced \$43.4 billion assistance program aimed at revitalizing the Russian economy. With the assistance of the US, Russia attempted to restructure of a total \$70 million debt of Soviet era but the effort was failed for London club (Tsygankov, 2016, d, p.75). Nevertheless, Russia made a deliberate effort to get significant access to the economic market of the European Union, but ultimately it was unsuccessful due to the uncooperative stance of the EU leaders. With the symbol of Western cooperation Russia joined Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and obtained observer status of the Atlantic Assembly in April 1992. In 1992, Russia abstained to exercise its veto power at the United Nations on the proposed military intervention by the United States against its traditional ally Yugoslavia. Even, Moscow tacitly endorsed the UN economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia due to its committed atrocities against Bosnian Muslims.

In January 1993 Russia and the USA signed START-2 treaty. To get further integration with the West, Russia upheld US economic sanctions on Iraq and Libya, and covertly supported US airstrikes on Iraq in 1993. (Tsygankov, 2016, e, p.77). Historically, Yugoslavia, Libya, and Iraq were the longstanding allies of Russia. But in these days, Russia took a pro-Western state for the sake of more convergence with Western countries. Simultaneously, in order to institute a personal connection with the Western countries, Yeltsin visited the UK, Canada, France, and the US. Yeltsin believed that fostering collaboration at both the individual and institutional levels would lead better cooperation with the West. But Yeltsin's cooperative approach failed to achieve the utmost level of collaboration between Russia and the West as desired by Russia.

3. Policy Toward Post Soviet Republics

Russia's primary priority was for its post-Soviet republics in ensuring the security and geopolitical stability, as well as protecting the rights and well-being of its Russian-speaking minority populaces in the post-soviet states. To ensure these demands, Russia founded the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991. The Alma Ata protocol of 1991 is regarded as an expanded incarnation of the CIS. Prior to the treaty Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Beloveha Accord on 8 December 1991 and recognized the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS). They invited other republics to join CIS. On December 21, five central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan along with Armenia, Moldova and Azerbaijan joined CIS. On 21 December 1991 by signing Alma Ata protocol Russia officially recognized its former republics as an independent state. Yeltsin government declared the relation with its post-soviet republics would be on the basis of reciprocated cooperation and respect. In the purpose and principles of the CIS charter declared Commonwealth should be founded on the principle of equal sovereignty among its members. The omphalos aim of the Commonwealth is to provide the progress and improvement of friendly ties, good neighborliness, inter-ethnic harmony, trust, reciprocated understanding, and equally advantageous collaboration among its fellow states ("Charter of the CIS" 1993, p.59). Yeltsin declared Russia's relation with CIS as the "close foreign countries" and Kozyrev noticed them as "our relatives" (Timmermann, 1992, p.167). Russia envisioned extensive integration with the former Soviet republics, aiming for a high degree of economic integration through a common economic market. This included a collective security pact, collaborative peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts, a shared external border, and a coordinated foreign policy. (Lo, 2002, p.75).

Simultaneously, Russia prioritized the well-being and protection of Russian-speaking individuals residing in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia issued a warning, stating that, former Soviet nations must provide equal rights for their minority populations. Kozyrev emphatically asserted that, if the Russian communities in these nations face oppression by any government, our government would respond lawfully and if necessary, we would undertake military intervention against these states. (Timmermann, 1992,a, p.169). The most important aspect of the integration was Russia's economic amalgamation with the CIS states. To strengthen economic integration among the CIS states, in 1993 leaders of the CIS implemented various significant actions, such as the creation of a regional market, the adoption of common customs laws, the development of a unified tax system, the implementation of a price system, and the implementation of collective measures to address economic challenges in the Ural and Caspian Sea region. (Jayashekar, 1993, p.2000). But due to leadership revelries, ethnic conflicts and individual groups high ambitions, the goal of the better economic coordination of the CIS states did not achieved its desired goal.

Table 2: The Economic Development of the CIS member states (In percentage of 1991)

Country	National Income	Industrial	Consumer goods output	Retail trade turnover	Paid services	Wholesale industrial price index
Russia	-20	-18.8	-15	-39.1	-36	2049
Ukraine	-15	-9	-9	-22.8	-25	2500
Belarus	-11	-9.6	-5	-26.1	-28	2465
Kazakhstan	-14.2	-14.8	-21	-38.5	-48	2469
Uzbekistan	-12.9	-6.2	100.4	-31.3	-42	1396
Turkmenistan	-	-16.7	-14	-38	-33	1094
Kyrgyzstan	-26	-26.8	-36	-67	-42	1764
Tajikistan	-31	-24.3	-28	-72.1	-68	1423
Azerbaijan	-28.2	-24	-24	-63	-68	1423
Armenia	-42.6	-52.5	-54	-72.7	-72	1047
Moldova	-21.3	-21.7	-16	- 49.4	-48	1311

Source: Delovoy Mir, Moscow, March 2, 1993

Table 3: The Economic Development of the CIS States

	1989	1990	1991	1992
GDP	3	-4	-8	-20
Industrial production	2.3	-3.4	10.1	-18.2
Consumer goods production	7.7	6.5	-4.5	-15
Agricultural production	1.5	-2.6	-6.9	-10
Capital investment	5	1	-12	-45
Trade turns over	8.4	10.5	-9.6	-36.7
Paid services	7.4	5.2	-18.5	-35.9

Source: Delovoy Mir, Moscow, March 2, 1993

However, the Payment Union and investment cooperation were not effective. The Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed in 1995) was the sole entity which attained a moderate level of economic integration in which bilateral relations reached in a progressive level.

Russia's integration with CIS did not attain in a possible maximum level. It is claimed that, Russia always explores Russia's relations with the CIS would be on the basis of reciprocated cooperation, equality and reverence as mentioned in the charter but in reality, Russia endeavored to establish its hegemony in these states. On the other hand, Ukraine and Belorussia's westward foreign policy provided their expectation to join with the West. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan also expressed their interest with the West. Russia's imperial pattern with liberal foreign policy created a complex policy with the CIS which led to Russia into a hegemonic character to the CIS. Aman Tulev, the minster of CIS cooperation said, we have lack of authority, jurisdiction, and resources to implement a genuine and effective policy of cooperation with the CIS nations (Lo, 2002, a, p.77)."

4. Primakov Doctrine and Multipolarity

After the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia and its subsequent expansion in Eastern Europe, along with the US military intervention in Iraq, Russia transformed its foreign policy by moving away from a Western-centric strategy and instead pursued a multi-polar world. In these days Russian leaders were identified that, the Western-centric foreign policy posed numerous challenges for Russia and the policy decreased Russian influence over the world but the US and Western countries reaped greater economic, security, and political benefits from Russia. On the contrary Russia moved for Eurasianism and enhanced vigorous cooperation with China. On 23 April 1997 Russia and China signed for new multipolar world shaping new order. The assertion stated that Russia and China would work together to encourage the diversification of power in the globe and for the formation of a new global scheme ("China-Russia Joint" 1997, p.97).". The goal of the Multipolar world is to provide counter-hegemony against the Western world. Following anti-western dream BRICS (2006) and Eurasian Economic Union (2015) were established to prevent Western hegemony in the Eurasian region.

5. Russia's Road to Great Power Identity

The construction of Russian great power identity is shaped by its historical and cultural approaches (Ponsard, 2007, p.7). In the post-soviet regime Russian great power identity was robustly introduced by the president Vladimir Putin. Since his presidency he promised to back Russian great power again. In 2000 Russian foreign policy doctrine clearly stated that, Russia is promised to maintain its global power status and secure its position as a leading center of the civilized world. Russian direct involvement in the Syrian civil war is the best example of the great power identity. This involvement denotes that, Russia intends to regain its global ranks again. Ukraine is the second battle ground where Russia fights against the Ukraine and the Western block. Russia intends to prove that Russia never wants to see NATO expansion in Ukraine which would be a security threat for Russia.

6. Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Historical Review

Russia has a robust ethnic and cultural relation with Ukraine. During the USSR, the Ukraine was one of the crucial states for economy, geopolitics, technology and food of Soviet Russia. After the termination of the USSR, in 1991 Ukraine gained independence from Russia and in the post-communist transformation the Western influence was expanding day by day. In the stage, the country was divided ideologically between pro-Russian and pro-western blocks. The ideological conflict led them precarious political condition which made orange revolution (2004-2005) and later Euro Maidan Revolution (2013-2014). latter Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 significantly deteriorated the Russia-Ukraine relationship. Russia claimed the annexation of Crimea was held by the Crimean people's choice. It was their demand to join with Russia. At the same time the war in Donbas clearly divides the country into ethnically and the culturally (Zhurzhenko, 2014, p. 249).

In May, following referendum the pro-Russian Donetsk and Luhansk declared their independence. The Ukraine mentioned the vote as "a criminal farce" organized by the Russian federation ("Ukraine rebels hold," 2014, May 11). The political crisis was directed at armed conflict between the pro-Russian and the Ukrainian armed forces. In February 2015, through the efforts of the Germany and the France, Russia and Ukraine signed Minsk Accords but the accords failed to stop escalation in Luhansk and Donetsk regions. It is worthy that, NATO and its Western counterparts perceive Russian influence in Ukraine as a threat to NATO and Western values. In 2016 to protect Baltic states and eastern European countries NATO deployed its four battalions in eastern fragment of the Europe from future Russian attack (Brown, 2016). At the beginning of 2017, the USA sent its two tank bigarades to Poland to boost NATO presence in the region ("Eucom Commander: U.S," 2017). Russia perceives the presence of NATO and the deployment of the US troops in close propinquity to its borders as a direct threat to its sovereignty. In response, in September Russia made a large-scale military exercise in Vladivostok, it was the largest military exercise after the end of the USSR. (Gorenburg, 2018). In retaliation to Russia, Ukraine participated in a large-scale of military exercise with the USA and the NATO in the western part of Ukraine in October 2018 ("War in Ukraine", 2024). Later in the Ukrainian presidential election was held in March-April 2019, pro-western Zelensky secured an impressive 73% of the votes, which was an unexpected and decisive victory according to election forecasts. (Hosa and Wilson, 2019). Zelensky's commitment to building a precise relation with the EU and to

reforming of army in accordance with NATO standards along with the integration of NATO provided a unequivocal anti-Russian stance. Since his accession of power, he pigeon-holes NATO as the true safeguard for Ukraine against Russian aggression. In the mid-June of 2021 he urged to become a member of NATO. On 14 June 2021 He demanded to president Biden to provide clear “yes” or “no” statement to become a NATO membership for Ukraine (Polityuk, 2021). Russia sees the expansion of NATO in Ukraine would be a direct threat to its national sovereignty. In the spread-out tensions Russia started deploying its large scale of military armaments near eastern and northern Ukraine.

6.1 Russia's Especial Operation Against Ukraine: The Quest for Great Power Identity

On 24 February 2022 Russia initiated its “especial operation” against Ukraine as mentioned Russia. Russia claimed their operation against the NATO expansion and Russia has no way without this operation. Aftermath of the operation the USA and its allies highly criticized the operation and it labelled as the “invasion against a sovereign country”. Till today the USA and its allies imposed more than ten thousand economic sanctions against Russia. Now Russia is the world most sanctioned country in the world. Russian invasion of Ukraine destroyed Russia's relations with the Western block. It is worthy that, following the US leading, all Western countries are united against Russia's Ukraine policy. The whole western block is fighting against Russia on the Ukrainian battlefield. At the annual anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine war, Mr. Putin declared the West provided 150 billion USD for the Ukraine against Russia. It's our security question and we do not give up our accurate right from the war (“Russia's Putin delivers”2023).

During Soviet period, Soviet Union had a great attachment and control over the Eastern, Central and Baltics Europe. Following the collapse of the USSR, the US and its allies categorized Russia as a waning force in Eastern Europe, lacking of aptitude to exercise hegemony over the eastern section of Europe. Consequently, they believe that Russia should not have the leverage to negotiate as a major power with the United States. But Russia believes still Russia is a great power and will remain as a great power (Kanet, 2007, p.14). Russia perceives invading Ukraine as a great opportunity to prove that Russia still a great power that has enough capability to protect its national interest in Ukraine. The integration of Crimea, Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine with the Russia is the result of proving Russian great power identity.

7. Relation and the Muslim World

The neo-liberal west-centric foreign policy of Russia stayed away from the Muslim world. During the Kozyrev period, Russia was much busy reconstructing its economy and politics. Consequently, the government did not get much time to pay attention to reinstalling a robust bilateral relationship with its traditional allies Iraq, Libya and Syria. Russia's silence for the US military intervention in Iraq created a fridge relationship with Iraq. Russia's adoption of a west-centric foreign policy resulted in the loss of its lucrative arms trade worth billions of dollars from the Middle East.

7.1 Russia and the Post 9/11 Muslim world

After 9/11 attack in the USA, the global politics has changed radically. The USA government accused Al-Qaeda for this. Osama Bin Laden, the founder of Al- Qaeda who had a good intimacy with Mullah Omar. It is claimed that the United States provided support to Osama bin Laden and his group, Al-Qaeda, during the Soviet-Afghan conflict. The USA government demanded to Mullah Omar to back Bin Laden for 9/11 attack. But Mullah Omar refused the USA government's demand. Consequently, on 7 October 2001 the USA and its allies begun “war against terrorism” against Afghanistan. The war propagandized Islam as the source of terrorism leads the rise of Islamophobia. Still the western Muslims are fighting against this hatred idea. For the hatred idea western world becomes insecure for the Muslims. After 9/11 Russia finds itself as the key trusted ally of the Muslim world. The insecure situation of Western Europe was not extended to Russia. President Putin stated, terrorism must not be associated with any specific religion or cultural tradition rather it associated with global criminal networks involved in the trafficking of weapons and drugs. In 2003, interview with Aljazeera he said, our Muslim population is indigenous to our region and they do not have any other homeland, unlike the Muslims residing in Western

Europe. He added historically millions of Muslims are living in Russia and they believe Russia is their original homeland. Mr. Putin pointed out that tensions are already grown up in sundry parts of the world where unscrupulous people tried to use Islam as a cover for their own criminal activities, and warned against interethnic conflicts which can spark from such situations. Putin's approach to Islam and Muslim sends a brotherly message to Muslim world against western Islamophobic discourse shaping Putin is the friend of Muslim world.

7.2 Russia and Iran

Iran has emerged as a key ally of Russia since the period of multi polarity. The relationship between Russia and Iran is complex, involving strategic collaboration, economic connections, and underlying tensions. Their collaboration have been strengthened in recent years due to overlapping goals and a mutual aspiration to disrupt the current US driven global power structure. In the Syrian civil war both countries backed Assad regime against Sunni groups. Both countries oppose US dominance in the Middle East. The current bilateral commerce between Russia and Iran is approximately valued at \$2.5 billion. Iran is internationally isolated due to its nuclear program. Russia plays a crucial role in safeguarding the nuclear program.

The imposition of US sanction has significantly altered the dynamics of the Iran-Russia relationship. Mentioning Western sanctions Lavrov noticed, Iran and Russia will take practical steps against this illegal sanctions (Henry Rome, 2022). This sanction lead Iran and Russia's armaments trade in a new height. Iran exports more than 70% arms from Russia. Iran bought the powerful S-300 air defense system from Russia in order to safeguard its nuclear power complex.

Ideologically Iran is constructed by Shia Islam. In Middle East Shia is the second largest Muslim group after Sunni group. The group demonstrates a vigorous anti Western value compared to the Sunni group. Putin asserts that Russia seeks amicable relations with any Middle Eastern nation, while in practice, Russian policy aligns with the "Shia Axis" in the region. It is because of Iran, Russia defined Muslim brotherhood and Islamic State as the terrorist organization but not Shia Militia Hezbollah. Russian presence in the Shia axis is growing day by day. In the current Russia-Ukraine war, Iran is one of the most pivotal countries in the world that provides military drones and technology against Ukraine, as repeatedly mentioned by the US and Ukraine, though Iran denied this obligation. However, the longevity of Russia-Iran partnership will hinge on the evolution of regional dynamics and the adeptness of both nations in managing their individual global obstacles.

7.3 Russia and Turkey

The relationship between Russia and Turkey is complex and multifaceted, encompassing both cooperation and competition. They share a long history entwined by geopolitical interests and regional ambitions. For centuries, this two nations have been maintaining rival relations, engaging in numerous wars over territorial control and influence in regions like the Black Sea and the Caucasus. In recent years, especially under the leadership of President Erdogan, Turkey and Russia have actively pursued pragmatic partnership based on mutual interests in sectors such as energy, trade, and security. Particularly the unsuccessful coup attempt in 2016 and the unresolved agreement to purchase of F-35 fighter jets from the United States, Turkey opted to establish a big profile partnership with Russia. On the contrary, the handover of Russia's S-400 air defense system to Turkey is a significant accomplishment of President Putin. Economically both countries made a mutual commitment to increase their bilateral trade volume to \$100 billion during Kazan Summit of 2021. The future of Russia-Turkey relations is ambiguous, especially considering the ongoing conflict of Russia-Ukraine. In the war Turkey appeared as a two sides player, Turkey energetically criticized Russia's invasion against Ukraine but it constantly maintained strong diplomatic relations with Russia. Despite this character, Russia upholds vigorous relation with turkey by considering anti-US approach in the war.

7.4 Russia and Palestine

The Palestine crisis is connected with the nerve of Muslim world. Consequently, Russia maintains a positive relation with Palestine. Throughout the history, Russia has maintained a positive and strong relationship with the

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its founding leader, President Yasser Arafat. Following the onset of the Syrian Civil war, the level of collaboration between Russia and Palestine has intensified greatly. From 2014 to 2020 President Mahmud Abbas visited Russia eight times. Both states maintain annual head of state meetings. In the Israel-Palestine peace process Russia proposes two-state solution for sustainable peace in the arena. However, Russia acts as a peace mediator between Israel and Palestine including Middle East countries. Russia's Palestine policy is a component of its broader strategy aimed at cultivating a positive perception of Russia across the Muslim world. In the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, Russia upholds an anti US-Israel stance and demanded complete ceasefire of the war.

7.5 Russia-Turkey-Iran coalition

The coalition of Russia, Turkey, and Iran have betrothed in a complex partnership, particularly in the context of the Syrian Civil War and Middle East politics. The coalition is a new model of "Eurasia" Bilateral relations. Since 2017, these countries have directed the Astana peace process, aiming to find a political solution of Syrian war. In the Astana format of 2019 these three countries collaboration on Syria issue, particularly the elimination of ISIS of Syria region is the foremost result of the Astana formation in which Russia gets benefits from Iran and Turkey (Truevtsev 2019, 11 July). This timely triparty alliance summit in Moscow, Ankara and Tehran promote new order against Western command in the Middle East. Despite their cooperation, the three countries have quite different ideas for Syria issue. Russia aspires to retain the Assad regime; Iran seeks to maintain its influence through ally militias; and Turkey prioritizes ending Kurdish autonomy along its border. Though this regime is not powerful in terms of attacking to US regime rather in terms of politico-economic cooperation the significances is very high. They claim for the extraction of the US troops from Eastern Euphrates to foster peace in the region according to Astana Process Summit on 20 July 2020. However, Under Russian leadership Iran and Turkey are getting united under one umbrella to decrease the US hegemony in Middle East. It's a victory of Russia to bring Iran and Turkey under one umbrella against US stance in Middle East.

7.6 Islamic Intergovernmental Organization and Russia

Russia's association with the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) elevated its status in the Muslim world. In 2003 Russia gained observer status of OIC. Putin stated that Russia's involvement in OIC will not only expand the organization's opportunities, but also bring new skills and leverage to Russia's large Muslim community. However, Russia's connections with the Arab League and OIC can be seen as a regular and routine effort that lacks of significant impact in resolving issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Nevertheless, Russia's involvement in these institutions foster a favorable perception throughout the Muslim world.

8. Conclusion

The first phase of the Russian overseas policy of the post-soviet eon was characterized by the effort of struggling to integrate with "civilized" Western world, the recipe of Kozyrev doctrine. But the recipe was failed in achieving Russian security, welfare, autonomy and identity. Later Primakov's doctrine advocated multipolar world approach which led to anti-west centric policy, aimed to increase Russia's global influence. Conversely, Russian economic amalgamation with the post-soviet republics was one the major goals in the post-soviet era foreign policy. However the integration did not reach in a promising level because of its leadership rivalry and ethnic conflicts of the CIS states. Russian reconstruction of the post-soviet era gained its modest liberal image during the period. In search of great power identity, Russia involved with two major wars, Syrian civil war and Ukraine war. By involving Syrian war, Russia returned as a protuberant actor in Middle East politics. The war in Ukraine remains ongoing. The war unequivocally demonstrates that Russia is not a declining power, but rather a burgeoning great power with the capacity to sustain the conflict for an extended period.

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Political Vigilantism in Ghana: A Threat to National Security and Democratic Processes

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Abstract

The presence of political vigilantism remains a critical challenge to Ghana's national security, particularly during the electoral period. This paper has investigated political vigilantism focusing on the characteristics and behaviour of structured factions such as the Delta Force and Azorka Boys who purport to be party affiliates. The study utilised a mixed research methodology, involving interviews, surveys, and document analysis, to identify the major determinants that foster the growth of vigilante groups in Ghana. From the study, political violence arises from intense political competition, socio-economic disparities, cultural factors, and weak state structures. Though political vigilantism has violent and non-violent outcomes, all the scenarios have the same implications of undermining public safety, state authority, and public trust in the security agencies. The paper validated these findings using the Delta Force's attack on a Kumasi court and the 2020 general election chaotic events to show the extent of the problem. It concludes by promoting policy recommendations that strengthen the legal frameworks, enhance the capacity of the law enforcement agencies, ensure political accountability, increase investment in community engagement, and deepen international cooperation. As Ghana approaches the 2024 general elections, the efficacy of these safeguards will be vital in guaranteeing a peaceful, free and fair democratic process.

Keywords: Democratic Processes, Election Violence, Ghana; Law Enforcement, National Security, Political Vigilantism

1. Introduction

In Ghana, political vigilantism has grown to be a source of grave concern, especially during elections. Political parties frequently create or co-opt vigilante organisations, which are usually organised to maintain security,

mobilise followers, and even threaten adversaries. These groups operate beyond the formal state apparatus and resort to violence, often stemming democratic processes in a profound way as well as social stability.

Apart from these few instances, the issue of political vigilantism in Ghana dates back to our early years of independence where violent clashes did occur as a result. The confrontations evolved into organized groups with easily identifiable leaders and methods over the years. Vigilante groups entered the Ghanaian political lexicon morphed at some point in time with the advent of multi-party democracy after three decades of military occupation. The high stakes of political competition also gave rise to groups like the Azorka Boys, Delta Force and Invisible Forces famous for their activities. Such groups not only pose a threat to the peace during elections but also challenge the legitimacy of state security institutions.

Azorka Boys for example are aligned with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and Delta Force, Invisible Forces in different contexts support the New Patriotic Party (NPP). These organizations have been connected to incidents of violence, such as attacks on political adversaries, planned property destruction and the crashing of political events. The activities of these groups underscore how far political parties are willing to advance their interests to the detriment of national security and democratic consolidation (Aning & Larney, 2021).

1.1. Importance of the Study

Understanding the growing issue of political vigilantism in Ghana is critical for a few reasons. Firstly, it makes progress on a fundamental security problem that erodes the rule of law and democratic control. The dynamics and operations of these groups can be analysed in order to make policies that act against their influence. Secondly, the article has relevance for broader debates on political violence and security in sub-Saharan Africa which are relevant to comparable situations elsewhere. Finally, it forms a foundation for priming an approach to enhance the national security and political stability.

Political vigilantism disrupts the peace obviously but even worse, it undermines public confidence in our political institutions and that fact as to whether or not this (state) can keep us all safe. This is a situation of mutual distrust which could create a vicious cycle as citizens rely more and more on non-state actors for security with an inevitable weakening in the authority of the state. The study, is in a nutshell, trying to understand the drivers and effects of political vigilantism towards efforts aimed at (re)building public trust over time in state institutions.

1.2. Objectives of Study

The primary aim of this study is to analyse the implications of political vigilantism on the security landscape in Ghana. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the key factors that contribute to the rise of political vigilante groups.
2. To investigate the reasons for the upward thrust of political vigilantism in Ghana
3. To analyse the political, and socio-economic impacts of political vigilantism in Ghanaian society.
4. To develop policy recommendations on political vigilantism that can be put into practice in the country.

1.3. Research Questions

The objectives of the research are guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the current and historical context behind political party vigilante groups in Ghana?
2. What is the impact of vigilante practices on community security and social cohesion in Ghana from a political perspective?
3. How can the menace of political vigilantism be effectively curbed in order to ensure national security?

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Meaning and the Evolution of Political Vigilantism

Political Vigilantism is a term used to describe the practice and activities of organised groups who tend to operate outside of the law in order to enforce their own version of order, usually on behalf (or at least ostensibly so) of an interest group or party. What began as ad-hoc groups is now quite structured with clear leadership and operational methods in Ghana. Political vigilantism has evolved in Ghana due to its political history, which is characterised by competitive multiparty democracy and intense political rivalries.

The evolution of political vigilantism in Ghana has been divided into three stages by Aning and Lartey (2021); (a) the pre-independence era (b) the post-independence period, and (c) the contemporary phase. In the lead-up to independence, political violence existed in a less structured and more ad hoc form; post-independence saw such violence become far more organised. These groups have been condemned, outlawed or proscribed by many sections of the Ghanaian society. The modern era has seen the organization of groups in a political party framework to be involved heavily on their respective sides during elections.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

There are two main theories on which the study of political vigilantism in Ghana stems.

Social Contract Theory: This theory states that the legitimacy of a state is derived from this contract/agreement between community and government where governing authorities provide order and security in response to citizens' loyalty to an organised political unit, such as a nation or city-state. In the context of democracy, political vigilantism can be interpreted as an erosion of such a social contract. It must be noted, that citizens or groups act outside the boundaries defined by law and order if they believe that state-borne security manacles are not being met (Murphy 2020).

State Fragility Theory: The state fragility theory analyses how deficient, or corrupted conditions within the world of states result in non-state actors attaining functions that belong exclusively to a [nation]State. In Ghana, this phenomenon may be better recognised with political vigilantism where a hollow security and judiciary facilitates the formation of these vigilante groups (Rotberg 2003).

2.3. Political Vigilantism from a Global Perspective

Political vigilantism is not new in Ghana. The same trend has been seen in nations like Nigeria, Kenya and many parts of Latin America & India. The Bakassi Boys and the Odua People's Congress in Nigeria, for example, are groups with political ends that have often stepped into the void created by an inadequate state security apparatus (Agbibo 2018). The use of militia has been found in Kenya, where hired political militias have fostered election violence to undermine democratic processes (Mwangi 2012).

Comparative studies reveal that political vigilantism tends to occur where state institutions are weak, there is high political competition and there is a lack of trust in the formal security apparatus. Together these global perspectives shed light on several factors that contribute to political vigilantism and reveal some of the frustrations associated with addressing it.

2.4. Historical Context of Political Vigilantism in Ghana

As stated earlier, political vigilantism in Ghana dates back to the pre-independence era and some political activism resulted in violence. After independence, this terrain changed somewhat with the emergence of political parties and the advent of multiparty democracy. The 1990s saw the emergence of political vigilante groups following the transition to democratic rule in Ghana.

Over the years, political vigilante groups have come to stay and they tend to make their presence felt during elections. Members of these extremist groups have carried out violence, such as brawling with counter-protesters during attempted marches on political opponents and assaults against politicians. The visibility of these groups and their activities has further intensified the level of concern and debate held by the populace, even on social media.

2.5. Recent Trends and Developments

Current developments suggest a surge in the activities of political vigilante groups especially leading up to elections. Increasingly these groups have become better organised, they mobilise over social media more—heading into hate-filled corners of society and making it the norm instead. These incidents include the 2017 Delta Force court attack in Kumasi and more recently, the 2020 electoral violence involving various vigilante groups (Gyampo, 2020).

2.6. Effects of Political Vigilantism on Security

The broader endangerment of Ghana's security and stability as a nation by political vigilantism includes:

- **Social Impacts:** Vigilante activities result in loss of lives, injuries and destruction of properties which makes the members of society always feel unsafe.
- **Economic repercussions:** Vigilante-related violence disrupts local economies. This tends to reduce the already minimal investment opportunities in the country and ultimately creates an economic standstill.
- **Political impacts:** Political vigilantism threatens our democratic processes by reducing public confidence in political institutions and the rule of law.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study followed mixed-methods research strategies to capture the qualitative and quantitative methodologies needed for a more complete picture of this phenomenon across Ghana. This approach permitted in-depth investigation of complex social processes, and at the same time provided quantifiable evidence to support qualitative findings (Cresswell, 2014).

3.2. Data Collection Methods

- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, such as political party functionaries, security personnel and vigilantes. This method allows a broad exploration of the opinions and experiences of respondents.
- Descriptive and numerical data were obtained using surveys — questionnaires sent out to gain diverse perspectives from the general populace on thoughts of political vigilantism. These surveys had a mixture of closed as well as open-ended questions to cover all possible information fields.
- Literature: The study reviewed existing literature from government documents, academic journal articles and news stories that helped structure the findings or offer alternative interpretations.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling strategy was used in this research to purposely choose individuals for interviews and surveys who have first-hand knowledge or experience with the phenomenon of political vigilantism in Ghana. It ensured that the information obtained was valid and informative.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes that emerged during the interviews and open-ended survey responses for analysing the qualitative data. We also carried out a descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data from the survey to provide a comprehensive overview of major trends and perceptions regarding political vigilantism.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines, obtaining participants' consent for inclusion and ensuring confidentiality of information, while also not exposing the names of respondents. Before any collection of the data, ethical approval was received from institutional review boards.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The Nature and Dynamics of Political Vigilantism in Ghana

In Ghana, political vigilantism has been characterised by the activities of organised groups that aligned themselves to major and minor forms of political organisations notably between pro-New Patriotic Party (NPP) vigilante groups or supporters as well as Pro-National Democratic Congress NDC buds throughout post-1992 multiparty era until recent times. These groups, like the Delta Force and Invisible Forces (linked to NPP), as well as the Azorka Boys (NDC-related) operated with varying degrees of organisation. These activities ranged from providing security at political rallies to participating in violent adversarial confrontations.

The groups functioned operationally around procedures for recruitment, training, and deployment that closely resembled those associated with official security services. These vigilante organisations, similar to the official security agencies use terror against citizens but with the distinction that they operate supra-legal or extra-judicial as compared to state security; using their connection to political parties to insulate themselves from prosecution. These groups are especially noticeable during elections when they exert themselves to influence election results through intimidation of returning officers or ballot snatching, or promoting their candidates at gunpoint.

In truth, social media investigation and interviews with political party officials and security agents reveal that these groups came into existence largely due to feelings among their members that they need backup protection in order to augment the inadequacy of governmental law enforcement measures. They justified their role by arguing that they are a necessary evil, beneficial to protect the interests of each other's flock. This was supported by a wide lack of trust in the good faith and effectiveness of government security agencies.

4.2. Case Studies

Ghana has had a couple of high-profile incidents which depicted the power political vigilantism wields. A notable occurrence was in 2017 at a court building in Kumasi when members of the Delta Force attacked the court. They forcibly entered the courtroom for their comrades who were on trial for previous violent actions that they had committed. This incident not only broadcast the brashness and unaccountable manner these organisations conducted themselves but also revealed serious inadequacies in the state's ability to maintain law & order.

On polling day for the general elections in 2020, vigilantes captured polling units and carried out assaults that led to snatching of ballot boxes. It further disrupted the voting process and subsequently created a vacuum of doubt about the perpetuation of Ghana's democracy.

The case studies provide a lens into how political vigilante groups have compromised the state and distorted politics. They also illustrate how difficult it is for law enforcement to rein in these gangs, largely because they enjoy political protection.

4.3. Factors that Contribute to Political Vigilantism

The reasons for the growth and sustenance of political vigilantism in Ghana are multi-faceted.

1. Political Competition: The near-perennial political competition between the NPP and NDC created parallel vigilante organisations. During a critical hotly contested era in politics, parties try to take advantage of these groups to intimidate their opponents and even amass potential votes using threats.
2. Socio-economic inequalities: The high rate of unemployment and deprivation have left poor youth of the nation more available for recruitment into groups like vigilante organisations. These people were often

motivated by the financial incentives and purpose-driven capacities that come with being members of such organisations.

3. **Cultural Factors:** In some communities, vigilante groups were viewed as cultural acts of 'restoration' in pursuit of justice and order where state institutions are thought corrupt or ineffective. The cultural context might justify the actions of vigilante groups and worsen efforts to mobilize public resistance against them.
4. **Weak State Institutions:** The inefficiency and malpractice in the state's security and judicial institutions have sown seeds for the wide presence of vigilante groups. Whenever residents lose faith in the state's ability to provide security or achieve justice, they may turn elsewhere for recourse and in this case, vigilante groups become a worthy option.

4.4. Implications for National Security

Political vigilantism poses the following threats to national security in Ghana:

- **Threats to Public Safety:** The aggressiveness and violent activities of vigilante organisations have caused loss of life, injuries as well as damage to properties. Such incidents create apprehension and feelings of insecurity among the masses. This weakens stability and cohesion in the country.
- **Undermining State Authority:** The fact that vigilante groups act with extreme impunity, threatens the authority of the state. This, in turn, undermines the credibility and effectiveness of state institutions like law enforcement agencies and the judiciary since cartels have a near limitless greater ability to act beyond legal constitutions than they would otherwise be able merely by subverting one single constitutional barrier.
- **Erosion of Public Trust in State Security Apparatus:** If a vigilante group unites with any one political party and can exercise influence on security activities, it impacts in the loss of public trust in the state's security institutions. If the confidence in security provisions is eroded further, there would be an increased reliance on non-state actors for security, thus reducing the capacity of the state to maintain public order.
- **Political Instability:** Political unrest derives directly from the friction of vigilante organizations which creates hotspots and flashpoints, especially during elections as a little spark could lead to widespread disturbances. They create instability which disrupts democratic processes and ultimately keeps investors away, thus retarding the country's economic progress.

As Ghana moves towards the general elections of 2024, there is a need for renewed focus on political vigilantism. As historical antecedents have suggested, vigilante groups get a free rein as the major political parties rouse their members for electioneering purposes. The involvement of bodies such as the Delta Force and Azorka Boys that have existing affiliations to influential political parties causes fear of violence and interference during elections. The upcoming Ghana 2024 elections are supposed to serve as an acid test of the nation's democratic determination and preparedness towards eradicating political vigilantism. The effectiveness of new laws and legislative measures in taking down vigilante groups will be tested. Nonetheless, the underlying socio-economic and political factors that are responsible for their genesis—such as intense internal competition among politicians, fiscal woes and poor government institutions—are far from intractable. The success of the government, civil society and international partners' efforts leading up to the elections is essential for determining Ghana's ability to secure a violent-free passage through this phase and define how crisis-proof its democratic mechanisms can be.

4.5. Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1 below summarises the survey responses from the general public regarding their perceptions of political vigilantism in Ghana.

Table 1: Survey Responses on Political Vigilantism

Survey Question	Response Options	Percentage (%)
Awareness of political vigilante groups in Ghana	Very aware	65%
	Somewhat aware	25%
	Not aware	10%

Survey Question	Response Options	Percentage (%)
Affected by vigilante group activities	Yes	40%
	No	60%
Perception of the impact of vigilante groups on the electoral process	Very negative	55%
	Negative	30%
	Neutral	10%
	Positive	3%
	Very positive	2%
Belief in political party support for vigilante groups	Strongly agree	50%
	Agree	30%
	Neutral	10%
	Disagree	7%
	Strongly disagree	3%
Effectiveness of government in dealing with political vigilantism	Very effective	5%
	Effective	10%
	Neutral	25%
	Ineffective	30%
	Very ineffective	30%
Feeling of safety during election periods	Yes	20%
	No	65%
	Not sure	15%

According to the survey data, a large part of the populace is already aware of political vigilantism organisations as 65% showed a very high level of awareness. More importantly, 40% of respondents said they had been personally affected by the work carried out by these organisations. On the impact of vigilante groups on politics, about 85% of the participants hold the view that they have a generally bad or very negative effect.

About 80% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the existence of vigilante groups has been endorsed and perpetuated by their involvement with political parties. The respondents also did not believe the government's effort or capacity to positively end political vigilantism in the country, as 60% considered the efforts mostly unsuccessful. Also, about 65% of the respondents noted that they feel an unsafe atmosphere during election seasons due to vigilante outfits.

The quantitative data corroborate the qualitative account provided through interviews and documents, revealing a widespread activity of political vigilantism with potentially serious implications for national security and democratic processes in Ghana.

4.6. Policy Recommendations

From the foregoing findings the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Enhancing the Legal Framework:** There should be legal reforms to address the societal deficiencies and loopholes that give rise to political vigilantism. Strengthening the application of existing regulations, introducing new laws directly targeting vigilante activities and providing better means for persecuting those who are found guilty of acts of political vigilantism will be most beneficial.
- 2. Increasing Law Enforcement Capacity:** Improving the capabilities of law enforcement authorities to address incidents related to vigilantism is critical. This intervention might include better-funded capacity

building, enhanced resources and even deeper co-operation among security and law enforcement agencies.

3. **Political Accountability:** There should also be a mechanism for holding political parties and their leadership accountable for their role in incubating vigilantism. This can entail setting up standards for greater transparency, tightening the control over political parties and enforcing penalties against all forms of violence in politics.
4. **Citizen Engagement and Public Awareness:** Community and public education on the signs, dangers, consequences and ways to avoid political vigilantism will help the populace make more informed decisions about vigilantism. This might involve community policing initiatives, public education programmes and activities that help to build trust between the communities and the police.
5. **International Cooperation:** Finally, the Ghana government should consider collaboration with allies from the international community to address political vigilantism in the country. This may involve partnerships with international agencies, providing specific assistance (whether logistic, financial or technical support), and learning from best practices elsewhere in the world.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study focused on political vigilantism in Ghana as a problem of organised group behaviour with strong partisan linkages. These organisations represent a real threat to national security by compromising state responsibilities over public order and safety while undermining the confidence of the populace in the established security institutions. Factors that fuel the perpetuation of political vigilantism include political rivalry, socioeconomic disparities and cultural traditions as well as underfunded and ill-equipped state institutions.

5.2. Relevance to the Current Literature

This paper is a significant contribution to the literature on political vigilantism and security in Ghana, as it extensively examines both the manifestations of this phenomenon and its impact. These are all valuable insights into how these vigilante groups operate, why they do what they do and their broad range of implications on national security. The findings and recommendations proposed could be useful in the formulation of policies to tackle or eliminate political vigilantism, as well as inspire actions — both tactical and strategic, to combat it.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies into the development of long-term interventions that would manage political vigilantism and prevent it from destabilising Ghana's nascent democratic dispensation. The comparison with other countries facing similar challenges can provide valuable insights as well. In addition, investigating the role of digital technology and social media in designing and coordinating vigilante activities can shed new light on how to address the phenomenon.

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Investigating Local Political Dynamics: A Case Study of the 2008 National Election in Bogura, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study intends to understand the local level politics in terms of changing political beliefs among the participants in the larger context of politics in Bogura, a northern district of Bangladesh. In particular, the research tries to investigate the voting behaviour during the national election of 2008 in Bogura. Though there are some studies about the national-level politics but still there is a dearth of researchers in understanding the local political dynamics. The study of a local-level election helps us engaging with different stakeholders and local agencies. To explore this research, with a list of questionnaires, researcher conducted interviews with grassroots level respondents' including local politicians, civil society members, academicians and mass people to examine the attitudes, opinions, voting behaviour and the political environment of the locality in reference to the parliamentary election of 2008 in Bogura district, Bangladesh. The study has found that behaviour of voters was influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the polls, extent of the franchise, political wave etc which led the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) to capture two seats from Bogura district. Since then the contemporary Bangladeshi politics has taking place through conflicts and corruption.

Keywords: Local Politics, Voting Behaviour, National Election, Democracy, Multi-Party System

1. Introduction

Bangladesh has a multiparty parliamentary democracy, in which elections are carried out by secret ballot. The people of Bangladesh have an elected democratic system, but, it has been always under scrutiny because of the problem in practice of the ideals of democracy. The idea of good governance has been interrupted by changing alliances of power with the political parties. By and large, Rahman, T. (2019), has studied that since 1991, the multi-party system has been institutionalized in Bangladesh. However, each time the defeated party creates some kind of dispute related to the election process, as there are many incidences when the party who lost the election claimed of unfair voting and alleged incredulous voting statistics, and thus trying to prove the votes were forged. According to the *Bangladesh Election Commission*, (n.d.) there are more than forty political parties in Bangladesh. Out of those, there are two major political parties which are 'Bangladesh Awami League' (AL) and

‘Bangladesh Nationalist Party’ (BNP) are interchangeably holding power at the centre since 1991. Given the predominant nature of these two major political parties, other parties find it impossible to break the shield of political power that these parties have created for keeping themselves intact.

The main aspiration of the rural people in Bangladesh is to fulfil their basic daily needs and live their life happily. There are promises by the candidates during the election, but after post-election periods the rarely look at the development in the rural area, therefore, people in the rural areas are not that much interested in the elections (Jahan, 2000). During the time of elections, various strategies are used by different political parties to get the votes from the rural people. These kinds of strategies involve the people during the election times. To understand this political process in detail I wanted to conduct this research. I was interested to know about the local level politics hence conducted an in-depth study following the ethnographic method in Bogura district in Bangladesh.

Since 1991, Hasan, M., & Hasan, M. (2020), when democracy returned in Bangladesh, Bogura district has its own significance, as it is the birth place of the founder of BNP and the former president Ziaur Rahman. In the 1991 election, BNP won 6 seats out of seven seats in Bogura district. Since then the tradition of winning all 7 seats by BNP in Bogura district continued till 2001 elections results. BNP was in power on all seats of Bogura till 2006. In the elections of 2008, for the first time, BNP lost two seats from Bogura district, which became a shock because these were supposedly sure seats for BNP. To understand the complexity of this electoral politics happened in Bogura, an attempt was made to investigate the notion of electoral politics of the country taking two particular villages within a single constituency and Bogura district in general as the representative sample in terms of people’s notion of how they have changed their political loyalty in choosing their representatives in the election.

According to Hashmi, T. (2022), Bogura has been historically a major stronghold for BNP. On the other hand, it was also a great challenge for Bangladesh Awami League as they were not able to win any single constituency on their hold. That is why Bangladesh Awami League always has made an effort to capture Bogura’s constituencies. There are seven constituencies which contribute towards candidates for the parliament election. These constituencies prove to be very influential in the national electoral politics of the country. In every parliamentary election, BNP always wins seats in Bogura; however, in December 2008 election there was a marked change. The research thus attempt to understand that why people change their political behaviour/ beliefs or voting behaviour during 2008 parliamentary election in Bogura district, Bangladesh.

The research focused on the political perceptions of voters who choose their political representatives by means of universal adult franchise. An attempt was made to understand the factors behind the changing in people’s political behaviour as well as the political situation during the election of 2008, at Sonatola Upazila in Bogura district, Bangladesh. Through this study which was qualitatively conducted, it tried to provide a better picture of prevailing mentalities and ground reality of local politics in rural Bangladesh, particularly in Bogura.

2. Research Questions

The following research questions are helpful to have a better understanding about the local level politics-

- What were the reasons that lead the voters of Bogura district to choose Awami League party in 2008 parliamentary election, Bangladesh?
- What strategies were carried out by the successful candidates in those particular constituencies?

To critically analyze the people’s voting behaviour during 2008 national election of Bogura’s constituencies where BNP lost their two traditional home seats, with the specific focus of changing perspectives of the voter’s outlook, the above research questions were considered while exploring this study. In addition to illustrate the basic notions of political culture in terms of people’s participation, political party’s activities and the role of different agencies in electoral politics during a local election in Bogura district, the predominant nature of two major political parties and the mass people’s conception would come under investigation in this research.

3. Background of the Study Area

The research was conducted in Sonatola Upazela Bogura-1 constituency where BNP lost their traditional seat. According to the population census of 2011, Sonatola Upazila is under Bogura district in the Rajshahi division, Bangladesh. Initially, it was declared as a Thana in 1981 and later on was converted into an Upazila in 1984. The total area of Sonatola Upazila is 156.75 square kilometres, land area is 145.14 square km and the riverine area is 11.61 square km. According to (*Sonatola Upazila - Banglapedia*, n.d.), there is 1 municipality, 7 unions, 94 mauza, 16 mahallas and 125 villages in Sonatola Upazila.

Researcher visited many times to the two villages of Sonatola Upazila namely 'Telihata' and 'Mohichoron' from where the data had collected to explore the research. In those two villages of Sonatola upazila, research found that Hindu and Muslims people have been living together. On the other hand, most of the local political leader of BNP, AL, Jamat-E-Islam, Jatiya Party are also there. Besides BNP and AL, there are other minor political party's leaders, namely Liberal Democratic Party, Krishak Sramik Janata league, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Jatiyo Samaj Tantrik Dal (JSD) have been living found by the researcher as well.

3.1. At a Glance of Bogura district

Bogura is located in the northern district under Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh (Census 2011). Initially, according to *Mahasthangarh | Wondermondo*, (2014), Bogura was part of 'Pundravardhana' region and it was the capital of 'Pundravardhana' in the ancient time which is now known as 'Mahasthangarh'. (*SAARC Cultural Capital – Bogra, Bangladesh – Inauguration* |, n.d.), reported that Bogura is really well known for its historical norms and values with 'Mahasthangarh' as former capital, which is now declared as the SAARC Cultural capital for 2016-17. Moreover, as per the information from *Bogra District - Banglapedia*, (n.d.), it is often heard from the people that Bogura district was named by Sultan Mohammad Nasir Uddin Bughra Khan who was an independent Ruler of Bengal during 1279 - 1282 A.D.

However, the greater Bogura was established as a Zila in 1821 under British rule. In 1983 greater Bogura was divided into two districts namely Bogura and Joypurhat District. For making governance easier Bogura was further divided into 12 Upazila (Districts) and 7 constituencies in Bogura district. The Upazila's are Adamdighi, Bogura Sadar, Dhunat, Dupchanchia, Gabtali, Khahaloo, Nandigram, sherpur, Shibgang, Shajahanpur, Sariaikandi and Sonatola Upazila. The constituencies are Bogura-1 Sonatola-Sariaikandi, Bogura-2 Shibgang, Bogura-3 Adamdighi-Dupchanchia, Bogura-4 Khahaloo-Nandigram, Bogura-5 Sherpur-Dhunat, Bogura-6 Bogura Sadar and Bogura-7 Gabtali-Shajahanpur. There are 108 unions, 1672 mauzas, 2618 villages, 11 paurashavas, 111 wards and 360 mahallas in Bogura district. During the British rule, Bogura municipality was established in 1884. But later on, Bogura Municipality was renamed as Bogura Paurashava in 1977. Bogura Paurashava was made of 21 wards and 111 mahallas. In 2008 general election Bogura-1 Sonatola-Sariaikandi and Bogura-5 Sherpur-Dhunat BNP lost their two traditional seats.

Suman, *et al.* (2021), have argued that Bogura is famous as an industrial hub of North Bengal. Due to the constructions of the Bangabandhu Jamuna multipurpose Bridge, all kinds of opportunities regarding trade and commerce have increased, not only in Bogura but also in other parts of north Bengal. Bogura district is also tremendously popular for its festivals and cultural tradition. By and large, Bogura plays an important role in the politics of Bangladesh. Due to its strategically position in northern part of the country, Bogura is called the gateway to North Bengal (*Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge - Banglapedia*, n.d.).

3.2. Background of Bogura's politics

Different studies show that since very ancient time Bogura was a remarkable region for politics. The Bogura district holds a crucial land in the famous and the earlier historical story of Bengal. According to Ali, (2009) the third prime minister of undivided Pakistan Mohammad Ali Bogra was from Bogura. He was born in Barisal district during British India on 19th October in 1909 but he grew up in Bogura. He started his study in Calcutta at 'Hasting House'. After that Mohammad Ali Bogura attended at 'Presidency College' of Calcutta University. Then he was living in Bogura until being the chairman of Bogura Municipality. Later on, Mohammad was being elected as a chairman of the District Board of Bogura. Then he started his politics in 1937 having been elected

to the legislature of undivided Bengal in Calcutta from the Muslim League Assembly (MLA). When Nazimuddin was elected as the new governor of Pakistan July in 1949, Mohammed Ali Bogura was sent as the first high commissioner of Pakistan to Canada (Balouch, 2015). Then he was made as an ambassador of Pakistan to the United States in 1952. In 1953 he was appointed as the prime minister of Pakistan ("Mohammad Ali Bogra (1909-1963)," 2012). During his period there were many achievements done. Just after three days of his working, the president of the United States' Eisenhower sent thousands of tonnes of wheat to Pakistan to aid the new country. In 1953 while taking charge as the prime minister of Pakistan he outlined his 'Bogura Formula' which would have made as a bicameral legislature. Mohammad Ali Bogura announced that his ultimate aim is to formulate of Pakistan constitution following the 'Bogura Formula'. Then he presented his 'Bogura Formula' before the Constituency Assembly of Pakistan on 7 October in 1953. Mohammad Ali's 'Bogura Formula' was being applauded by various parts of the society in Pakistan (admin, 2003). "Mohammad Ali Bogura formula had given the concept of parity whereas East Bengal's population was larger than West Pakistan's region. According to Kiran, (2016) Mohammad Ali Bogura said while giving details of the formula, "We then proceeded to make special provision that neither of the two parts of Pakistan may apprehend domination by the other."

On 23 January in 1963, Mohammad Ali Bogura, died in Dhaka and he was buried in Bogura district on the grounds of the Bogura Nawab Palace (*Who Was Muhammad Ali Bogra?*, n.d.). Like Mohammad Ali Bogura, there are many famous politicians are also from Bogura district such as former Bangladeshi president Ziaur Rahman, first female prime minister of Bangladesh Begum Khalida Zia senior Vice-Chairman of BNP Tareq Rahman, former organizational secretary of Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and first elected AL MP from Bogura Md Abdul Mannan and famous national cricketers Musfikur Rahim, Shafiul Islam. Because of various reasons Bogura keeps a very crucial role in Bangladesh politics.

3.3. Practice of local politics in Bogura

Due to geographical area, Bogura is considered very important in the national-level politics. Bogura district has a Muslims majority area. Since the partition, the political history of Bogura is taking place the enormous contributions of various political personnel. The political figures of Bogura present their performance during the election. During my field work in December, one respondent said me the political conditions of Bogura are not good since very long as we local people want. After partition in 1947, the local people of Bogura struggled to gain their basic demands and rights. When Ziaur Rahman became president of Bangladesh the required demands and rights were being filled to mass people up by him. On the other hand he gradually became the symbol of hopes and ambition of the persecuted people of Bogura. Being president of Bangladesh Ziaur Rahman tried to be popular by doing many welfare works for the mass people of Bangladesh. Not only had that he brought in a new idea in the constitution that he styled as Bangladeshi Nationalism. He strongly believed that in over populated country like Bangladesh in where masses are from various diverse ethnicities and they assume various norms, values, faiths have a different culture, fashions, nationalism should be better thought in terms of territory rather than culture. Bangladeshi nationalism keeps influence on national unity and integration for all people of Bangladesh irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender, culture, and ethnicity. This popularity assisted BNP to win all seats from Bogura in the parliamentary election from 1991 to 2001.

Basically, Ziaur Rahman was given the mandate of the people to make a constitution for the improvement and prosperity of the persecute people not only in Bogura but also in whole Bangladesh. Since long independence, there were many political parties practicing their politics and Bogura was their choice place in whole north Bengal for politics. Subsequently, just after independence when Sheik Mujibur Rahman was in power he rushed to Bogura in public meeting. The main motto of Mujibur Rahman was to grab and create a good image about AL to people not only in Bogura but also in whole north Bengal respondent said me. During Mujib regime, Bangladesh Awami League was the one and only largest political party in Bogura, Bangladesh but BNP was not formed that time. However, when Ziaur Rahman came to power and formed a new political party to spread its ideology in Bangladesh, the people of not only Bogura but also whole kept trusting faith in this newly formed political party. Since that time BNP has become the largest political party in Bogura, Bangladesh. As the AL was the largest political party in Bogura that is why the existence of AL is still there but not that much popular as BNP is. Besides AL and BNP there are many minor political parties in Bangladesh which also practicing their

politics in Bogura such as Jamat-E-Islami, Jatiya Party (JP), Jatiya Samaj tantrik Dal (JSD), communist Party of Bangladesh, National Awami Party, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, and Islamic Andolon Bangladesh and so on.

According to some messes, however, as a leftist and minor party, Jatiya Samaj tantrik Dal (JSD) played a great emphasis on local politics in Bogura especially at Gabtali, Sonatola and some nearest places of Bogura district. The Bogura district president of JSD Rezaul Karim Tansen was very much discussed and criticised in Bogura politics. He is always against of Islamic politics. Once in a 'Regional dialogue at Bogura' on 26 August in 2006 organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) which was addressed on national election in that seminar Rezaul Karim Tansen demanded prohibition of politics based on religion. "No reforms no elections," he said adding that bringing reforms in the electoral system is necessary to avoid conflict. A report was made by Center for Policy Dialogue regarding *National Election 2007*, (n.d.), at the same seminar, on the other hand, the district Awami League President Alhaj Momtaz Uddin categorically addressed that his party would not participate in the next parliamentary election if not its demands is met. He alleged that "politics have been corrupted by people who came from the cantonment."

Like this way Jatiya Party's (Ershad) local leaders of Bogura Shariful Islam Jinnah the Bogura district president of JP, Nurul Islam Omar current MP of Bogura from Jatiya Party and Jamat-E-Islam leaders of Bogura such as Bogura district Jamaat Ameer Shahab Uddin, active and veteran leader of Jamat-E-Islam Nazir Ahmmed, and Principal Rostom Ali were also active practicing and participating in all sorts of political activities in local as well in national level politics. For the second time just before the 9th parliamentary election as a partner alliance of BNP demanded two seats for nomination in Bogura but they were not given because it was said that the seven seats of Bogura are always reserved for BNP. But Jamat Ameer Shahab Uddin was talking to the Daily Star on December 01, 2008 saying that "at least 65,000 Jamaat voters were listed in the last enrolment in Bogura -4 and another over 70,000 in Bogura-5. More than 34,000 people in Bogura-4 cast their votes in favour of Jamaat leader Nazir Ahmeed in 1996". He also said that "we requested BNP central leadership through proper channel to reconsider their decision regarding selection of Jamaat-e-Islami candidates Nazir Ahmmed for Bogura-4 and Principal Rostom Ali for Bogura-5 (the daily star, 2008)."

3.4. The role of local political parties in Bogura

The political parties can keep an importance influence at the local level politics. According to the local BNP leaders, there is no existence of political parties in Bogura district other than BNP. On the other hand, the AL leaders informed me that within the next national election AL will be the largest local political party in Bogura. The existence of BNP will be disappearing. But the real scenario is that in AL there are two groups are visible in Bogura politics. One is Momtaz Uddin group (Bogura AL president) and another is Monjurul Alam Mohon group (Joint general secretary of Bogura AL). Momtaj Uddin is the leader of one group and Mohon is the leader of another group but Momtaj group is very strong in Bogura politics. Momtaj group leads from the district level to grassroots level in Bogura district. On the contrary, according to joint secretary of Bogura BNP, there are no internal clashes and conflicts in Bogura BNP.

Moreover, the BNP has a very crucial influence on local level politics in Bogura. However, during BNP government it was engaged in maximum development activities in Bogura. The BNP local political leaders assume that the main force of BNP is the people of Bogura. BNP central leaders also pay a strong attention to Bogura. The political situation of Jatiya Party (Ershad) was not very good in Bogura during 2008 parliamentary election. But in 2014 parliamentary election Jatiya Party was able to get four seats from Bogura because of the absence of BNP. However, among 4 seats from one seat the Presidium member of JP and Bogura district president Md. Shariful Alam Jinnah from Bogura. Being elected in the election, he offered many social works for his constituency's people. Moreover, having got 4 seats from Bogura the MPs are active to make their party strong. That is why they are frequently organizing some political programs as it were the inactive supporters and workers become active. Meanwhile, the party chairman Hussain Mohammad Ershad used to visit in some political program in Bogura to encourage its supports, local leaders and activists. But problem is that JP political activities are limited in those areas where they have been elected. Its activities are not that much visible in such

area like Sonatola-Sariakandi, Sherpur-Dhunat constituency in where AL won in 2008 national election and Bogura Sadar Upazila. In these places, AL is very strong. I heard from my interviewers that the AL MP Md Abdul Manna is working very hard to implement his political manifestos for the well-being of people in Sonatola- Sariyakandi constituency. The Same thing is happening in Sherpur-Dhunat constituency. That is why; the popularity of AL at these grassroots level is being increased than before. And in Bogura Sadar Upazila level the Bogura AL president Momtaj Uddin is controlling the whole political situation by his own hand.

3.5. Scenario of national elections in Bogura

The national elections in Bogura district, Bangladesh, during the years 1996, 2001, and 2008 were pivotal moments in the region's political landscape. Let's explore each of these elections:

Table 1: Parliament Election Winner (Party wise): 2008, 2001 and 1996

Constituency	National Election-2008 & Winning Party	National Election-2001 & Winning Party	National Election-1996 & Winning Party
Bogura-1	Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-2	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-3	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-4	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-5	Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-6	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-7	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

The above table provides the information about the last three terms' election report of Bogura's constituencies' result of Bangladesh Awami league and Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP). In the June 1996 election, the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) secured 146 seats nationally, however, was to able to secure any single seat from Bogura district where the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), in Bogura district, emerged victorious, winning all seven seats. This marked the beginning of a tradition where the BNP consistently won all seats in Bogura district. However, in October 2001 election was conducted under a caretaker government concept where the Four Party Alliance, led by the BNP, secured a majority with 193 out of 300 seats nationally. Again in Bogura district, the BNP continued its dominance, winning all seven seats.

On the other hand, in October 2008 General Election marked the return to elected government after military intervention. In this national election, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, secured a landslide victory nationally, winning 230 out of 300 seats. In Bogura district, however, there was a significant shift: the BNP lost two seats, breaking their streak of winning all seven seats. This outcome was unexpected and had a considerable

impact as well. These elections reflected the dynamic nature of Bangladeshi politics, with power shifting between major parties and local dynamics playing a crucial role in Bogura district's representation.

Table 2: Elected MP (s) in 2008 parliamentary election

Constituency	Elected Candidate	Political Party
Bogura-1	Abdul Mannan	Bangladesh Awami League (AL)
Bogura-2	A.K. M Hafijur Rahman	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-3	Abdul Momen Talukder	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-4	Z.I.M. Mostofa Ali	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-5	Md. Habibur Rahman	Bangladesh Awami League (AL)
Bogura-6	Begum Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
Bogura-7	Begum Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

3.6. Political situation in Bogura, 2001-2006

It is important to discuss something about the political situation of Bogura since 2001 to 2006. For the 2nd time when BNP came to power through free, fair and neutral election took some steps to develop Bogura as their election manifestos. Subsequently, the son of Begum Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman was appointed as the Senior Joint General Secretary of BNP in June 2002, just after being selected Tarique Rahman commenced his program namely 'Grassroots Level Conference' from Bogura. Through the program he tried to encourage the impoverished people to be self-dependant in various ways having established poultry, dairy and fish farm. Gradually he would become very popular throughout the country by these kinds of activities. As a politician, he tried to begin 'Bogura Model' to change the whole country's economy. This time the other local political leaders of BNP maintained good relation with him. Subsequently, he was the popular leader of BNP in Bogura, constructed many things for the well-being of Bogura's people such as international cricket Stadium, Medical college, supplied gas line, Gabtali Model Thana, fire station, reconstruction of many schools, colleges, religious institutions, infrastructure development, proposed TV centre and domestics airport and so on would be set up in Bogura and also acquired lands for this purpose. He did more priority to introducing agro-based industry to develop a communication system to improve the society through its work. Later on, his 'Bogura Model' was going to be appreciated by many foreign experts as well. Within this period the PM and BNP Chairperson Begum Khalida Zia used to visit Bogura and shared views with various classes of people. For these reasons, the common people of Bogura were devoted to activities. But these development activities were stopped when the government was changed. On the other hand, it is often heard that besides Tareq Rahman's welfare activities were badly engaged with corruption during BNP period.

On the contrary within this period, the opposition parties AL, JP and other minor parties tried to mobilize people towards their own party. The Awami league leaders Md. Abdul Manna and Momtaz Uddin tried to motivate people by saying that BNP and Jamat are not in favour of the independence of Bangladesh. But they could not convince the people so properly. The processes of the practice of AL's activities in Bogura were not that much appear during BNP period. The Awami leaders Momtaz Uddin used to take care of the sub unit leaders, Thana, union, and ward level (ibid: 2004).

3.7. Political turmoil, 2006-2008

At the end of the period of BNP government in 2006, they were supposed to hand over the power to Care Taker Government (CTG). But whom BNP appointed as a caretaker government, AL did not accept. Since that time the political impasse has begun. Subsequently, the chief adviser and the president of Bangladesh Iajuddin Ahmed, attempted to initiate a dialogue with the two major political alliances led by Awami League (AL) and BNP (*Définitions et Usages de : Tarique Rahman - Dictionnaire de Anglais Sensagent*, n.d.). After dialogue, AL decided to participate in the election but later on, they raised another issue about reforming the election commission. During the 2001-2006 in BNP regime what election commission was formed that was the political controversy especially in 2005 and 2006 (Moniruzzaman, 2009). Then AL refused to participate in the election under this controversial election commissioner and demanded his removal. But BNP government was not

agreeing to entertain the demand. On the other hand, AL became violent on the matter when BNP handed over power to Caretaker government in October 2006. AL called countrywide strikes and street violence.

During Dr. Fakhruddin Ahammed's (CTG) period most of the political leaders got arrested from both parties due to their corruption such as BNP Chairperson Begum Khalida Zia, Tareq Rahman and AL leaders Sheikh Hasin and her others leaders (*Bangladesh Former PM Is Arrested*, 2007). This time from Bogura most of the local political leaders of both parties also got arrested. Especially BNP local leaders like Rezaul Karim Badsha President of Bogura BNP, VP Saiful Islam General Secretary of Bogura BNP, Shokh Rana MP Candidate of BNP Sonatola constituency and others former MP of Bogura BNP got arrested and sent them to jail. On the contrary, district AL president Momtaz Uddin, Secretary General Mujibur Rahman Moyni and others local leaders also got arrested from Bogura. During this caretaker government, all political activities were banned before the election to control the political situation. That is why the local political leaders were not active in engaging in political activities during this period. But just before the 9th parliamentary election the political condition become in favour to practice.

4. Literature Review

A Democratic country like Bangladesh local level politics is very crucial. Local level politics has a great emphasis on national politics. Wohab and Akhter, (2004) have indicated that the restoration of democracy in 1991, political activities have spread from the capital to local level. The local level politics can be a great platform to practice for national level politics.

According to Ahmed (2004) "political scientists opine that voting behaviour is influenced by social class plus one or more other factors, such as regions, ethnic group, religion and urban-rural differences". Similarly, a related study by Hossain, Aktar and Islam (2017) observed that the voting behaviour and public decisions were made either by public decision-makers, which has been a central concern for political scientists. Moreover, Van der Brug, et al. (2017), investigated that the changing voting pattern and voting behaviour can be affected by both political and non-political as well. Furthermore, Ahmed, M., & Naseem, F. (2011), found that socio-economic aspects can also be responsible for changing the political beliefs and voting behaviour in a rural election such as age, education, gender, and occupation and so on. On the contrary, there can be some socio-political and economic issues like, political ideology, party affiliation, candidates' qualification, family background and so on that have strong influence on changing the voting behaviour, this research particularly explored the changing of voting behaviour with its socio-political and economic determinants, during the parliamentary election in 2008 in Bogura.

According to Hazarika (2015), voting behaviour is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in a public election and the reasons why they vote as they do. The term voting behaviour can refer to the meaning and it has taken as one massive and broad area of study included within the major title of political behaviour. It engages a practice of human political behaviour regarding the voting pattern in elections. Voting behaviours examine the open windows on the mindset of the people who are engaged in the political system as voters. Biswas, F. (2023), argued that the behaviour of voter might be affected by some issues like religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, the purpose of the polls, the extent of the franchise, political wave etc. The local political party leaders and its supporters try to make use of these to win in the battle of the ballot box.

A related study conducted by Lieske, J. (1989), where it was found that the voting behaviour attempts to look up narrating the matters accountable for individual's functions or showing behaviour in elections and why people change behave the way they do politically. It might be various from money politics and vote-buying not only that they grab same natures and characteristics. Moreover, Leigh, A. (2005) found that social, psychological and individual perspectives are involved in voting behaviour during the election period. Individual outlook like an evaluation of the personal nature and features of the candidates, assessment of government functions and performance of certain policy problems, party identifications and ideology are few of the definitive matters in building choice of candidates and their different political parties. According to Adamu, Ocheni and Ibrahim

(2016) for social factor, race, religion, region and social class are all factors contributing to voting behaviour. Psychological factors are based on emotion.

Political power might be understood in very different ways. Especially, the loss of political power is characterized by Shaw (2008) said that 'Weber's primary concern in his later political writings seems to be less with the distribution of power in modern states than with the amount of power they can support. He worries that there is not enough political power, in the sense of intentional control of political life'. I have researched as an effort to the voters from the research area. Since it's an ethnographic work, I was to go to the field to interact with the respondents to grab the required data to explore my research.

According to Banerjee, (2007) an election is one big ritual serving a single function in the society. The political leaders try to pay close attention to the voters by this ritual approach. Political leaders try to be like a God to fill up the all required demands of the voters during the election. I have tried to find whether the AL political leaders acted to motivate people here or not to get their vote by following this kind of activity during election Sonatola Upazila under Bogura district. Because at Sonatola, Sariyakandi constituency under Bogura district where AL candidate won in the 2008 parliamentary election might motivate the voters by paying his good attitude which has been questioned by the interviewers during the investigation.

An article by Wohab and Akhter (2004) focuses on local level politics of Kushtia district, Bangladesh is important to understand the local politics in the rural area. It also tries to explain how the rural politics influences on nation politics because of the population of voters. However, it has been mentioned by the authors that since the last two regimes when a party comes into power, they ignore the people's demand at local levels. This can only happen by using strategies during the time of election as they are not working for the poor, during the rule. So to gain the trust of people various kinds of strategies are used in the election to get votes. All these strategies will be identified by doing the ethnography at the research site.

Moreover, studying the political phenomenon of elections demands a methodological framework which is sound as well value-free. The methodological framework applied by the authors in the book lays stress on the study of small communities. This is done through extensive fieldwork and interviews with local respondents of the area. In the words of Yadav (2007), this is referred to as the worm-eyed view of society, in contrast to the bird's eye view offered by other methods of research. Ethnographic fieldwork would be the guiding light of the research.

5. Post-election Ethnography

5.1. Methodology of information collection

The research is based on people's views, thought and choosing the political representative by means of universal adult franchise. The research has explored the common perception of the political circumstance in the election according to gender, age group, urban-rural and different constitutional setting, socio-economic and geographic divisions. The research focuses on the people's belief regarding choosing their political representative during the election.

To explore the research, in-depth interviews with a questionnaire have been conducted so that the research succeeds in throwing light on the main research question. The interviews have been conducted with some local voters especially those who have changed their political allegiance from BNP to AL, AL to BNP and there are few people those who are still in AL and BNP. On the other hand, interviews were carried out with the candidate of BNP who lost in 2008 election from Sonatola Upazila and also interacted with few Bogura local political leaders of both parties. There have been many approaches employed in qualitative data analysis.

5.2. Interview analysis and discussion

According to the research plan, authors had an ethnographic study going to the field for 25 days by interviewing respondents including local politicians, school teacher, bankers, petty businessman, rickshaw pullers, farmers

and some mass people who change their political parties from AL to BNP and BNP to AL and there some people who are still in AL and BNP to understand their political behaviour before and during the national level election held in 2008. Authors analysed the following interviews conducted in the field.

5.3. Interview with the Union Parishad Chairman

Before venturing into the field, I confirmed an appointment with Ali Toyob Shamim, the Union Parishad Chairman of Mohichoron village and an Awami League (AL) supporter and activist. Shamim had received the AL nomination for the Union Parishad election. On the 23rd of December 2016, after Jumma Namaz and lunch, I hurried to his office in Mohichoron village. Upon arriving, I noticed a large crowd gathered, piquing my curiosity. I learned that Shamim was on his way to the office and that blankets were being distributed to the impoverished. Witnessing this charitable act allowed me to gain insight into his relationship with the community.

While waiting for Shamim, I grabbed a cup of tea at a nearby tea stall and asked the owner why so many people were present. He informed me that the Chairman would distribute blankets to the poor. Soon after, the distribution began. Observing the event, I saw the grateful faces of those receiving the blankets. An elderly woman expressed her appreciation, mentioning the improved quality of the blankets and blessing the Chairman for his generosity. The chairman's involvement and support from the local MP Md. Abdul Mannan was credited for the quality and quantity of the blankets.

Once the blanket distribution concluded, I approached Shamim's personal secretary for permission to meet him. With approval granted, I introduced myself and explained my purpose. Shamim was welcoming and agreed to sit down for an interview. He discussed his political journey, from joining the AL in 1991 to becoming an active participant in 2008. His political aspirations revolved around serving people, an ideal influenced by the honourable MP Md. Abdul Mannan. Shamim proudly acknowledged the achievements made during the 2008 parliamentary elections and attributed the AL's success in Bogura to a desire for change and a growing discontent with the BNP candidate's reputation.

During our conversation, Shamim explained that the BNP's failure in the 2008 election could be traced to the unpopularity of their candidate. The BNP nominee was a newcomer with a poor reputation, failing to connect with the people. Additionally, internal conflicts within the BNP and a lack of development during their tenure caused the party's downfall in Bogura. He believed that the voters, who once blindly supported the BNP due to party loyalty, shifted their allegiance to AL as they sought a more effective and dedicated candidate.

5.4. An interview with the BNP candidate

As per the plan, authors met with the BNP candidate who lost in the 2008 Parliamentary election in Sonatola Upazila, Bogura. His name is Mohammad Shok Rana about 66 years old. Basically, he is a businessman besides roles as an Adviser of BNP in Bogura. He joined with BNP in 1999 as a member of Bogura BNP. He has a 5-star hotel in Bogura where he has a personal office as well. I went to his office to meet but unfortunately, he was outside of the office. Authors were asked to wait there until he came to office. After waiting for about 30 minutes finally he came. Authors were given permission to enter into his office. Offering 'Salam' authors entered into his office, he asked me to sit. Then he wanted to know about my purpose of the interview. Despite narrating him the reasons to visit he did not agree to talk. He was saying that 'it is prohibited to talk about the politics without permission from the party'. However, authors finally made him convinced him then he told that, 'okay, I can give you only 30 minutes not more than that'. I asked him that how do you consider about your personality as a local political leader of BNP? He answered me that 'I am a freedom fighter, from student life I am engaged with politics, my grandfather was an MLA of undivided Pakistan, and I am very helpful for the poor people of my locality'.

Then he was again asked despite having such good qualities, why people did not vote for you in 2008 parliamentary election? He replied me that 'the election was very controversial not only in my constituency but also in whole Bangladesh because before the election the AL party made a latent connection with the caretaker

government and during the election the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan spent a huge amount of money to purchase votes from the masses, and on the election day from few centre there was vote snatching, vote ragging by AL local goons. In a word the election of 2008 was not free, fair and credible, it was an election to make AL party happy by the caretaker government'. Moreover, authors wanted to know the political manifestos of BNP during the election in 2008 and he informed that 'infrastructures development, job for all qualified candidates, health facilities for all, free education, electricity supply, free distribution of agricultural seeds and fertilizers among all poor farmers and so on'.

Then finally he was asked to know his recommendations to regain this seat in the next election. Rana shared his views on the election, firmly believed that BNP would regain its seat in the next election if a fair process were ensured. Rana also expressed confidence in his party's ability to secure the constituency once again, citing its long-standing popularity in Bogura.

5.5. Meeting with local BNP activist

During our conversation, he reflected on the significant development that occurred during BNP's rule, including infrastructure improvements and increased government job opportunities. However, he admitted that the party's loss in 2008 was due to poor candidate selection and internal divisions. He mentioned that vote buying and influence from other political parties also contributed to the BNP's downfall.

5.6. Interview with a voter

Fazlul Haque, a businessman in the clothing industry, experienced a significant shift in political allegiance during the 2008 parliamentary election in Bangladesh. Previously a supporter of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Haque realigned his loyalty to the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) in that election. When asked about his reasons for this change, Haque highlighted several key qualities of the AL candidate, whom he described as educated, experienced in politics, possessing strong leadership skills, and deeply committed to helping the poor. He noted that the AL candidate regularly visited his constituency to address the needs of the people, qualities he felt the BNP candidate lacked. Haque criticized the BNP for nominating a "local goon" and expressed his desire for change in Bogura politics. He further described the AL candidate as a "charismatic leader," echoing Max Weber's definition of such leaders in his work '*Politics as a Vocation*' those who inspire devotion and trust among the people, particularly in times of political instability.

5.7. Interview with Gaziul Islam: A shifts in political allegiances and social influence

Md. Gaziul Islam, a 47-year-old illiterate petty businessman, reflects a growing trend in the post-2008 electoral landscape of Bangladesh, where social factors like income, religion, and status influence voting behavior. Initially a BNP supporter, Gaziul changed his allegiance to the Awami League (AL) following the 2008 parliamentary election. His reluctance to discuss politics at first stemmed from fear of repression, as he believed criticizing the government might result in police action, while criticism of the BNP could lead to harassment by local gangs. Despite these concerns, Gaziul opened up, revealing that while he had voted for the BNP in 2008, the party's candidate was unpopular and lacked strong local support. His shift to AL was driven by the positive qualities of the AL candidate, who regularly visited the community, listened to the concerns of the poor, and implemented policies such as subsidizing essential goods and providing almost free healthcare. These measures, particularly beneficial to low-income individuals like Gaziul, played a significant role in his decision to support the AL, marking a broader realignment of political loyalties in his constituency after 2008.

5.8. A teacher's shift in political loyalty

Kajol Kumar, a 40-year-old high school teacher from Mohichoron High School, represents a broader trend of political realignment in Bogura following the 2008 parliamentary elections. Initially a supporter of the BNP, Kajol's political allegiance shifted to the Awami League (AL) after 2008. He explained his change by contrasting the candidates: the BNP's candidate was a new and notorious figure in Bogura, known for corruption, criminal

activity, and repeated imprisonment, which tarnished his image across the constituency. On the other hand, the AL candidate, Md. Abdul Mannan, was well-educated, socially active, and politically experienced, making him a more appealing choice. Kajol noted that despite several previous electoral losses, Mannan's consistent work for the welfare of the people during his time with the AL ultimately swayed voters who were eager for change. His efforts in social development projects played a significant role in shifting public sentiment, leading to his eventual victory.

5.9. Interview with a farmer

While doing interviews with another respondent, who only supports Awami League named Md. Badsha about 32 years old. By profession, he is a farmer. I tried to know the people's view regarding the feature of nomination as a comparison between the candidate of AL and BNP. The respondent told me, 'AL always evaluates the qualified, experienced, morally sound and dedicated person for nomination in the election but BNP does not do anything of that sort'. According to him 'BNP candidate was not highly qualified, sincere, honest, dedicated, people loving and experienced person like AL candidate'. Again I asked him which party's manifesto was more meaningful for the wellbeing of the people. The respondent replied to me that though Awami League now is in power as the MP for the constituency is very helpful and tries his level best to implement the offered manifesto than previous governments. Beyond mere promises by candidates, my survey was trying to look at the voter's perception about the implementation of manifesto goals of the political parties. Having interviewed with the common voters it was clear to me that most of the people want honest and capable representative for their own benefit. Among some of my respondents said they would look for dedicated party candidates to vote.

The financial wellbeing can be a crucial determinant for political evaluation and vote choice. This influence might be unnoticed for the people as a whole by the measurement of mass voter turnout for which financial benefit has little-assumed link to politics. The common behaviour of the voters regarding the politics might install a sense of order in an otherwise baffling political fact.

5.10. Interview with a businessman

At this stage, we found an old respondent named Abdul Kuddus, about 63 years old businessman. While conducting an interview with this common voter once we asked him how you choose your political party during the election for vote. By smiling a bit he told me that "choosing a political party which has the few common views to me such as political parties should think deeply for the common people when they are in power. We believe that the elected government is to offer the better education for all citizens, provide our basic rights, develop a safe nation with strong and enlarge our economy'. Not only to maintain peace and order in the country, eradicated the violence, protect the democracy, that the party would like to do this, I'd vote for him".

Kuddus expressed that he chooses his political party based on its dedication to the common good, economic stability, and the protection of citizens' rights. His views reflected a broader trend of voters seeking tangible improvements in their lives rather than political rhetoric.

5.11. Insights from former BNP supporter

On the other hand, I was conducting with another voter named Md. Rezaul Karim was an activist of BNP before 2008 parliamentary election but since that election, he has changed his political beliefs. Now he is a supporter of AL. Authors wanted to know the reason for changing the apolitical party. He was telling that 'Bangladesh Awami League is committed to promoting our standard of life in each and every corner of the country'. He also told that Bangladesh Awami League had played a major role in the political liberation war and the party took measures to accomplish its declaration and program such as 'to uphold the ideal of independence and the spirit as well as values of Liberation war'. On the contrary, 'Jamat-E-Islam is the opposed group of war of Liberation and BNP did make a big mistake to make an alliance with Jamat' he said. According to the Democracy International, 'Bangladesh Awami League is the most popular party in Bangladesh'.

All in all, Karim highlighted AL's commitment to national development, the party's role in the Liberation War, and his disillusionment with BNP's alliance with controversial factions. He pointed out that these factors led many voters to abandon BNP and place their faith in AL, which was seen as a party focused on progress and national pride.

6. Findings and Critical Analysis

6.1. Political belief/voting behaviour in Bogura in 2008 election: Determinants

Election indicates a system of taking part in which all the people reveal their choice to select political representative by using a secret ballot. The behaviour of voter is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the polls, extent of the franchise, political wave etc" (ibid: 2015). The all political parties and groups try to utilize these to win in the election. During the time of voting, the voter's interest and behaviour may be emphasised by the nature of the election. The role of all these matters can be scrutinized in the study of Bogura's political behaviour in 2008 election. There can be some issues responsible for changing the voting belief during the in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogura. This research highlighted several determinants of Bogura's voters particularly at Sonatola Upazila. In Bogura the following core political and socio-economic issues which play as determinates of voting belief/behaviours in our voting system;

6.2. Charismatic leadership and political realignment

Charisma is one of the important factors in changing the voting behaviour in the election. It means extraordinary virtue of a political leader that can be an origin of attraction and trust for the voters in the election; on the opposite site, it also means that an origin of fear and panic that intimidates the voters and nothing to say against the wishes of the powerful leader. Luckily, in Bogura district particularly in Sonatola Upazila the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan was a charismatic leader according to my respondents which let people changes their political or voting behaviour during the election in 2008. On the contrary, BNP candidate did not occupy such this quality to attract the people attention during the election which can be a reason to lose BNP in the election in Bogura.

6.3. Religion's role in shaping political behaviour in Bogura's 2008 election

Religion was a pivotal role to change the people's political behaviour during the election. Since the establishment of a secular³⁹ state by AL in Bangladesh, therefore, most of the Hindu community people had strong trust to AL candidate in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogura. In my research area, almost half of the people are Hindu. While informally talking to them most of the Hindu people let me know that "BNP and Jamat-e-Islami are the alliance, coming to power they will be more fundamentalist". Subsequently in Bogura during the election the two party's candidates tried to achieve the voter's mind from both religions. According to most of my respondents, the Awami league candidate had a good relation with both Hindus and Muslims people but BNP candidate could not maintain this. Therefore, the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan was able to secure the seat from Bogura. Like this way, people might be changed their political behaviour in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogura politics.

6.4. Election campaign and manifestos

One of the objectives of the research was to analyse about the election campaign and its political manifestos from both parties. As a part of the election campaign, canvassing and campaigning commenced early in the election in Bogura, generally soon after the candidates had announced their candidature. Subsequently, party workers and supporters and activists began moving around through the election area by distributing pamphlets, posters and handbills. Sometimes, the supporters and workers also went from each voter door to door and tried to convince the head of the household. According to the Awami League supporters, the election campaign of AL during the election was as honest, hardworking and united. The AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan is an

agronomist, therefore, he was able to motivate the farmer's voters by offering some agricultural facilities among the farmers as election manifestos which were not done by BNP candidates. Sometimes, especially in the rural area the AL candidate Md. Mannan and BNP candidate Md. Shokh Rana himself used to come and spoke with the local people as an election campaign during the 2008 parliamentary election in Sonatola Upazila, Bogura district.

On the other hand, the election manifestos can play a crucial role to change people's political view during the election, and having come into power, every voter expects to fulfil its promises given there in. 'Good or bad performance of the ruling party, just on the basis of the election promises made and promises actually fulfilled influence the basis behaviour of the people in a big way' (ibid, 2015). People experienced that from 2001 to 2006 in Bangladesh when Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) came to power for the 2nd time could not win in the very next election held in 2008 mainly because of its failure to perform successfully during its time period. In 2008 parliamentary election the BNP and its alliance become failed to get power because of their failures to exercise power and maintain its political stabilities during their time period.

6.5. Factionalism's impact on Bogura's 2008 election

The local political scenario of Bogura, from the rural level to the national level, was characterized by factionalism in both parties BNP and AL. It was observed that no political party, even BNP and the two communist parties are free from factionalism other than Jamat-e-Islami in Bogura. According to the respondents, there is a strong factionalism in Bogura BNP. Because of factionalism in Bogura BNP, during 2008 election, the BNP supported, workers did not work properly. On the other hand, despite having factionalism in Bogura AL, during election, all supporters and activists worked together for AL candidate. From the analysing of interviewed data it can be said that because of factionalism of Bogura BNP, the party leaders and local workers were not able to retain its supporter's political behaviour during 2008 parliamentary election.

6.6. Party's accomplishment in power

On the basis of election manifestos each and every political party competes election and having come to power, it is longed to perform the promises that made before the election as manifestos. People of Bogura experienced from 1996 to 2001 by AL that candidate despite being failed in the election he did many social works for the wellbeing of the people and maintain their political stabilities because during this time AL was in power. From my field work, on the other hand, it is assumed that during the BNP since 2001 to 2006 the promises that made before the election did not follow properly by BNP in Bogura because of this some voters changed their political behaviour from BNP to AL in 2008 national election. This was the good performance done by AL candidate during 1996 to 2001 of AL period in Bogura which led people to change their political behaviour in 2008 national election. Not only that, on the other hand, on the basis of the bad performance by BNP from 2001 to 2006 in Bogura, many people literally changed their political party from BNP to AL which has been reflected by my field work.

7. Conclusion

The aptitudes of the local political environment of Gabtali, Shibgang, Bogura Sadar, Kahalu, Nanadigram, Adhomdighi, Dhupchachiya are mostly same but there are some differences in Sonatola-Sariyakandi and Sherpur-Dhonot constituencies. The BNP and AL local politics have been actively practicing in Bogura Sadar Upazila to prevalent their dominance. Basically the research has highlighted in various local political parties and their activities that perform in Bogura district, Bangladesh. Respondents have informed me that the AL, which has been able to come to power after a long time in 2008 through the free and fair election, people became very disappointed to this government because the way that government is following to govern the people is not participatory. It has found that after coming to power, the AL government was trying to control over the political situation and not to allow the others political parties to practice their political rights in not only Bogura but also in whole Bangladesh. Though there are many political parties in Bogura, they are not allowed to practice their local politics freely. But In 2001 when BNP won all seven constituencies from Bogura district, the others

political parties would practise their politics in Bogura freely. Therefore, some of my respondents said to me that 'it's a political game by AL to dominate the political situation in Bogura into order to grab all seats from Bogura in the next elections'. On the other hand, just after coming to the power AL commenced to use law enforcing agency to arrest the opposition's political leaders especially BNP leaders from Bogura. On the contrary being an AL MP of Sonatola constituency Md. Abdul Manan kept visiting his whole election constituency to become more popular as well as to grab BNP's popularity. But the Sonatola Upazila Chairman (Present BNP Candidate) and other local BNP leaders also trying to keep organising their party programs in order to people are engaged with BNP politics.

Moreover, during AL government Jatiya Party (Ershad) is also not that much active in Bogura politics though it's an alliance of AL and some JP leaders Bogura such as Presidium Member and district president of Bogura Md. Shariful Alam Jinnah and another Presidium Member and current MP of JP in Bogura Md. Nurul Islam Umar are also from Bogura. For not having the party program and have internal party conflicts some of the JP local leaders, activists and supporters have moved to others parties such as AL, BNP in Bogura. On the other hand, the organizational strength and process are very strong in Jamat-E-Islami but the supporters are not more because the government is strict on Jamat's activities. The political parties try to maximise their strength through the organisational structure which is hidden from the mass of the population. But, there is interesting thing is that there are some people who keep trust on Jammat because they think that it's not involved with outlaws party in Bogura. All the people of Bogura district want to have a very good life where peace and tranquillity are prevalent in the finest form. But it's a matter of fact that in this circumstance the popularity of BNP gradually was decreasing in compare with another party.

It is needed to be said that the both largest political parties AL and BNP try to draw their power from the charisma of their two leaders—Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia (ibid, 2004). In Bogura, if BNP and AL want to retain their power over the election system, and want to skip extreme mutual hatred, these two major parties competitive process might be institutionalized with the expectancy for a durable democracy. By investigating the whole political and its surrounding circumstances, the local level politics in Bogura is being bit by bit transcript with the national politics in Bangladesh. Besides that, the exchange of political views between local and national level are also being developed. It is often too heard to say by the local people that if the national level political leaders of AL do not keep communication to the local area in Bogura, their acquired popularity will be diminished and they will not be able to capture any single constituency from Bogura. Subsequently, the PM Sheikh Hasina visited once in Bogura in 2015 to encourage its supports, activists, and local leaders. On the other hand, the BNP party chairperson Begum Khalida Zia and its other central leaders keep coming to visit to encourage its supporters, activists and local leaders to seize their all constituencies including two losing as well in Bogura district.

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CPEC 2.0 and Special Economic Zones: Analyzing the Existing Regulatory Framework for Chinese Investors in Pakistan

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Abstract

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor entered its second phase in the middle of 2024, where it suggestively aligned with establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and bilateral memorandums of the union. Launching SEZs under the CPEC is an engine for Pakistan's economic growth, industrial development and provides opportunities to Chinese investors. Pakistan has set up nine zones across the country to materialize this aim and bolster equal and fair industrialization. However, to invest money fearlessly in these zones and work conveniently, investors need to find a comprehensive legal framework that gives at least the minimum international standard of protection by the host state. This paper has analyzed the standard of protection in the existing legal frameworks, particularly the Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET) standard under the 2007 China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA). According to this research, Chinese investors enjoy the vast interpretation of FET under the FTA, its incentives and privileges provided domestically under the 2012 SEZ Act of the government of Pakistan. This study has further included the viewpoint of economic experts from Pakistan who have assisted in connecting the current concept of sustainable SEZs under CPEC relative to the present regulatory framework. Also, this suggestive paper has probed the existing flaws in the current investment system and has given policy recommendations paving the path for Chinese and other foreign investors. Finally, the analytical method has excavated the prospects and challenges in the existing domestic and international investment principles, highlighting the privileges and loopholes under the SEZ Act of 2012. Hence, the research has examined that for greater certainty, Pakistan's government must consider enlisting the FET standards in further international investment agreements for the smooth progress of CPEC SEZs.

Keywords: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Special Economic Zones, China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, Economic Zones Act, Fair and Equitable Treatment

1. Introduction

Taking forward the aim of shared prosperity, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor entered phase II in 2024, signaling a broader vision of global economic growth. Coinciding with the decade anniversary, CPEC marks the successful completion of the first phase of energy and infrastructure development, guaranteeing immediate progression to Pakistan and strengthening the vision of lifting entire BRI regions out of the low levels of economic development (Umer, 2023). Sino-Pak friendship is extended to all aspects, including but not limited to trade, commerce, investment, energy, transport, and defence. Both countries have finalized memorandums of understanding, free trade agreements and investment treaties to further enhance and regulate the relationship. Now, CPEC 2.0 has supplemented the groundbreaking achievement of signing six crucial infrastructure and development agreements to expedite the corridor's success under the Belt and Road Initiative. Precisely, these six memorandums of understanding include a Joint Cooperation Committee on CPEC for bilateral projects; an Export Exchange Mechanism outlining trade and economic activity; Protocols of Phytosanitary Requirements; Enhancement of Agricultural Cooperation; Feasibility Check of Important Transportation Routes and Industrial Workers Exchange Program (Khalid, 2023). This contemporary hallmark is further believed to push Pakistan's GDP to 10 percent by 2030 (Global Times, 2024).

Having an enchanting slogan of 'There is more to this Corridor,' the primary scope of CPEC 2.0 suggestively aligns with establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and bilateral memorandums of the union. The launch of SEZ under the CPEC is an engine for Pakistan's economic growth and industrial development, providing opportunities to Chinese investors (Ghoury, 2016). To materialize this aim and bolster equal and fair industrialization in Pakistan, it was decided to set up SEZs in each province of Pakistan, making four zones in total, with the initial plan of establishing nine SEZs first drafted in 2017 (Abbas & Ali, 2018). However, to invest the money fearlessly and work conveniently, investors need a comprehensive legal framework that gives at least the minimum international standard of protection by the host state.

China and Pakistan have entered two international investment agreements to expedite the flow of investment. These are the 1989 China-Pakistan BIT and the 2007 China-Pakistan FTA. Hence, this paper aims to analyze the standard of protection in the two existing legal frameworks, particularly the Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET) standard under the 2007 FTA and its impact on phase II of CPEC. Furthermore, the study includes the viewpoint of economic experts from Pakistan that will assist in connecting the current concept of sustainable SEZs under CPEC relative to the regulatory framework in Pakistan. Also, this suggestive paper has probed the existing flaws in the present regulatory framework of investment and has given policy recommendations paving the path for Chinese and other foreign investors. It has further excavated the prospects and challenges in the existing domestic and international investment principles to protect foreign investors.

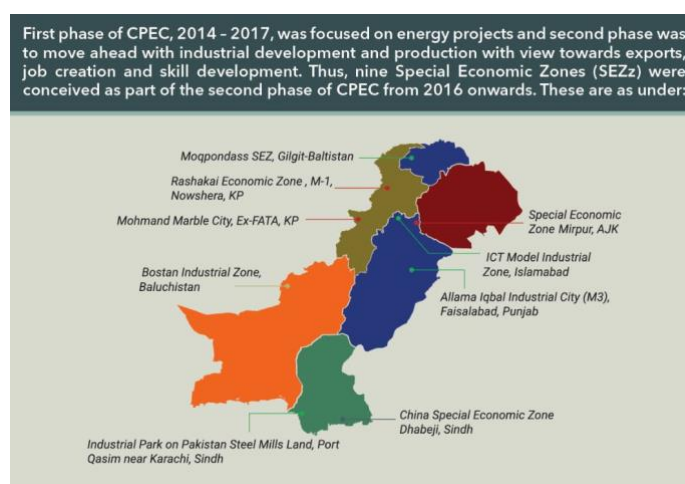


Figure 1: Map showcasing initial nine SEZs establishment plan

Source: Center of Excellence-CPEC, 2018-Ministry of Development, Planning and Initiative, Pakistan

2. Background and Literature Review

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of China's grand OBOR (One Belt One Road Initiative), a multilateral framework of development proposed by the People's Republic of China in 2015. In his research, Muhammad Ali states that OBOR translates the strategy of building one road network along with one maritime route, also termed the Silk Road Economic Belt. This initiative highlights China's redefined role in global affairs, explicitly classified as China's Global Push. This project also hints at China's over-production scheme and a lead runner in the manufacturing sector (Ali,2020). According to the official website, OBOR will connect almost 65 countries with an investment structure of \$8T of infrastructure, \$2.5T of trade annually, 900 planned projects, and \$4 trillion of investment (One Belt One Road Official,2015). Pakistan was made a principal partner by China in this new Silk Route initiative since China announced projects of 46 billion dollars, naming it the 'China Pakistan Economic Corridor.'

Moreover, accelerating regional development would reform Pakistan's role in regional security calculus and assert Pakistan's robust position in global affairs. As per the study conducted by Shakir, Nehal, and Qadri, CPEC is expected to reach the heights of \$72 billion in the coming years and would prove to be a regional game changer as well as challenging the Indian hegemony while taking Pak-China friendship to another level (2017). Also, considering the regional dynamics, the China-Pakistan friendship has a long and deep standing in Asia. This relationship is strengthened by the treaties for regulating trade and investment that have been binding on the parties until the signing of the 1989 China-Pakistan BIT and the 2007 China-Pakistan FTA (Stone,2012). Further, in July 2013, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The main aim of CPEC is to work harder to connect China and Pakistan with all Asian and Central Asian countries. To implement this plan, the Chinese government will lend Chinese companies to work in all integrated transportation services in Pakistan. As such, the number of Chinese investors in Pakistan is expected to increase (Idrees et al.,2020).

2.1 Special Economic Zones and CPEC

The term Special Economic Zones marks a central place on every discussion table about international trade and economy. Although the concept has multiple connotations in academic, industrial, and layperson language, the modern era cannot escape from the far-reaching holistic welfare it provides to a country. According to the World Bank Report, 2008, Special Economic Zones or Industrial Parks are efficient instruments to drive industrialization, have distinct characteristics of geographically demarcated areas, single management, offer privileges to investors physically present in the zone, and provide a separate tax area or duty-free benefits (FIAS,2008). Conferred further by Farole and Akinci (2011), SEZs emerged with the four core purposes of economic development. These values include attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to the country, eradicating unemployment, establishing large-scale job programs, making the country's economic reform policy, and using experimental implementation platforms to test new economic strategies.

Moreover, the study and success of SEZs can be determined pragmatically by discussing the historical Chinese model of local economic development that pioneered the former concept. Breaking the shackles of neutrality and debuting as the modern international economy in 1981, China established the four economic zones near the coasts of Guangdong and Fujian, selecting four cities with strategic significance: Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen and Shantou. Further, these economic areas were deliberately and strategically selected to be away from the political centre of Beijing so that political influences could not hinder the country's economic activity. The progress of all four Chinese SEZs was later calculated to be \$1.17bn in 1985, accounting for China's 26% of FDI (Yeung et al., 2009). In addition, the Shenzhen Model is a famous global case study delivering the success of SEZs. Risen from a small fisherman village in 1980 to a mega centre in just three decades, Shenzhen became the best-performing high-tech industry by 2007, better than the Chinese metropolitan hubs. At the same time, Chinese economic experts were selecting Shenzhen as a safe experimental platform for SEZs based on its little fiscal contribution to the state. Thus, power decentralization for local governments was established as the principal focus for boosting investment projects. Furthermore, a pivotal step was the setting up of the Shenzhen Foreign Investor Center to engage smoothly with foreign investors, which resulted in the investment of 2.3 billion RMB in fixed assets in Shenzhen

(Liu & Cai, 2018). According to the estimates of UNCTAD, following this successful Shenzhen model, currently, 5000 SEZs are working across the world, with almost 90% installed in developing countries (World Investment Report UNCTAD, 2019).

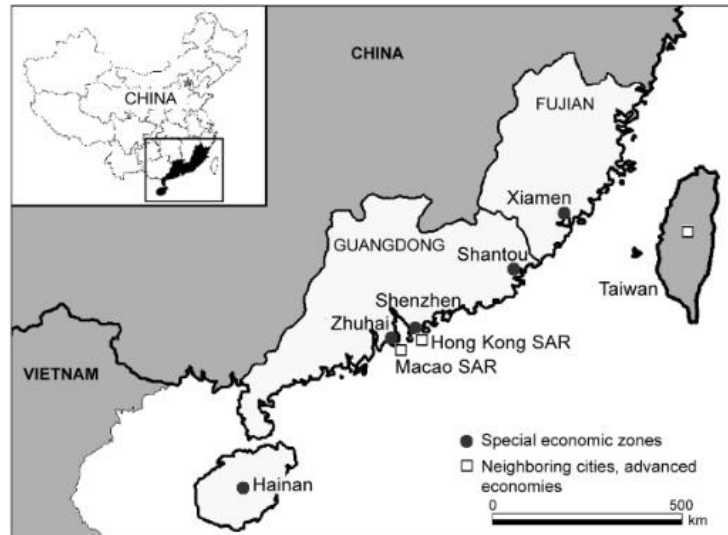


Figure 2: Map of China's first four special economic zones

Source: Chen, 2019

Another essential concept of the present decade is designing sustainable special economic zones, a solemn focus of phase II of CPEC. Initially struggling with the preconceived notions of industrial development's precedence over sustainability, the green economy has risen to the surface with hearts on climate resilient growth (Hamzah et al., 2023). According to the research conducted by UNCTAD in 2021, new SEZs have started to adopt the 'role reversal strategy' by shifting from mere cost advantages to becoming flagbearers of sustainability. Assuming the research outcome as a pragmatic stage, UNCTAD further developed a framework for SEZs to swift the progress of the SDG 2030 agenda. The list of options in the program includes:

- Focus on inviting investments related to SDG activities
- Implementing and complying with the top-level corporate governance standards ensuring social and environmental protocols
- Contributing towards the promotion of Inclusive Green Economic Growth by building ties and alliances

Another significant research displayed the relevance of SEZs to sustainability growth is based on the indicators from the social, economic, and environmental sectors. Further, these are combined with core indicators of sustainable development marked by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to develop, assess, and analyze the SEZ framework for promoting sustainable green investment. The sustainability performance of SEZs can be evaluated by measuring water use per person or project, leading to a cost analysis of the potential investment (Buaban et al., 2020).

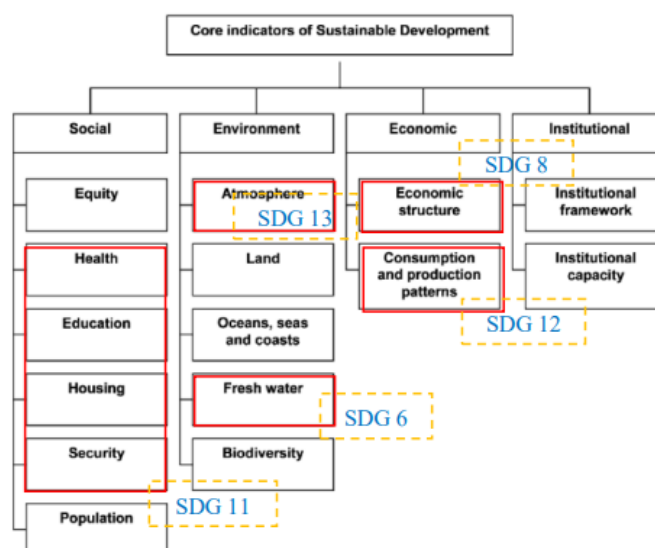


Figure 3: Core Indicators of Sustainable Development

Source: World Investment Forum, 2021

2.2 The Existing legal framework for the protection of Chinese Investors in Pakistan

Possessing the aim to connect Europe with Asia, the Belt and Road Initiative represents a multinational investment platform where regional governments, being equally responsible for the restructuring, would be accountable for the resident community challenges, repairing the environment from any damages, and upgrading the traditional forms of economic development (Jafferzadeh & Yang, 2023). CPEC, being one tier of it, is already in the phase of exercising investment through economic zones in Pakistan. For a developing country like Pakistan, the practical implementation of the hardcore concept of SEZs was challenging; however, since 1947, the country has established small industrial zones to accelerate modern economic growth. One such example is the making of the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation in 1952, right after the independence, with the policy of reinvestments by a small group of the country's prominent businessmen (Khan et al., 2016). Another major step was the China-Pakistan Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), which came into force in September 1990 after its initial signing in 1989. Although Article 13 of the treaty has put the condition of termination after ten years, it is still in force as no notification has been served for its termination by the parties.

The China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which came into force in July 2007, also has a substantial chapter on investment. As both the FTA and BIT exist simultaneously, it is evident that there will be an overlap in the protection standards for the investors of both countries. Chinese investors have been protected by both the International Investment Agreements (IIAs), which are subject to interpretation and analysis of their content about the subject matter at hand.

As CPEC was unveiled after the launch of the 2007 China-Pakistan FTA, all the investments in CPEC and the SEZs were governed by the latter. The primary purpose of using this agreement is its compliance with the latest standards and providing better protection to Chinese investors than the 1989 BIT. For example, a recent case study of the lawsuit initiated under the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) by Chinese investors is against the Government of Cambodia. The China-ASEAN FTA, which came into force in 2009, has better protection than the China-Cambodia BIT 1996. The investors' claims were based on the latest FTA rather than the former BIT (Qiong Ye and Jianping Yang v. Kingdom of Cambodia, 2021). Implementing the same case for Chinese investors in Pakistan, the China-Pakistan FTA will be used for any claim against the Government of Pakistan. Furthermore, this concept stands credible from the investor's perspective, which demands clear and strong protection, especially from the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties interpretation.

As an indispensable discussion at the latest, the regulatory concept of SEZs in Pakistan is more intricate now. As per the SEZ Act 2012, laws for the economic zones under CPEC would be set up by Federal or Provincial governments depending on the project's locality and will be in collaboration with public-private partnership regulations. Following this scheme, the government of Pakistan has established a total of five estates, including Multan Industrial Estate Phase-II, Bhawalpur Industrial Estate and Mianwali, RahimYar Khan Industrial State, DeraGhazi Khan and Rawalpindi Industrial Estate as Special Economic Zones under CPEC estimating the creation of 150000 jobs locally (Hussain & Rao, 2020).

3. Research Method

The research is a qualitative study that follows exploratory methods to find solutions and reach conclusions. The primary data is collected through personal interviews with the experts. Secondary data is collected from related publications, such as articles and books from known research analysts. These include the database and 2024 Sustainable Development Policy Institute catalogue, documents from official websites including CPEC, and archives of the Ministry of Planning and Development, Pakistan. The analytical framework is used for the regulation part to understand the current scenario better, find gaps, and provide suitable measures for future studies. To analyze the existing legal framework for Chinese investors in Pakistan, the researchers went through the international investment agreements of the two parties and related cases under the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). The research also used the Special Economic Zone Act and existing jurisprudence on Fair and Equitable Treatment.

4. Present Developments

The recent meeting between the Federal Minister of Pakistan, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, and the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Jiang Zaidong, in July 2024 accentuated the need to operationalize the SEZs under CPEC to speed up Chinese investments in Pakistan (CPEC-Government of Pakistan, 2024). Retrieved from the official website of CPEC, the 2024 data for industrial cooperation between Pakistan and China displays the significance of SEZs with the current under-construction projects and with the ones in the pipeline.

Table 1: Present and Upcoming SEZs under CPEC

Present and Under Construction SEZs			Future SEZs
1	Rashakai Special Economic Zone	5	ICT Model Industrial Zone
2	Allama Iqbal Industrial City	6	Industrial Park on Pakistan Steel Mill Land
3	Dhabaji Special Economic Zone	7	Mirpur Industrial Zone
4	Bostan Special Economic Zone	8	Mohmand Marble City
		9	Moqpondass Special Economic Zone

Another primary aim of developing SEZs is to make CPEC a successful model for green industrial development for future BRI projects. Also, amid the socio-economic and environmental challenges in Pakistan, mainly arising from the locals about the unfair exploitation of resources, making CPEC a sustainable project has become inevitable. For instance, a recent ethnic Baloch campaigning against the inauguration of the international airport in Gwadar (a CPEC project) glints upon the need to enhance cooperation on renewable resources for gaining the confidence of local and smooth progress of CPEC aims (Janjua, 2024). According to the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, CPEC phase II strongly emphasizes the diversification of energy resources, with almost 50% of upcoming projects concentrating on renewable and hydropower industrial development aligned with global sustainability goals. Linking it further with establishing SEZs in the light of Rostow's Model of Economic Development, CPEC 2.0 is expected to move to stage three. However, the primary areas of focus must be regional growth, investments, and industrialization, embedding it with renewable energy and environmental considerations.

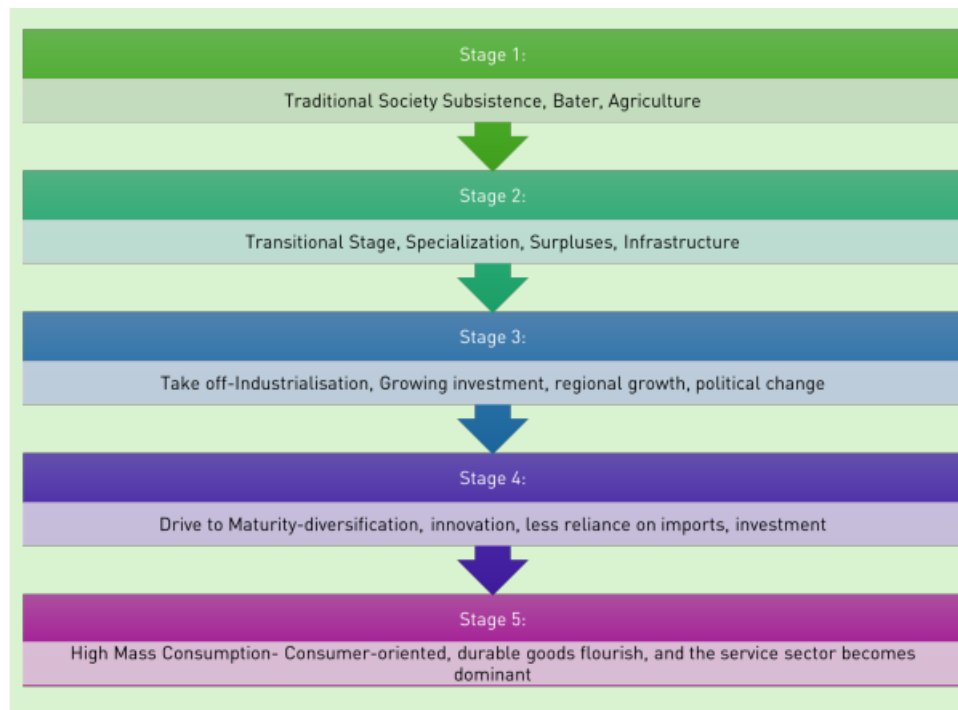


Figure 4. Rostow's Model of Economic Development

Source: Cited in SDPI-2024 Catalog

5. Discussion

5.1 Regulations at Policy Level

According to the 2024 policy framework by SDPI, several measures can gear up the SEZ development with the cooperation of the Board of Investment (BOI), the Ministry of Industries and Production (MoIP) from Pakistan, and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) from China. Further, in a personal interview, Mr. Ubaid-ur-Rehman Zia, a Senior Research Associate from the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, shared the impact of the following measures to enrich the investors' interests in CPEC 2.0 amid SEZs establishment.

- Transferring Chinese industries to Pakistan can positively impact Pakistan's export industry
- Discovering possible financing schemes, including subsidies to investors, tax incentives, and land grants, which will attract considerable investment from Chinese companies to establish manufacturing facilities for renewable energy components (such as solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries) and EV production within the SEZs
- Provision of low-interest loans targeted explicitly at renewable energy and electric vehicles (EV)
- Speeding up the infrastructure development of SEZs by mobilizing the funds and upgrading transportation networks with consistent access to electricity and water
- Events and forums like recent Kunming Expo of July 2024 must be organized for the stakeholders from the government and private sector from Pakistan and China, which will provide direct opportunities to the Pakistani and Chinese investors to interact and explore business opportunities in SEZs (Zia, Personal Interview, 2024).

5.2 Regulations at Legal Level

On the legal front, the 1989 China-Pakistan BIT has the Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET) standard in a different form, unlike the contemporary articles which use the word FET, with only the word 'equitable treatment.' The FET is used as an umbrella clause to fill the gap left by other specific protection standards. It merely works for the

rule of law and good faith between the investor and host state relationship (Mahmood, 2021). Ahmad Ghouri, in his research, argued that the word 'equitable' without the prefix "fair" in the BIT shows the development of the standard it has passed through rather than implying lesser protection from the contemporary FET standard. The 1959 Germany-Pakistan BIT, the first BIT in the world, even had no provisions for Fair and Equitable Treatment (Germany - Pakistan BIT, 1959). Later, in 2007, following the parameters of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries, the protection standard found its full name, i.e., FET, which eventually shows the gradual development of FET and other standards under IIAs.

5.2.1 Fair and Equitable Treatment under the China Pakistan FTA

It is only possible to analyze some protection standards for Chinese investors in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan FTA within this article. Although every protection standard has its own significance, the Fair and Equitable Treatment standard is highly litigated and a catchall standard in International Investment Law. Additionally, this standard proves beneficial as tribunals broadly interpret it unless the investment agreements provide restrictions (Dolzer, 2013). Also, from the provisions of the 1989 BIT and 2007 FTA between China and Pakistan, it can be seen that all the litigation standards for investors have gradually developed to enhance the investment environment in Pakistan.

According to the China-Pakistan BIT preamble, 'treaty is designed to encourage, protect and create favorable conditions for investments by investors' moving between party states'. While on the other hand, FTA states that "This Agreement should be implemented to raise the standard of living, creating new job opportunities, and promoting sustainable development complying with the environmental protection and conservation (Ghouri, 2016). Hence, the FET standard provides a minimum absolute standard of protection to investors, and the host must treat investors according to international law (Bazrafkan & Herwig, 2016). Ultimately, tribunals are responsible for finding FET violations and are required to assess the state's conduct and the damage threshold. The FET standard can be either the Minimum International Standard (MIS), given by civilized countries to foreigners and their properties, or an independent standard with life and interpretation of itself. Therefore, there are two ways of interpreting the FET standard, one about MIS and the other in FET as an autonomous standard. (UNCTAD, 2012).

5.2.2 FET as an Autonomous Standard and the CPEC

According to Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the provision of a treaty should be interpreted literally in good faith, considering its purpose and objective. According to this interpretation, FET is an autonomous, independent standard that should be interpreted as opposed to another argument that calls for the interpretation of the FET standard similar to the customary international law of treatment of aliens like the Minimum International Standard (Stone, 2012). In almost all International Investment Agreements (IIAs), a state must comply with no specific rule or requirement aside from the vague words 'Fair and Equitable,' which also holds for the China-Pakistan FTA.

Additionally, through the independent application and interpretation of FET, until now, tribunals have substantiated the following constituents of the standard: prohibition of manifest arbitrariness, prohibition of denial of justice, prohibition of discrimination, prohibition of abusive treatment, protection of legitimate expectation (Bazrafkan & Herwig, 2016). In other words, violation of FET constitutes arbitrariness, bad faith, discrimination, denial of justice, frustration with legitimate expectations, lack of transparency, coercion, and harassment (Stone, 2012). Evidence of bad faith, lack of transparency, unjustified enrichment, and lack of respect for the obligation of vigilance and protection also constitutes a breach of FET. The administrative rules incorporated into FET are the absence of due process, administrative irregularity, lack of transparency, absence of good faith, and violation of the legitimate expectation of the investor in exercising administrative functions (de Vietri, 2011).

The China-Pakistan FTA has no limitations in interpreting the FET standard provision. Therefore, the FET standard has independent meaning and application under the FTA, which is a good sign for Chinese investors in

Pakistan under the CPEC and SEZ as they are well protected by the FET standard under the FTA. The reason behind this is the broad shield that limits the legislative, judiciary, and administrative power of the government of Pakistan. Although it is difficult to generalize the constituents of the FET standard due to the absence of a unified or frozen agreement and continuous development of the standard (de Vietri, 2011), countries have already started to codify the different constituents generated by tribunals in interpreting and applying the standard. An exemplary case here is Article 8.10 of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the trade and investment agreement signed between the European Union and Canada, and the Trans Transatlantic Trade and Partnership Agreement (TTIP) (Grisel, 2022). Although Pakistan has already committed to providing Fair and Equitable Treatment standards to Chinese investors beyond the principles of the International Minimum Standard (IMS), the government must keep codifying the elements of FET to curtail arbitrators' jurisdiction. Further, providing FET standards beyond the MIS benefits the investors, but Pakistan's sovereign right of regulation and administration might be abridged. To avoid this restriction, the government of Pakistan must consider enlisting the standards of FET rather than leaving them open-ended.

5.3 Regulation of SEZs Under CPEC

Presently, CPEC is considered the primary source of economic change in Pakistan, and SEZs are the tools for implementing the long-term integration project under the CPEC (Naeem, Waheed & Khan, 2020). SEZs' laws and regulations differ from those of the trade and manufacture conducted in other areas of the country. Investors and traders are given fiscal and regulatory incentives to invest in that area (Mahmood, 2021). Although the 2012 SEZ Act was enacted before the Belt and Road Initiative, the economic zones under the CPEC are governed by this act (Naeem, Waheed, and Khan, 2020). However, despite all the incentives that the 2012 Act provides to investors in the SEZ, this legal measure is criticized for only dealing with domestic investors (Mahmood, 2021). A recent development is the conversion of CPEC-SEZs into sustainable platforms. The 2024 catalogue issued by the Sustainable Policy Development Institute and Pakistan China Institute presents several measures to convert the CPEC SEZs into green investment hubs under the proposed legal standards.

- Among green financing schemes, the reforms include the promotion of debt swaps and the development of a green bond market to expedite the progress of green investment in renewable energy. Moreover, establishing financing institutions with regulatory bodies and incentive schemes would further pave the way for greening SEZs, mitigating the financial risk. It is further advised that these schemes be incorporated into the Traffic Light System of the BRIGC green development guidance.
- Through a personal conversation with the research associate of SDPI, Mr. Ubaid-ur-Rehman Zia, to bring ease for the investor, designing a toolkit for the financing institutions can aid the enforcement of Environmental Social Management System (ESMS), alleviating the fears of foreign investors in the CPEC SEZs. These steps include a series of phases, such as prior project screening and evaluation. Moreover, developing a "grievance redress mechanism" in the area's local language must be accessible to people negatively impacted by any project under its multiple phases. Also, consultations with local stakeholders and communities will ensure institutional and governance transparency.
- For the environmental and social risk assessment and mitigation, financial institutions must be designed to work in close coordination with the investment clients to amend any breach of ESF and loan agreements.
- To ensure the transparency and accountability of the litigation process in the SEZs, proper guidelines for investing and lending, incentives including tax breaks and subsidies along with incentivizing banks by the regulators to sponsor sustainable projects
- Another significant step is the establishment of a carbon market following the Clean Development Mechanism with the aim of focusing and multiplying funds into ESG investing
- A proposed plan of applying ESG Metrics to Pakistan, such as measuring carbon emissions and water usage, will bring ease to global investors (Zia, Personal Interview, 2024)

6. Conclusion

Having an enchanting slogan of ‘There is more to this Corridor,’ the primary scope of CPEC 2.0 suggestively aligns with establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and bilateral memorandums of the union. The launch of SEZ under the CPEC is an engine for the economic growth and industrial development of Pakistan and provides opportunities to Chinese investors (Ghouri,2016). To materialize this aim and bolster equal and fair industrialization in Pakistan, it was decided to set up SEZs in each province of Pakistan, making four zones in total, with the initial plan of establishing nine SEZs first drafted in 2017. Furthermore, SEZ launched under the CPEC to attract domestic and Chinese investors. To have legal monitoring, the 2012 Act for regulating SEZ is considered outdated and more inclined to domestic investors as it was enacted before the CPEC came into the picture. Thus, the 2007 FTA was a remedy between China-Pakistan investment schemes and provided better protection for Chinese investors than the 1989 China-Pakistan BIT. Fair and Equitable Treatment is a catchall standard that is broadly interpretive as opposed to the FET connected with MIS. Further, this independent interpretation is also a privilege for Chinese investors in Pakistan as it is under a constant development process and has already conceptualized several general principles restricting the host state's regulatory, judicial, and administrative power. Therefore, it is assessed that Chinese investors in Pakistan are well protected under the FTA, particularly under the FET standard.

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Note 1. Abbreviations

Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET),

Free Trade Area (FTA)

Minimum International Standard (MIS)

The Vertical Integration Model of Peacebuilding as Applied to the Bangsamoro Peace Process

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to apply the vertical integration framework to the Bangsamoro peace process. The model can be applied to the Bangsamoro peace process through an inspection of the actors involved in the process: mediation, facilitation, and implementation. However, given the multitude of actors involved in the triple nexus of peacebuilding, it entails cooperation, coordination, and collaboration based on mutual trust and a multitude of other factors. Participation and accommodation are just features of the peace process since what matters most is the realization that possible solutions may just be around the corner which can be achieved through indigenous processes already known to the locals themselves.

Keywords: Bangsamoro Peace Process, Vertical Integration Model, The Local

1. Introduction

The Bangsamoro peace process is an ongoing liberal project. Various administrations have initiated in one way or another, with the assistance of foreign governments, transnational civil society groups, and local civil society organizations, to institute peace in the Bangsamoro homeland, yet peace is still elusive. Until today, packets of resistance from rebel groups, such as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the Abu Sayyaf, and extreme fundamentalists inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Maute-ISIS, still threaten the fragile illusion of peace in Mindanao, notwithstanding the prolonged communist insurgency in other parts of the country. History points to the injustices suffered by the Bangsamoro for decades since the inception of Philippine Independence as the root cause of the problem. However, massive efforts to address this have been instituted from the Tripoli Agreement in 1976 to the 1996 Final Peace Agreement establishing the now defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), to the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB), to the signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2018, and the institutionalization of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on March 2019 have been equally remarkable, yet the Bangsamoro peace process is yet to produce lasting peace (Kingston, 2019).

International norms dictate that states embrace democratic values, yet the rights regime also espouse the right of indigenous communities to self-determination. Both of these have been utilized as causes by leaders of Muslim

rebels to call for greater autonomy through armed struggle. On one hand, secularism is not an option in Islamic governance because the Western liberal concept of the separation of church and state is alien to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. It requires that only those who are devout of the faith and have memorized the provisions of the holy book (*hafiz*) as well as in possession of the depth of understanding of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), can be elected as Islamic leaders. Hence, democracy is not antithetical to Islam, as Islamic practice allows for a qualified system of consultation (*mushawir*) and the election of Islamic leaders, to ensure that leaders thus elected would not veer away from Islamic tenets, dogma and values. This is of course, ideally, with the assistance of a consultative council (*Majlis*) or *Shura* council. An imperfect example of this system is that of the 'revolution from above' of rentier states where women are *appointed* (instead of being *elected* as in a democracy) as members of the *Shura* councils in the Middle East, although yet qualifying that oil is at fault (Ross, 2008) for the democratic deficit, not Islam. On the other hand, greater autonomy resulted from legalizing the Bangsamoro peace process (Carolan, 2016) with the series of agreements signed between the rebels and the government peace panel – with the MNLF in the 1976 and 1996, with the MILF in 2008 (declared as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court), and again with the 2014 CAB and 2019 Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) that paved the way for the current BARMM. Apparently, peace agreements can be enhanced by their incorporation into domestic law and through international oversight mechanisms (Ozcelik, 2020).

Peacebuilding is a process that needs the convergence of international, national and local peace initiatives to work towards the progress of attaining lasting peace. The global agenda under the triple nexus of humanitarian-development-peace nexus has ushered humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors to come to the aid of conflict-affected populations, ensuring inclusivity and the development of local ownership such that peace would be made sustainable. However, given the protracted peace process with the Bangsamoro, and with the belligerent communist insurgency and some packets of Islamic extremists in the countryside, the present paper endeavors to investigate the vertical integration model of peacebuilding and how this is applied to the peace process.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

1.1.1 Peacebuilding and the vertical integration framework

A vertical integration perspective points to the importance of long-term consensus building among all key constituencies involved in postconflict transitions around both the means and ends of peace-building processes, through participatory processes that neither co-opt the agency of the less powerful actors nor close off opportunities for different perspectives to emerge (Donais & McCandless, 2017). A vertical integration refers to strategies that link actors, knowledge, and processes upwards a cross societal strata for improved peacebuilding and development (Gray & Burns, 2021). This entails the combination of local civil society actor's knowledge of context and access to conflict-affected locations, with the expertise and generous funding of international actors and their capacity to connect the international to the national. According to a recent research, context-specific approaches highlight the importance of local agencies for peacebuilding to become more sustainable within the broader spectrum of the peace process (Muto & Saraiva, 2020).

Vertical relationships between local and nation, as well as international, levels and actors are of importance for peacebuilding as they are critical to developments occurring on the ground (Leonardsson, 2020). The research stresses that the concept of vertical relationships implies relationships across levels of governance but also incorporate space for interconnections that move freely across levels and scales, including relationships with individual actors or non-state organizations related to another government level or spatial scales, such as national politicians or experts in the field. In addition, these vertical relationships must be complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, a much earlier work (McCandless, Abitbol & Donais, 2015) already provided a clear definition of vertical integration, positing that at the most basic level, is a strategy to link actors, ideas and efforts vertically for peacebuilding and development impact. This requires that the dynamics of locally-led initiatives of peacebuilding must be vertically integrated to the dynamism of the international and the national, hence, it is considered as a concerted effort of various actors that transcend the silos of the humanitarian-peace-development nexus as well as that barriers of agency of the local, national and the international. The authors further assert that

minimum conditions for vertical integration efforts to gain traction include the existence of political space and the willingness of the governments of fragile and conflict-affected states to engage.

1.1.2 Situating the local

An analysis of the concept of localization across the three parts of the triple nexus – humanitarian, development, and peace - was the subject of a recent research (Barakat & Milton, 2020) since localization is a central issue on the international humanitarian agenda. The authors traced the concern of the local in each of these domains and proceeded to frame the challenges common to localization across the forms of conflict response: defining the local, valuing local capacity, maintaining political will, and multi-scalar conflict response. The authors posit that the Triple Nexus, proposed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in 2017, could enable the breaking down of the silos of the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors. The trend towards localization is primarily driven by the value of local actors in terms of more effective humanitarian operations due to their local knowledge appropriate for their culture and context, in short, they are at the frontlines of the humanitarian response to crisis situations. The author also adds that the concept of localization in humanitarian action differs from that of peacebuilding and development because the humanitarian system is more centralized and streamlined globally. In this research, the local is considered as a relational concept dealing with power relations between the local and the international, the local and the regional, or the local and the national. Nonetheless, the authors assert that localization should be primarily about empowerment and effectiveness.

However, to avoid the abovementioned binaries of power – local versus international, the local versus the regional, or the local versus the national - the local should be seen as a sphere of activity, a system of beliefs and practices that loose communities and networks may adopt such that peacebuilding is enabled without reference to any specific place (Mac Ginty, 2015). Hence, the author asserts that the local is not a place. Rather, it is a concept that is de-territorialized, networked and constituted by people and activity (Mac Ginty, 2015). For him, to see this version of the local, we need to pay attention to context-specific knowledge that are concomitant constructions by the local and the global and the multitude of points in between.

In the same vein, the construction of the local and the international as binary opposites was a core problem in the literature on the local turn (Paffenholz, 2015). The author argues that this construction is at the heart of many problems and contradictions: (1) the weak conceptualization of the primary actors (the local and the international); (2) including an excessive focus on Western actors within the international; (3) a romanticized interpretation of hybrid peace governance structures; (4) a blindness towards the dominant role of local elites; an overstating of local resistance; and (4) an ambivalent relationship to practice. The author then asserts that the local turn in peacebuilding advocates for a major shift in focus from international peacebuilders to local people as the most important drivers of peace.

The local, however, in another conceptualization, is the everyday, ordinary individuals who live in villages and neighborhoods, or the “local-local” (Firchow, 2020). After all, it is the local actors that communicate the local needs of the community for peacebuilding and coordinate with the international actors especially in situations of conflict. The significance of the local is even more magnified when the state actors are absent at the local level to address situations of conflict. Hence, for the author, peace (and conflict, security, and development) is experienced and embodied at the local level. Local ownership of peacebuilding facilitates and supports local agency (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2016). This conceptualization recognizes that to include broad sections of the population and mobilizing local capacities is necessary for effective and sustainable interventions which better correspond to local needs and the changing local context. The authors also assert that the pursuit of local ownership implies building various types of partnerships which require time, commitment and funding that often go beyond the typical external aid frameworks. What is novel about this research is the concept of the whole of society approach, “whose perspective suggests that the promise of local ownership in international interventions is best served through identifying spaces of action within local society, and an adjustment of programming parameters to enable the UE to complement the efforts of domestic actors.”

In a more recent work from the same authors, using the whole of society (WOS) lens shows how current methods of engagement by the EU fail to embrace the diversity of the local society in pursuit of peacebuilding objectives (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018). To quote at length, the WOS entails “that intervention practice can acknowledge and reflect local responses to conflicts not only by attempting to engage with a greater diversity of local stakeholders but also through identifying combinations of significant non-state actors, taking account of relationships and interactions among local groups, and by recognizing the breadth and relevance to indigenous practices.” For the authors, an inclusive WOS approach must include deeply embedded private businesses in the locality and the far-reaching influence of faith groups that institute adherence and social cohesion among social groups of diverse backgrounds. As a practice perspective, the WOS approach “enhances inclusivity and incorporates local agency but also in consideration of indigenous customs, cultures and responses to conflict which offer constructive entry points for engagement by external peacebuilders.”

Meaningful inclusivity, however, requires those with power to make space for those without (Donais & McCandless, 2017). The authors assert that inclusion requires that top-down, state-centric approaches must be complemented by bottom-up, society-centric processes. For them, inclusivity in the context of peacebuilding refers to “the carving out of space within which a cross-section of the conflict-affected community, from community-based organizations to ordinary citizens, to exercise meaningful voice and agency in the design and implementation of peace processes.” This conception of inclusivity opens a gateway for a host of actors within the triple nexus to come to the aid of conflict-affected areas, but at the same time allows for local actors with their indigenous means of peacebuilding at the grassroots level.

1.1.3 The Bangsamoro peace process

The Bangsamoro region has been characterized as being besieged by and ethno-nationalist (Liow, 2006) movement led by local *mujahideens* that either fight for autonomy (in the case of the Moro National Liberation Front) or independence (in the case of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, except until recently in 2018, with the passage of the Republic Act 11054 or the Bangsamoro Basic Law that instituted the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao). Identified causes of conflict in the Moro region are: (1) the longstanding pattern of inequality and injustice, (2) ancestral domain, (3) abject poverty (Ochiai, 2016), (4) structural inequalities in the socio-political and economic domains (Taya, 2010), (5) the government’s framework of asymmetric political autonomy in bureaucratic governance (Gera 2016), and (6) cultural differences and conflicting ‘imagined communities’ that have been neglected in terms of self-determination and cultural/religious emancipation (Stark, 2003).

A shortened version of the peace process is presented in its milestones is as follows: First, the signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement in Libya. The Agreement provided autonomy to the thirteen (13) provinces in the southern Philippines facilitated by Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) through the Libyan Government. Second, the passage of the Organic Act for the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – the ARMM - (R.A. 6734) that included Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. Third, was the peace talks leading to the establishment of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) in 1996. Fourth, was the signing of the Tripoli agreement of Peace in Libya in 2001 that resulted in the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in 2008. Fifth, was the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012 which finally concluded as the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014. And sixth, the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that paved the way for the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA) under the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The Bangsamoro peace process has always been composed of these major players: the peace panel of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), the recognized legitimate Moro leadership of both the MNLF and the MILF, along with and the presence of third-party negotiators or states. Multi-party peace negotiations such as the Bangsamoro peace process ensure that the parties would be bound by its signed commitments. The only factors that change in the scene are the players: with a change of administration every six years due to a constitutionally-mandated elections to replace the Presidency; the change of leadership, and recognition accorded to such change by the government, within the MNLF and the MILF; and the constitution of the third-party observers, mediators and facilitators that are multi-national in character, involving various experts, transnational Civil Society Organizations (CSOs),

international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is a plethora of state and non-state actors that are met on the ground by grassroots advocacy networks armed with, and constituted of, a humanitarian, peace, and development agenda.

1.2 Research Problem/ Questions

This paper is a humble attempt to investigate the heuristic and practical utility of the application of the vertical integration model of peacebuilding into the Bangsamoro peace process.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following queries:

1. How can the vertical integration model of peacebuilding be applied to the Bangsamoro peace process?
2. What international, national and local networks under the triple nexus work together in the Bangsamoro peace process?
3. What is local ownership of peacebuilding and what are its implications to the Bangsamoro peace process?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Vertical Integration Model

Vertical integration refers to strategies that link actors, knowledge, and processes upwards across societal strata for improved peacebuilding and development impact (Gray & Burns, 2021). This perspective requires consensus-building among key stakeholders through participatory processes that do not deny agency or restrict alternative processes to achieve a desired end (Donais & McCandless, 2016). In addition, vertical relationships thus established may be across levels of governance (formal and informal) or across levels and scales (between individuals or non-state organizations to another government level or spatial scales) (Leonardsson, 2020). Moreover, vertical integration allows bottom-up processes to link with the top-down peacebuilding processes to ensure inclusivity (Donais & McCandless, 2016), where top-down, state-centric approaches must be complemented by bottom-up, society-centric strategies. Here, state-society relations (the vertical axis) must be fortified, as well as ensuring that inter-group relations (the horizontal axis) also remain intact to achieve effective and lasting peacebuilding

Central to the analysis of vertical relationships are the concepts of complementarity, autonomy, agency and context, as well as localization (Barakat & Milton, 2020) or otherwise also known as local ownership of peacebuilding. Hence the following are of equal importance: community-level dimensions of promoting post-conflict reconciliation (Clements & Lee, 2021) as a peacebuilding initiative, the interactions between national and local levels (Hancock & Mitchell, 2018) and the development of local peacebuilding models at local ownership (Lee, 2019), inclusive of its challenges in peacebuilding and conflict prevention (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2016).

Deep and appreciative dialogue is critical to peacebuilding and reconciliation (Clements & Lee, 2021). True reconciliation is where there is a meeting of truth, justice, peace and compassion; it involves a deep recognition of past wrongs, a request for forgiveness, the expression of apology and contrition; a willingness to make reparation, and a desire to celebrate differences. Here, promoting post-conflict reconciliation requires changes in individual attitudes and behavior but it also requires attention to the deeper structural and cultural sources of violence and non-violence. The authors stressed that peacebuilding and reconciliation processes are multilevel, multidimensional, and relationally transformative. In the communities effective dialogues for reconciliation (Abu-Nimer, 2021) should include the following key elements: (1) principle of trust, (2) purpose of learning, (3) interaction through proper communication channels, with an assumption of symmetry – that all members of the group are equal and have the same rights to expression and action, (4) ability to take risks, (5) the ability to engage with the other and with one's own faith group members, and (6) principle of action – the joint or unilateral action to illustrate commitment to reconciliation. These concepts and principles are of material significance to agency and context.

The relationship of grassroots actors to the goals of peacebuilding appears to be most intrinsic, in the sense that these actors typically engage in peacebuilding in order to achieve the goals of peacebuilding (Hancock & Mitchell, 2018). Peacebuilding initiatives of grassroots actors should be met with initiatives from the national government to achieve a common goal of fostering peace. Interactions with national and the local actors in the context of conflict should not be about the sense of legitimacy that one has over the other but should be a partnership of complementarity rather than that of rivalry. The four main areas of peacebuilding activities in Mindanao are: relief and protection, conflict resolution, peaceful coexistence, and rehabilitation and development (Lee, 2019). For relief and protection, many local peacebuilders pay attention to the establishment of zones of peace – geographic areas designated and declared by local communities as zones with no violence, hence conducive for peacebuilding. For conflict resolution, direct involvement in the ongoing peace process through consultation, policy proposals, monitoring and the like. For peaceful coexistence, programs have been instituted on various forms of peace education and advocacy as facilitated by a few local universities and grassroots organizations. And finally, for rehabilitation and development, programs have been instituted assisted by international aid agencies to pursue peace through development.

1.4 Significance of the study

This research is significant because it attempts to utilize the vertical integration framework into the Bangsamoro peace process. This allows a perspective to look at the peace process as a parallel process of the top-down and the bottom-up peacebuilding narratives vertically integrated through networks of the triple nexus.

2. Methodology

This paper has a qualitative research design using content analysis as its method. Hence, it is descriptive, and inferences are drawn from researches cited in this paper. The analysis is guided by the vertical integration model as its framework. This research was conducted at the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Data were drawn from the academic publications that are included in this paper and whose complete citation are reflected in the reference section. The analysis was guided by the framework and incorporated in the results and discussion section.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Vertical Integration and the Bangsamoro Peace Process

Sustainable peace can only be attained through cooperation, partnerships, and linkages along with the community's commitment to the pursuit of peace through the liberal-democratic framework. Here, the role of civil society is deemed critical. Civil society is defined to include a range of organizations – from development NGO's to church-based groups and business associations (Rood, 2005). Accordingly, these organizations pursue the achievement of peace through vital activities such as dialogue between communities, the provision of horizontal spaces for peace and their vertical involvement in peace policymaking (Rood, 2005). At the heart of these movements is the centrality of advocacy, grassroots peacebuilding and peacekeeping, advancement of the value of peace, and the provision of basic services, among others.

A selection and tabulation of information among thirty-nine (39) organizations (see table in the Appendices section) identified by peaceinsight.org as organizations and institutions that are in the pursuit of peace in Mindanao reveals that certain organizations, such as the MIDCOP Inc., “coordinates with non-state actors and state actors in partnership with The Asia Foundation (TAF), and the Department for International Development (DFID).” Another one is that of Move This World – Philippines, an affiliate of Move This World, Inc. based in New York, working on sustainable peacebuilding projects through “partnerships with teachers, schools and communities; sustained through a cost-sharing model.” Added to this is an organization cited by Rood (2005), the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) that nurtures international links to those organizations concerned with Mindanao issues. With these examples, the link between the local and the international has been established; where the obvious role of the state, other than peacebuilding policy legislation, is to support and facilitate these peacebuilding

initiatives by allowing them to take place in formal and informal contexts, serving as a conduit for access and legitimation. This makes the relationship between state, society and the international community critical to the pursuit of peace, and instrumental to the vertical integration model.

The core of a vertical integration model of peacebuilding is the realization that local agency of domestic actors is as equally important to that of the agency of international actors. The aim should be that *coherence and coordination* through partnerships and linkages that allows for vertical integration whether going up or going down the chain of relationships linking the international, the national, and the local in the context of peace building processes (Donais, n.d.).

The operationalization of vertical integration was extensively discussed by McCandless, Abitbol, and Donais (2015). According to the authors, the minimum conditions for vertical integration efforts to gain traction clearly includes the existence of political space and the willingness of the governments of fragile and conflict affected states to engage. However, beyond such minimum conditions, other priorities for putting vertical integration into practice include the following (to quote at great length):

1. Ensuring context and conflict sensitivity is the starting point for vertically integrating peacebuilding, and rejecting the imposition of models or approaches (especially those divorced from a robust analysis of socio-economic, security, and wider political dynamics);
2. Broadening and deepening the strategic lens with an eye towards more holistic engagement, bearing in mind the need for commitments and support that acknowledge the long-term nature of structural, normative, and relationship transformation;
3. Engaging with stakeholders representing diverse communities at all levels, especially those capable of facilitating broad national ownership of vertical integration processes, and supporting the development of inclusive participation processes and accountability structures to maintain this;
4. Developing strategy and programming rooted in clear and compelling theories of change, and links with wider peacebuilding and development strategic analyses and frameworks – national and international – to support and build linkages, both vertically and horizontally, across sectors, constituencies and efforts;
5. Identifying and addressing power asymmetries and abuses that undermine transformative peacebuilding; and
6. Reflecting critically on appropriate roles for different actors, with particular emphasis on the ways in which international actors can move away from social engineering and towards facilitating and ‘accompanying’ roles.

The Bangsamoro peace process, since its inception, reflects a multiplicity of actors that were involved in the mediation, facilitation, coordination and implementation of the successive agreements. Of value to the purposes of the present research is the International Monitoring Team (IMT), for the monitoring of the ceasefire and situations on the ground, and the International Contact Group (ICG) intended to serve as guarantor of negotiations for the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. These two groups of international character included with them transnational civil society (TCS) organizations with local partnerships on the ground.

The International Monitoring Team (IMT) (Herbolzheimer, 2015) is comprised of 50 unarmed members of the armed forces of Malaysia, Libya and Brunei; and to include two officers of the Norwegian army with two experts from the European Union, plus a civilian protection component which included one international (the Nonviolent Peaceforce or NP) and three local NGOs [the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC), the Mindanao People’s Caucus (MPC), and the Muslim Organization of Government and other Professionals (MOGOP)]. The NP is a global non-profit organization (NPO) protecting civilians in violent conflicts and building peace side-by-side with local communities (Nonviolent peaceforce, 2024). The MinHRAC has an extensive pool of local human rights actors drawn from various sectors because its partnership with the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) allows it to work with Bangsamoro NGOs, People’s Organizations (POs) and other CSOs who have

committed themselves to a more sustainable advocacy for peace, human rights, good governance, and development (Peace insight, 2016). As such their groundwork for the advocacy on the ground parallel's that of the advocacy of the INGO Nonviolent Peace force creating a vertical integration across levels and scales (Leonardsson, 2020). Added to this network is the breadth of networks of its coordinating center, the Mindanao Dynamic Culture of Peace (MIDCOP Inc.). Accordingly, the MIDCOP Inc is a grassroots human rights advocacy group that conducts peace forums, partnerships in monitoring human rights violations, coordinates with non-state actors and state actors in partnership with the Asia Foundation (TAF) and the Department for International Development (DfID) (Peace insight, 2024). These linkages allow bottom-up processes of peacebuilding to link with the top-down peacebuilding processes, thereby ensuring inclusivity (Donais & McCandless, 2016). This also confirms the claim that peacebuilding and reconciliation processes are multilevel, multidimensional, and relationally transformative (Clements & Lee, 2021).

The International Contact Group (ICG) is the first-ever formal hybrid mediation support initiative of its kind (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014), composed of four third-party governments – The United Kingdom, Japan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia - and four INGOs, accordingly, intended to serve as guarantor of negotiations (Hoffman, 2011). One of the NGOs in the ICG was Conciliation Resources, locally partnered with Teduray Lambangian Women's Organization Inc. (TLWOI), a federation of 35 community-based women's organization of indigenous peoples in the province of Maguindanao (Conciliation Resources, n.d.). The INGO Conciliation Resources has paved the way, with this partnership, for a network of local women's grassroots organizations to be able to meaningfully participate in the peace process from a bottom-up perspective. This is linked to the ground (top to bottom) by the International NGO itself through its available networks and resources.

The three other INGOs are Muhammadiyah (Indonesia), the Asia Foundation (USA), and the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (Switzerland). These INGOs are specifically tasked to act as a bridge between parties, the facilitator, local partners, business and others; provide technical assistance to parties; and support communications for peace advocacy. However, their core challenge is to commit to confidentiality while advocating for inclusion and transparency (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014). Muhammadiyah is a major Islamic NGO in Indonesia with strong connections in civil infrastructure, particularly in the areas of health and education. It has an estimated 50 million affiliates (Monash University, 2018). This extensive connection provides a platform for grassroots Islamic organizations such as the local CBCS in the Philippines to have a voice in the peace process within and without the formal talks. In addition, quoting at length from the source, asserts that Muhammadiyah also convened multiple activities in Indonesia to increase social awareness and political support for the Mindanao peace process. They invited the MILF, GPH and ICG to peace events in Indonesia, where they provide health and educational services, and have done some bridging between the MILF and MNLF. Furthermore, the organization conducted exploratory visits to Mindanao to identify how best they can contribute with their expertise in human development (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014). On the other hand, The Asia Foundation (TAF) has a long-standing presence on the ground with partners from the private sector, the civil society, and government. With the TAF's partnership with MIDCOP Inc., the field coordinating office of MinHRAC, in support of grassroots-level human rights advocacy, makes their partnership determined to engage in peacebuilding in order to achieve the goals of peacebuilding (Hancock & Mitchell, 2018). The inflow of aid allows grassroots advocacy networks to constructively utilize these resources, gained through partnerships, for the attainment of common goals. Complementarity (Barakat & Milton, 2020) of desired goals is basic for vertical integration to occur. Hence, the goals on the ground of advocacy networks and CSOs must complement those that are already in place internationally and nationally.

3.2 Consensus-building through participatory processes

The object of any participatory process in peacebuilding is to reach a consensus, a common agreement as well as an understanding that the pursuit of peace is a much better alternative than addressing the aftermath of a conflict. Stakeholders must reach, at the very least, an overwhelming agreement that minimizes the loss of lives, the destruction of property, violation of human rights, as well as to ensure access to basic necessities (such as food and shelter, or personal security) even in situations of conflict. However, a consensus can only be reached if an

inclusive dialogue or forum has already been established that allows for the exchange of ideas and conversations, grounded on mutual respect and trust.

Participatory processes across levels of governance: the formal level happens at the level of the state, such as forums, dialogues, trainings; but at the same time these participatory processes also occur at the informal level, as women's groups and youth organizations contribute to peacebuilding at the grassroots level. Here, consensus building is an undertaking that stakeholders to the peace process engage in to effectively institutionalize lasting peace.

Participatory processes across levels and scales, that is between individuals or non-state actors and another government level. An example that can be cited here is that of *Kusog* Mindanao in 2001 (Rood, 2005) where, together with then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo named an all-Mindanao peace panel with a civilian head (then presidential assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza), for an all "out-peace policy." *Kusog* Mindanao is an umbrella organization that has an NGO as its secretariat. This peace panel was participated in by civil society groups, business councils and elected public officials at that time.

To reach a consensus, one must be engaged in a dialogue. In post-conflict situations, the dialogue must center around the themes of reconciliation. However, the utility of conventional peacebuilding models for reconciliation would be unachievable without engaging with political authorities and the transformation of negative dynamics in state institutions (Clements & Lee, 2021). Accordingly, those who wish to advance reconciliation needs to pay more attention to the opportunities it creates for various social actors to participate in reconciliatory processes and to weave their own distinctive contributions into reconciliation design and implementation plans. Hence despite the presence of a multitude of grassroots advocating for peace and human rights, along with the presence of development workers, their effort would be in vain without facilitating the obvious need to sit down and talk between parties to a conflict, between and among victims, and mediating to reconcile the two.

3.2.1 Bottom-up processes to link with top-down peacebuilding

On one hand, bottom-up peacebuilding techniques have been utilized by civil society organizations to encourage understanding and improve inter-societal relations, such as inter-faith dialogues, continuing peace education, conflict resolution training, team-building activities, local community projects, and local advocacy campaigns among others. These activities aim at empowering individuals and local communities at the grassroots level to promote, as well as practice, *just* peace. On the other is top-down peacebuilding which puts emphasis on formal institutions in charge of conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution and transformation. Linking these two processes are networks of civil society organizations that work on both ends of this peacebuilding divide.

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts by grassroots organizations and local civil society organizations are all essential for pushing forward the overall peace process (Trajano, 2020). NGOs and POs often form alliances, or cluster together in network organizations to acquire the advantages of scale, but this institutionalized collaboration also gives them the ability to have more impact. The author asserts that by forming an alliance or a network, these actors are able to gain more access to policymakers, facilitate collaboration among NGOs, provide leadership, and marshal support from elsewhere. In short, they become more visible. This research work is crucial in explaining why the NGOs of the IMT and the INGOs of the ICG have local partnerships with grassroots organizations. This serves as a two-way process: the INGOs can acquire local knowledge in facilitating and mediating situations of conflict through their networks on the ground, while those networks of advocates on the ground, get to have representation in a national and an international scene. Making them visible allows them to get and gain access to prospective donors who have a parallel mission and goal. Here, indigenous processes find recognition and utility with those working through peacebuilding from the top. This notion is summed up better in another research, positing that international assistance providers help address deficiencies in peacebuilding by providing technical and financial support but they have limited access, on the other hand, local CSOs have excellent context knowledge and access to conflict-affected locations but with limited financial resources and technical know-how (Gray & Burns, 2021), hence providing the link for bottom-up processes to link with top-

down peacebuilding. One must also be reminded that inclusion of civil society and the public (process inclusion) and their interests (content inclusion) is what underpins the inclusivity norm (Gray & Burns, 2021).

3.2.2 Networks and the Triple Nexus

This section identifies and discusses the international, national and local networks working within the Triple nexus in line with the Bangsamoro peace process.

For development NGOs, the “network of networks” in the Philippines is the Caucus of Development NGOs (CODE NGOs) – the largest organization of civil society in the country (Rood, 2005). Accordingly, this has a regional equivalent, the Mindanao Caucus of development NGO Networks (MinCODE) with 500 member organizations. For peace advocates, the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) is a solidarity network of 40 Bangsamoro NGOs and other civil society organizations, together with its secretariat, the Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc., is committed to an advocacy of sustainable peace, human rights, good governance, and development (see table Appendix on Civil Society and Other Organizations). For humanitarian

These organizations working in the triple nexus are vertically linked by organizations that seek principled partnerships between civil society organizations, local government units (LGUs) and international aid providers. Examples are that of MIDCOP Inc., with its partnership with the Asia Foundation and the Department for International Development; Balay Mindanao Foundation Inc. (BMFI) with its partnerships with LGUs, people’s organizations, NGOs and government agencies; and the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) that serves as a resource for peacebuilders as well as a training institute in the Asia Pacific that provides skills to individuals, institutions and communities that transcend the local, national and the international.

The Japanese government through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), began its peacebuilding effort through the provision of development assistance to Mindanao in 2006 (Ishikawa, 2014). As a development agency, according to the author, JICA had three main departures from its mandate: (1) it decided to commence assistance under the cease-fire agreement even before a final peace agreement was signed between the GRP and the MILF, (2) since JICA worked under tremendous pressure due to the uncertainty of the peace process, it collaborated extremely well with all parties and agencies, (3) JICA supported peacemaking efforts by an innovative Track One-and-a-half mediation initiative after the peace process reached a stalemate in October 2008. The first mode of Japan’s assistance to Mindanao was the Task Force, consisting of the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, JICA, and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. The second mode was its participation in the IMT headed by Malaysia. The third mode was that of Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD). It is in this mode that with its initial 12 grassroots programs, it expanded to technical cooperation, loan aid, and other relevant modalities of assistance aside from these programs. The Bangsamoro Development Authority served as the de facto partner of JICA for the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) scheme. With the presence of JICA as partner for projects in the Bangsamoro, a network of state actors and non-state actors have mobilized themselves to work for the attainment of the goal of providing assistance to conflict-affected areas.

3.3 Local Ownership and its implications for the Bangsamoro peace process

Local ownership of peacebuilding simply means that local concerns as espoused by local agents must be at the core of any peacebuilding initiative. It must be the agents themselves or the local communities that identify and define the problem, but at the same time, provide solutions that are local as well. This method allows local agencies to be the central focus of peacebuilding, thereby allowing ownership of solutions provided for the problems thus identified. This makes peacebuilding sustainable because the solutions provided come from the locals themselves.

In this paper’s section on situating the local, a number of research have been reviewed. The local are at the frontlines of the humanitarian response to crisis situations (Barakat & Milton, 2021), because their local knowledge is appropriate to culture and context. Localization is primarily about empowerment and effectiveness. Though this conception points to a binary relationship (Mac Ginty, 2015), hence pushing for the local as a “de-territorialized,

networked and constituted by people and activity.” A notion that insists that the local is not a place, but is an activity constructed simultaneously by the local and the global. Therefore, the local turn in peacebuilding advocates for a major shift in focus from international peacebuilders to local people as the most important drivers of peace (Paffenholz, 2015). Nonetheless, it is the local actors that communicate the local needs of the community for peacebuilding and coordinate with the international actors especially in situations of conflict (Firchow, 2020). And because local ownership of peacebuilding facilitates and supports local agencies (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2016), indigenous and grassroots local knowledge of advocacy, peacebuilding and conflict resolution must be privileged. Recent research introduces the whole-of-society (WOS) approach (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018) as “that intervention practice that can acknowledge and reflect local responses to conflicts not only by attempting to engage with a greater diversity of local stakeholders but also through identifying combinations of significant non-state actors, taking account of relationships and interactions among local groups, and by recognizing the breadth and relevance to indigenous practices.” It was also asserted that meaningful inclusivity requires those with power to make space for those without (Donais & McCandless, 2017).

The exercise of meaningful voice and agency in the design and implementation of peace processes is especially useful in the context of the Bangsamoro peace process because being multi-cultural by itself, does not allow for a unified approach to peace. The Maranaos have a way of resolving conflicts within and without through the practice of giving blood money for example, as a way of appeasing the aggrieved party, to avoid the escalation of a conflict. Another strategy is that of intermarriage, done through the marriage of one of the eligible bachelors or bachelorettes of the parties to a conflict, to ensure that the affinal family ties that bond would hold meaning and prevent bloodshed. Most often the parties to a conflict are called together for a dialogue by the respected elders of the community to ensure compliance to the terms of a peace agreement. These local/indigenous practices can inform the Bangsamoro peace process that there are other means of resolving conflicts other than the top-down or the bottom-up processes. The peace process can be indigenous, utilizing indigenous practices and can be down to the grassroots level through the assistance of local community elders that still hold significant influence over the behavior of the community-at-large.

4. Conclusion

First, the vertical integration model can be applied to the Bangsamoro peace process through an inspection of the actors involved in the process, from mediation to facilitation to implementation. The network of actors from top-down peacebuilding narrative complements as well as facilitate the bottom-up peacebuilding narratives of advocates and actors on the ground be they from the humanitarian, peace, or development sectors. The triple nexus allows the vertical integration of peacebuilding through networks and partnerships that transcend the local, the national and the international.

Second, multiple actors, facilitated by governments and mobilized by development aid work under the triple nexus as partners in the fostering of peace initiatives in the Bangsamoro region. Donor agencies, foreign governments and local networks of CSOs, in partnership with TCS organizations, are working to observe, mediate, and facilitate peace. This can only be made possible with the liberal project that entails cooperation, coordination, and collaboration based on mutual trust and a multitude of other factors.

Third, the local turn though contested in some ways, informs the Bangsamoro peace process that there are many ways that one to resolve conflict. Participation and accommodation are just features of the process, what matters most is the realization that possible solutions to the still ongoing Bangsamoro peace process may just be around the corner, through indigenous processes already known to the locals themselves.

5. Implications

First, peacebuilding through networks transcends the silos of the triple nexus and enhances the facilitation of peace processes on the ground. The nexus is merely an academic terminology to facilitate a discussion of the compartmentalization of advocacy networks that are working on the clock to foster peace. On the ground, the

nexus, unless threatened by security concerns, merely serves as an identification of the advocacy agenda of the actor immersed in relevant communities at stake.

Second, the agenda of TCS, CSOs, POs and other advocacy groups is not made at the outset, but rather reflected in the kind of work and the impact they make in the communities where they work. After all, peace advocates, development workers and humanitarian actors are all affected by security concerns – security of the individual in cases of armed confrontations. Hence, all must work together albeit knowing that their advocacies are complementary to each other.

Finally, literature on the local is fairly new. The contestations therein are academicians and practitioners trying to establish a niche in the field, hence clearly explaining the logic of their intellectual arrogance. And yet, whether the local is a place or an activity, does not actually matter. All that matters is a clear vision of what to address and how.

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The De-dollarization of China-Related Financial and Economic Systems: Precursors Movements via Aligned Economic Blocs

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Abstract

This paper examines how de-dollarization is configured from a perspective of monetary diversifications, being an action of mutual interest between emergent economies that are part of the economic arrangements that China comprises. Currently, China's trade and political processes are characterized by their own aspects due to their differences from the usual system of unilateralism and monopoly, which is based on the predatory capitalism of the central states. It is in China's interest to project itself as a country based on an idea of commercial strength, monetary diversification, and weakening of the dollar through new economic arrangements. Within the process of contesting the dominant financial system, as historically identified since the 19th century, there has not been such a proactive participation of emergent states in aligning to change the status quo. Thus, relating new perspectives for analyzing the transformations of the international system. The paper's findings reveal that the process of greater integration of peripheral economies, based on mutual cooperation institutions, is essential in structuring strategies that mitigate dependence on the dollar in the international economic and financial system. The paper proposes that China's international trade policy is not limited to the role of BRICS Plus or the Belt and Road Initiative, but using a varied system of economic partnerships, formed by emergent economies, with such blocs integrated and centralized in China to create a more diversified financial environment for currencies.

Keywords: De-dollarization, Belt and Road Initiative, Monetary Diversification, BRICS Plus, Global South

1. The institutionalization of Chinese interstate relations: the Belt and Road Initiative and BRICS as a reflection of China's political and monetary interests

After the 2008 crisis, China, in addition to being politically strengthened, positioned itself as an economic power that was not submissive to Western economic demands, based on its autonomy in the face of international crises. The occurrence of the recent financial crisis stimulated the creation of new institutional arrangements, focusing on the emergence of new ones in the Global South (Grabel, 2013, p.5). In line with China's future objectives, in

2011, the admission of South Africa into BRIC, forming BRICS, meant the expansion of the relations that these emerging economies would have with each other given their strategic positions on their respective continents. Furthermore, just two years later, a new fiscal package for intercontinental economic boosting was announced by China, with the aim of promoting assertive trade strategies with internal and external impacts. Initially named *One Belt, One Road*, the initiative has come to be known as the New Silk Road due to its interconnected commercial aspect between Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa.

According to Cox (1996, p. 114), the long-term trend of the international order would be the replacement of the US global dominance, with one possibility being the structuring around groups of states, such as the EU in Europe and China and Japan in East Asia. However, Chinese cooperation with different states across the globe does not fit Cox's premise about the replacement of global dominance, as China highlights a homogeneous strengthening of the participating countries. Based on this aspect, it is observed that BRICS and the New Silk Road are not integrated within a dynamic of American participation, because, in addition to being connected economic arrangements, China intends them to be turning points in the status quo. In other words, the inclusion of the emerging peripheral economies of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe within joint projects demonstrates a new political and economic organization in the system.

The short time between Chinese moves to develop prominent interstate relationships, especially post-crisis, should not be analyzed as a modest action. As evidenced by Jabbour and Paula, from the international financial instabilities, China demonstrated both control of the financial and industrial spheres and a high level of "socialization of investments"¹ due to new and better forms of economic planning had been constructed (2020b, p. 2). It is observed that the RMB internationalization strategies are intertwined in an even more ambitious perspective for China, seen as a process of detachment from the political, economic, and monetary traditionalism of the international system, which will be better elaborated later on regarding "de-dollarization."

According to Grabel, "recent crises have motivated policymakers to establish entirely new sub-regional, regional and transregional institutions; to build out existing institutions, substantially increasing their funding and capacity" (2019, p. 49). However, not only have financial crises driven the formation of regional organizations, but fiscal dependence, high interest rates, and unfavorable mandatory counterparties have contributed to this scenario of dissatisfaction because of the inequities of cooperation with Western States. Thus, China responds with collaborative proposals of mutual benefits to emergent countries, in addition to providing high availability of credit that would not normally be offered by traditional financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank.

In the same year that the *New Silk Road* was announced, Xi Jinping declared the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), an initiative integrated with the networks of Chinese development banks in financing capital for infrastructure in Asia (Pinto, 2021, p. 210). Furthermore, the AIIB would be one of the few multilateral organizations outside the US authority or its allies because the AIIB is composed of the China-Africa Development Fund, the China Development Bank, the African Development Bank Group, the New Development Bank (NDB)², and the Silk Road Fund (Vadell & Ramos, 2015).

In 2014, the New Silk Road Fund was set to have a total of US\$40 billion, with the aim of investing in medium to long-term projects. Nevertheless, Xi Jinping declared that there was the possibility of using resources from the AIIB, the NDB and the World Bank (Figueiredo, 2019). In effect, the coalition between the New Silk Road project and the AIIB reverberates as pillars within the process of financial assistance for regional infrastructure projects, resulting in greater Asian financial integration with the other participating States, not exclusive to emerging countries (Pinto, 2021, p. 211). The AIIB became a counterpoint in the international financial system, as reforms in the IMF, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank (ADB)³ were requested by States with lower purchasing power and, consequently, did not receive enough attention to their demands (Pinto, 2021, p. 211).

¹ Concept also used by Keynes in the book "The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money".

² The New Development Bank refers to the BRICS Bank, which was agreed at the 5th BRICS Summit in 2013 and was only founded in 2015.

³ The ADB would be an extension of Japanese interests in the Yen in Asia because the ADB is an institution highly influenced by the US to control the financial system in Asia (Pinto, 2021, p. 211).

Due to the New Silk Road, the trend of Asian deposits and bonds in RMB has grown exponentially as a result of the strong flow of capital within Asian countries, as a consequence of the initiative (Pinto, 2021, p. 212). Hence, in 2016, the RMB was officially integrated as part of the IMF's unit of account, in the Special Drawing Right (SDR) basket, which is the same basket that other international reference currencies are also included, such as the Dollar, the Euro, the British Pound Sterling, and the Yen (France Presse, 2016). According to Prasad (2016, p. 85), there has been a significant increase in the indicators of RMB use within international monetary transactions, even though it is at a low level, but it is prominent in the main foreign exchange markets. "In any case, the allocation of the RMB into the SDR basket does not aim to increase demand for it by central banks in the short term, but rather to incorporate this currency into the international system and encourage further financial reforms in China" (Martins, 2018, p. 14, translated by the author).

Through Cox's analysis (1981, p. 237), it is understood that the projection of a new hegemony is based on the social structure of power that is generated in the internationalization of production. In this regard, the consolidation of a new hegemonic State is defined by the international dominance of capital in alignment with the main economies, in addition to the perpetuation of the State through its internationalization (Cox, 1981, p. 237). However, the Chinese scope of transnational projects goes beyond the rapprochement with central economies because China uses strategies to form multilateral links with emerging peripheral economies to build more effective trade routes, obtain raw materials, and consumer markets.

According to the author (Cox, 1981, p. 237), an implicit process of continuity of monetarism as an orthodox economic policy would be necessary, in which the new hegemonic State would promote international economic stability (inflationary and exchange rate stability) through its own domestic political and social demands. Nonetheless, China not only does not fit into a policy of perpetuating monetarism and orthodoxy but positions itself with an international economic dynamic of mutual benefit between States through economic organizations. This is one of the consequences of the greater economic stability of States that are commercially close to China. Therefore, the New Silk Road, BRICS, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among other international organizations and projects, develop a type of Chinese centrality in their economic and financial arrangements because China is a point of economic stability, also due to its uninterrupted growth for more than three decades.

As evidenced in the Fortaleza Declaration, at the sixth BRICS meeting in 2014, "international governance structures designed within a different power configuration show increasingly evident signs of losing legitimacy and effectiveness, as transitional and ad hoc arrangements become increasingly prevalent, often at the expense of multilateralism" (United Nations, 2014). Furthermore, according to Batista Jr. (2016, p. 180) — former vice president of the NDB — BRICS is an "anti-hegemonic" agent based on its "multipolarization" character of the international economic and financial architecture. In other words, it is observed that the position of BRICS within the current international system is classified as a competitor to pre-established precepts because it is a new path for national development based on multilateralism among developing economies.

The financial nature of BRICS is reflected in its Reserve Fund and the use of the NDB to combat financial vulnerabilities and the shortage of financing for projects and sustainable infrastructure of its members due to some countries having a deficiency in the availability of credit within the hegemonic global financial architecture (Grabel, 2019, p. 63). In 2016, the initial projects were agreed with a total of US\$1,544 million in new operations, with China and India as the largest recipients of projects financed by the NDB, having added together accounted for 49% of the projects agreed (Costa, 2023, p. 32). The AIIB's alignment with the NDB for financing the New Silk Road is based on the combination of 13 regional and bilateral funds, which are accelerating China's financial development of energy and infrastructure (Gallagher, Kamal & Wang, 2016, p. 1). Thus, in the data relating to the annual growth of fixed-asset investment growth in China, it can be seen that, in mid-2016, there rose to 23,5% of state-owned fixed-asset investment growth, at the same time that private fixed-asset investment growth in China declined by 2,8% (Ross, 2016).

Although the AIIB represented the largest Chinese contribution to the evolving institutional landscape, China and the Bretton Woods institutions officials see these actions as complementary to the interests of Western multilateral

development banks, while the decisions of the US and Japan suggest an opposite view (Grabel, 2019, p. 65). As identified by Grabel (2019, p. 66-67), the foreign policies of European states and the US are promoting the dismantling of multilateral institutions, resulting in a power vacuum in the leadership of international multilateralism, which is being supported by the US due to the constant global economic instability. Consequently, according to Ocampo and Ortega (2022, p. 241-242), in the last two decades, the relationship between national development banks and multilateral development banks has provided an increase in long-term committed venture capital for innovation projects. However, in addition to the banks being more pragmatic after the 2008 crisis, private investors are also joining national development banks in venture capital funds.

US resistance against the China-led multilateralism is based on China's projection within the international economic system itself. "It would be extremely naive not to realize that China, in its pursuit of rapid economic growth, does not take advantage of gaps in the international geopolitical movement to further its own interests" (Jabbour, 2006, p. 52). In this sense, China's political strength has developed through its approximation with peripheral economies, which were historically invisible to central countries, with China's relations with emerging peripheral economies being one of the points of contention for international hegemony (Jabbour, 2012, p. 285).

As illustrated in the Fig. 1, the New Silk Road was designed to be divided into 6 economic corridors, which would mostly pass through more peripheral economies than central economies, separated into:

- 1) New Eurasia Land Bridge; 2) China-Mongolia-Russia; 3) China-Central Asia-West Asia (it will pass through the Middle West); 4) China-Indochina Peninsula; 5) China-Pakistan; and 6) Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor (Carletti, Ana, *apud* Pinto, 2021, p. 228).

The initiative is designed to go beyond the construction of high-tech logistics mechanisms because, through the Chinese alliance with at least 71 representative countries — in 2018 —, China promotes economic partnerships that account for 60% of the world's population and $\frac{1}{3}$ of international trade (The World Bank, 2018).

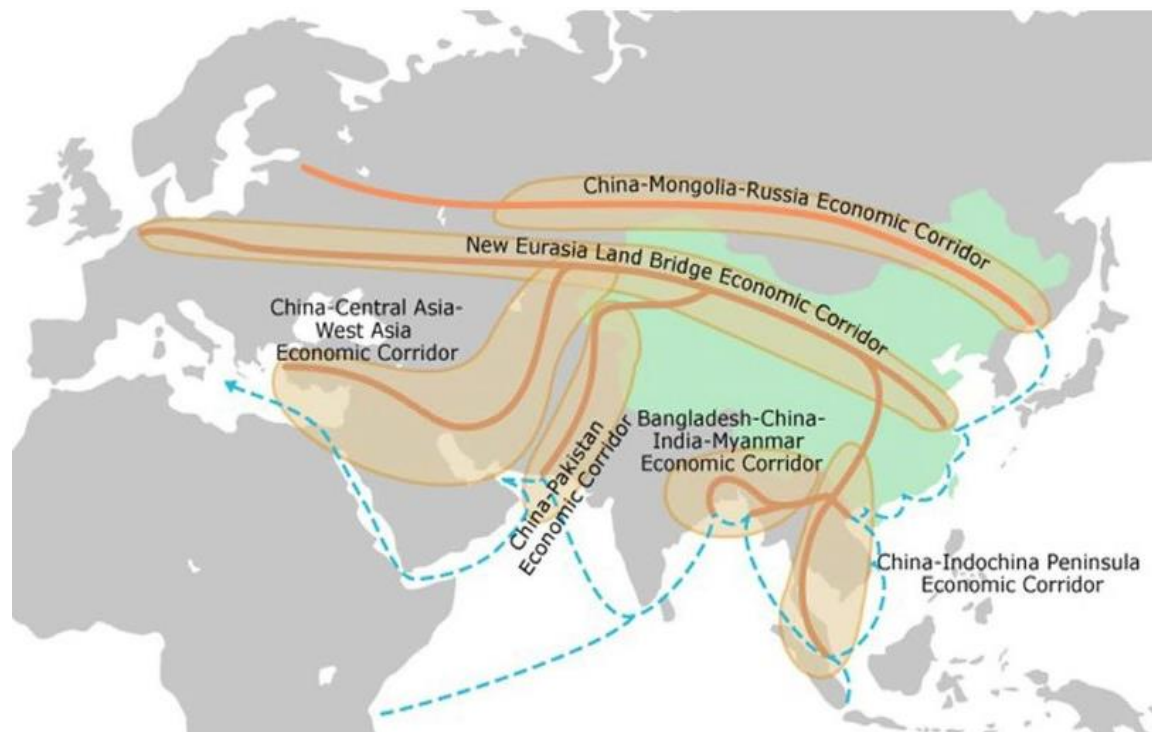


Figure 1: New Silk Road's corridors

Source: Sarker, Md Nazirul Islam & Hossin, Md & Yin, Xiaohua & Sarkar, Md., 2018.

It is essential to emphasize the growing dependence of US and European companies on Chinese productive, logistical, and economic advantages (Jabbour, 2012, p. 285). For example, in 2012, 40% of Chinese exports to the US were from US companies located in Chinese territory (Jabbour, 2012, p. 270). China's internal production chains not only integrated China with the international market but also consolidated the country as a major investor

in advanced logistics projects, which differentiates China from other states by having the technical development that prevents foreign companies from returning to their countries of origin (Jabbour & Gabriele, 2021, p. 239). With this in mind, US sanctions against Chinese industrialization would backfire on its own economic structure. As an illustration of the economic power of the New Silk Road, according to the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (2019), trade between countries participating in the initiative grew 16.3% from 2017 to 2018, establishing a total volume of commercial transactions at the level of US\$1.3 trillion.

The institutionalization process permeates a particular stabilizing and perpetuating order, with state institutions and arrangements as a reflection of the prevailing power of the member states, which delimit a collective image of possible opposition to existing trends (Cox, 1981, p. 291). More simply, the Chinese position of organizing new economic arrangements favorable to emerging states, from blocs to interregional and continental initiatives, contributes to the perspective of divergence from the current economic structure centered on the USA.

This is because the economic and financial reforms embraced by China are characterized as new waves of institutional innovations due to the fact that, in summary, the growth of the private sector in a quantitative manner, while the public sector grows qualitatively (Jabbour & Gabriele, 2021, p. 253). Thus, it is analyzed that the Chinese economic projection is closely connected with the country's monetary interests, because, according to the "13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China" of 2016, there is a state interest in promoting the internationalization of the RMB through greater flexibility and convertibility of the capital account of its balance of payments, which will be aided by the internationalization of Chinese financial institutions (National Development and Reform Commission People's Republic of China).

2. De-dollarization: BRICS as a institutional tools for emerging economies

Although China intends to reduce its dependence on the dollar, there is still a strong Chinese demand for it, as in 2018 China held around US\$4 trillion in its monetary reserves — with an estimated 70% to 80% of this invested in dollar-denominated assets (Martins, 2018, p. 14). In Chart 1, China drastically increased its international reserves throughout the 2000s, establishing a certain stability from 2016 onwards. In this regard, the fall in the value attributed to the dollar would not only affect the international economy, but would also lead to the devaluation of China's own reserves because, in 2018, China also stood out for holding 18,7% of the total public debt securities of the United States, as shown in Table 1.

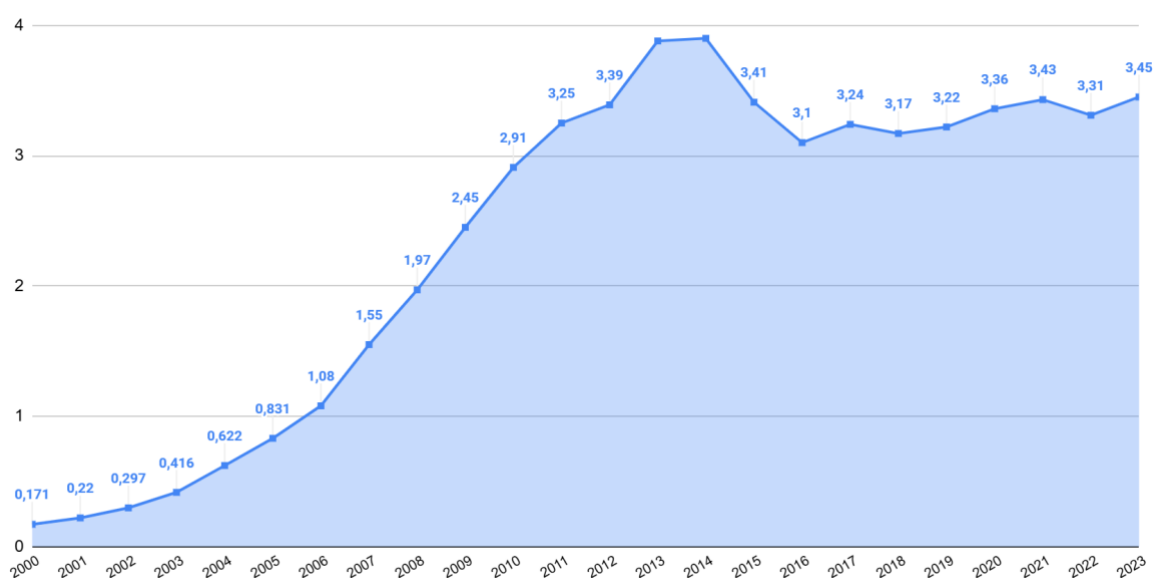


Chart 1: China's accumulation of international reserves (US\$ million)

Source: Author's estimates based on The World Bank data, 2024.

Table 1: List of largest creditors of US government debt securities

Country	January 2018	Debt percentage
China	US\$1,16 trillion	18,70%
Japan	US\$1,00 trillion	17,00%
Ireland	US\$327,50 billion	5,20%
Brazil	US\$265,70 billion	4,20%
Switzerland	US\$251,10 billion	4,00%
United Kingdom	US\$243,30 billion	3,90%
Cayman Islands	US\$241,90 billion	3,90%
Luxembourg	US\$220,90 billion	3,50%

Source: Author's estimates based on Forbes data, 2018.

However, the strengthening of Chinese trade dynamics is not limited to the growing surplus alone, as it relies on an increase in South-South monetary and financial relations, as a strategy for de-dollarizing the system. According to Kuehnlenz, Orsi, and Kaltenbrunner (2023, p. 2), BRICS countries, mainly China and Russia, are in the process of composing an international financial structure that is neither ordered by the dollar, nor US-centered institutions (as well as the IMF and the World Bank) nor adhered to the SWIFT⁴ (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) system. Cooperation for the development of new mechanisms to reduce dependence on the dollar is expanded among emerging peripheral economies, such as the use of “regional monetarism” (Fritz, Kaltenbrunner, Mühlich, & Orsi, 2023, p. 819). Therefore, since the creation of the Cross-Border Interbank Payments System (CIPS) in 2015, China has been developing measures to reduce intra-regional financial asymmetries through systems integrated with the RMB, although CIPS still has negligible relevance in the international financial system if compared to SWIFT. Based on CIPS statistics, by the end of 2020, the banking system already covered 99 countries and regions, in which all ASEAN countries have joined and another 876 direct and indirect participants from Asia (Gao, 2023, p. 239).

As highlighted in the last topic, the internalization of the RMB is deferred within a framework linked to the economic arrangements that Chan has developed, such as the New Silk Road and BRICS, with the growth in the use of the Chinese currency being a consequence of these achievements. Li (2019, p. 57) analyzed that, although the Central Bank of China uses forms to achieve effective control of the RMB through the statutory reserve ratio, open market business, and discount policy, there is still the possibility of loss of control of the macroeconomic regulation of domestic monetary policy. In this sense, China strategically stipulates that its trade relations will be fixed in the RMB due to the positions of these Chinese monetary activities centralized in key sectors. For example, the fixing of Saudi Arabia's⁵ Oil sales in RMB resulted in greater access for China to energy resources through the use of the so-called “petroyuan” (Leal, 2023, p. 18). The Year-on-Year Report of the Central Bank of China, published in 2020, described that cross-border payments and receipts in RMB for commodity trade (crude oil, iron ore, and others) totaled 252.57 billion yuan, representing an increase of 16,4% year-on-year (The People's Bank of China, 2021, p. 17).

Although in 2020, the expansion of cross-border portfolio investment settled in RMB totaled 16.50 trillion yuan, which represents a 73.6% year-on year growth (The People's Bank of China, 2021, p. 15), China's use of the US bonds and stocks as an economic resource remains present. In 2022, China sold approximately US\$173.2 billion (17%) of US bonds, as a result of the FED's interest rate hike, but mainly as a result of US political and economic

⁴ The SWIFT system is a major mechanism for communicating international financial, and banking transactions between private and public institutions, and has been influenced by the G10 countries (Germany, Belgium, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Switzerland) since its foundation.

⁵ “[...] Saudi Arabia, in addition to traditionally being a country aligned with the United States, has important US military bases on its territory. Its ability to exercise an independent and full foreign policy, especially on sensitive issues of international relations, such as monetary diplomacy linked to oil pricing, clashes directly with Washington's basic interests” (Metri, M., 2023, p. 424)

actions against Moscow. Since the beginning of 2022, the US has restricted Russia's access to its foreign reserves due to the Ukrainian War, generating an equally negative effect on China, due to its influence on Russian-owned bonds (Nikkei Asia, 2023). However, before the war, Russia previously created economic articulations with the aim of mitigating future sanctions from Western countries, expanding alternative payment mechanisms, such as the RMB and other currencies (Frankel, 2023, p. 8).

Furthermore, the movement towards de-dollarization of the global economic and financial system is separate from the perception of pure monetary diversity because protecting national economies from US-led economic sanctions is equally an unique objective within the reduction of the dollar's prominence. According to Sergey Glazyev, former Russian Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, the economic sanctions launched against Russia by the US, the European Union, and England were the imperative for accelerating the beginning of the dismantling of the dollar-based economic order (Janata Weekly, 2022). In Cox's view (1981, p. 231), the international economic structure was only delimited within a paradigm of US dominance, but also of the forced maintenance of power hierarchies, which are hidden in the development of negotiations between the parties. In this way, US financial sanctions consolidated the maintenance of the economic and financial order of the current system, but also corroborated the alliance of affected agents in partnerships with perspectives opposed to the status quo.

Table 2: Composition of U.S. Sanctions Programs

País	2021
Venezuela	5%
Russia	5%
Iraq	6%
Syria	7%
DPRK	9%
Iran	21%
Other	47%
-	Total of financial sanctions: 176

Source: Author's estimates based on U.S Department of the Treasury, 2021.

Table 2, in addition to addressing US financial sanctions, shows the division of antagonistic relations between the US and the countries listed. For example, Iran's leadership among countries financially sanctioned by the US is due to US pressure to disconnect SWIFT from Iranian banks (Zucker, 2021, p. 32). According to Frankel (2023, p. 7), the frequent increase in the use of sanctions by the US causes some countries to move away from allying with the dollar. Or, more pragmatically, it causes the search for alternatives. Consequently, it is analyzed that China develops commercial rapprochements with both US allies and its opponents. In a similar vein, it is understood that the fear of a dollar-led system is inherent to US allies and rivals because, due to the US sanctions against Iran, countries and companies with commercial relations with Iran have begun a process of searching for monetary alternatives for direct payments (Zucker, 2021, p. 33). Similarly, with the aim of generating greater monetary flexibility in the French financial system, China has begun to allow banks located in France to pay debts in Yuan through investments in China or through the purchase of imports (Kondratov, 2021, p. 43).

[...] Historically, to become hegemonic, a state would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, i.e., not an order in which one state directly exploits others but an order which most other states (or at least those within reach of the hegemony) could find compatible with their interests. Such an order would hardly be conceived in inter-state terms alone, for this would likely bring to the fore oppositions of state interests (Cox, 1983, p. 171)

In parallel with the dollarized economic system, China uses the common interest of the other states in monetary diversification to consolidate strategic alliances with objectives that are opposed to the current financial and

economic structure. The aim would be similarly “non-exploitative,” as mentioned by Cox, because reducing the role of the dollar would bring greater economic freedom, essentially to peripheral economies. This process, although prone to reprisals by the hegemonic state, is promoted by China through economic advantages of mutual benefits between the parties. This is also because US economic sanctions are another condition for closer relations between peripheral countries and the Chinese economy — as identified in the previous topic. However, unlike how Cox wrote about the difficulty of interstate coalition, China develops an antagonism to the dollar as one of the central points of interstate interest for de-dollarization, reconciling favorable economic benefits of the Chinese economy with the increase in the country’s monetary independence.

China’s rapprochement with the BRICS member countries permeates the intention of monetary expansion. According to Putin, during a visit by Xi Jinping to Russia in March 2023: “We have reached 65% of the trade volume with settlements in our local currencies, and this will allow us to secure international trade from the influences of third countries and reduce our exposure to the currency market (Sky News, 2023)⁶.

Following the BRICS initiative to create a new international payment system, Enoch Godongwana, South Africa’s finance minister, states that the institution seeks to create trade facilities in local currencies, even though Russia is giving greater priority to using this system as an alternative to SWIFT (Reuters, 2023). Not only that, Naledi Pandor, South Africa’s minister of international relations and cooperation, reported that leaders from more than 23 countries⁷ have confirmed their interest in joining BRICS (TeleSUR, 2023).

India, in parallel, suffers more instability due to its links with Russian monetary diversification proposals, because, although in early 2023 there was a signal of trading Russian oil in Yuan between both countries, the increase in barrel prices imposed by the US pressured India not to include the Yuan as a payment currency (Bloomberg, 2023). In other words, to the extent that India’s economic relations with the US are more dependent, it is observed that the US articulation is not passively attributed within the actions opposing its currency in the current context, with the use of its monetary and economic influence being essential in the privileged maintenance position of the Dollar.

In agreement with what Dilma Rousseff, president of the NDB, stated in an interview with China’s international news channel, one of the current problems is the non-convertibility of the currencies of the Global South countries in foreign trade, with the position of the dollar as the international reference currency being an “exorbitant privilege”⁸ (CGTN, 2023). In the same month, Dilma Rousseff announced the NDB’s evaluation of issuing debts in Rand⁹, Real, and Rupees¹⁰ for loans, since there are already loans in RMB (Folha de S.Paulo, 2023).

Unlike the New Silk Road, where China is more planned to incorporate the RMB as an alternative currency, BRICS is being developed as an economic arrangement of mutual interests, in which de-dollarization is included. Consequently, since the announcement of Saudi Arabia and Iran’s entry into BRICS in August 2023, Chinese political articulations have established their strategic economic association through the duality of US foreign policy, which is reflected in their interstate relationships. This is because, as defined in Table 2, due to the fact that Iran has 21% of US financial sanctions, it becomes easier for the country to join the institution. Furthermore, the inclusion of Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Argentina would be an expansion of BRICS in the African and Latin American continents, consolidating an increase, not only in national medium and long-term economic growth projects, but in sectors that are fundamental to maintaining economic development, such as the oil sector led by the three Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, BRICS is linked to financial pluralization, because, given the importance of the countries already present and the interest of other emergent economies in participating, de-dollarization is a friction for the US and its allies. In other words, as stated by French President Emmanuel

⁶ As analyzed by Sergey Glazyev in the same month, the debate on a new currency within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, although surrounded by strong obstacles, is an important possibility for the development of the energy sector trade between China, Russia, India, and Iran, given that there is an increase in bilateral trade in their own currencies (The Candle.co, 2023).

⁷ The countries that applied to join BRICS were: Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Venezuela, Vietnam, Honduras, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Nigeria, Palestine, Ethiopia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Thailand.

⁸ Dilma Rousseff made a clear reference to the book “Exorbitant Privilege: The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System”, by Barry Eichengreen (2011), given the French dissatisfaction with the privileged position of the dollar in 1960.

⁹ Official currency of South Africa.

¹⁰ Official currency of India.

Macron, the expansion of BRICS is a “fragmentation of the world” (Sputnik, 2023), however, of the dollarized world.

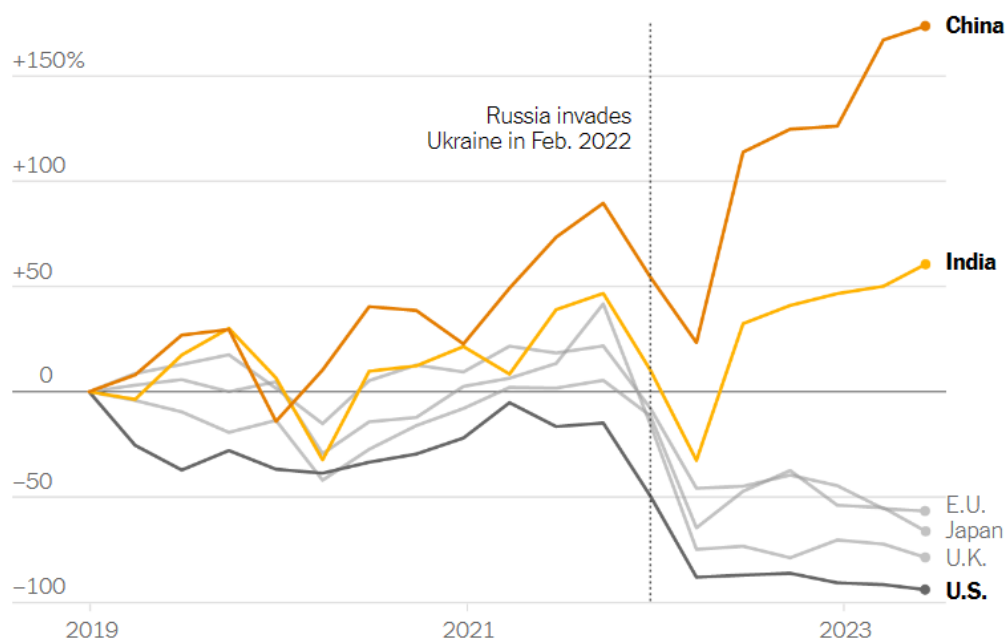
3. Chinese de-dollarization strategies in the context of strengthening South-South relations and the war in Ukraine

Although Torres and Pose (2018, p. 18) argued that the process of expanding the RMB as a monetary alternative in the international system stagnated in 2018 due to the low convertibility of the currency during the period, it is observed that the Ukrainian War was one of the predominant factors for the resumption of the RMB growth in international trade transactions. Since 2019, China and Russia have already agreed on de-dollarizing movements within the mutual commercial and financial development of both countries, which were based on using their respective national currencies in bilateral financial transactions (Kondratov, 2021, p. 44). Thus, with the advancement of Western isolationist economic sanctions against Russia, it is understood that, in addition to favoring Russia’s rapprochement with emerging economies, they corroborated the Sino-Russian financial and economic coalition.

According to a document from the European Parliament (2022), the Ukrainian War resulted in the greatest financial instability in the price policy within the Eurozone, since, through the inflationary escalation in Europe, the significant deterioration of public trust in the European Central Bank. In contrast, Russia has seen positive economic growth even one year after the start of the war, given growth from -1.2% in 2022 to 3.59% in 2023 (O’Neill, 2024). This established Russia as a unique economic agent within the European economic and financial sphere. In this sense, Russia’s interstate relationship with emerging countries has incorporated an attraction into the de-dollarization policy developed between Russia and China since the mid-2000s (Kondratov, 2021), also due to Russia’s necessity to drain resources abroad — which were traded with Western Europe before the war.

In 2023, the debate about the creation of a new currency integrated into BRICS was intensified by the desire for monetary emancipation from the dollar that the member countries have. The development of closer relations between the member states began with the political-economic changes of the Ukrainian War, because, given the greater use of the RMB in commercial transactions between the participating states, an unofficial monetary diversification is observed. This is because, through the economic and financial sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries since the beginning of the war, Russia’s trade relations with its partners have been strengthened, boosting imports from China and India, while there has been a drastic reduction in Russian imports from the European Union, Japan, England, and the USA, as illustrated in Chart 2. This process, in addition to being beneficial to China, establishes a favorable environment for the projection of the RMB and other currencies in the Russian financial system, since, according to Andrei Belousov, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, by the end of 2023, bilateral trade between Russia and China was defined at 95% use in the Yuan and Ruble, with the Yuan currently being the primary foreign currency in Russia¹¹ (Chen, 2024).

¹¹ Prior to the economic sanctions on Russia, the country traded mainly in dollars or rubles (Chen, 2024).



Graph 2: Change in imports from Russia by country (2019-2023)

Source: Wu, Ashley, 2023, *apud The New York Times*, 2023.

As of 2024, the official integration of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Iran, and Ethiopia into BRICS resulted in a more robust configuration for the economic arrangement, given the total representation of its members in global GDP at 36% and 50% of the planet's hydrocarbon reserves (Valor-São Paulo, 2024). However, while some countries declared interest in joining BRICS, Argentina refused to join the bloc, due to its position against the bloc, mainly in favor of the USA (Valor-São Paulo, 2024). As described by Cox (1981, p. 219), institutions can become a battleground of opposing tendencies, with Javier Milei's refusal being an illustration of permanence in the economic status quo of links to structures more focused on the North Global. As set out in the European Parliament (Jütten, Marc and Falkenberg, Dorothee, 2024), the European Union declared its fear of developing further trade relations with BRICS+ due to political differences in the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, but, essentially, due to the concern of the member of the Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) about the expansion of BRICS+ and its potential currency and its consequence on the European Union's trade policy.

Authors such as Kuehnlenz et al. (2023) and Zharivok (2023) show that an alternative to de-dollarization would be the formulation of a digital currency. Although the authors discussed this before the entry of the new members of the economic arrangement, Zharivok (2023) analyzes that cryptocurrencies are an option for BRICS because they are not tied to a central monetary authority, but it is difficult to predict the scope of a new currency in view of international use. On the other hand, Kuehnlenz et. al. (2023) establish reasoning aimed at the foundation of a Central Bank of Digital Currencies, which would be more technologically advanced, since, the hybridization of virtual and physical currencies, monetary diversity would increase efficiency and reduce the costs of international transactions. In any case, it is analyzed that, through both authors, the construction of a less dollarized international economic and financial system must be designed through the distancing of the current financial structures, as well as SWIFT.

By launching the digital yuan pilot initiative, in which Russia is already involved, China is responding to the dollarized system based on the challenge of a new financial digital revolution by adopting their own state control over international monetary policy (Zharivok, 2023, p. 14). Russia's interest in de-dollarization is based on the protectionist prerogative of the national economy because there is an intention to avoid external actions of internal economic decline (Zharivok, 2023, p. 15). For example, Western economic sanctions affected the market value of the Ruble by 30%, even though Russia previously established payment alternatives in RMB or non-dollarized currencies (Frankel, 2023 p. 7). Therefore, the War in Ukraine demonstrated a more optimizing perspective for Russia in developing de-dollarizing alternatives — which are mostly supported by China —, but which also

encouraged the dynamization and grouping of States from the South Global interested in a financial and economic system of an emancipatory nature.

According to Cox (1981, p. 219), it is necessary to distinguish between hegemonic and non-hegemonic structures because hegemony cannot be reduced to a purely institutional dimension. In other words, reflecting what BRICS+ tends to be, the structuring of its situation is not limited to China's interests alone, but is organized through mutual interests among its members, given the commitment to integration and intra-institutional coalition for de-dollarization. Consequently, the movement towards greater South-South relations is a relatively new international order within the current international system, which remains aimed at perpetuating and privileging developed countries in interstate relations. Although BRICS+ remains with a reduced number of members compared to other more consolidated economic arrangements, China is strengthening its economic ties beyond the bloc, given the New Silk Road initiative as a pivot for developing more effective intercontinental integration.

In recent years, the expansion of South-South relations has shown that countries are positioning themselves to mitigate the harmful effects on their own economies. The de-dollarization of more emancipatory monetary purposes is being developed with the perspective of emerging countries to reduce their monetary dependence on the dollar, since, to the detriment of US objectives, the use of the "weaponization of the dollar," also called by Frankel (2019), is a reality in the current US strategy. According to the economist (2019), the applicability of the dollar as a weapon refers to the US exploitation of the currency's dominance in order to expand the extraterritorial reach of US law and policy. However, the implementation of the dollar's ordering position is contradicted within the Russian sphere, given that, in an interview with Tucker Swanson¹², Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the US expectation of the collapse of the Russian economy after sanctions, but as a result of monetary diversification, the Russian economic and financial system remained relatively stable.

This event is not only due to Chinese collaboration in the monetary pluralization of Russian trade relations, but also due to the desires of China and other emerging peripheral economies to contain the influence of the dollar in the global economic and financial system. Unlike BRICS+, where there is a greater projection of mutual interests among member states, the New Silk Road is characterized as a non-institutional initiative with a logistical purpose, which would benefit China by expanding the reach of the RMB in international trade. In contrast to the analysis formulated by Cox (2007, p. 119-120) regarding the role of international organizations, China is building a structure of transcontinental magnitude that reduces the global domination of hegemonic powers, being a project to also reduce hierarchies between states given the protection of the New Silk Road against US interference.

China's intensified positioning in designing new alternatives for greater use of the RMB is a result of the very compulsory actions of the top of the hierarchy of the international and financial system, because, in order to avoid coercive movements against their economies, emerging states take advantage of Russian conduct to integrate into the new financial dynamics. With the fact that the Ukrainian War has forced Russia to take a more active stance in mitigating the negative effects of economic sanctions from the West, China has had economic advantages that have brought Russia closer to agreeing to economic measures that both favor monetary diversification and expansion of the RMB. The purpose of both being to expand de-dollarization in the system. Therefore, it is analyzed that the increasingly close alignment between China, Russia, and other countries of the South Global in the last two years is part of a ramifying Chinese strategy, which directs different interstate and institutional segments to promote de-dollarization.

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¹² kremlin. Interview to Tucker Carlson. Youtube, 9 February 2024. Available in: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYfByTcY49k>>, 21/04/2024. Interview between Tucker Carlson and Vladimir Putin.

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Persuasive Britain: The Generation of Soft Power in the Facebook Pages of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt

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Abstract

This study explores the soft power that is currently generated on and through the Facebook pages of the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Egypt and British Council in Egypt. In his classic text, 'Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics', Joseph Nye argues that successful international institutions and policies should be based on both hard power (coercion, military power, and payment) and soft power (consent, attraction, and seduction). This paper claims that the social media pages of the British Embassy and British Council generate and disseminate soft power in order to pursue the interests of national institutions based in Britain such as the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and British universities and schools. This research is based on a nuanced critical multimodal discourse analysis of posts published on their Facebook pages between June the 1st, 2023 and May the 1st, 2024. These social media platforms highlight mutual spheres of public interaction between the UK and Egypt, synergising large-scale public and private interests in building British prosperity, 'safeguarding' British national security, and supporting British nationals, in that order of priorities (FCDO 2024). This nuanced analysis of soft media power concludes that these social media pages represent the doctrine of 'Foreign Aid in the national interest' (USAID 2002) in which large-scale private British interests prevail. Official Facebook posts tend to be static and monolithic rather than dynamic and interactive, presenting and promoting rather than personalising or debating large-scale national policies and initiatives.

Keywords: Soft Power, British Embassy, British Council, Facebook Pages

1. Introduction

In May 2024, the Facebook platform of the British Embassy in Egypt, the diplomatic arm of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) uploaded a video of the current British ambassador, Gareth Bayley embarking on a three-day tour of the cities of Qena, Luxor and Aswan in upper Egypt to commemorate a 'long-term relationship based on development and investment' (UK in Egypt 2024).

In the same month, British Council in Egypt, the educational arm of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office announced a meeting between the UK Minister for Schools, three UK Ministers in the Department for Education and their Egyptian counterparts, the Egyptian Minister of Education and Technical Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific research in order to share their commitment to educational innovation and excellence and to enhance the International Public Schools (IPS) program in Egypt (British Council Egypt 2024).

The aim of this paper is to explore the strategic online discourse of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), this being the main institution of British interests and policies abroad, thereby providing insight into the current nature of British soft power, and into the current use of social media as an instrument of public digital diplomacy abroad (Cull 2013). The main issues are, how does the FCDO construct and communicate soft power in Egypt? How dynamic and engaging is the relationship between British diplomatic, cultural and educational institutions and their publics in Egypt? How, to what extent, and to what end do the social media pages of the British Embassy and British Council engage their audiences in Egypt?

2. Theoretical insights

2.1. Soft power

The main goal of this paper is to investigate the claim that the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) uses social media to generate and promote soft power in Egypt. The notion of soft power can be traced back to Harvard Professor Joseph Nye, and his influential publication, 'Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics' (2004). Professor Nye served as Assistant Secretary of Defence, Chair of the National Intelligence Council, and Deputy Under Secretary of State in the United States, implying that he has the interests of the US at heart and would 'be the last person to deny the importance of maintaining [our] military strength' (Nye 2004, p. 3). Nye therefore suggests that power has two components or sides. These two components are hard power (military strength) and soft power, 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments' (ibid). Professor Nye connects soft power to legitimisation, arguing that soft power 'arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies' (ibid), and reminiscing on Liberal or neo-Liberal representation of Freedom, of young people behind the Iron Curtain listening to American music and news on Radio Free Europe; of Chinese students symbolizing their protests in Tiananmen Square by creating a replica of the Statue of Liberty; of newly liberated Afghans in 2001 asking for a copy of the Bill of Rights; of young Iranians today surreptitiously watching banned American videos and satellite television broadcasts in the privacy of their homes' (ibid).

Professor Nye highlights the advantage of using social media to exercise soft power, because 'information is power, and modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history' (p. 25) and the advantage that the United States has over less democratic regimes, because '[our] values [such as] democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive' (p. 24). Nye correlates Liberal rights to Liberal and Neoliberal development institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. He divides soft power into three categories, culture (high and low), politics, and legitimate foreign policies (p. 44). Then he suggests that US and European cultures are superior to other cultures, that 'the closest competitor to the United States in soft power resources is Europe' because 'European art, literature, music, design, fashion, and food have long served as global cultural magnets' (p. 169).

The University of Southern California (USC) Centre on Public Diplomacy (2024) is dedicated to the measurement and exercise of soft power in line with these self-serving principles, arguing that, 'More than ever, the success of foreign policy depends on the ability to attract, build, and mobilise networks of actors to work collaboratively [and] the ability to achieve objectives through attraction and persuasion.'

The USC Centre has therefore identified and measured six categories of soft power (government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power), polling 11,000 people in 25 countries in each region

of the globe, thereby providing a subjective account of the key soft power assets of countries. Soft power in government measures ‘commitment to freedom, human rights, and democracy.’ Culture identifies ‘the global reach and appeal of a nation’s cultural outputs, both pop-culture and high-culture.’ Soft power in education prioritises ‘the level of human capital, the contribution to scholarship, and attractiveness to international students.’ Global engagement measures ‘the strength of a country’s diplomatic networks and its contribution to global engagement and development’. Soft power in enterprise prioritises ‘the attractiveness of a country’s economic model, business friendliness, and capacity for innovation.’ Digital soft power measures ‘digital infrastructure and capabilities in digital diplomacy.’

Professor Nye characterises soft power as a method of persuasion that permits nation states in general and the United States in particular to pursue their interests and achieve success in world politics through both coercion and consent (2004, p. 3). Nye’s understanding of soft power is therefore institutionalist (Barnett 2021). Institutional notions of international relations ‘acknowledge a mixture of coercion and consent’ (ibid, p. 4), arguing that states can ‘build institutions that can induce an equilibrium’ in international relations through contracts and social arrangements (consent) and mechanisms that ensure compliance (coercion).

Institutionalist notions of international relations are therefore based on a combination of coercion and consent in contrast to realist and constructivist insights into international relations. Realist insights into international relations are based on coercion and balance of power rather than consent (Barnett 2021). Constructivist insights into coercion and consent on the other hand suggest that there is little consent in international relations, because institutional structures constitute or dictate ‘the subjectivities, identities, interests, social capacities, and practices of actors’ (ibid).

Nye’s practical goal seems to be to promote the interests of the US at the expense of the rest of the world (2004, p. 24) through a combination of coercion (military power) and consent (political attraction and seduction). Nye is supporting the capitalist interests of the US. Capitalism in turn is based on coercion and violence that is ‘experienced as physical, symbolic, ritualistic or psychological ... depending on one’s location in the distributed global network of production and consumption’ (Zwick 2018, p. 914). Nye is also pursuing legitimacy, but it is a legitimacy that the US is imposing on the rest of the world (Barnett 2021).

The main institutions of soft power (government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power institutions) might seem to be benign. But political violence has always exercised itself obscurely through the workings of ‘institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent’ (Chomsky and Foucault 2006, p. 41). Modern institutions are based on disciplinary power (1977, p. 176), on bio-power (1978, p. 140) and on regimes of so-called truth,

‘The regime or politics of truth, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true’ (Foucault 1980, p. 131).

To sum up, Nye’s goal (2004) is to maximise the power and promote the business interests of the United States by maintaining coercion (US military power, investments, and business opportunities) and by exploiting consent (US ideological power, investments, and business opportunities).

2.2. Nationalism and national interests

The second goal of this paper is to investigate the claim that the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) uses soft power and social media discourse to promote British nationalism and national interests in Egypt. This paper suggests that the Facebook pages of the British Embassy and British Council play a crucial role in conducting the official mission of the modern British nation abroad. Such institutions construct, develop and disseminate nationalism abroad, embedding the international public relations of the modern nation state (L’Etang 2009: 614). International diplomatic and educational institutions such as these are therefore dedicated to public (digital) diplomacy (Cull 2013).

Llobera (1999) discusses a broad range of theoretical insights into nationalism, primordial theories that suggest that the modern state is superimposed on ethnic identities and ties to the land (Smith 1991), instrumentalist theories that suggest that nationalism is an ideological tool of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism (Anderson 2016). Primordial theorists such as Smith (1991) suggest that nationalism is based on collective cultural and ethnic identities: to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit of population to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit to notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unit and its culture' (p. 25). Instrumentalist theorists such as Anderson (2016) connect nationalism to the bourgeoisie, to nationalised languages, media, and marketplaces, and to the construction of imagined national communities.

Žižek (2008) in contrast provides a philosophical and psychological understanding of nationalism, by arguing that nationalism is 'a sublime object of ideology' and 'an ideological fantasy' (p. 30). He claims that ideology is 'an (unconscious) fantasy' that structures social reality rather than 'an illusion masking the real state of things' (p. 30).

To sum up, the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) uses soft power to promote British nationalism and national interests in Egypt. The objectives of the FCDO are instrumentalist, pragmatic and profit-centred, rather than primordial, philosophical or psychological (Llobera 1999).

2.3. Public (digital) diplomacy, online activism, counter-public sphere

The third goal of this paper is to explore the claim that the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) is engaged in public (digital) diplomacy in Egypt. Public diplomacy is defined as 'a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies' (Tuch 1990, p. 3).

Cull (2013) provides historical insight into the role and nature of public (digital) diplomacy in the United States, beginning with the Cold War Internet practices of the United States Information Agency (USIA). In the early 1990s, the USIA used the Internet to present information. But in the 2000s, the Internet became a vehicle of blogs, crowd-sourced knowledge, and social media platforms such as Facebook (2004) and YouTube (2005) in which individuals and groups could engage in social interaction and construct online identities (Singh 2013). This communication revolution increased the importance of public opinion and diplomacy based on online exchange, dialogue and mutuality (Melissen 2006).

The main instruments of online diplomacy are social networks and online communities, user-generated comments and content, and horizontal networks of exchange (Cull 2013). The use of these instruments has been termed Public Diplomacy 2.0 (ibid). Cull explores important elements in successful online diplomacy, namely listening (engaging a foreign public by listening to it and channelling this information into policies), advocacy (engaging a foreign public by explaining policies), cultural diplomacy (engaging a foreign public by exporting culture), exchange diplomacy (engaging a foreign public through direct contact) and international broadcasting (engaging a foreign public through mainstream news broadcasts). Cull (2013) sadly admits that US officials simply do not listen, rarely incorporating foreign public opinion into public policy, and that advocacy (explaining policies to the foreign public) predominates in US public diplomacy.

Dodd and Collins (2017) concur, having investigated the use of social media in 41 European embassies, concluding that these embassies primarily engaged in information sharing, that Western European embassies (like their US counterparts) generally engage in advocacy, and that Central and Eastern European embassies primarily engaged in cultural diplomacy (exporting national culture).

Curtin and Gaither (2005) argue that digital diplomacy and public relations are intertwined. Both diplomats and public relations practitioners are responsible for official institutional communications and relations with broader publics and both have an interest in media coverage and public opinion. Both are also engaged in surveillance, secrecy, crisis management, information wars, psychological operations and propaganda.

Entman (2008) therefore argues that diplomats and public relations practitioners should cultivate 'active engagement and empathy with audiences, rather than simply making pronouncements to them' and that the relationship between diplomats and publics should be based on 'mutual understanding' rather than 'unconditional support' (p. 100). Tomblason and Wolf (2017) conclude that public relations professionals need to become cultural curators, engaging audiences, and sharing rather than imposing cultural opinions and content.

Researchers into digital activism suggest that online communication technologies and platforms are bridging the digital and cultural divide between professional communicators and audiences, thereby addressing and equalising power inequalities between government institutions, business corporations, non-governmental organisations, and activist groups (Xiong et al. 2019). Grassroots organisations such as #bringourgirlsback, #equalityforall and #blacklivesmatter are leveraging global campaigns to support their causes (ibid).

Other theorists have been even more optimistic, notably Castells (2012), who provided a very different vision of the role of social media in generating consent and voicing dissent, by envisaging networked societies based on democratic discourse, thereby bypassing the private interests embedded in and implemented through governments and big business. Castells declared the Internet to be a counter-public sphere, 'born from their disgust with their governments and the political class, be it dictatorial or, in their view, pseudo-democratic [and] prompted by their outrage towards the perceived complicity between the financial elite and the political elite' (2012, p. 21).

In the Brave New World of the Internet, political and social justice is finally served, 'Financial magicians went from being the objects of public envy to the targets of universal contempt. Politicians became exposed as corrupt and as liars. Governments were denounced' (ibid, p. 1).

This paper suggests, on the other hand, that Castells exaggerates the role of the Internet in the powerful social movements that occurred in 2011, such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. His arguments are drowned in techno-euphoria and techno-determinism (Fuchs 2012, p. 1).

To sum up, the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) is engaged in public (digital) diplomacy in Egypt (Cull 2013), but its objectives are to promote rather than negotiate pre-determined Neo-Liberal development policies. The Facebook pages of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt are not designed to promote online activism or to provide a counter public sphere for local dissidents as Castells suggests (2012).

2..4. Levels of engagement

The fourth and final goal of this paper is to explore how, to what extent, and to what end the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) engages its audiences on the Facebook pages of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt.

Strauß et al. (2015) argue that embassies and consulates should, 'interact with host governments, local businesses and nongovernmental organizations, the media, educational institutions, and private citizens [in order to] promote and represent the home country in the host country (e.g., to stimulate export)' (p. 370).

Strauß et al. (ibid) therefore suggest that diplomatic and educational institutions such as the British Embassy and British Council should build interactive networks and relationships between stakeholders, using social media to engage 'the general public and specific audiences across national borders' (ibid). Graham et al. (2013) argue that this interaction between diplomatic organisations and their audiences should be direct, continuous and unrestricted. Claiming that effective online communication should be 'interactive, personalized, positive, relevant, and transparent,' Strauß et al. (2015, p. 370) argue that, in the main, embassies do use 'positive sentiment' but do not 'engage in direct interactive and personal communication' or reach out to broad audiences.

Bjola (2015) concurs, arguing that diplomatic social media has not fulfilled its promise, by transcending 'hierarchical chains of diplomatic communication', by 'bringing ordinary people into the spotlight of political life

and making their voice heard' and by permitting 'diplomats to directly engage foreign publics in a sustained dialogue' (p. 2). Diplomatic social media platforms have attracted public engagement in South Korea and Japan (Park and Lim 2014) but the Turkish government Twitter platform indulges in monolithic image cultivation (Uysal et al. 2012). Bjola (2015, p. 27) concludes that 'digital diplomacy is being primarily used as an instrument of information dissemination and much less for engaging the audience in a two-way dialogue.'

To sum up, diplomatic social media provide limited engagement with their publics, generally promoting hierarchical chains of diplomatic command and rarely giving people a voice in their policies. The next part of this paper provides nuanced insight into the Facebook pages of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt in order to measure the nature and extent of their engagement with their audience.

3. Case studies

This paper has selected two case studies to investigate the use of social media and the generation of soft power on the part of the FCDO, the British Commonwealth and Development Office. The two case studies are the Facebook pages of the British Embassy (59 posts on British Embassy Facebook page, June 1st, 2023 to May 1st, 2024) and British Council (28 posts on British Council Facebook page, May 23rd, 2024 to May 28th, 2024). This part of the paper will explore 1) the method used to measure the use of social media and the generation of soft power (multimodal discourse analysis), 2) the social media platform that has been used to perform digital diplomacy (Facebook), 3) the evolving nature and goals of the FCDO, the British Embassy and British Council, 4) the use of social media and the generation of soft power in the British Embassy Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ukinegypt>), and 5) the use of social media and the generation of soft power in British Council Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilEgypt>).

3.1. Method

The current research uses critical multimodal discourse analysis to explore the Facebook page communications of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt in order to understand their evolving interactive discourse practices inside the current constraints of self-censorship.

Critical discourse analysis is a useful tool in this research into the generation of soft power in the Facebook pages of the FCDO because of its rigorous insights into the practice and re-production and possible resistance to 'social-power, dominance and inequality' (van Dijk 2015). Critical discourse analysis, according to van Dijk (ibid) represents 'a critical attitude towards the use of discourse practices to maintain the status quo in power relationships,' this being the central aim of this paper: to investigate the method, extent, and end of the social media pages of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt.

This article uses multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the interconnection or intermingling between language, sound and image (Kress 2011). Multimodal discourse analysis is based on three insights into meaning (Halliday 1978): ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Ideational meaning provides insight into people and objects. Interpersonal meaning provides insights into social interaction. Textual meaning provides insight into context and structure. Multimodal discourse analysis therefore provides useful insight into the ideational, interpersonal and textual significance of diplomatic discourse, and into the interplay between language, sound and image in online public diplomacy.

Multimodal discourse analysis also highlights the importance of polysemy, the interweaving of semiotic resources such as music, captions, voices, background sounds, tone, still images and footage that capture the interest, minds and heart of the public (Phillips and Ghalwash 2019). This insight into polysemy, into 'how different kinds of meaning making are combined or orchestrated as an integrated, multimodal whole' (Kress and Leeuwen 2006) is crucial in this research into the generation of soft power on multimodal Internet platforms such as Facebook.

3.2. Platform

Embassies and government institutions such as the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt have their own official social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Of the multitude of social media platforms, Facebook remains globally one of the largest and the most popular (Silver et al. 2019). Radcliffe and Abuhmaid (2023) provide a rigorous interpretation of social media use in Egypt, claiming that 42 million social media users in Egypt prefer to use Facebook, compared to TikTok (23.7 million), Instagram (15.4 million), and Twitter (5.8 million). Because Egypt is an important strategic partner of the United Kingdom, these case studies contextualize the current global nature and role of such social media platforms in managing international diplomatic relationships and generating soft power, by interpreting the nuanced interplay of language, sound, and image on the main Facebook platforms that the FCDO operates in Egypt, the British Embassy Facebook platform (<https://www.facebook.com/ukinegypt>) and British Council Facebook platform (<https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilEgypt>).

3.3. *The FCDO, the British Embassy, and British Council*

The main goal of these case studies is to investigate the claim that the FCDO (the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office), the British Embassy, and British Council use social media discourse to generate and promote soft power in Egypt. This part of the paper explores the current political and economic nature and role and interaction between these three central British institutions.

3.3.1. The FCDO

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (2024) developed out of the Foreign Office that used correspondents of the Times newspaper to provide insights into foreign affairs. During the First World War, the Foreign Office set up the Arab Bureau in Cairo in order to collect intelligence from around the Middle East (ibid). During the Cold War, the Information Research Department (IRD) disseminated propaganda against socialist and anti-colonial movements. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) emerged in 1968, merging the British Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Office. The FCO supported and promoted international British business interests (through UK Trade & Investment), secured the rights of British nationals abroad (through consular teams in Britain and overseas, and through UK Visas and Immigration) and managed immigration from abroad. Its four central foreign policy goals were, 1) to counter terrorism, 2) to prevent and resolve conflict, 3) to promote low-carbon, high-growth global economies, and 4) to develop effective international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union.

On 16 June 2020, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson created the current FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) by combining the FCO and the Department for International Development (ibid). The FCDO employs and deploys around 17,000 employees in their diplomatic and development offices, that include 281 embassies and high commissions abroad.

The current policy goals of the FCDO are, 1) to safeguard British national security by countering terrorism, by controlling the arms trade, and by reducing conflict, 2) to build British prosperity ‘by increasing exports and investment, opening markets, ensuring access to resources, and promoting sustainable global growth,’ and 3) to support British nationals abroad ‘through modern and efficient consular services’ (ibid).

Lazell (2023) provides crucial political insights into current British development policies, arguing that since the 2010s, donors have insisted that international aid must be used in the national interest of the donor, thereby reflecting the United States policies enshrined in a document entitled ‘Foreign Aid in the National Interest’ (USAID 2002). Perceived risks to UK national interest have accordingly been categorised as conflict and instability, terrorism, organised crime and migration (DFID 2018b).

Lazell (2023) is critical of this Neo-Liberal turn in British development policies, claiming that such policies are designed to secure and benefit British interests through dispossession, global capital accumulation, and employment opportunities in the global marketplace, thereby addressing terrorism both home and abroad and reducing migration to Europe. She argues that the underlying goal behind FCDO development policies is to reduce

migration to the UK and to 'ensure that ... UK businesses are a partner of choice for Africa in terms of trade and investment' (DFID 2018a), these being two important goals of the British Embassy and British Council in Egypt.

The policy goals of the FCDO UK-Egypt Development Partnership (UK-Egypt Development Partnership Summary 2024) reflect the policy goals of the FCDO International Development White Paper, by highlighting the need to accelerate progress on 'eliminating extreme poverty, tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, and [meeting] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030' (ibid).

The current UK-Egypt Development Partnership Summary (2024) provides no historical context or insight into the injustice and atrocities that characterised UK-Egypt relations during the period of British occupation, 1882-1992 (Morton 2019), but instead highlights the economic potential of Egypt, its hydrocarbons, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, its improvements in macroeconomic performance, and its drive 'to promote sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation, to create a level playing field between public and private businesses, and to reform the business climate in order to unleash Egypt's huge economic potential.' The stated goals of this partnership are, 1) 'to build a strong UK/Egypt long-term Climate Partnership, providing technical assistance and prioritising green trade and investment opportunities,' 2) 'to pursue economic reform, social rights' and investment opportunities, 3) 'to protect vulnerable groups including women' and 'to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the UK and Egypt in terms of people-to-people, institution to institution and government to government links through development programmes' (UK-Egypt Development Partnership Summary 2024).

3.3.2. British Embassy in Egypt

Embassies and diplomats are intermediaries who communicate, negotiate, and persuade (L'Etang 2009), shaping and operationalising national identity and interests abroad. The official Internet site of the British Embassy in Egypt promises support in consular affairs, economic affairs, political affairs, congress, public diplomacy, cultural affairs, education, national defence and security (<https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-cairo>). The British Embassy in Egypt is located at 7 Ahmed Ragheb, Qasr Ad Dobarah, Qasr El Nil, Cairo. The bilateral relationship between Britain and Egypt is primarily represented by Gareth Bayley, the British Ambassador in Egypt (as of May 2021) and Mohamed Abulkheir, the Egyptian Consul General in London (as of October 2022). This research investigates current British Embassy posts to its Facebook platform, providing insight into the dynamics of UK-Egypt relations, contributing to research at the intersection of online diplomatic and strategic communication (Strauß et al. 2015), and providing insight into the use and level of engagement in its Facebook platform.

The official platform of the British Embassy in Egypt presents its official role in Egypt, maintaining and developing relations between the two nations in areas of development such as 'trade and investment, education, culture, development, energy and climate security and defence' that reflect current international development policy (White Paper on International Development 2024). It also promises to provide consular services to British nationals living in and visiting Egypt. These services include Egypt travel advice, urgent help, emergency travel documents, and notarial services.

3.3.3. British Council in Egypt

Set up in 1934 in the UK, the British Council opened its first overseas offices in Cairo and in Bucharest (Streeter 2024). In 1940, King George VI granted the British Council a Royal Charter for promoting 'a wider knowledge of [the United Kingdom] and the English language abroad and developing closer cultural relations between [the UK] and other countries' (British Council 2023). In 1942, the British Council began to promote British culture and generate soft power abroad. In 1948, the British Council sponsored a tour of high British culture to Australia and New Zealand: Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh performed three classic British plays, Richard III, The School for Scandal, and Skin of Our Teeth, to audiences of over 300,000 people, and made a profit of around £40,000 (\$50,000).

Jeff Streeter, Director of British Council in Egypt (2024) refers to a common thread running through British Council policies and practices since its inception, 'English language teaching & learning; teacher training & development; testing; academic/university exchange; science; and within the arts, film, exhibitions, drama, music and dance'. The main change, according to Streeter is the scale, 'In the 1940s and 1950s, each of our Institutes [in Egypt] taught hundreds of people a year. Now we measure the number of English students in the tens of thousands across our six branches. And whereas we used to teach only adults, now half of our students are under 18' (ibid).

Other sectors in Egypt have also boomed, exams ('many of them with our partner schools network for International GCSE exams, which has over 120 schools attached to it'), teacher training ('a large scale nationwide project with the Ministry of Education'), the £50 million (\$65 million) Newton Mosharafa Fund ('a large bilateral fund to support scientific research and capacity development of researchers'), the Premier Skills programme ('using sport to develop life skills across Egypt and especially for women and girls' through partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports in Egypt). This expansion is connected to technological development, the digital component and the Facebook platform (investigated in this paper).

The British Council annual report (2023) similarly lauds its own progress and achievement, in creating 'thousands of opportunities to bring people, institutions and governments internationally together with the UK's arts and culture, education and English language sectors,' thereby supporting 'peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between the people of the UK and countries worldwide'. This report makes a strong connection between the policies and practices of British Council, British development policies, and the generation of soft power or 'British influence' (ibid). The report addresses and supports the UK's International Development Strategy, citing its English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme that 'has benefitted over 18,000 girls in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, building English language, digital and life skills'. British Council has also partnered with 40 governments 'to strengthen English in their education systems,' to support 'employability and positive pathways for young people,' to 'address the challenges of climate change,' and to generate £113 million in exam exports. This report supports the claim that overseas development should primarily reflect and benefit national or nationalistic British interests (source?), arguing that 'the annual intake of international students contributes £41.9 billion to the UK economy' and that 'the British Council influences 23% of those students to study in the UK' (ibid).

On 19th October 2021, British Council submitted an oral report to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee in the British Parliament, outlining its contribution to soft power, by 'increasing positive perceptions of Global Britain,' and by 'proactively engaging with key cultural stakeholder groups such as national arts councils and major UK cultural institutions, linking to major domestic events and global anniversaries, sporting events and geopolitical priorities such as Tokyo 2020 Olympics' and referring to their soft power survey that 'showed that trust in the UK government increased among those who had participated in a UK cultural initiative, making our clients twice as likely to engage economically with us, through trade, travel, study or investment' (ibid).

The policies and practices of British Council at the same time have been criticised because of their allegiance to notions of British soft power and profits. Phillipson (1992; 2009; 2011) argues that institutions such as British Council use English language education as a tool of British linguistic imperialism, privileging 'those able to use the dominant language' and perpetuating 'exploitation, injustice, inequality, and hierarchy' (2011, p. 442). He claims that global English language dominance since 1945 is based on 'gate-keeping, hegemonic paradigms, and monolingual control' and is designed to 'consolidate Anglophonic power in the information society and the knowledge economy' (ibid). Zeng et al. (2023) provide a nuanced interpretation of linguistic neo-imperialism, arguing that current English language education is 'locally-driven' (because 'the local people themselves have initiated and maintained the status and use of the colonial/imperial language because of the economic value that goes with it') and normalised.

3.3.4. The British Embassy in Egypt: using Facebook to generate soft power

The official Facebook platform of the British Embassy in Egypt is UK in Egypt (<https://www.facebook.com/ukinegypt>). The page had 398,000 followers at the time of this research. The initial image on the page is an advertisement for the Embassy's pet project, the Chevening scholarship. The advertisement has a modern font type that uses block capitals to promote the UK in general, the UK education system and the scholarship, in turn, and to invite Egyptian students to 'STUDY IN THE UK WITH CHEVENING.' The British flag, Big Ben and the crown are included in the ad, in addition to three people that could be Egyptian and are silhouetted against Tower Bridge in London, suggesting that their dreams have come true.

This research is based on 59 posts that were inserted on the official British Embassy Facebook platform between June 1st 2023 and May 1st, 2024. The posts have been divided into nine central topics, namely the British Ambassador and his team (Topic 1, 8 posts), Embassy jobs, the British royal family, religious celebrations (Topic 2, 7 posts), educational partnerships between Britain and Egypt in general and the British Chevening scholarship in particular (Topic 3, 10 posts), development and business partnerships (Topic 4, 10 posts), popular sport in general and soccer in particular (Topic 5, 7 posts) and climate change and the environment (Topic 6, 6 posts), Gaza (Topic 7, 5 posts), gender abuse (Topic 8, 4 posts) and health (Topic 9, 2 posts).

These posts reflect the general sources of soft power that Nye (2004) has explored (culture, politics, legitimate foreign policies) and the specific sources that the USC (2024) has advocated: government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power. The posts promote British interests and nationalism, reflecting the general notion of development in the national interest and the specific instrumentalist, pragmatic and profit-centred objectives of the FCDO. These posts in turn promote the current UK–Egypt Development Partnership (2024). This partnership is based on reforming the business climate in order to unleash Egypt's huge economic potential,' and on 'building a strong UK/Egypt long-term Climate Partnership' that prioritises green trade and investment opportunities' (ibid). There is no reference to, and therefore no critique of the exercise of hard power. Importantly, in the context of this research, interaction has been reduced to British Embassy statements and a very limited number of likes to indicate agreement. There is little, if any, democratic discussion or debate in the comments section of each post.

Topic 1 (The British Ambassador and his team) is represented visually through photographs of smiling British dignitaries posing in suits beside their Egyptian counterparts. Post 1 (1st May, 2024) depicts the British ambassador on a tour of the cities of Qena, Luxor and Aswan, exploring grassroots local development and investment opportunities. Post 2 (20th September, 2023) presents Matthew, his British colleague exploring unique facets (stereotypes) of Egyptian culture, cementing the gap between diplomats and visitors and the Orient. Post 3 (30th August, 2023) treats their Egyptian colleagues to a similar test of fun facts about Britain. Post 4 (24th August, 2023) takes British Deputy Ambassador Qudsi Rashid to the beautiful city of Ismailia. In Post 5 (15th July, 2023) the British Ambassador Gareth Bailey celebrates Egyptian Airlines launching its newest route to Manchester, supposedly creating cultural exchange, job opportunities, and tourism-business relations. Post 6 (11th July, 2023) promotes an Egyptian soccer academy. Post 7 (18th June, 2023) brings on the Egyptian Ministers of Petroleum and Post 8 (1st June, 2023) lauds the Climate Finance Accelerator Egypt #CFAEgypt programme. Topic 1 thereby conflates development (sustainable and otherwise) and business, aligning itself impeccably to 'development in the [British] national interest' [?]

Topic 2 (Embassy jobs, royals, and religious tolerance) uses a modern blue capitalised font to advertise job opportunities inside the Embassy, a Residence Manager (Post 9, 17th September, 2023), a Senior Trade Adviser, Healthcare and Education (Post 10, 19th November, 2023), and a Political and Communications Officer (Post 11, 3rd December, 2023). There is a photograph of King Charles (Post 12) in a blue and white suit and tie (representing the British flag), telling of his struggles with cancer and his positivity. The messages of religious tolerance and celebration wish their partners well during Ramadan and Eid with tasteful images of mosques in the background (Posts 13-15).

Topic 3 (British education in general and the British Chevening Scholarship in particular) vigorously promotes private British educational partnerships. Posts 16-22 (June 2023 to February 2024) advertise the Chevening Scholarship that the British Embassy provides to students that would like to pursue graduate studies in UK

universities. Images of proud smiling multicultural students with their certificates of achievement promote the Chevening scholarship in addition to benign smiling images of the British Ambassador silhouetted against the #IAMCHEVENING sign. These advertisements promote the British education system, its discourse, goals and skills. The process begins at the UK Education Fair where prospective students have the opportunity to visit the Chevening Programme Manager at their booth at the Global Study UK - Education Fair in Hilton Cairo Hotel (7th June, 2023). Post 16 (21st August, 2023) gives prospective students the chance to meet the 2023-2024 #ChosenForChevening scholars from Egypt. Post 17 (28th August, 2023) sets the date for applications, and the countdown begins. Posters help students complete their applications, advising them on 'key points to cover in your Chevening application.' There are numerous personal testimonials of successful candidates, such as the winner of the Chlor Leadership Fellowship who describes the Fellowship in liminal terms as 'being a very big part of the person I am now' (18th February, 2024). Like this, postgraduate Egyptian students are integrated into the transnational British education system.

Educational posts are designed to strengthen ties between Britain and Egypt through 'the successful visit of the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education delegation to the UK' to participate in the 'UK-funded Higher Education for Career Guidance and Employability' (23rd July, 2023), to career hubs that 'help you write your CV correctly and prepare you for an interview' (20th August 2023) and celebrations of successful alumni (5th February, 2024).

Topic 4 (development and business) discusses partnerships in the field of banking, mining, agriculture, food security, environmentally friendly fertiliser, sustainable cities and infrastructure (Posts 26-35). Here development and business are conflated, in a synergy of public and private national interests. The Central Bank of Egypt and The London Institute of Banking & Finance sign a memorandum of understanding (16th July, 2023) and Britain celebrates 'a significant milestone for Egypt's mining industry' that will simultaneously 'enable a stable and rewarding environment for investors, unlocking Egypt's geological potential' and promote 'sustainable growth and development' (6th August, 2023).

Topic 5 (popular sports) and Topic 6 (climate change) have a similar number of posts in spite of soaring global warming and impending environmental doom. Climate change is causing 'substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, freshwater, cryospheric [icy], and coastal and open ocean ecosystems' (IPCC 2023). The British Embassy Facebook page on the other hand has assigned equal space to both popular sports and impending environmental catastrophe, suggesting that the tone of this platform is designed to be positive and upbeat in promoting British national interests above global concerns about climate change and natural disasters. Images of national flags and team colours and smiling soccer players, both men and women celebrate national achievements and success both in Britain and in Egypt (Posts 36-42). Climate posts (Posts 43-48) advertise designated solutions to the global environmental crisis, using images of officials, a wind turbine, and King Charles making a speech (5th December, 2023). Facebook users are invited to join the Climate Finance Accelerator (CFA) program, and to acknowledge 'Egypt's impactful role as president of COP27 in 2022' (13th November, 2023).

Finally, there is Gaza (Topic 6), gender abuse (Topic 7) and health (Topic 8). The tragic case of Gaza (Topic 6) is represented visually through images of random men with British flags and the words 'UK aid' printed on the back of their yellow plastic protective jackets and aid trucks and ships in the background. On 1st April, 2024 British Lord Ahmed visits Egyptian Foreign Minister Samih Shukri to discuss humanitarian aid and Egypt is thanked for her contribution (Post 53). On 24th November, Lord Cameron announced that Britain had provided £30 million 'in additional humanitarian aid that supports trusted partners, including UN agencies working on the ground, to deliver life-saving aid to the people of Gaza,' simultaneously hoping that the killing will end and excusing the killing until the hostages are released. On 14th December, Lord David Cameron makes a statement on the killing of Palestinian civilians in Palestine (Post 55).

Gender abuse (Topic 7) is tackled diplomatically by Baroness Hodgson and her Egyptian counterpart, Dr. Maya Morsi, President of the National Council of Women in Egypt (5th June 2023), and the Pearson Edxel Award-winning Outstanding Learner thanks her mother for bringing her up (23rd March, 2024), suggesting that 'successful' motherhood is the solution to generations of systemic institutional abuse. Finally, the two posts on

health (Topic 8) tackle public health and advertise, the renowned Islam Abdelkhalek, ‘the best obesity surgeon in Egypt.’ This includes a testimonial uncharitably titled ‘the Fat lady sings!’ (10th April 2024).

3.3.5. British Council in Egypt: using Facebook to generate soft power

The official Facebook platform of the British Council in Egypt is British Council Egypt (<https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilEgypt>). The platform had 2.1 million followers at the time of this research. The initial information and images on this platform advertise British Council Partner Schools, promise to support ‘peace and prosperity,’ and monetise the IELTS exam (the International English Language Testing System) in particular, and the British education system in general. The images include learners, absorbed in the learning process, and simple modern texts. One advertises a Science competition (black text on yellow background), and the other, an IELTS writing test about a graph.

This research is based on 28 posts that were inserted on the official British Council Facebook platform between May 23rd, 2024 and May 28th, 2024. The posts have been divided into seven central topics, namely British Council English language classes (Topic 1, 2 posts), specific English language skills (Topic 2, 3 posts) the transnational English language exam industry (Topic 3, 4 posts), educational sponsorships and partnerships (Topic 4, 3 posts), British universities and schools (Topic 5, 4 posts), popular British sports (Topic 6, 5 posts), high culture (Topic 7, 4 posts), and English language and business (Topic 8, 3 posts).

These posts run parallel to official British Embassy Facebook posts (June 1st, 2023 to May 1st, 2024), reflecting general insights into soft power such as culture, politics, and legitimate foreign policies (Nye 2004) and the goals of the USC (2024), in government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power. The posts promote pragmatic profit-centred British interests and nationalism, implementing FCDO policy regarding development in the national interest, but not alluding to specific grassroots development projects. These posts in turn promote the current UK–Egypt Development Partnership (2024), unleashing ‘Egypt’s huge economic potential’ and ignoring political and social inequalities and injustice. British Council is wholeheartedly and unashamedly tuned into linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992, 2009; 2011).

Importantly, in the context of this research, interaction has been reduced to British Council statements and a very limited number of likes to indicate agreement. There is very little, if any, discussion in the comments section of each post, and even less democratic debate. Popular initiatives such as the football matches at the British School Ismailia generated the most likes (115) and discussion, but limited to congratulating themselves on their own achievements, ‘effort and organisation’ (Post 15).

Topic 1 (Post 1 and 2) advertise British Council English language classes, connecting them to senior students at the private British schools in Egypt and advising other English language students to book their package at current prices. Topic 2 (Posts 3-5) provides young English language learners opportunities to improve English language skills, by clicking on icons, and downloading apps. Topic 3 (Posts 6-9) promotes the transnational English language exam industry, by targeting IELTS students. Post 6 builds up skills in ‘getting inside your IELTS examiner’s head,’ by providing 40 practice tests. Post 7 celebrates an IELTS conference on standards and technologies. Post 8 teaches students to ‘use the right quantifiers with countable and uncountable nouns.’

Topic 4 (Posts 10-12) presents British conferences, partnerships and educational initiatives, beginning with a meeting between Egypt’s Minister of Education and Technical Education, Egypt’s Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the UK’s Minister for Schools, in order to strengthen ‘the educational partnership between the two countries’ and enhance ‘the International Public Schools (IPS) program in Egypt.’ Post 11 refers to British Council Action Research, ‘an enlightening educational journey with educators from countries such as Peru, Colombia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Jordan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan’ that is presented as an online discussion forum. The British Council also attended ‘insightful discussions on the side-lines of the Education World Forum,’ discussing ‘ways to strengthen academic ties between Egypt and the UK,’ with both sides emphasizing ‘the importance of aligning education with industry needs, in support of Egypt’s Vision 2030 development goals’ (Post 12).

Topic 5 (Posts 13-16) promotes British universities and schools operating inside Egypt, using portraits of dignitaries in suits and children in sports strips, and enthusiastic videos of students and alumni, posing around the British campuses. The British University in Egypt that promotes itself through the achievements of the Faculties and its alumni, the quality of the student experience, and even ‘eye-catching spots where students create unforgettable memories.’ Topic 6 (Posts 17-21) uses sports to promote the interests of British Council in generating soft power and profits in Egypt. The British International School-Ismailia invited the Director of British Council and ‘top international schools’ from Egypt to its campus for ‘an exciting football tournament’. In this post, the Director rebrands Ismailia as a ‘very open, very wide, very clean, very green place’ in which he had the opportunity to observe ‘houses from when the British were here, I saw some of that, and so, really, really lovely’ (Post 17). Other posts used successful soccer players such as Mohamed Saleh to promote their initiatives and interests in sport.

Topic 7 (Posts 22-25) promotes high culture such as opera. The iconic Alexandria Library uses the British Council platform to advertise its production of Orpheus and Eurydice, displaying its star performers, and generating 106 likes and 26 positive comments. Topic 8 (Posts 26-28) makes a direct connection between English language education, business, and job opportunities, inviting students to tailor their English language skills to writing job emails (Post 26), and to ‘join us for an exclusive HR & L&D panel discussion on the power of internal mobility and workforce flexibility’ (Post 27). This is designed to give pharma its competitive edge (Post 28).

4. Conclusion

This paper has developed insights into the nature of soft power in general and of the current nature of British soft power in particular, into the policies and pragmatic interests of the FCDO (Foreign Commonwealth Development Office), British Embassy and British Council, into their use of social media, and into their level of engagement with their audiences. It traces the notion of soft power to the insights of Harvard Professor Joseph Nye (2004, p. 3), who divides political power into hard power (based on coercion) and soft power (based on consent and seduction). Professor Nye subdivides soft power into culture, politics, and legitimate foreign policies (p. 44), and recommends the use of social media to exercise soft power, and to promote democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities (p. 24). The USC Centre on National Diplomacy (2019) provides a more comprehensive list of sources of soft power, embracing government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power. This is aligned with U.S. interests in maintaining coercion (based on military power, investments, and business opportunities) and in exploiting consent (U.S. ideological power).

The paper then suggests that the interests of the three main British diplomatic institutions, the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), British Embassy and Foreign Office, in turn, reflect these same principles of soft power. The current goals of the FCDO are to safeguard British security, to build British prosperity, and to support British nationals abroad, reflecting a neo-Liberal turn in British development policies (Lazell 2023) based on the notion of ‘Foreign Aid in the National Interest’ (USAID 2002). The online platform of the British Embassy reflects the goals of the FCDO, by proclaiming that its role in Egypt is to promote (British) trade and investment, education, culture, development, and security, and to provide consular services to British nationals living in and visiting Egypt. British Council in Egypt is singing from the same song sheet, providing English language teaching, learning, training and testing, promoting British education and educational institutions, and cultural and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson (1992; 2009; 2011) or at least linguistic neo-imperialism (Zeng et al. 2023).

This article investigates the Facebook platforms of the British Embassy and British Council in turn, concluding that these platforms are dedicated to the generation of soft power and to promoting a public-private synergy of British interests in business and education. The topics discussed in the Facebook posts of the British Embassy (traditional British institutions, educational partnerships and scholarships, development and business partnerships, popular sport in general and soccer in particular, climate change and the environment, Gaza, gender abuse and health) and British Council (English language classes, specific English language skills, exams, educational sponsorships and partnerships, British universities and schools, popular British sports, high culture and English

language and business) reflect the soft power goals of Nye (2004) and of the USC Centre on Public Diplomacy (2024), in the sectors of government, culture, education, global engagement, enterprise, and digital power.

These posts promote British universities and schools, English language classes and exams, the most refined culture (opera) and the most popular and lucrative sport (soccer). Burning ethical issues such as the global environmental crisis are reduced to images of officials, turbines, King Charles and his speech, the Climate Finance Accelerator Program and the COP27 Summit. The unspeakable horrors of Gaza are reduced to images of random men with British flags and the words 'UK aid' printed on the back of their plastic protective jackets.

Reflecting on the claim that embassies and consulates should use social media to interact with and engage governments, local businesses, non-government organisations, the media, educational institutions, and the general public (Strauß et al. 2015), this paper suggests that the Facebook platforms of the FCDO, the British Embassy, and British Council provide limited levels of engagement. These diplomatic institutions use social media as an 'instrument of information dissemination' rather than engage the audience in dialogue (Bjola 2015, p. 27). This low level of engagement is reflected in the low number of clips, and the preponderance of labels that use modern, minimalist, standardised text in order to promote British interests in business and private education, the main focus being Return on British Investment (ROI).

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