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INTERSECTIONALITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING STUDIES IN ABYA YALA (LATIN AMERICA), 2015-2025

INTERSECCIONALIDAD EN ESTUDIOS SOBRE ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS EN ABYA
YALA (AMERICA LATINA), 2015-2025

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Abstract

This article presents studies on intersectionality in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Abya Yala (Latin America) published between 2015 and 2025. Drawing on studies from Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela, it maps how intersectional perspectives have been mobilized to examine teacher identity, classroom practices, gender and sexuality, coloniality and decolonial pedagogies, multiliteracies, social class, migration, and global citizenship. Across the region, intersectionality has been closely tied to decolonial thought and critical pedagogy, particularly in studies with Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, while narrative and qualitative methodologies dominate the field. The systematic review identifies major contributions of this perspective, including the expansion of intersectionality beyond its Black feminist origins to encompass local epistemologies and the lived realities of teachers and learners in multilingual, racialized, and socially classed contexts. At the same time, limitations emerge: the concentration of research in a few countries, the underrepresentation of Central America and the Caribbean, the scarcity of comparative cross-national studies, and the limited exploration of categories such as disability, age, or digital inequalities. This paper points out that intersectionality in Abya Yala ELT is both important and uneven, advancing decolonial understandings of identity and power while also facing challenges of methodological innovation and geographic scope. It concludes that Abya Yala should not only be seen as a context of application, but also as a site of theoretical production, offering critical insights that can reshape global debates on intersectionality in language education.

Keywords

Intersectionality; English Language Teaching; Abya Yala; Latin America

Resumen

Este artículo presenta estudios sobre interseccionalidad en la Enseñanza del Inglés (ELT, por sus siglas en inglés) en Abya Yala (América Latina) publicados entre 2015 y 2025. Basándose en estudios de Colombia, Brasil, México, Chile, Argentina, Perú, Uruguay, Cuba, Ecuador y Venezuela, realiza un mapeo sobre cómo se han movilizado las perspectivas interseccionales para examinar la identidad docente, las prácticas en el aula, el género y la sexualidad, la colonialidad y las pedagogías decoloniales, las multiliteracidades, la clase social, la migración y la ciudadanía global. A lo largo de la región, la interseccionalidad se ha vinculado estrechamente con el pensamiento decolonial y la pedagogía crítica, particularmente en estudios con comunidades indígenas y afrodescendientes, mientras que las metodologías narrativas y cualitativas dominan el campo. La presente revisión sistemática identifica las principales contribuciones de esta perspectiva, incluida la expansión de la interseccionalidad más allá de sus orígenes en el feminismo negro, para abarcar epistemologías locales y las realidades vividas por docentes y estudiantes en contextos multilingües, racializados y socialmente clasificados. Al mismo tiempo, surgen limitaciones: la concentración de la investigación en pocos países, la subrepresentación de Centroamérica y el Caribe, la escasez de estudios comparativos transnacionales y la limitada exploración de categorías como discapacidad, edad o desigualdades digitales. Este artículo señala que la interseccionalidad en ELT en Abya Yala es tanto importante como desigual, avanzando en los entendimientos decoloniales sobre identidad y poder, mientras enfrenta desafíos de innovación metodológica y alcance geográfico. El artículo concluye en que Abya Yala no debe ser vista solo como un contexto de aplicación, sino también como un sitio de producción teórica, ofreciendo perspectivas críticas que pueden reconfigurar los debates globales sobre interseccionalidad en la enseñanza de lenguas.

Palabras Clave

Interseccionalidad, Enseñanza del inglés, Abya Yala, América Latina

1. INTRODUCTION

The present article alternates between the terms *Abya Yala* and *Latin America* to acknowledge the coexistence of distinct epistemic and political perspectives regarding the region. *Abya Yala*, the pre-colonial name given to the continent by the Guna (Kuna) people of present-day Panama and Colombia, functions as a decolonial alternative to *Latin America*, a term historically rooted in European geopolitical and linguistic projects (Gobat, 2013). Using *Abya Yala* recognizes the ancestral continuity, resistance, and epistemologies of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples who were excluded from the so-called “independence” processes of the nineteenth century, which largely reproduced colonial hierarchies under new political forms (Webber, 2018). In contrast, *Latin America* is

employed when referring to the region as it is conventionally represented in academic, geopolitical, or institutional discourses. The deliberate alteration between both terms aims to signal and dialogic stance: one situates the discussion within the critical traditions of decolonial thought while maintaining accessibility and recognition in global scholarly debates.

In the last decade, Intersectionality has gained increasing attention in English Language Teaching (ELT) as a critical lens to examine how overlapping systems of power, such as gender, social class and ethnicity, shape the teaching and learning of English. Although originally developed within the Black Feminism in the Global North (Collins, 2000), scholars and practitioners in the Global South, particularly in Abya Yala have reinterpreted intersectionality in the local histories of colonization, resistance and linguistic diversity. This local lens reveal not only how English works as a colonization tool, but also how teachers and learners negotiate identities, inequalities, and possibilities of transformation in their classrooms. Between 2015-2025 a growing body of research has addressed these issues, exploring questions of access, agency, and justice in diverse educational contexts. This review synthesizes such scholarship to highlight emerging trends, identify theoretical and methodological contributions, and map future directions for intersectional approaches to ELT in Abya Yala.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Origins of Intersectionality

The concept of Intersectionality was first introduced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to describe how systems of oppression, such as sexism and racism, intersect to create unique experiences of marginalization that cannot be understood by examining these systems in isolation. Rooted in Black Feminism (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1984), intersectionality emphasizes the necessity of analyzing social inequalities through overlapping categories of identity and power. Within ELT, this perspective provides a framework for understanding how learners' and teachers' experiences are shaped by multiple, interdependent factors that extend beyond language proficiency (Baum, 2021).

2.2. Reframing Intersectionality: Decolonial Perspectives from Abya Yala

In Abya Yala, intersectionality has been engaged with critical perspectives, often in dialogue with decolonial theories. Scholars have emphasized that intersectionality, though offering powerful tools for analyzing inequity, must be grounded in local histories of colonization, racialization, and linguistic hierarchies (Lugones, 2008; Curiel et al., 2016). Latin American feminist and decolonial experts critique the Euro-American centering of intersectionality and advocate for adaptations that account for Indigenous epistemologies, Afro-descendant

struggles, and the epistemic violence of coloniality. These perspectives foreground the need to move beyond identity categories alone, situating intersectionality within broader struggles for social justice and epistemic reparation in education.

2.3. Intersectionality as a Decolonial Tool in ELT

Intersectionality is presented by Viveros (2023) as a methodological, analytical and transformative tool, essential to understand the complexity of inequities, resignify them from a situated and communitarian perspective, to promote social transformation, especially in local contexts. Applied to ELT, intersectionality serves as a decolonial analysis that reveals how English, as both a global language and colonial legacy, intersects with gender, social class and ethnicity in local classrooms. By framing ELT through intersectionality, educators can uncover how inequalities are reproduced by language policies, curricula and pedagogies, while also identifying spaces of resistance and transformation. Thus, intersectionality becomes not only a descriptive tool, but also a praxis-oriented approach, enabling teachers and researchers in Abya Yala to change deficit views of learners, valorize multilingual repertoires, and foster emancipatory educational practices aligned with decolonial agendas.

3. METHODOLOGY

This review employed a systematic but interpretive approach to map and analyze scholarly work on intersectionality in ELT in Abya Yala between 2015 and 2025. The objective was not only to identify existing studies, but also to highlight the epistemological and pedagogical perspectives that shape the field in this region.

3.1. Criteria for Study Selection

The inclusion criteria required that studies: (a) were published between 2015 and 2025; (b) addressed English Language Teaching or English as a Foreign Language in Latin America; (c) engaged explicitly or implicitly with intersectionality, inequities, or related categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, or indigeneity; and (d) appeared in peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes, conference proceedings, or graduate theses. Studies outside these geographical or thematic boundaries were excluded.

3.2. Sources and Databases

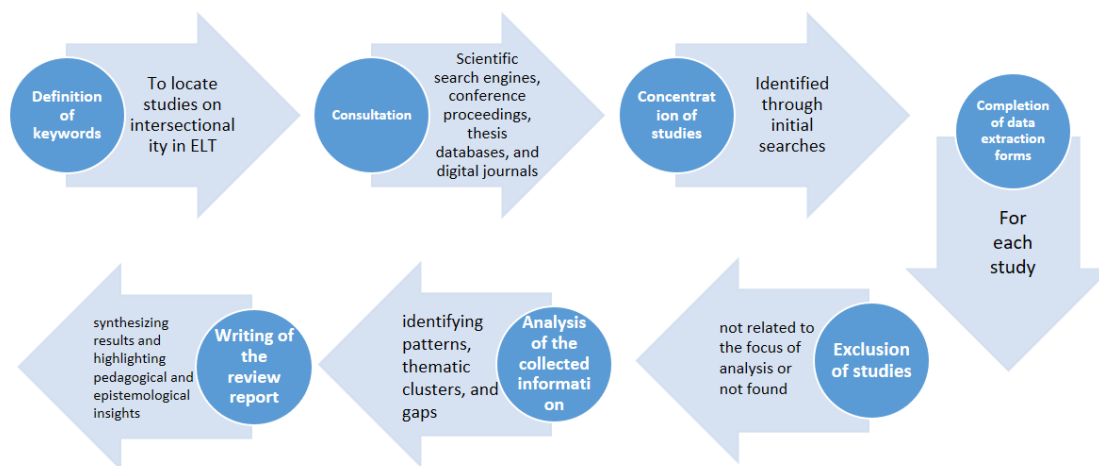
In an initial search, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) model was employed to identify relevant contributions. The AI model yielded 38 results; however, after a manual verification of each contribution, only 11 were found to actually exist. As a result, the subsequent search prioritized regional and specialized journals in applied linguistics and language education,

including *Íkala*, *Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, *HOW Journal*, *PROFILE: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, *Lenguas Modernas*, among others. In addition, graduate theses, book chapters, and proceedings from regional conferences were considered. Searches were also conducted through institutional databases, digital archives, and open internet sources. Keywords combined terms such as *intersectionality*, *English Language Teaching*, *ELT*, *EFL*, *inequity*, *race*, *ethnicity*, *gender*, *indigeneity*, and *Latin America*. Finally, 27 additional research works were identified, resulting in a total of 45 contributions selected for analysis.

3.3. Search Procedure

The review followed a structured seven-step procedure (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Methodological Procedure



Source: Self-elaboration

3.4. Limitations

Several constraints shaped the scope of this review. First, many articles included abstracts in English, access to full texts in different languages required additional effort. Second, access to regional journals posed challenges, as some issues were behind paywalls or not fully digitized. Finally, although the review sought to capture the diversity of work across Latin America, some locally circulated or unpublished studies may not have been retrieved.

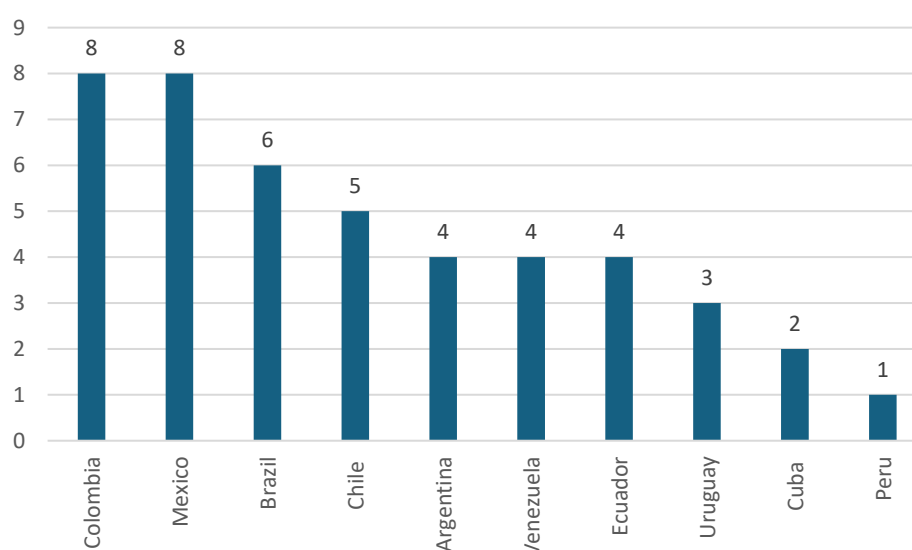
4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results of this review are organized both geographically and thematically to provide a comprehensive overview of intersectionality in ELT research across Latin America. In terms of geographic distribution, the majority of contributions were produced in Colombia (8),

Mexico (8), and Brazil (6), followed by Chile (5), Argentina (4), Venezuela (4), Ecuador (4), Uruguay (3), Cuba (2), and Peru (1); with a total of 45 (Figure 2).

Beyond this quantitative mapping, the content of the reviewed studies was analyzed and grouped thematically according to how intersectionality is addressed in research and practice. While all contributions explicitly or implicitly engage with intersectionality through various categories of vulnerability and privilege, this review further categorizes them according to the perspective or aspect from which intersectionality is approached: Vulnerable Communities; Identity and Language Ideologies; Teacher Training and Professional Development; ELT Classroom Innovations; and Structural Challenges and Policy Dimensions. This structure allows for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which intersectional approaches are operationalized in ELT across diverse Latin American contexts.

Figure 2 – Contributions by Country



Source: Self-elaboration

4.1. Vulnerable Communities

A significant strand foregrounds the intersectional challenges faced by Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and gender-minoritized learners. In Abya Yala, despite the fact that there is not a specific percentage available, non-Caucasian groups represent the vast majority of the population, studies in language education, especially in the field of ELT, tempt not to be focused on the ethnicity of the agents of the teaching and learning process.

In this review, there were 10 studies found about the implications related to these sectors of the population. In Colombia, Gutiérrez & Aguirre Ortega (2022) documented the ways Afro-Colombian and Indigenous students contest colonial pedagogies in university English classes. Similarly, Bonilla Medina & Finardi (2022) drew on Critical Race and Decolonial Theory to highlight how English language teaching privileges whiteness while

marginalizing teachers and students from the Global South. In Brazil, Rodrigues et al. (2019) examined efforts to decolonize English language teaching for Indigenous communities, whereas Lima (2025) drew on *escrivências* to explore the racialized experiences of Black women English teachers. One Chilean study (Pérez Otárola et al., 2023) further examined tensions between English instruction, socioeconomic stratification, among economically vulnerable students. Likewise, research in Peru (Benitez Ruiz & Ortiz García, 2025) investigated the professional formation of an Indigenous Spanish–Kichwa speaker as an English teacher, foregrounding linguistic and cultural negotiations. In Venezuela, de Osorio (2019) analyzed language learning as a pathway to recognize cultural diversity. From Ecuador, multiple studies emphasized structural inequities: Pesantez Medranda et al. (2025) showed how sociocultural contexts limit equitable English learning opportunities for adolescents; González Quinto et al. (2025) documented persistent barriers to higher education for Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and migrant populations due to language and systemic exclusion; and Bonilla-Tenesaca et al. (2016) described the challenges of addressing multiethnic and intercultural diversity in language academies. Although the results are centered on critiques towards the hegemonic practices in curricula, pedagogies, and language policies, collectively they emphasize the urgency of incorporating intersectional perspectives to move toward more equitable English education in Latin America and that benefit the marginalized groups in society.

4.2. Identity and Language Ideologies

Language identity and ideologies shape language learning experiences. In essence, both identity and ideology are intertwined with social expectations, cultural narratives, and individual agency, affecting how learners engage with and acquire a language (De Costa, 2016). This was grouped in a second category found in the analysis phase with 17 investigations found.

The first group of studies analyzed under this category emphasizes how intersectional identities are negotiated in and through ELT. Benavides-Buitrago (2023) profiled diverse identity categories among Colombian teachers and learners, while Camargo-Ruiz & Aponte-Moniquirá (2023) examined embodied femininities in pedagogy. Ubaque-Casallas (2021) further theorized teacher identity through a decolonial lens, highlighting how pedagogy and coloniality intersect in the construction of professional selves. Similarly, Castañeda-Peña (2010) analyzed gender positioning in preschool EFL classrooms, where femininities and discourses shaped young learners' identity formation. In Mexico, Villegas-Torres & Mora-Pablo (2018) traced identity formation in transnational EFL teachers, whereas Pablo (2015) analyzed discourses of attachment/detachment tied to native-speakerism. Complementing this, Zotzmann (2017) used a critical realist perspective to investigate how Mexican teachers of English negotiate intersectional dimensions of identity. In Argentina, Loebel et al. (2021)

examined Mapuche youth navigating bilingualism and cultural belonging in educational spaces. The second group of studies discussed aspects related to ideologies throughout English language learning and teaching processes. In Uruguay, Canale (2022) disrupted heteronormative assumptions in classroom interaction through an analysis of family tree activities, and Canale & Furtado (2021) explored how students negotiated gender ideologies embedded in textbook discourse. In Venezuela, Moncada Vera & Chacón Corzo (2018) revealed how English is understood through hegemonic framings by teachers; this complements Blanco's (2016) examination of the ideological underpinnings of English textbooks in secondary education. In Brazil, de Jesus Ferreira (2021) foregrounded racial literacy epistemologies in the identity formation of foreign language teachers, regarding their share de Oliveira (2020) and Nóbrega (2017) analyzed how Black women educators and feminist perspectives illuminate the socioconstruction of identities through intersectional negotiations. From Ecuador, Espinoza-Hidrobo et al. (2023) investigated how gender, educational background, and media consumption shape students' English proficiency, linking identity formation to broader structural inequalities. Finally, Pajares (2016) documented Cuban youth's ideologies and attitudes toward English, showing how national politics and global pressures intersect with identity formation. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that identity in ELT is always in motion, constructed through racialized, gendered, classed, and geopolitical ideologies, being simultaneously shaped by local specificities across Latin America.

4.3. Teaching Training and Professional Development

In teaching training and professional development, the improvement of capacities to identify categories of oppression and privilege in themselves and in those who will be their language students is a necessity for improving their teaching practice (Schissel & Stephens, 2020). Seven studies interrogate how intersectionality is and it is not integrated into teacher preparation.

In Brazil, da Silva-Pardo (2019) highlighted the challenges and potential of incorporating decolonial perspectives in teacher education, proposing embodied knowledge as a pathway for resisting Eurocentric pedagogies. In Chile, Abrahams & Silva (2017) examined persistent gaps in English teacher training; Romero (2024) traced how novice teachers develop ELT capabilities alongside an awareness of social (in)justice in contexts of educational marginalization. In Argentina, Banegas et al. (2020) documented the integration of a gender perspective into initial teacher education, and Piquer (2024) analyzed how curriculum can be re-envisioned through a multidimensional gender lens. Complementing these national case studies, Tarrayo (2025) offered a systematic literature review that positions intersectionality as a necessary but often overlooked framework in language teacher education globally, with implications for Latin America. In Mexico, Espinoza et al. (2024) proposed an intersectional-

based curricular design for Mexican normal schools, signaling emerging institutional uptake of these perspectives. Together, these studies show that intersectionality is increasingly recognized as a crucial dimension in teacher preparation; however, its integration remains uneven and contested across contexts.

4.4. *ELT Classroom Innovations*

Intersectionality also underpins pedagogical experimentation in the language classrooms. There were seven studies that could be categorized under this idea. In Chile, Rodríguez (2020) explored preschoolers' subjectivities through art-based literacy. Meanwhile, Alviar Rueda & Rojas Rodríguez (2025) implemented action research cycles with inclusive gender activities in early childhood education. In Mexico, Palacios (2020) investigated writing tasks for gender-specific audiences; similarly, Roux (2019) emphasized glocal citizenship practices. Brazilian scholarship promoted decolonial, multilingual, and critical literacy pedagogies. In Cuba, Fernández-Bermúdez & Rodríguez-Llama (2024) advanced the notion of "educación justa de género" in EFL teaching, linking gender justice with language learning. In Venezuela, Chacón (2017) employed film as a consciousness-raising tool for critical pedagogical reflection. Similarly, in Argentina, Porto (2018) theorized intercultural citizenship education through an intersectional lens. In this sense, intersectionality is seen as a model to transform the English language field.

4.5. *Structural Challenges and Policy Dimensions*

Finally, four studies situate intersectionality within broader sociopolitical and policy frameworks. Scholarship in Brazil has connected ELT to the colonality of knowledge; in addition, Guerrero Nieto (2018) made the case for decolonial pedagogies across Latin America. In Mexico, Despagne Broxner (2015) revealed how colonality and discrimination shape English learning in Puebla, echoing findings on class and gender in other contexts. In Chile, González Mellado et al. (2020) examined how structural and systemic inequalities tied to socioeconomic context influence English learning. In Argentina, research has discussed linguistic justice and gender policy in educational settings, with Porto et al. (2025) highlighting how a gender perspective informed the computational thinking program in Uruguay, analyzing teachers' perceptions and student performance in Bebras tasks. These studies reflect how an intersectional perspective spotlights the injustices within the field of English language education.

Taken together, these patterns, tensions, and contributions suggest that intersectionality in ELT across Abya Yala functions simultaneously as a diagnostic lens and a transformative framework. Across teacher education, classroom practices, and broader sociopolitical debates, it reveals how English teaching is entangled with structural hierarchies

of gender, class, ethnicity, and coloniality, but at the same time opens space for educators to design more inclusive, critical, and context-responsive pedagogies. The body of work spans from emerging efforts in countries such as Uruguay, Cuba, and Venezuela to more established debates in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, showing both the promise and the uneven distribution of intersectional scholarship in the region. This unevenness ranging from descriptive mappings of oppression and privilege to systemic curricular reconfigurations and policy critiques; moreover, it underscores the urgent need for sustained dialogue, comparative analysis, and praxis-oriented collaborations. Therefore, this discussion sets the stage for the conclusion, which reflects on the broader implications of these findings for the future of intersectional and decolonial ELT research and practice in the region.

5. CONCLUSION

This review set out to map and analyze studies published between 2015 and 2025 that address intersectionality in English Language Teaching across Abya Yala (Latin America). The central aim was to examine how this perspective has been incorporated into research and educational practice, also identifying contributions, tensions, and gaps that shape the field.

The findings demonstrate that intersectionality has become a productive lens to illuminate persistent inequities related to access, identity, and the lived experiences of teachers and learners. A common feature across the reviewed studies is their focus on historically marginalized populations, such as: Indigenous and Afro-descendant students, women, racialized teachers, or those working in rural contexts. This reveals a growing tendency to problematize English teaching as a socially situated practice. Categories of ethnicity, gender, class, language, and territoriality frequently intersect, underscoring the importance of understanding educational experiences as complex and interdependent.

In relation to global debates, Latin American scholarship not only engages with international discussions on social justice in language education, but also challenges them by embedding intersectionality within decolonial frameworks and Southern epistemologies. This dual orientation highlights intersectionality as both an analytical tool and a pedagogical-political practice aimed at building more equitable and critical learning spaces.

At the same time, the review highlights several gaps in the field. Most of the studies are qualitative and focus on specific contexts, leaving room for comparative or longitudinal research that could capture intersectional dynamics over time and across countries. There is also a noticeable emphasis on higher education, with fewer systematized experiences documented at the primary and secondary levels. Furthermore, research output is concentrated in Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela with fewer studies have emerged from Uruguay, Cuba or Peru. Notably, no publications explicitly addressing intersectionality in ELT were identified in several other Latin American countries,

including Bolivia, Guatemala, and El Salvador, which underscores significant regional gaps and uneven research development across Abya Yala.

Looking ahead, the field would benefit from collaborative, regional research projects that foster dialogue across countries and diverse educational communities. Equally urgent is the integration of intersectionality into both pre-service and in-service teacher education so that it becomes not only a framework for analysis but also a guiding principle for practice. Embedding intersectionality within educational policies likewise remains a pressing task in order to foster school systems that are inclusive and responsive to diversity.

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TRANSFORMING EGYPTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: STRATEGIES FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

TRANSFORMANDO LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EGIPCIA: ESTRATEGIAS PARA LA
COMPETITIVIDAD GLOBAL

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Abstract

This research posits that enhancing the competitiveness of Egyptian universities is crucial for their integration into the global academic landscape. The study analyzes the significant challenges these institutions face and proposes actionable strategies to address them. By reviewing existing literature, academic papers, and relevant reports, the research situates its findings within both global and national contexts, focusing specifically on the Egyptian higher education system. A comprehensive examination of strategic plans and policies reveals key determinants of competitiveness, including research output, infrastructure development, student satisfaction, and employability. Additionally, the potential benefits of international collaborations are explored, underscoring their importance in enhancing university performance. Although the study does not include primary data collection, it provides valuable insights into the complexities of the Egyptian higher education landscape. The findings culminate in evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, university administrators, and stakeholders. By adopting these strategies, stakeholders can significantly improve the competitiveness of Egyptian universities, fostering their growth and enhancing their contributions to the international academic community.

Keywords

Competitiveness, Egyptian universities, international rankings, higher education, challenges, recommendations

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that enhancing the competitiveness of Egyptian universities is essential for national development and requires a multifaceted approach to address key challenges. In today's global context, the race for competitiveness in higher education has intensified, driven by factors such as globalization, the knowledge economy, and the increasing importance of university rankings. Egyptian universities confront unique challenges, including limited infrastructure, difficulties in faculty retention, and the urgent need for innovative pedagogical approaches (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015; Barsoum, 2014).

To ground this analysis in empirical evidence, this study incorporates recent quantitative and qualitative data. For instance, an examination of the most recent QS World University Rankings 2025 reveals that while Cairo University (ranked 350th) and The American University in Cairo (ranked 415th) have secured positions in the global top 500, a significant gap persists for other institutions when compared to regional and global counterparts. This study will also analyze comparative funding levels, highlighting the disparity between Egypt's public expenditure on tertiary education (approximately 0.8% of GDP in recent years) and the OECD average of 1.5%, which directly impacts research capacity and infrastructure. Finally, it will present case studies of successful models within Egypt, such as Zewail City of Science and Technology, to identify replicable strategies in fostering research-intensive education and innovation.

Building on these empirical indicators, this research situates its analysis within the broader discourse on higher education's role in national competitiveness. By examining strategic plans from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, this study evaluates current efforts aimed at improving university performance. It identifies critical determinants of competitiveness, including research output, infrastructure development, student satisfaction, and graduate employability. Furthermore, the potential benefits of international collaborations and partnerships are explored, emphasizing their vital role in enhancing university performance.

This research contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation by addressing the specific challenges faced by Egyptian universities and proposing evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders. By strategically aligning educational programs with community needs and fostering a culture of quality in research, Egyptian universities can significantly enhance their competitiveness. This introduction thus sets the stage for a comprehensive, data-driven examination of the current state of higher education in Egypt and the necessary steps to elevate its global standing.

Table 1 – Questions of research

Research Question	Rationale
1. What are the primary challenges faced by Egyptian universities in achieving global competitiveness, and how do these challenges compare to those encountered by universities in other countries?	Clarifies "primary" to emphasize the most significant issues and aligns the question with comparative analysis.
2. In what ways does the existing educational infrastructure in Egypt affect universities' ability to enhance their global rankings and overall competitiveness?	Specifies "in what ways" to encourage a deeper exploration of the infrastructure's impact.
3. What key factors influence the quality of education and research output in Egyptian universities, and how do these factors measure up against international standards?	Uses "measure up against" to emphasize a comparative analysis with international benchmarks.
4. What strategies can Egyptian universities adopt to effectively attract, retain, and support talented faculty members and researchers in the current academic and research environment?	Adds "effectively" to stress the importance of practical application in the proposed strategies.
5. How can Egyptian universities effectively integrate technology and digital resources to enhance teaching, research, and overall competitiveness?	Emphasizes "effectively" to focus on successful implementation.
6. In what specific ways can collaborations and partnerships with international institutions enhance the competitiveness and global reputation of Egyptian universities, and what challenges might arise from these collaborations?	Clarifies "specific ways" to prompt detailed exploration of benefits and potential challenges.
7. What innovative teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches can Egyptian universities implement to enhance the learning experience and better prepare students for the demands of the job market?	Uses "implement" to focus on actionable strategies.
8. What comprehensive strategies can be developed to enhance the global recognition, rankings, and reputation of Egyptian universities, considering their unique strengths and areas for improvement?	Uses "comprehensive" to indicate a holistic approach to strategy development.
9. How can funding mechanisms and resource allocation be optimized to effectively support research, innovation, and infrastructure development in Egyptian universities?	Changes "improved" to "optimized" for a more precise focus on efficiency.
10. What measures can be implemented to increase engagement and collaboration between industry and Egyptian universities, aiming to bridge the gap between academia and the job market and foster workforce development? (Kirby & Ibrahim, 2013; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004; Bruneel et al., 2010)	Emphasizes "implemented" to focus on actionable steps for enhancing collaboration.

Source: author

In the case of Egyptian universities, they face challenges in achieving a prominent position in international rankings. However, by analyzing the relationship between competitiveness in higher education and elite university rankings, insights can be gained, and growth opportunities can be identified. Leveraging available reports, data, and previous studies, it is possible to assess the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of Egyptian universities. Based on this analysis, recommendations can be made to address the challenges and create a more competitive environment in Egyptian higher education.

Table 2 - Challenges faced by Egyptian universities in global competitiveness

SOLUTION	DESCRIPTION
1. Increased funding	Allocating more resources to universities for research, infrastructure, and faculty development.
2. Curriculum reform	Updating curricula to align with international standards and industry needs.
3. Faculty development	Investing in faculty training and development programs to enhance teaching and research skills.
4. Infrastructure improvements	Modernizing laboratories, libraries, and technological infrastructure.
5. International partnerships	Fostering collaborations with international universities and research institutions.
6. Language training	Enhancing English language proficiency among faculty and students.
7. Incentives for faculty	Providing competitive salaries, research funding, and career advancement opportunities to attract and retain talented faculty. (Kirby, 2006; Kirby et al., 2011)
8. Institutional autonomy	Granting universities greater autonomy to make decisions and implement innovative strategies. (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2016; Kirby et al., 2011)

Source: author

Egyptian universities confront several obstacles in their pursuit of research and development, including inadequate financing, subpar instruction, a dearth of publications and research output, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, a lack of international collaboration, (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004; Bruneel et al., 2010) and a lack of fluency in the English language. These problems make hiring outstanding researchers, acquiring cutting-edge equipment, and carrying out ambitious research initiatives difficult.

Certain Egyptian institutions offer varying degrees of quality education, which calls for advancements in curriculum development, instructional strategies, and evaluation procedures. Improving educational quality is essential to creating graduates who can compete in the global labor market. Promoting faculty publications in esteemed journals is crucial to raising the profile and influence of Egyptian research.

Universities' capacity to conduct high-quality research and offer a supportive learning environment is hampered by inadequate infrastructure and outdated facilities, which include small lab spaces, antiquated libraries, and inadequate technological infrastructure. Investing

in state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure is essential to developing a competitive research and educational environment.

For Egyptian universities, international collaboration is particularly difficult since they have little access to global research networks and collaborations with esteemed organizations, making it difficult to produce high-calibre research. Enhancing English language programs and offering language assistance can make Egyptian institutions more competitive.

Another issue facing Egyptian colleges is brain drain, as highly qualified academics and researchers leave the nation in quest of better employment and research opportunities elsewhere. To keep smart people on staff, efforts should be made to develop appealing career options, offer incentives for research, and create welcoming settings.

Establishing institutional autonomy and governance is crucial in cultivating a competitive milieu. Boosting academic freedom, expediting administrative procedures, and enhancing institutional autonomy are crucial for fostering competitiveness.

To tackle these obstacles, a thorough and multifaceted strategy is needed. It entails putting more money into R&D, changing the curriculum, upgrading infrastructure, encouraging international partnerships, encouraging language skills, putting in place efficient plans for keeping outstanding faculty members on staff and strengthening institutional autonomy and governance. Egyptian universities may become more globally competitive and rise in international university rankings by tackling these issues.

2. IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

The competitiveness of Egypt's universities is greatly influenced by its educational infrastructure. The competitiveness of the university is greatly impacted by the calibre and accessibility of its resources and facilities, which include cutting-edge technology, research labs, and contemporary libraries. Building infrastructure—classrooms, lecture halls, and research facilities, for example—is essential to fostering an atmosphere that supports both learning and research. By creating better learning environments and opening up chances for advanced research, upgrading and growing these infrastructures may increase universities' competitiveness. Having access to computer laboratories, fast internet, and e-learning platforms is crucial to educating students for a competitive global job market. This requires technology integration. Universities are more competitive when they have easy access to transportation, housing, and well-connected campuses.

Additionally, by fostering partnerships and collaborations between academic institutions, business sectors, and research centers, the educational infrastructure helps students become more marketable in the labor market by giving them access to real-world experience, internships, and research opportunities. Egypt can recruit top talent, grow a

dynamic learning environment, and make its institutions more competitive by investing in and upgrading their educational facilities.

3. FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION AND RESEARCH QUALITY IN EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

Enhancing teaching and research production is a problem faced by Egyptian institutions. These consist of inadequate faculty development, an absence of research culture and collaboration, antiquated infrastructure, poor governance and administration, antiquated curricula and traditional teaching methods, inadequate funding and resources, difficulties with quality assurance and accreditation, and ineffective faculty development. While obsolete buildings might limit the ability for cutting-edge research and student participation, insufficient finance can limit access to contemporary facilities, equipment, research funds, and scholarships. While out-of-date curricula and conventional teaching techniques might restrict student participation and critical thinking, effective governance and administration are essential (Kirby et al., 2011; El Hadidi & Kirby, 2016) for guaranteeing excellent education and research. Developing faculty members is also essential for improving instruction and doing research.

To foster an atmosphere that supports high-quality instruction and research and socioeconomic issues like poverty and inequality must be addressed. A multitude of things greatly impact the libre of research and education. Sufficient money is essential for maintaining skilled faculty members and providing cutting-edge facilities, technology, and research equipment. Inadequate classrooms, labs, libraries, and IT infrastructure are examples of buildings and infrastructure that might restrict an institution's ability to offer top-notch research and educational opportunities. The calibre of instruction is greatly influenced by the calibre of the faculty, with elements like hiring and retaining highly skilled instructors, providing chances for continuous professional growth, and creating a positive work atmosphere all influencing their commitment and knowledge.

The relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching methods also play a role in affecting the quality of education. A well-designed curriculum that aligns with industry demands incorporates practical skills, fosters critical thinking, and encourages research can enhance the learning experience and better prepare students for the job market.

A vibrant research culture that encourages innovation, collaboration, and interdisciplinary research can significantly impact the quality of research output. Effective governance, transparent policies, and robust quality assurance mechanisms are essential for maintaining and improving the quality of education and research.

Access to quality education and research opportunities should be equitable and inclusive, addressing barriers such as socioeconomic factors, gender disparities, and regional disparities. Collaboration between universities and industries can enhance the quality of

education and research by fostering applied research, internships, and work-integrated learning opportunities.

It is noteworthy that these variables may differ between Egyptian institutions and may evolve with time. By addressing these issues, Egyptian universities may raise the calibre of their research and instruction colleges?

4. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENTED FACULTY IN EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

To attract and retain talented faculty members and researchers in Egyptian universities, several strategies can be implemented (Etzkowitz, 2003; Kirby et al., 2011; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004). These include competitive compensation and benefits, research support and facilities, academic freedom and autonomy, collaboration and networking opportunities, professional development and career advancement, a supportive work environment, recognition and rewards, internationalization initiatives, and transparent recruitment and evaluation processes. Competitive salaries and benefits, state-of-the-art research facilities, and access to funding are essential for attracting and retaining faculty members and researchers. Universities should prioritize investment in research infrastructure and create an environment conducive to cutting-edge research. Ensuring intellectual exploration, independent thinking, and freedom to pursue research topics of interest is also crucial. Collaboration and networking opportunities, professional development, a supportive work environment, recognition and rewards, internationalization initiatives, and transparent recruitment and evaluation processes are also essential for attracting and retaining talented individuals.

Attracting and retaining talented faculty members and researchers is crucial for the success and advancement of Egyptian universities. To attract and retain these individuals, universities should employ strategies such as competitive compensation, research support, professional development opportunities, strong institutional reputation, clear promotion and tenure policies, a collaborative and interdisciplinary environment, work-life balance, internationalization efforts, supportive leadership and governance, and collaboration with industry.

Competitive salaries and benefits packages are essential for attracting professionals with valuable expertise and experience, incentivizing them to stay in the long term. Research support includes allocating research funding, offering research grants and fellowships, providing access to state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, and facilitating collaborations with industry partners and other institutions.

Creating a supportive environment that encourages continuous professional development is also important for attracting and retaining talented faculty members and researchers. This can be achieved through attending conferences, workshops, seminars, funding for further education, research sabbaticals, and mentorship programs.

Building a strong institutional reputation is key to attracting and retaining talented faculty members and researchers. Universities should focus on enhancing their academic reputation by promoting excellence in education and research, publishing high-quality research papers, and fostering collaborations with renowned institutions both domestically and internationally.

Implementing transparent and fair promotion and tenure policies, fostering a collaborative and interdisciplinary environment, and promoting internationalization efforts can also attract and retain talented faculty members and researchers.

Lastly, establishing partnerships with industry leaders can enhance the attractiveness of Egyptian universities for talented faculty members and researchers, providing opportunities for applied research, funding, and industry connections.

By implementing these strategies, Egyptian universities can create an environment that attracts and retains talented faculty members and researchers, fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and academic growth.

5. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY UTILIZATION IN EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

To enhance the utilization of technology and digital resources in Egyptian universities, several strategies can be implemented. These include upgrading the technological infrastructure, offering training and support programs, promoting e-learning platforms, partnering with EdTech companies, encouraging the creation and sharing of open educational resources, allocating funds for research and innovation projects related to technology integration in education, and fostering partnerships with industries. Infrastructure development involves investing in high-speed internet connectivity, modern computer labs, and updated software and hardware. Training programs and workshops can help faculty, staff, and students access and utilize digital resources effectively. E-learning platforms provide a user-friendly interface for online courses, virtual classrooms, and interactive learning materials, facilitating blended learning approaches and allowing students to access educational resources anytime, anywhere.

Collaboration with EdTech companies can help develop customized digital tools, content, and learning management systems tailored to the needs of Egyptian universities. Open educational resources, such as textbooks, lecture notes, and multimedia materials, can reduce costs for students and foster a culture of knowledge-sharing among educators. Financial allocation for research and innovation projects related to technology integration in education can incentivize faculty members to explore innovative ways of utilizing technology and digital resources for teaching and research purposes. Partnerships with industries can provide students with real-world experiences and access to the latest technologies and tools. Continuous evaluation and improvement are essential for aligning strategies with the evolving needs of the university community.

The utilization of technology and digital resources in Egyptian universities can significantly improve the learning experience, research capabilities, and overall efficiency. Strategies to achieve this include investing in robust technological infrastructure, offering comprehensive technology training and support, promoting the use of digital learning platforms, encouraging the use of Open Educational Resources (OER), integrating virtual laboratories and simulations, developing comprehensive online libraries and digital repositories, implementing collaboration and communication tools, using data analytics and learning analytics, embracing mobile learning, implementing research support systems, and conducting continuous evaluation and improvement.

Infrastructure development is crucial for effective utilization of technology and digital resources, including high-speed internet connectivity, reliable network systems, upgrading computer labs, and providing access to modern hardware and software tools. Technology training programs for faculty members, researchers, and students can help them develop the necessary digital skills to effectively utilize technology. Digital learning platforms, such as learning management systems (LMS), facilitate online course delivery, resource sharing, and student engagement. Open educational resources (OER) can enhance access to high-quality educational materials, while virtual laboratories and simulations provide practical learning experiences in fields with limited physical labs.

Online libraries and digital repositories provide easy access to a wide range of academic resources, allowing universities to collaborate with publishers and promote open access publishing. Collaborative tools, such as video conferencing platforms, project management software, and virtual teamwork platforms, facilitate effective communication and collaboration among faculty members, researchers, and students. Data analytics and learning analytics can help universities gain insights into student performance, engagement, and learning outcomes, enabling personalized learning experiences and timely interventions.

These strategies, when implemented effectively, can contribute to the improved utilization of technology and digital resources in Egyptian universities, ultimately enhancing the quality of education, research, and administrative processes.

6. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS IN ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

Egyptian universities can significantly enhance their competitiveness through collaborations with international institutions. These partnerships facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices, allowing universities to share research findings, teaching methodologies, and innovative approaches to education. This broadens the horizons of faculty and students, enhancing the quality of education. Collaborations also open up avenues for collaborative research projects, allowing Egyptian universities to tap into a global network of researchers, access cutting-edge facilities, and participate in international research initiatives. This enhances the quality and impact of research output, attracting more

funding opportunities and bolstering the university's reputation. Faculty members can participate in conferences, workshops, and exchange programs, staying updated with new ideas and research methodologies. This exposure benefits students, enhancing their cross-cultural competencies and employability in the international job market. Collaborations with prestigious international institutions can also enhance the reputation and ranking of Egyptian universities. Joint research projects, publications, and high-profile partnerships contribute to the university's visibility and recognition, attracting quality students, faculty, and research opportunities, further enhancing its competitiveness.

Egyptian universities can significantly enhance their competitiveness through collaborations with international institutions. These partnerships allow for the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices, leading to innovative solutions, advancements in various fields, and increased publication and citation rates. International collaborations also provide access to additional funding opportunities, grants, and resources that may not be readily available within Egypt. This additional support enhances research capabilities and outcomes, contributing to the competitiveness of Egyptian universities.

Global recognition and visibility are also enhanced by collaborations with reputable international institutions. Engaging in joint academic programs, conferences, and scholarly events exposes faculty members, researchers, and students to a wider audience, attracting talented faculty members and establishing the universities as credible global players.

Student and faculty mobility is another benefit of collaborations with international institutions. These programs offer opportunities for students and faculty members to study, conduct research, and gain exposure to different educational and cultural environments, broadening perspectives and enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

Curriculum enhancement and innovation are also facilitated by collaborations with international institutions (Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004; Gunasekara, 2006; Bruneel et al., 2010). Sharing educational practices, pedagogical approaches, and curriculum design models can help Egyptian universities align their programs with international standards and best practices, improving the quality of education and increasing graduates' competitiveness in the international job market.

In addition, learning from successful practices in other countries can improve administrative processes, transparency, and accountability mechanisms, contributing to the overall competitiveness and sustainability of Egyptian universities. Industry collaborations also help align educational programs with market demands, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the workforce.

So, collaborations and partnerships with international institutions bring numerous benefits to Egyptian universities, including knowledge exchange, research opportunities, access to funding and resources, global recognition, curriculum enhancement, and industry collaboration. These collaborations contribute to the competitiveness of Egyptian universities, positioning them as key players in the global academic community and enhancing their reputation and impact.

7. INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES FOR ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Egyptian universities are focusing on innovative teaching and learning methodologies to enhance their global competitiveness. These include active learning, technology integration, experiential learning, learner-centered approaches, interdisciplinary programs, and alternative assessment strategies. Active learning, such as problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and collaborative projects, engages students in the learning process, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Technology integration, such as online platforms and virtual reality, promotes self-paced learning and remote collaboration. Experiential learning, such as internships and community engagement initiatives, allows students to apply knowledge in real-world settings, developing practical skills and a competitive edge. Learner-centered approaches, such as personalized learning plans and competency-based education, cater to the diverse needs and strengths of students, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Interdisciplinary programs encourage collaboration across different disciplines and nurture innovative thinking, equipping students with a broader skill set and preparing them to tackle complex real-world challenges. Alternative assessment strategies, such as project-based assessments, portfolios, and peer evaluations, provide comprehensive insights into students' abilities and competencies, fostering deeper learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. So, exploring and implementing innovative teaching and learning methodologies is essential for enhancing the competitiveness of Egyptian universities. By adopting active learning, integrating technology, promoting experiential learning, embracing learner-centered approaches, developing interdisciplinary programs, and utilizing effective assessment strategies, Egyptian universities can provide a transformative educational experience that prepares students for the global challenges of the 21st century. These innovative approaches have the potential to elevate the quality of education, attract talented students and faculty, and contribute to the overall competitiveness of Egyptian universities.

Innovative teaching methodologies can significantly improve students' learning experience by fostering active engagement, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge. Some such methodologies include the flipped classroom, project-based learning, gamification, collaborative learning, experiential learning, technology integration, case-based learning, peer instruction, adaptive learning, and mindfulness and reflective practices.

In a flipped classroom, students learn foundational concepts outside of class through pre-recorded lectures or online resources, with classroom time dedicated to interactive discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative projects. This approach allows students to engage in active learning and receive personalized support from their instructor. Project-based learning involves students working on real-world projects that require them to apply their knowledge and skills to solve authentic problems. Gamification incorporates game elements into the learning process, making it interactive and enjoyable. Collaborative

learning emphasizes group work and peer-to-peer interaction, encouraging teamwork, communication skills, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Experiential learning focuses on hands-on experiences that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts.

Technology integration in teaching can enhance the learning experience by providing access to a wide range of learning materials, promoting active learning, and facilitating personalized instruction. Case-based learning involves analyzing real or hypothetical cases to develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities. Peer instruction promotes deeper understanding, peer learning, and the identification of misconceptions.

Adaptive learning uses technology to personalize the learning experience based on individual student needs and progress. It employs algorithms to provide customized content, assessments, and feedback, helping students learn at their own pace and address specific learning gaps. Mindfulness and reflective practices involve promoting self-awareness, metacognition, and introspection, enhancing self-directed learning skills.

By adopting these innovative teaching methodologies, educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and practical application of knowledge, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

8. ENHANCING FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION FOR RESEARCH IN EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

Egypt's economy is a "factor-driven" one, with low salaries, productivity, and economic growth (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015a, 2016). It competes primarily on unskilled labor and natural resources. The decline in innovation potential is attributed to factors such as low quality of scientific research institutions, poor performance of higher education, the absence of an educational system that fosters innovation, low private sector contribution to scientific research, low rates of technology transfer, low university spending on R&D, weak university-industry collaboration in R&D, and low government spending on R&D (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015a, 2016; Kirby & Ibrahim, 2013; Hattab, 2014).

Egypt's overall ranking in terms of innovation has steadily declined (CAPMAS, 2012 [for context on data period]; Global reports cited align with the challenges described by El Hadidi & Kirby) from 59 out of 114 in 2005/2006 to 83 out of 139 in 2010/2011. The country is ranked 108th out of 142 nations in the Global Innovation Index (GII, 2011) for progress and innovation, 113th out of 142 nations for the calibre of its scientific research institutions, and 83rd for its capacity for innovation in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012.

The country's poor university sector, heavily centralized and run by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Egyptian Supreme Council, results in institutions lacking autonomy and independence (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015a, 2016; Barsoum, 2014). The country has been falling

in the rankings for the quality of higher education and training, with 70% of the overall budget going to salaries and wages.

In recent years, the goals and focus of Egyptian higher education have changed, with the educational system responding positively to international trends in education. Modernizing education is now seen as a way to promote economic progress, but reforms in the school system, including restructuring, are needed to develop creativity and independent thinking.

Egyptian universities are among the top 500 globally, making significant contributions to R&D, technology transfer, and entrepreneurship. However, Egypt was placed last among the 69 participating nations in terms of education contribution to entrepreneurship growth and 68th for research and development and technology transfer (Hattab, 2014; Kirby & Ibrahim, 2013). Improving funding and resource allocation is essential for supporting research and innovation in Egyptian universities. Here are some strategies that can be implemented to enhance funding and resource allocation:

Government investment is a crucial factor in funding research and innovation in universities. Increased government budgets can provide the necessary financial resources for research activities, infrastructure development, and innovation initiatives. Research grant programs can offer competitive funding opportunities for faculty members and researchers, supporting various research areas, including basic and applied research, interdisciplinary projects, and collaborations with industry partners or international institutions. Clear guidelines, transparent evaluation processes, and timely disbursement of funds are essential for fair allocation.

Industry collaboration and sponsorship can attract additional funding for research and innovation by engaging with private sector companies, leading to sponsored research projects, joint ventures, and technology transfer initiatives. Universities can establish research centers or institutes with industry partnerships to facilitate collaboration and funding opportunities.

Alumni and philanthropic contributions can provide additional financial support for research and innovation by establishing effective alumni engagement programs, cultivating strong relationships with alumni, and showcasing the impact of research. Universities can also actively seek philanthropic partnerships to support specific research projects or establish funding endowments for long-term sustainability.

Strategic partnerships and consortia can pool resources and leverage expertise to undertake larger-scale research projects. Transparent resource allocation mechanisms ensure fair distribution of resources, building trust and encouraging healthy competition.

Research infrastructure development is essential for supporting high-quality research, including well-equipped laboratories, research centers, and specialized facilities. Seed funds and innovation grants can support early-stage research and innovation projects, bridging the gap between initial ideas and more substantial funding opportunities.

International funding opportunities can provide additional resources for research and innovation by collaborating with international funding agencies, participating in global

research programs, and leveraging international partnerships. Efficient resource management practices optimize the utilization of available funds and resources, identifying areas for improvement, eliminating waste, and maximizing the return on investment.

By implementing these strategies, Egyptian universities can improve funding and resource allocation, thereby creating a supportive environment for research and innovation. This, in turn, can enhance the research output, attract talented researchers, foster collaboration, and contribute to socioeconomic development and knowledge creation in Egypt.

9. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING GLOBAL RECOGNITION AND RANKINGS OF EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

University rankings play a crucial role in the international "battle for excellence," serving as benchmarks for evaluating higher education institutions and assessing their global competitiveness. These rankings have emerged in response to globalization and the need for transparent information that underpins economic growth. They encourage healthy competition among universities, providing incentives for performance improvement. Governments, academics, and industry stakeholders utilize these rankings to inform policies, job choices, and investment decisions (Kirby, 2006; Kirby et al., 2011; Etzkowitz, 2003).

The increasing importance of university rankings emphasizes the need for accessible data regarding the quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions. Rankings are effective tools for benchmarking and quality assurance, shaping perceptions of educational excellence. High-achieving students and their families are often drawn to universities with strong reputations, influencing funding contributions from both public and private sectors.

To enhance the global recognition and rankings of Egyptian universities, a comprehensive approach focusing on academic excellence, research impact, international collaboration, and institutional reputation is essential. The following strategies are proposed, categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term priorities for clearer stakeholder guidance:

- **Short-Term Strategies**
 - **Increase Funding for Research and Infrastructure:** Allocating additional resources to support research activities and improve facilities.
 - **Initiate Curriculum Reform:** Updating curricula to align with international standards and industry needs, enhancing educational quality.
- **Medium-Term Strategies**
 - **Invest in Faculty Development Programs:** Offering competitive salaries, research grants, and professional development opportunities to attract and retain high-caliber faculty members.

- Establish International Partnerships: Fostering collaborations with leading universities and research institutions to enhance cross-cultural learning and global visibility.
- Long-Term Strategies
 - Build State-of-the-Art Research Facilities: Developing modern laboratories and research centers to support high-quality research outputs.
 - Foster a Culture of Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset within the university community, promoting innovative research and collaboration with industry.

Quality assurance and accreditation from reputable international bodies are critical for enhancing the credibility of degree programs. Additionally, developing career services and internship programs will improve graduate employability by aligning academic programs with industry demands.

To further support these initiatives, a robust alumni network should be established to engage graduates and encourage their involvement in university development. Reputation management and marketing efforts should be enhanced to increase visibility and improve the institution's global perception.

The focus must be on impactful research that addresses societal challenges and contributes to national and global development. Enhancing institutional governance practices will foster transparency, accountability, and good governance.

It is important to recognize that improving the global recognition and rankings of Egyptian universities is a long-term commitment requiring sustained efforts and collaboration among various stakeholders. By implementing these strategies collectively, Egyptian universities can significantly advance their reputation and position in the global academic landscape.

10. INCREASING INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT IN BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND THE JOB MARKET IN EGYPT

The gap between graduates' employability and industry expectations is a significant issue in the higher education system (Kirby & Ibrahim, 2013; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004; Bruneel et al., 2010; Brimble, 2007; Kirby et al., 2011). To address this, several recommendations are suggested.

1. Foster student motivation by engaging students in diverse activities outside the traditional curriculum, such as college fests, hackathons, and art-related events.
2. Develop a balanced syllabus, incorporating foundational subjects with hands-on practical experience and online platforms for learning the latest technologies.

3. Provide workplace exposure through internships, guest lectures, one-on-one mentoring, and industry engagement programs.
4. Focus on capacity development, a long-term process that bridges the industry-academia gap. Individuals, including students, faculty, and organizations, must take responsibility for enhancing their capabilities and embracing lifelong learning to adapt to future changes and disruptions caused by emerging technologies.
5. Establish a consistent knowledge transfer ecosystem, connecting various elements, including new curriculum development, faculty development programs, innovative teaching practices, industry partnerships for internships, and an expert network supported by university management. This ecosystem should provide motivating and thought-provoking information on new trends and developments.

We conclude that Egypt has the advantage of a large pool of motivated and skilled individuals. However, the quality and employability of graduates require significant improvement. Bridging the industry-academia gap is a vital step towards harnessing the potential of Egypt's young population, which is projected to make the country the youngest in the world by 2030. Collaboration among students, universities, organizations, and the government is essential to address this challenge and enhance the competitiveness of Egyptian universities. By implementing the aforementioned recommendations, stakeholders can work together to create a positive and employable workforce that contributes to Egypt's overall growth and development.

10.1. How to Bridge the Gap Between Academia and Industry?

Businesses and industry must get more involved if they want to bridge the knowledge gap between the classroom and the labour market. To promote more solid collaboration and partnerships, the following tactics might be used: The creation of industry advisory boards, collaborative research projects, internship and cooperative programmes, industry guest lecturers and visiting professionals, curriculum alignment, industry-sponsored projects, mentorship programmes, industry-focused workshops and seminars, job fairs and recruitment events, collaborative innovation and incubation centres, and ongoing professional development are just a few of the strategies discussed here for enhancing educational capacity.

Universities can improve the relevance of higher education to the industry (Kirby & Ibrahim, 2013; Bruneel et al., 2010; El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015a) by establishing industry advisory boards, encouraging collaborative research projects, developing robust internship and cooperative education programs, involving industry experts as guest lecturers or visiting faculty members, regularly reviewing and updating academic programs, promoting industry-sponsored projects, establishing mentorship programs, organizing industry-focused

workshops and seminars, arranging job fairs and recruitment events, and establishing collaborative innovation and incubation centers. These strategies aim to provide insights into industry trends, skills requirements, and emerging job market needs, and to provide practical solutions to industry challenges. By incorporating industry-relevant courses, practical training, and experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum, universities can foster an entrepreneurial culture and facilitate the development of innovative solutions to industry challenges.

By implementing these strategies, universities can ensure that their graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce and that their research is aligned with the needs of industry. By implementing these strategies, universities can enhance their collaboration with industry and businesses, foster a more seamless transition from academia to the job market, and ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge that align with industry needs.

11. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The article provides a comprehensive review of competitiveness issues faced by Egyptian universities and offers solutions in the form of plans and suggestions. It emphasizes the importance of strengthening governance and autonomy, implementing robust quality assurance mechanisms, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, and collaborating with industry to bridge the gap between academia and the job market. It also highlights the need for investment in infrastructure and resources, such as laboratory equipment, libraries, information technology services, and research grants.

The article also emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive student support services, including counselling, career guidance, and extracurricular activities, to foster a student-centred learning environment. It also emphasizes the importance of promoting ethical conduct and integrity in research and academic activities, implementing policies and providing training on research ethics, plagiarism, and academic integrity. Effective communication and outreach strategies are also highlighted, such as using digital platforms, and social media, and organizing international conferences and events to showcase research and academic excellence. The article also highlights the benefits of engaging with alumni and creating a strong network of graduates. The article emphasizes the importance of establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies, regularly reviewing progress, collecting feedback from stakeholders, and making necessary adjustments to enhance competitiveness continuously.

Egyptian universities can enhance their competitiveness by assessing their current situation, identifying key challenges, developing a strategic plan, enhancing research output and faculty qualifications, embracing technology and digital resources, fostering collaborations with international institutions, implementing innovative teaching methodologies, enhancing global recognition and rankings, improving funding and resource

allocation, strengthening industry-academia collaboration, and monitoring and evaluating progress (Kirby, 2006; Kirby et al., 2011; Etzkowitz, 2003; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004). A comprehensive assessment of the university's competitiveness, including rankings, research output, faculty qualifications, infrastructure, and other relevant factors, is essential. Key challenges may include inadequate research infrastructure, limited international collaborations, lack of faculty talent, or outdated educational approaches. A strategic plan should be developed to address these challenges, tailored to the university's unique context and strengths. Effective strategies to improve research output and faculty qualifications include providing funding for research projects, establishing research centers, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, offering competitive compensation packages, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment. Embracing technology and digital resources in teaching, learning, and research can involve investing in advanced infrastructure, providing training for faculty and students, and promoting online learning platforms and digital tools.

Fostering collaborations with international institutions, implementing innovative teaching methodologies, enhancing global recognition and rankings, improving funding and resource allocation, and strengthening industry-academia collaboration are also crucial steps. Continuous evaluation and improvement of these strategies are necessary to ensure the university's competitiveness remains relevant and effective.

12. CONCLUSIONS

This study emphasizes the urgent need to enhance the competitiveness of Egyptian universities and elevate their global stature. The analysis of current international rankings has identified critical challenges, including insufficient research funding, quality of education, research output, infrastructure, international collaboration, language proficiency, brain drain, and governance issues.

The recommendations provided establish a comprehensive framework for improving competitiveness. By focusing on performance metrics, promoting academic freedom, enhancing education and research quality, and leveraging Egypt's unique advantages, universities can strive for global recognition. Additionally, the proposal for an OIC ranking system offers an opportunity to create benchmarks for Arab universities, fostering cooperation and healthy competition in the region (Concept aligns with benchmarking discussed in Alden & Lin, 2004).

To effectively implement these strategies, collaboration among stakeholders—including government agencies, academic institutions, faculty, students, and industry partners—is essential. Continuous assessment and adaptation of these strategies will be crucial for sustained progress. By addressing these challenges, Egyptian universities can transform into centers of academic excellence, research innovation, and international collaboration, (Kirby

et al., 2011; Leydesdorff & Etzkowitz, 2004; Kirby & Ibrahim, 2016) thereby contributing to the growth of Egypt's higher education sector and enhancing its global recognition.

Coordinated efforts are necessary to overcome existing obstacles and improve the international standing of Egyptian universities. By adopting the proposed strategies and forming collaborative partnerships, they can enhance their competitiveness, elevate their global position, and significantly contribute to knowledge and innovation both in Egypt and beyond. This approach will not only benefit the universities themselves but also support broader societal development within the country (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2015a, 2016; Kirby et al., 2011).

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INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOSITY ON PERCEIVED ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY: EXAMINING MEDIATION OF STRUCTURAL AND COGNITIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL

INFLUENCIA DE LA RELIGIOSIDAD EN LA MOTIVACIÓN EMPRESARIAL PERCIBIDA Y LA AUTOEFICACIA: EXAMINANDO LA MEDIACIÓN DEL CAPITAL SOCIAL ESTRUCTURAL Y COGNITIVO

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of religiosity on perceived entrepreneurial motivation (EM) and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) among business graduates in selected parts of Punjab, focusing on the mediating roles of structural and cognitive social capital. The work follows a positivist philosophy with a deductive approach and a cross-sectional time horizon to test theoretical relationships using empirical data. A sample of 321 business graduates from selected areas of Punjab was selected through convenience sampling due to accessibility and time constraints. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire adapted from previous validated studies. To examine the direct and mediating effects among religiosity, social capital, entrepreneurial motivation, and self-efficacy, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted using SmartPLS 4, offering robust analysis of complex relationships within the proposed conceptual framework. The findings revealed a positive influence of religiosity on both entrepreneurial motivation and self-efficacy. Cognitive social capital fully mediates the influence of religiosity on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, while structural social capital

positively impacts self-efficacy but does not predict motivation to engage in entrepreneurship. Both religiosity and cognitive social capital have a significant and positive influence on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and motivation, while structural social capital significantly influences self-efficacy. These insights provide a foundation for policymakers and educators to design interventions that incorporate religious and social factors to foster youth entrepreneurship. This study contributes to the existing literature by enhancing the understanding of the factors influencing youth entrepreneurship in a developing country context, particularly by exploring how religiosity and social capital shape entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy.

Keywords

Religiosity, Structural Social Capital, Cognitive Social Capital, Entrepreneurial motivation, Entrepreneurial self-Efficacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion provides guidance for the spiritual, social, and economic activities of individuals, and society is a collection of individuals. Religiosity can affect society and economics. The interaction between entrepreneurship and religion has gained traction since 2007. However, it is still considered a specialized area of study and has yet to be published prominently in top-tier scientific journals (Shahzad et al., 2021). A growing aspect of global wealth disparity, unemployment, and impoverishment. Interactions among individuals from diverse age groups, educational levels, social statuses, and regional origins have the potential to trigger social conflicts and issues (Green et al., 2024). This phenomenon is widespread in developing nations across Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe (M. M. Ali & Faisal, 2020). For example, it is projected that in 2022, the number of unemployed people in Asian countries will range from 5% to 7% of the total population, in Latin America it will range from 6% to 10%, and in Africa it will exceed 15% (Regional Economic Report).

The implementation of entrepreneurial programs and courses has been regarded as the most effective approach in China and India (Yuan et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the program remains confirmed both inside and outside the areas. Entrepreneurship in certain regions, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, is primarily led by older individuals, with a limited number of young entrepreneurs. Consequently, politicians and educational organizations must revise educational programs on entrepreneurship to foster self-confidence and drive entrepreneurship (Junaidi et al., 2023). This assertion is corroborated by the research conducted by Al Amimi and Ahmad (2023), who proposed that individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 require greater attention towards entrepreneurship. Z-Generation plays a vital role in driving socioeconomic progress. More precisely, this research focuses on university students (Javed et al., 2021).

In 2022, Pakistan had a situation where only 2.10% of the people engaged in entrepreneurial activities, while 4.5% of the population was unemployed (Majeed et al., 2021). This data is somewhat less significant than that of other ASEAN nations, such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia, where the proportion of entrepreneurs exceeds 5% of the population. Notably, 13% of unemployed individuals in Pakistan are young people with diplomas. This percentage represents a considerable increase compared to 2018, when the unemployment rate among university graduates was 7.92% (Tabassam et al., 2021). Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, where religious values play a significant role in society. It promotes the entrepreneurial skills and motivation of Muslim students. However, some gaps remain to be explored. Wardana et al. (2020) suggested further investigation into the relationship between RL and entrepreneurship.

Social capital greatly impacts the financial and social sectors, which leads to the improvement of individual welfare and well-being (Khuram et al., 2022). This process includes persons from both the elderly and young age groups who are oriented toward religion, that is, by adopting religious ideas or identities or taking part in religious activities. The third reason for RL as an entrepreneurial enabler is the creation of self-confidence and the will to start a business (SOHU et al., 2022). Culture and geographical location often assign religious rules through which society is molded (Van Buren et al., 2020). According to a recent study by Zafar et al. (2022), it has been established that Muslim and Buddhist followers have a higher preference for entrepreneurship among other religions. Fatima et al. (2022) revealed that Islamic values and societal wealth contribute to the entrepreneurial power of Muslim youth in some areas. This implies that employees who set religious priorities are better equipped with social capital elements, such as relationships, conversations, knowledge sharing, and trust, to attain their level of autonomy through workplace dealings (Lestari et al., 2022). However, there are contradictory findings in the literature regarding whether social capital functions prominently (Setiawan & Lestari, 2021). In addition, religion is perceived as a factor that fosters individual bonds among Millennials (Sarfraz et al.). It arguably does this through social capital as well, thus could relate to the self-image and ambition of students in business.

This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the following questions and improving the understanding of the current practices of religion: Does religion positively affect the social capital of Gen Z? Can social capital alter the connection between faith and innovation? In this sense, this study aims to pinpoint the possible association between faith and social capital and how they assist students in their tactical self-efficacy and enthusiasm development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Religion

Currently, the fields of social capital and entrepreneurial studies have incorporated the study of religion (Ahmed et al., 2021). Religion also fosters and upholds ideals within and among cultures. These principles, in turn, influence beliefs regarding religion and social capital in business (Soomro & Shah, 2022). Religion, in addition to its global universal significance, plays a significant role in establishing networks on both large and small scales and has a crucial impact on economic results (Hossain et al., 2024). According to Oulhou and Ibourk (2023), RL is the extent to which an individual believes that God intervenes in their life.

Certain groups acknowledge that religion facilitates both official and unofficial networking by fostering similar ideals, convictions, confidence, and social conventions. Religious involvement offers individuals the chance to enhance their social networks, acquire knowledge and understanding, and cultivate capabilities that can be utilized to accomplish both individual and communal objectives (Lakhan et al., 2021). Moreover, religion exerts a beneficial and substantial impact on social capital (Zhang et al., 2021). RL can serve as a basis for cultivating entrepreneurial behavior (Ahmed et al., 2021). Religion promotes social cohesion by fostering tolerance in society. Religion has a notable and influential impact on the social capital of communities in the United States and the United Kingdom. Ullah and Yahya (2021) contend that Islamic principles and social capital have the potential to shape individuals' attitudes and perspectives.

2.2. *Social Capital*

Social capital, as defined by Jiatong et al. (2021), refers to the power to discretely benefit from an individual's social collaboration. In addition, Oulhou and Ibourk (2023) extended this idea to encompass community and personal consequences, such as relationships, conventions, social trust, and engagement in society, to improve communal opportunities and well-being (Hussain et al., 2021). Insufficient social capital often leads to social and economic problems (BILAL et al., 2021). This implies that the extent of social connections plays a significant role in achieving both personal and community objectives (Akhtar et al., 2020). Moreover, social capital has the potential to restore and enhance societal unity, particularly in emerging countries (Sardar et al., 2021). Social capital, as a theoretical notion, encompasses two well-known dimensions: economists and sociologists. It enables individuals to obtain vital resources. Therefore, this notion has emerged as a guiding principle for policymakers worldwide. Within an economic framework, social capital encompasses three significant principles: unity in the community, cooperation, and trust (Srimulyani & Hermanto, 2021). These dimensions contribute to improving teamwork and communal growth, specifically in the context of environmental instruction facilitated by social integration projects. Therefore, it has the potential to promote the welfare of young people and support societal progress by encouraging entrepreneurship (Jiatong et al., 2021). Ahmed et al. (2021) discovered that social capital has a favorable and noteworthy impact on the achievement of businesses.

2.3 Hypothesis Development

It is possible that it may increase the level of intimacy between students and community members (Yasir et al., 2020). According to Hossain et al. (2024), students are required to cultivate system connections that serve as vessels for the flow of data and materials, which significantly impacts the ability of participants to transfer commodities. The first benefit of network ties is that they make it easier for members to engage in social interactions with one another. Additionally, they lower the duration of work and time necessary to obtain information, which ultimately increases the magnitude, number, and diversity of the transfer of knowledge (J. Ali et al., 2021). According to Sher et al. (2020), the act of neutralizing the intense feelings among pupils through the medium of religion has the potential to help increase their foundational social capital. Students are more likely to share ideas and assets with others because of their personal relationships. These relationships also provide consistency and ensure that valuable information is shared.

There is a connection between emotional and cognitive values regarding an enhanced awareness of God, and this connection exists in addition to the activities associated with religion. Religion has been shown to play a significant influence in increasing the personal and interpersonal capacities of becoming entrepreneurs and recognizing knowledge, wisdom, and social empowerment, according to a study that was conducted in the past (Waris et al., 2022).

H1: RL positively impacts students' SSC

The concept of social capital has evolved into a social normative practice and character in certain locations (Sarwar et al., 2021). Siddiqui et al. (2020) revealed that it is also involved in social and interpersonal relationships, leading to a positive image for both tourists and local citizens. The kind of relationship that evolves among the parties as a result of the principles of humanity, such as civility, hospitality, cooperation, and esteem, is also represented by this symbol. According to Martins et al. (2023), this process is the infrastructure of an organization, wherein the business of administration and finance is conducted. For instance, consider the dispute that arises due to the existence of different religions and cultures across the world. This may create dissonance in one's connection with and networking among people.

According to Al-Qadasi et al. (2023), multiple and sustained contacts among students are assumed to be the crucial reason for the formation of interpersonal capital in inter-organizational settings. Religion creates a deep-rooted set of tolerance and norms for how people communicate and deal with others, which are both sanctioned and censured. These linkages provide a solid foundation for building shared beliefs and values. For example, it can

cause psychological uniformity among groups, resulting in the development of a homogeneous union. This union helps group members enhance their ability to survive and innovate. (Ullah & Yahya, 2021).

According to Adu et al. (2020), CSC refers to individualized and creative skills, both of which are important elements of local society. Consequently, students will be able to build a shared understanding and encourage the creation and distribution of new concepts. In the opinion of Naz et al. (2023), shed light on the fact that it allows both students and educational institutions to share knowledge, thoughts, and discussions which are vital in developing an entrepreneurial curriculum. In general, the same visions learners have will become very useful since they can serve as co-workers based on their vast experience (Shah, Sukmana, & Fianto, 2022). These students have a good attitude towards entrepreneurship.

H2: RL has a positive impact on students' CSC

In the context of social interactions, SSC represents appreciation and admiration for the sharing of knowledge and expertise among friends, groups, and connections (Maluda & Alias, 2022). Whether entrepreneurs can quickly access marketplace assets and finance is a critical factor in determining the longevity of a business. Research has shown that teaching students how to access industries and knowledge significantly increases their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and drive to start their businesses. Institutional social capital is a resource that can be utilized to increase both personal and company efficiency in business (Na-Allah & Ahmad, 2022). In this context, positive interactions with individuals may be used to boost both individual and company performance (Mahmood et al., 2021). There is a clear connection between this and encouraging young people to start businesses.

It is a motivating factor and justification that guides entrepreneurs in establishing a firm (Shah et al., 2022). In addition, entrepreneurial motivation influences entrepreneurial intentions (Anjum et al., 2020). Therefore, entrepreneurial motivation is an inspiration and an explanation. In the entrepreneurial context, the idea that an individual possesses the capability to carry out duties and functions to accomplish specific entrepreneurial results while participating in entrepreneurial activity is referred to as entrepreneurial confidence (Memon et al., 2020). According to Ali and Faisal (2020), SSC among students has a favorable and significant impact on both the self-efficacy of entrepreneurs and their motivation to start their businesses (Yousaf et al., 2021). It is also highly associated with the development of network ties and the assistance of students in making decisions to become independent in their jobs through the development of ESE and motivation (Majeed et al., 2021).

H3: SSC positively impacts students' CSC.

H4: SSC has a positive impact on students' ESE.

H5. SSC has a positive impact on student's EM

Information is shared among community members for various reasons, one of which is to locate opportunities for professional advancement. This pattern of uncovering and solving interpersonal issues through interpersonal social capital is discussed in the following paragraphs (Elnadi & Gheith, 2021). According to Sardar et al. (2021), the student community must have access to information that is reliable, helpful and pertinent. Students with social connections with one another are more likely to engage in constructive collaboration (Sargani et al., 2021).

Islam has been the religion of several merchants and businessmen since its inception because Islam supports its believers to actively do business. Attention is given to the participation of the Miracles of Allah in the daily operations of Islamic businesses by the followers, which moves them to mimic the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) behavior. It can be hypothesized that individuals might be aiming to begin a business due to the increasing trend of entrepreneurship in Islam. The study performed by Abdelwahed et al. (2023) revealed that the impact of Islam was one of the primary motivating factors for entrepreneurs. As far as SUAN et al. (2022) propose, the SSC element is a mechanism that RL uses to create an incentive to begin commercial activities.

McDermot et al. (2021) maintain that having a high standard of conduct, high competence, and inherent potential attributes gives a company an advantage over other enterprises when they are involved in entrepreneurial ventures. The intellectual level and intellectual plane, in the words of Ahmed et al. (2021), are the main determinants of the cognitive capacity of an applicant who seeks entrepreneurial positioning. Lakhan et al. (2021) contend that it has a crucial role in determining how companies choose their strategies to follow. As capital, which is composed of cognition and social relations, is responsible for the processes of output and the equipment within a business, it is vital to conduct a critical analysis of the instrumental role of religion in the self-efficacy and motivation of Muslim students, which operates through the medium of CSC. This is in addition to other important topics.

According to Sarfraz et al. (2023), students' share of vision affects their level of involvement throughout the learning process. According to Sargani et al. (2021), it also encourages students to work together and perform well by taking advantage of the concepts they have in common to develop community relationships. Additionally, it facilitates the development of agreed-upon objectives and acceptable methods of communication within a social system, which is beneficial for both the community and the company (Murad et al., 2022). Consequently, the significance of students having similar perceptions, occasions, and understanding is highlighted by the concept of CSC.

As proposed by Munir et al. (2021), as a theoretical concept, entrepreneurial motivation can be defined as the pursuit of opportunities in specific sectors to achieve a goal. The key factors for the decision to start an entrepreneurial activity are a set of different sociocultural and environment-specific factors. One of the mentioned variables explains the extent of a person's religious beliefs. The other vital factor to keep in mind as we ascertain a person's

ability to give valid and informed consent is their level of RL. This role is crucial in ensuring economic growth and encouraging more independent entrepreneurs to thrive. Among Pakistani entrepreneurs, where Muslims make up a large percentage, most of them always refer to the Prophet Muhammad's achievements as a businessman as their source of encouragement and success role model.

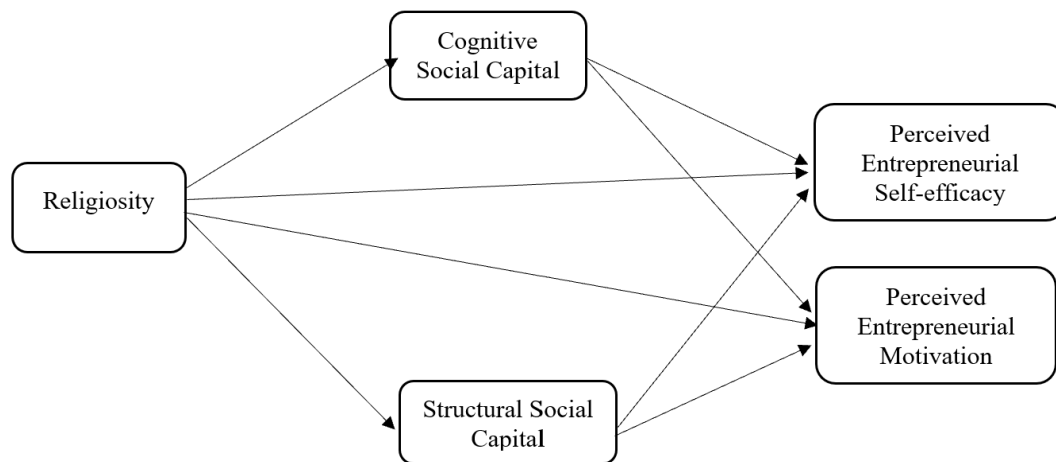
The strongest link between Islam's arrival in Pakistan and the monetary and trading aspirations of Muslims in India and Persia was commercial and entrepreneurial objectives. While Muslim students in Pakistan may be more likely to start new businesses because of their Islamic beliefs (Uddin et al., 2022), this is not a certain outcome. Moreover, Rajar et al. (2022) suggested that the highly religious character of Pakistani students has a noteworthy and positive relationship with their motivation to be involved in entrepreneurial deeds. They broke the complexity of religion among Pakistanis while still highly valuing mutual respect, collaboration, and the free flow of thoughts, which have become the foundation of the CSC in Pakistan.

H6: CSC has a positive impact on students' ESE.

H7: CSC positively impacts students' EM.

Self-efficacy is not only a consequence but also a source of assessment and control of impressions about a target disposition and conduct. According to Naveed and Mahmood (2022), self-efficacy may be defined as an individual's own belief as well as their capacity to actively activate motivation and independence. A correlation exists between it and performance at work.

In addition, it teaches how to achieve success and maintain one's mental health while studying and conducting business. It is also important to note that the self-efficacy factor encompasses interpersonal risk control and project evaluation skills. In light of this, Gul et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy can alter the level of entrepreneurial drive. According to Soomro and Shah (2022), individuals who are business-focused, independent, and have faith in their capacity to establish firms are more interested in acquiring knowledge and procedures associated with entrepreneurship.

Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Philosophy, Approach, and Time Horizon

The study is based on a positivist research philosophy and adopts a deductive approach, together with a cross-sectional time horizon that yields the foundation of the present research. Positivism focuses on objectivity, numerical measurements, and empirical evidence to combine existing hypotheses and study relationships between variables (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). Since the purpose of the study was to examine the role of religiosity and social capital in entrepreneurial motivation and self-efficacy based on measurable data collected in response to the structured questionnaire, the positivist approach was suitable. This philosophy allows generalization or replication, especially in social science research, where structured models and hypotheses are evaluated through statistical manipulations such as structural equation Modelling (SEM).

The research is deductive in nature and is associated with positivist research. This method entails testing prior existing theories when they are being formulated by coming up with a hypothesis and empirically investigating it (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Because the constructs of religiosity, social capital, entrepreneurial motivation, and self-efficacy are well theorized in the literature, the deductive approach was applicable in validating the proposed model within the context of business graduates in Punjab. Additionally, a cross-sectional time horizon was followed, where data were only collected at one time point. The design is very frequent in behavioral and attitudinal research, as the aim is to pin-point the prevailing impressions of a certain population group (Bryman, 2016). Considering the financial and time limitations of the study, cross-sectional design has made it possible to gather high-quality data and at the same time not to reduce the relevance of the results.

3.2. Sample Size and Technique

This research utilized convenience sampling as the sampling method and obtained 321 responses from business graduates in certain sections of Punjab. The reasons behind the ability to use such a non-probability sampling were practicality, affordability, and accessibility to a particular segment of the population, particularly when time and resources are constrained (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). In social scientific studies, convenience sampling is commonplace when the main aim is to investigate theoretical relationships and produce insights and not to be in a position to generalize the outputs to a given population (Bornstein, Jager, and Putnick, 2013). Since this is an exploratory study investigating the subtle aspects of the relationship between religiosity, social capital, and how these two variables contribute to the development of entrepreneurial motivation and self-efficacy, this method enabled practical access to fresh business graduates, which are directly linked to the study goals. In addition, prior research in the same area of entrepreneurship using convenience sampling as a behavioral reliably studied a behavioral construct among a sample of students and graduates (Ahmad, Xavier, and Rani, 2012), further showing its applicability in this study.

3.3. Measures

The RL of students was evaluated using a measurement tool that was developed and consisted of six questions. For example, the students made statements regarding the existence of God, as well as their recognition of entrepreneurs and their faith. This tool was adopted from the survey conducted by Junaidi et al. (2022). SSC covers five indications and refers to the ability and confidence of students in entrepreneurship and their skills in knowledge exchange and expert sharing. The CSC concerns the engagement level between students when exchanging resources and social worth. The concept of social capital is based on the research of Farooqi (2006) and Sengupta and Sarkar (2012). Students' mastery of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as evaluated by Zhao et al. (2005), and EM, as elucidated by Solesvik (2013), were measured using five different measurement scales.

3.4. Questionnaire Design

The study participants were university students from Pakistan who identified themselves as Muslims. Participants were selected based on an offline survey conducted between July and March 2024. Before the official examination, preliminary and pilot tests were conducted to verify the accuracy and appropriateness of the final language of the survey. The participants were instructed to take the survey on-site, that is, at the institution. However, they maintain a link with the University Office to guarantee that enrollment and the study are

authenticated. Compliance with the instructions was increased by implementing measures such as requiring participants to fully complete the surveys with gifts as rewards to improve the response rate. The measurement questions in this questionnaire were modified to align more effectively with the study aims.

Multiple modes of control and filters were made anonymous, and with the help of a random concept verification, the validity of the survey was guaranteed and possible bias was avoided. Filter questions were introduced to determine whether respondents fulfilled the announced conditions of being actively enrolled in school and having successfully completed an entrepreneurial course. Data were gathered from two cities in Pakistan, Lahore and Sialkot. To avoid bias problems with anonymous questionnaire administration, this study used the popular CMV technique and employed the widely used variance (TCC) method. Furthermore, the items to be measured were presented randomly (Salem et al., 2022). SEM was used to model the relationships among the research constructs using PLS and SPSS software.

4. ANALYSIS

Table 1 - Respondent's Demographics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	190	59.2
	Female	131	40.8
	Total	321	100.0
Age	18-20	240	74.8
	21-22	72	22.4
	Above 23	9	2.8
	Total	321	100.0

Source: Authors

The Table 1 depicts the gender prevalence in the study sample and the proportion of women to men. The participants comprised the entire group of 321 people, of whom 59.2% were men and 40.8% were women. The data demonstrate the disparity between male and female participants by providing a higher rate of men than women. Almost 60% of the overall sample consisted of males. Conversely, females accounted for approximately 40% of participants. The table displays the prevalence and percentage distribution of age groups among the participants in the study. Among the 321 participants, the majority were 18-20 years old, including 240 people (74.8%). The second most populous demographic consisted of individuals between the ages of 21-22, accounting for 72 individuals or 22.4% of the total population. Finally, nine individuals (2.8% of participants) were aged > 23 years. The data indicate that more than half of the overall sample consisted of participants under 18 years of age. A significant proportion of persons in this age bracket implies that the study may have

deliberately focused on or had a greater attraction to younger people, thus reflecting a specific research emphasis on this population.

Table 2 - Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) Correlation

Constructs	HTMT
EM <-> CSC	0.869
ESE <-> CSC	1.175
ESE <-> EM	0.954
RL <-> CSC	1.215
RL <-> EM	0.901
RL <-> ESE	1.185
SSC <-> CSC	1.204
SSC <-> EM	0.827
SSC <-> ESE	1.191
SSC <-> RL	1.183

Source: Authors

Table 2 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of the correlations between various constructs. HTMT is a measure used to assess discriminant validity, with values below 0.90 or 0.85 generally indicating that the constructs are distinct. The HTMT value between EM and CSC was 0.869, which is within the acceptable range, suggesting discriminant validity between these two constructs. However, the correlation between ESE and CSC was 1.175, exceeding the threshold, indicating a potential overlap or lack of discriminant validity between these constructs.

The HTMT value between ESE and EM was 0.954, which is above the acceptable threshold, implying that these two constructs may not be entirely distinct. RL showed high correlations with several constructs, including CSC (1.215), ESE (1.185), and SSC (1.183), all of which exceeded the typical threshold, raising concerns about discriminant validity. The relationship between SSC and CSC is also high, with a value of 1.204, suggesting an overlap between these constructs.

Table 3 - Measurement's Results

Variables Item Scales	Factor Loadings	α	CR	AVE
RL		0.647	0.808	0.584
RL1:	0.770			
RL2:	0.798			
RL3:	0.722			
SSC		0.740	0.819	0.478
SS1:	0.728			
SS2:	0.556			
SS3:	0.647			
SS4:	0.745			
SS5:	0.768			
CSC		0.719	0.813	0.467
CS1:	0.727			
CS2:	0.622			
CS3:	0.606			
CS4:	0.711			
CS5:	0.739			
ESE		0.641	0.805	0.580
SE1:	0.825			
SE2:	0.695			
SE3:	0.759			
EM		0.690	0.767	0.404
EM1:	0.484			
EM2:	0.567			
EM3:	0.585			
EM4:	0.760			
EM5:	0.737			

Source: Authors

The reliability and validity of the measures were confirmed by factor loadings (Table 3), which ranged from 0.722 to 0.798, Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.647, composite reliability (CR) of 0.808, and average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.584. Reliability analysis of the SSC yielded α = 0.740, CR = 0.819, and AVE = 0.478, but moderate convergent validity, with loadings ranging between 0.556 and 0.768. CSC had factor loading from 0.606 to 0.739, α = 0.719, CR = 0.813, and AVE = 0.467, so reliability was found to be acceptable, but the convergent validity was

slightly lower. The factor loadings ranged from 0.695 to 0.825 for ESE, where $\alpha = 0.641$, CR = 0.805, and AVE = 0.580, indicating that ESE has good reliability and validity in this study. Finally, EM yielded factor loadings between 0.484 and 0.760, $\alpha = 0.690$, CR = 0.767, and AVE = 0.404, indicating moderate reliability and comparatively low convergent validity.

Table 4 - R-Square, Adjusted R-Square, and P-Values for Constructs

	R-square	R-square Adjusted	P-Values
CSC	0.679	0.678	0.000
EM	0.500	0.495	0.000
ESE	0.703	0.700	0.000
SSC	0.664	0.663	0.000

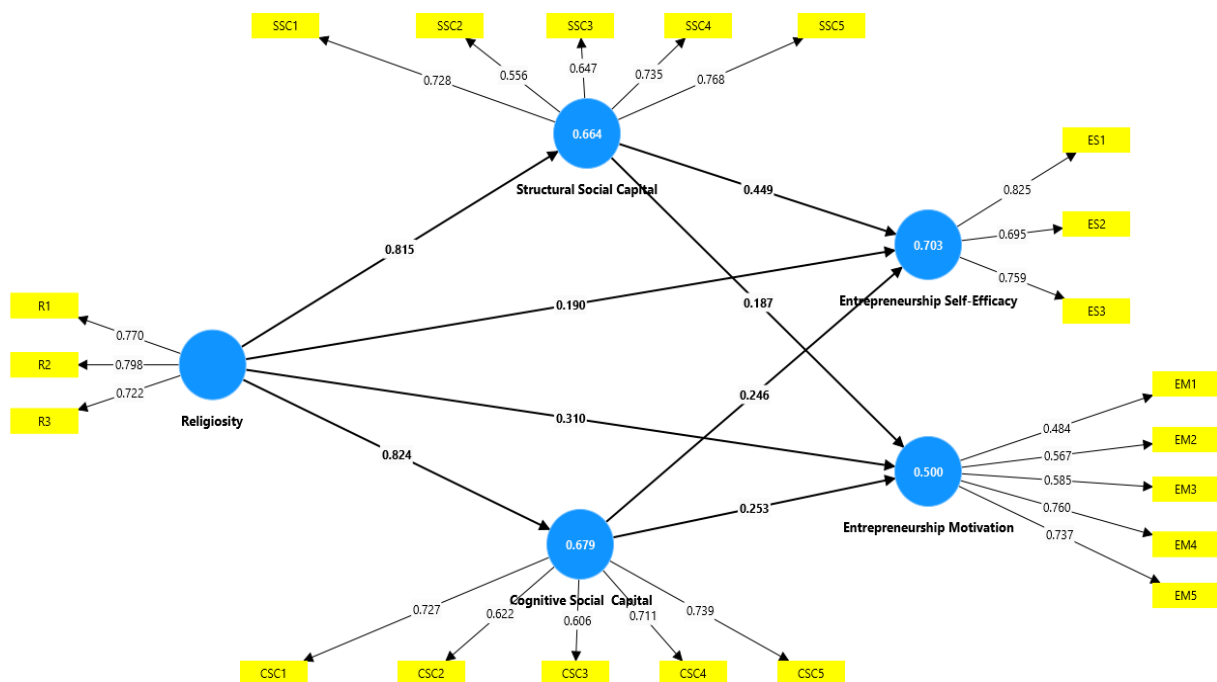
Source: Authors

CSC had an R-squared of 0.679, with 67.9% of the variance explained and an adjusted R-squared of 0.678 (Table 4). EM has an R-squared of .500, meaning 50% of the variance or total sum of squares (adjusted R-squared = .495). From the analysis of ESE, the model had an R-squared of 0.703 % and a variance of 70.3% (adjusted = 70.0%). Finally, SSC has an R-square of 0.664, of which 66.4% variation is explained, and the adjusted R-square of 0.663. All the models have very low p-values (0.000), suggesting the good explanatory power of the models.

Table 5 - Hypothesis Results

Constructs	Path Coefficient	P-Values	Results
CSC-> EM	0.253	0.021	Accepted
CSC-> ESE	0.246	0.006	Accepted
RL -> CSC	0.824	0.000	Accepted
RL -> EM	0.310	0.001	Accepted
RL -> ESE	0.190	0.050	Rejected
RL -> SSC	0.815	0.000	Accepted
SSC -> EM	0.187	0.080	Rejected
SSC -> ESE	0.449	0.000	Accepted

Source: Authors

Figure 2 - Illustrating the graphical representation of path coefficients

Source: Authors

The findings highlight that CSC has a positive effect on both EM ($\beta = 0.253$, $p = 0.021$) and ESE ($\beta = 0.246$, $p = 0.006$) (Figure 2). RL had a significant impact on both CSC (standardized regression coefficient = 0.824, $p = 0.000$) and EM (standardized regression coefficient = 0.310, $p = 0.001$) but had an insignificant direct effect on ESE (standardized regression coefficient = 0.190, $p = 0.050$). The analysis also revealed that RL has a predictive relationship with SSC ($\beta = 0.815$, $p = 0.000$); SSC has a decisive influence on ESE ($\beta = 0.449$, $p = 0.000$), but does not impact EM ($\beta = 0.187$, $p = 0.08$). In general, social capital, particularly CSC, is of central importance to entrepreneurial motivation.

5. CONCLUSION

The ability of parents and teachers to parent effectively is a significant factor in shaping the character of young people. Religion and social capital values are the results of the habits that youngsters form at home. These habits serve as a model for the development of students' interaction and conversation patterns, not only with fellow students but also with persons of different generations (for example, younger and older people) (Yousaf et al., 2021). The relationship between religion and entrepreneurial self-efficacy and motivation is further mediated by the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital. These dimensions play an essential role in mediating this association (Alam et al., 2020). Educational stakeholders are responsible for enhancing the skills and capabilities of students through the implementation of entrepreneurial programs, such as giving speeches, as a consequence of teaching them about religious life. It has a significant relationship with the

success of communication and engagement among individuals (Hussain et al., 2021). When it comes to increasing transactional ties among students, as well as their sense of self-efficacy and motivation in the realm of entrepreneurship, the level of trust, knowledge of details, and technological advancement, particularly social media, are also unavoidable.

5.1. Practical Implications

Young people can boast their skills and provide information and knowledge resources by using their social capital to achieve the objective of sustained interaction and communication. Furthermore, it is also necessary to stage regular training exercises to engage secretaries and share information on subjects related to entrepreneurship, which should not only create enthusiasm but also trigger enterprise. (Ahmed et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is crucial to prioritize religious activities, as well as the material and techniques of student connection that foster enduring relationships, generate value propositions, and cultivate an innovative, adaptable, and imaginative mindset for entrepreneurial endeavors. Alternatively, they need to examine the factors that motivate students to compose captivating articles and engage in meaningful discussions, redirecting their productive endeavors from idle pursuits to deliberations on business and gaining a competitive edge in the job market. University stakeholders must analyze the entrepreneurial program by evaluating experienced entrepreneurs and establishing collaborations. This technique offers students the opportunity to volunteer in a company, allowing them to gain firsthand experience in managing and operating a business. It enhances the appeal of the entrepreneurial program in terms of its economic and social value. To determine the feasibility of government and university programs and objectives, professors and students must assess and analyze the aspects that impact students' self-confidence in entrepreneurship and their drive to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. This promotes strategic collaboration between students and colleges. In this scenario, the government and universities offer the services of knowledgeable individuals or accomplished entrepreneurs to serve as motivators and role models for individuals who wish to start their businesses. This endeavor serves to enhance mutual exchange and cooperation among students, universities, the government, and business proprietors.

5.2. Limitations and Future Directions

The study reveals valuable hints about the interplay among RL, social capital, and students' efficacy, as well as the reasons motivating students to venture into entrepreneurship. However, it is difficult to assess the influence of such research on other fields related to psychology, demography, culture, region, and religion. Follow-up studies can aim to expand the scope of the research to the extent that many cultural, regional, and entrepreneurial

pupils are engaged as subjects, which, in turn, increases the generalization of the study. The study's participants may have a clearer picture of the central role student engagement in religion, social capital, and business play, through observing how people communicate and interact in dynamic situations, such as the impact of social media on communication and conversation patterns. This is such a fact that most companies and founders do their operations on social networking sites like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. Additionally, the research did not include other aspects, such as students' behavioral or demographic traits, that may modify their attitudes towards work and business as they come of age. Consequently, studies must be conducted to investigate how these factors influence students' views and behaviors toward entrepreneurship.

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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SHIFTS IN ICONOCLASM: COLONIAL TO CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES OF TEMPLE DESECRATION UNDER THE MUGHALS

CAMBIOS HISTORIOGRÁFICOS EN LA ICONOCLASIA: NARRATIVAS COLONIALES A
CONTEMPORÁNEAS DE LA PROFANACIÓN DE TEMPLOS BAJO LOS MOGOLES

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Abstract

This study explores the changing historiographical trends surrounding iconoclasm, particularly temple desecration during the Mughal period. It suggests that explanations of temple desecration should move beyond interpretations limited to religious policy or political strategies and instead consider temples as multi-functional institutions whose social, economic, educational, and religious centrality made them strong symbols of power and, consequently, targets of contestation. The study underscores that the history of iconoclasm encompasses not only the acts themselves but also their evolving representation in writing by successive generations of historians contesting the memory of temple desecration. This idea stems from long-standing debates in South Asian historiography about desecration and adaptation of sacred sites, embodying intersections of power, legitimacy, and cultural negotiation. Emerging during the early Islamic invasions in the subcontinent, these practices were often associated with proclamations of domination, appropriation of sacred spaces, and

at times, resource acquisition, later evolving into tools of political control and expressions of authority. Over time, varied interpretations of these practices have emerged. Colonialist and nationalist interpretations emphasized religious intolerance, while recent scholarship has situated these acts within broader political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods in contemporary scholarship has further contributed to diverse reinterpretations, representing an important milestone in the historical discourse of iconoclasm.

Keywords

historiography, iconoclasm, Mughal, religious policy, temple desecration

1. INTRODUCTION

Iconoclasm in medieval India remains one of the most contested themes in South Asian historiography. Central to this theme is the desecration of temples and religious images by various Indo-Muslim dynasties and later during the Mughal period. While some scholars interpret these acts as expressions of religious intolerance, others view them as instruments of political power or strategies of symbolic statecraft. The subject of iconoclasm, particularly temple desecration, continues to attract significant scholarly attention as historical interpretations and historiographical methodologies evolve over time.

This study focuses on the shifting paradigms within historiography concerning temple desecration during the Mughal period (1526 to 1707 CE), encompassing the reigns from Babur to Aurangzeb. Although the Mughal Empire officially lasted until 1857 CE, the study confines itself to the first two centuries of Mughal rule, when imperial expansion and authority were at their peak and when acts of temple desecration were most systematically recorded in official court chronicles. These chronicles from 1526 to 1707 CE serve as the primary evidentiary foundation upon which historians from various schools of thought have constructed their interpretations. The study seeks to trace how the historiography of iconoclasm has evolved using these chronicles as a consistent analytical base, highlighting the ways in which changing ideological standpoints and methodological frameworks have shaped understandings of temple desecration in the Mughal period.

1.1. *The Rise of Mughal Chronicles*

During the Mughal period, a distinct tradition of historical writing emerged under Persian influence, in the shape of official chronicles - "namah"¹, to document royal affairs. This

¹ Namahs, which originated from Persian tradition and mean "book" or "letters", were adopted by the Mughals as a unique form of official historiography. These texts were based on contemporary written records, such as waqai (official reports of the province) and akhbarat-i-mu'alla (court bulletins) (Sarkar, 1977, p. 98).

practice began during the reign of Akbar, who granted court historians access to the state archives (Sreedharan, 2022). While the practice of *namah* writing started under Akbar, earlier autobiographical works, such as Babur's "Tuzuk-i-Baburi" or the "Baburnama," established important literary and stylistic precedents for Mughal historiography.

Under Akbar, the genre reached its pinnacle with works like the "Tarikh-i-Alfi" by Mulla Ahmad of Thatta and Asaf Khan, Abul Fazl's "Akbar-namah" and "Ain-i-Akbari," all of which glorified the emperor as a universal monarch. In contrast, counter-narratives emerged in works like Nizamuddin Ahmad's "Tabaqat-i-Akbari" and Badauni's "Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh," which offered critical evaluations of Akbar's administration and policies. This tradition continued with Mutamad Khan's "Iqbal-namah-i-Jahangiri," "Ma'athir-i-Jahangiri," and Abdul Hamid Lahori's "Badshahnama," detailing the reign of Shah Jahan.

During Aurangzeb's reign, Muhammad Kazim began the "Alamgir Nama," though the work remained incomplete after the emperor withdrew royal patronage and discouraged the continuation of official court histories beyond the first ten years of his reign (Sarkar, 2022; Goel, 2019). Nonetheless, the tradition persisted in independent works of Mustaid Khan's "Maasir-i-Alamgiri" and Khafi Khan's "Muntakhab-ul-Lubab."

These chronicles not only celebrated the dynasty but also documented their acts of temple desecration. Shaykh Zain's "Fathnama," composed for Babur, describes "Allah" as the "destroyer of idols from their very foundations" (Goel, 2019, p. 138), a model that Babur sought to emulate by breaking the idols of the idol-worshippers. The "Tarikh-i-Baburi" records the destruction of Hindu and Jain temples in central India (Goel, 2019). In Badauni's "Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh," Akbar is shown granting "pargana of Lakhnou as Jagir" (group of villages offered as land grant) to Mahdi Qasim Khan, who then marched to demolish temples (Al-Badaoni, 1990). While another section of this work recounted the fall of "Nagarkot Temple" in Himachal Pradesh, describing mass killings, idol desecration, and a mosque erected in its place (Al-Badaoni, 1990).

The "Shash Fat'h-i-Kangra" celebrates Jahangir's conquest of Kangra Fort (1620), portraying it as an endorsed royal victory. Jahangir's "Tuzuk" mentions desecration of temples at Ajmer, Kangra, and Varanasi, while Shykh Abul Wahab's "Intikhab-i-Jahangir Shahi" details the destruction of Jain temples in Gujarat with their idols thrown at mosque entrances to be trampled (Goel, 2019). Similarly, Abdul Hamid Lahori's "Badshahnama" records Shah Jahan's demolition of seventy-six temples in Varanasi, the razing of Bir Singh Dev's grand temple at Orchha, and temple conversions in Kashmir (Elliot, 1875). Inayat Khan's "Shahjahannama" further describes royal ordinances for destruction of temples at Orchha (Khan, 1990).

Aurangzeb's era generated even more extensive records concerning the destruction of Hindu religious sites and the exclusion of Hindus from administrative positions. Bakhtawar Khan's "Mirat-i-Alam" noted the widespread demolition of Hindu shrines (Goel, 2019). Muhammad Kazim's "Alamgir Nama" recounted the desecration of temples in Bihar and Bengal (Goel, 2019). Saqi Mustaid Khan's "Ma'asir-i-Alamgiri" documented the emperor's

general order to demolish schools and temples in Varanasi, Mathura, Rajasthan, and beyond (Sarkar, 1947). Contemporary compilations such as Inayatullah's "Kalimat-i-Tayyibat", "Ganj-i-Arshadi" and Ishwardas Nagar's "Futuhāt-i-Alamgiri" further substantiated these actions.

To summarize, the Mughal chronicles play an important role in comprehending not only the period's political culture but also the methods through which actions such as temple desecration entered the historical record and were later interpreted. This study seeks to highlight their timeless role as foundational sources for reconstructing the intricacies of Mughal policy and the developments of historiographical debate, tracing how the origins of iconoclasm under the Mughals were constructed, contested, and reinterpreted from colonial to contemporary times.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a historical narrative approach to trace the evolving interpretations and paradigmatic shifts in the study of Mughal iconoclasm and temple desecration. It involves a critical review of the works of historians representing different schools of thought: Colonial, Nationalist, Marxist and Modern to analyse how interpretations have evolved over time and substantially changed or redefined our understanding of Mughal India history.

In accordance with this strategy, literature was chosen through a targeted study of significant historiographical sources that discuss iconoclasm, temple desecration, and administrative policy in the Mughal context. Each selected work was examined for its interpretive framework and engagement with foundational court chronicles and material evidence. Rather than attributing contemporary judgments to earlier interpretations, the study attempts to understand how historians' analytical decisions and ideological positionings influenced their portrayal of such historical events.

This paper, using a historical narrative method, maps the evolution of interpretations surrounding temple desecration under Mughal rule, without reducing the analysis to a mere comparison of different schools of thought. The analysis follows changes in historiographical focus, highlighting the primary analytical priorities, like the religious, political, economic, or symbolic, that have shaped each era's understanding. By tracking these developments sequentially, the study identifies key turning points like new sources, evolving theories, and methodological innovations that have influenced historians' perspectives on the subject. Presenting this evolution in a narrative form reveals the broader patterns and trajectories that have shaped scholarly debates on Mughal iconoclasm across generations.

3. COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Mughal histories were initially interpreted by colonial historians who, following their conquest of India during the empire's decline, approached this subject through a distinctly Western lens. Their perspective portrayed the rulers of the Orient as "absolute" and "oppressive," framing their reign as a period of "economic stagnation" and "societal decline"

(Bernier, 1916). These representations sought to legitimize colonial domination over India by emphasizing alleged despotism and backwardness in precolonial polities. Drawing on European travel accounts, gazetteers, memoirs, and early findings of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), their writings established a foundational framework for interpreting Mughal iconoclasm.

Colonial historiography of the Mughal era was strongly influenced by Francois Bernier's theory of "Oriental Despotism," articulated in his "Letter to Colbert" from 1670 which depicted Hindustan as a land characterized by "arbitrary power, economic stagnation, and social decline." Viewing the Mughal Empire through an imperial lens, colonial historians portrayed the rulers as "despotic" and "religiously intolerant," relying on partial translations and selective studies of Persian chronicles such as Abul Fazl's "Akbarname" and "Ain-i-Akbari," Jahangir's "Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri" and the "Babur-Nama." Owing to the limited accessibility to the Persian texts, European travelogues composed largely of personal observations or second-hand accounts became the building blocks of the colonial construction of Mughal history, particularly shaping the discourse on temple desecration and iconoclasm.

The writings of European travellers, like those of Francois Bernier, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, and Niccolao Manucci, gained particular significance in shaping colonial and later historical understandings of Mughal India. Bernier's travel observations from the 1660s, first published in French in 1670 and later in English in 1916, described the Keshava Deva temple in Mathura as "an ancient and magnificent temple of idols" (p. 284), reinforcing its architectural brilliance and artistic excellence of Indian craftsmanship at the time. Tavernier (1889) likewise reinforced this by referring to it as "one of the most sumptuous buildings in all India" (p. 240–241). The narrative of its desecration entered colonial discourse primarily through Niccolao Manucci (1907), who noted the demolition of the Keshava Deva temple under Aurangzeb and the construction of a mosque in its place. Manucci also noted the renaming of the site as "Esslamabad" (Islamabad), a claim reflecting colonial attempts to interpret Mughal state actions within a framework of religious conquest.

In the early seventeenth century, William Finch (an English merchant for the East India Company) made an important observation that influenced evidence-based interpretations of iconoclasm. As documented by William Foster in "Early Travels in India" (1921), Finch, during his travel to Ayodhya, observed Hindu worship at the ruins of "Ramkot" in Ayodhya, which he identified as the site of Rama's temple, suggesting an earlier Hindu structure. The location corresponds to the area later known as the "Babri Masjid–Ram Janmabhumi" site, key to one of India's most contested historical and political debates. This connection illustrates how colonial-era documentation later became intertwined with modern interpretations of temple desecration and the continuity of Hindu worship under Islamic rule.

By the nineteenth century, colonial documentation extended to archaeological surveys that further amplified temple desecration narratives. James Prinsep's "Benares Illustrated" (1831) provided detailed documentation of Varanasi's architecture, including the Kashi

Vishwanath temple's earlier "cruciform layout" described in the *Kashi Khanda* (detailed account of Kashi) of the *Skanda Purana*. Particularly distinctive were his drawings depicting the "Gyanvapi mosque" situated on the temple site, adjacent to a platform built by the Hindus, which he interpreted as evidence of Hindu religious continuity despite Islamic appropriation of space. Similarly, M.A. Sherring's "Benares: Past and Present" (1868) provides a detailed account of temple desecration under Aurangzeb, noting sites, like the "Krittivasesvara, Bindu Madhava, Vishwanath, and Bakaria Kund," where mosques were built on the ruins of these demolished temples. Sherring's work highlights remnants such as the "Lat Bhairava" pillar and the memory of minarets known as "Madhavarao Ka Dharhara," which help preserve traces of valuable structures, implying pre-existing temples (Jain, 2025) and the place's layered history of conflict, adaptation, and resilience.

Expanding upon such documentation, Sir Henry M. Elliot, with John Dowson in "The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians" (1867-77), established a narrative portraying Muslim rule as an era characterized by "idols mutilated, temples razed, forcible conversions, and massacres," which led Hindus into "the lowest depths of wretchedness and despondency" (Vol. I, p. xxi). Excerpts from Mughal court chronicles, translated and considered alongside European travellers' accounts, their work selectively framed iconoclasm with a convincing account of religious tyranny, which reinforced the narrative of British rule as a civilizing intervention in India.

Archaeological and administrative surveys from the nineteenth century further reinforced this interpretive framework. Alexander Cunningham, the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India, in his 1871 report on Mathura, recorded local traditions attributing the demolition of the Keshava Deva temple to Aurangzeb. He claimed to have verified this by physical evidence such as slabs bearing Nagari inscriptions reused in the mosque's pavement, and the mosque's back wall was built directly on the temple's original plinth. F.S. Growse's "Mathura: A District Memoir" (1874) added specificity by dating the Keshava Deva temple destruction to 1669, "the eleventh year of the reign of the iconoclastic Aurangzeb" (p. 126). He noted that the mosque erected on its ruins was "of little architectural value," while describing Govinda Deva temple as "the most impressive religious edifice that Hindu art has ever produced, at least in Upper India" (p. 126).

Comparable observations by other colonial historians extended these interpretations beyond Banaras and Mathura. Walter Lawrence described Kashmir in "The Valley of Kashmir" (1895), as the "holy land of the Hindus" and documented the vestiges of desecrated Hindu temples as evidence of Mughal iconoclasm, noting that nearly every village contained relics of antiquity (p. 161). Similarly, the Sun Temple at Multan, one of Northern India's most celebrated shrines and longstanding pilgrimage centres was frequently cited as an example of religious desecration, even before the Mughal period. According to Edward Maclagan's "Multan Gazetteer" (1926), the temple was last destroyed by Aurangzeb and replaced by a Jama Masjid; however, earlier literary evidence complicated this narrative. In the seventeenth century, French traveller Jean de Thévenot described Hindu pilgrims visiting this

site, worshipping an idol with “a black face cloathed in red Leather” and “two Pearls in place of Eyes,” with offerings collected by the local governor (Sen, 1949, p. 78). Thévenot indicated that, despite reports of destruction, the site continued to function as a Hindu place of worship.

A.K. Forbes, in “Rasmala” (1878), described the desecration of the Sun Temple at Modhera, Gujarat. The author observed that the temple was “nearly complete, although indentations are visible upon some of the columns, such as might have been made in wood by sharp weapons, to which the Mohummedans point as marks of the swords of the Islamicate saints” (p. 195, 196). By corroborating archaeological observations with local accounts, Forbes established this narrative of attack on the temple structure by Islamic invaders.

Through gazetteers, archaeological surveys, and translated chronicles, colonial scholarship thus constructed a narrative that portrayed temple desecration by the Mughals as systematic and religiously motivated. By aligning excerpts from court chronicles with European travelogues and juxtaposing administrative reports and archaeological documentation, colonial historians transformed these interpretive accounts into seemingly verified historical facts and Mughal iconoclasm as a central and defining aspect of India's past. Within this interpretive framework, rooted in the idea of Oriental Despotism, Indian society was portrayed as stagnant, irrational and morally inferior in contrast to Europe's progressive rational order.

While colonial writings laid the groundwork for later scholarship by systematically compiling records of Mughal administration, temple policies and regional architecture, their analysis, however, reflected selective interpretations shaped by colonial ideology. Their tendency to emphasize political instability and religious prejudice thereby served to legitimize British rule as a corrective to centuries of Oriental despotism. They overlooked the administrative intricacies, economic pragmatism, and cultural syncretism aspects of Mughal governance. In summary, colonial historiography, though instrumental in preserving crucial textual and architectural records, ultimately offered a monolithic narrative of religious persecution.

4. NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

Nationalist historiography developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a direct response to colonial portrayals of India's past. While colonial interpretations depicted Mughal emperors as “despotic rulers” who allegedly destroyed the Hindu institutions and culture, nationalist historians re-examined the primary sources to establish a narrative that glorified India's historical agency and cultural resilience in the face of repeated invasions and threats.

Initially, this school of thought focused on dynastic histories of ancient and medieval India to counter colonial interpretations. Over time, it expanded its analytical scope to include

elements like 'religion, caste, language, economy, and culture.' Eminent historians like R.C. Majumdar, Jadunath Sarkar, R.P. Tripathi, K.P. Jayaswal, R.C. Dutta, S.R. Sharma, Sita Ram Goel, and Meenakshi Jain contributed to the evolution of this interpretive framework.

Within this interpretive framework, the religious policies of the Mughal emperors, particularly Aurangzeb, garnered significant attention. Jadunath Sarkar's "Studies in Aurangzeb's Reign" (1933, 2022) provided a detailed thematic analysis of the emperor's life and administration, grounded in a systematic analysis of a range of primary sources. Central to this were Aurangzeb's personal letters, which gained much evidentiary importance due to the absence of an official chronicle in the later years of his reign².

In the context of temple desecration, Sarkar attributed religious reasons to his actions and observed that Aurangzeb "...began to give free play to his RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY," highlighting the emperor's heightened zeal and systematic intensification of attacks on Hindu temples (p. 11). He substantiated this interpretation by citing various orders, or "farmans," directed by the emperor to destroy the temples and educational institutions, alongside administrative measures like the reimposition of "jizya" (pilgrimage tax) and the restriction of Hindu rituals like "Tuladana," large gatherings in fairs, and other Hindu festivals.

In a similar vein, S.R. Sharma's "The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors" (1940) traced the evolution of Mughal religious policy and proposed a two-phase analytical theory. In the first phase, the rulers preceding Akbar are examined; they primarily relied on military strength while imposing a poll tax (jizya) and pilgrimage tax on dhimmis (non-Muslims) in exchange for protection and the right to practice their religion. The second phase, starting with Akbar, was marked by a deliberate policy of religious tolerance that encouraged temple construction and abolished the jizya and pilgrimage tax. This policy was followed, though in lesser degrees, by his successors Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

During the reign of these rulers, Sharma documents temple desecration, usually as a component of "military measures." Aurangzeb's reign, however, is interpreted to have brought an end to this. While he acknowledged that some of the early temple desecrations under him can be perceived as military measures, the author characterized later desecrations as an "act without the provocation of military necessity" (p. 137), indicating a purposeful shift from previous Mughal policy. According to Sharma, Aurangzeb's rule indicated a shift from political dimension to religious orthodoxy.

In contrast, R.P. Tripathi, in "Rise and the Fall of the Mughal Empire" (1956), analysed Mughal religious policy, focusing particularly on Akbar's reign. Tripathi argued that the acts of temple desecration under the Mughals were majorly driven by political or military

² According to Sarkar (1933), the personal and official letters of Aurangzeb from various sources such as Kalimat-i-Taibiyat, Akham-i-Alamgiri, Adab-i-Alamgiri, Raqaim-i-Karaim, and Mirat-i-Ahmadi especially captures the start and the end of his reign. Other short notes and stray letters housed in various collections have aided in supplementing data for reconstruction of Aurangzeb's character.

considerations, aimed at consolidating imperial authority and administrative cohesion in a religiously diverse empire, rather than arising out of religious hatred or intolerance.

R.C. Majumdar's seventh volume, "The Mughul Empire," in his series "The History and Culture of the Indian People," offered one of the most focused analyses of Mughal religious policies, drawing on editions from 1974 through 2022. The early emperors, Babar and Humayun, receive only brief mention regarding their religious inclinations, while Akbar's reign was studied in depth, including his liberal religious outlook and the institution of "sulh-i-kul" (universal peace). Jahangir was characterized as "tolerant in religious matters" (p. 193), though instances of orthodoxy are found in sources referencing the temple desecration at Ajmer. For Shah Jahan, Majumdar described a ruler "more orthodox" and "less tolerant" and having "an uncompromising" religious policy (p. 212). Lastly, Majumdar attributed the decline of the Mughal empire to Aurangzeb's religious orthodoxy (p. 302), identifying a gradual narrowing of religious policies that corresponded with an increase in temple desecration.

Another major work of the late twentieth century is Sita Ram Goel's series "Hindu Temples and What Happened to Them" (1990, 2019), which clearly addresses the issue of temple desecration. Goel emphasized that regional literature from the medieval period seldom discusses Islamic iconoclasm from a Hindu perspective. The author reconstructed the situation of Indian temples during Islamic rule, drawing on chronicles, inscriptions, and archaeological evidence. He stated that idols were mutilated or removed to be buried in mosque foundations, and temples were damaged, despoiled, razed, or transformed into mosques with some modifications to the structure reusing temple elements. Goel stressed the Islamic invaders' purposeful efforts to demolish India's unique cultural and religious structures. He also strongly critiques the emerging Marxist historiography, contending that attempts to explain temple desecration as solely politically or materially motivated underplay the substantial evidence of religious iconoclasm found in inscriptions and chronicles.

In the contemporary period, Meenakshi Jain stands out as one of the major proponents of nationalist historiography. In "Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples" (2019, 2025), she criticized Marxist and Modern scholarship for emphasizing political elements in temple desecration and reducing them to "...transactional institutions concerning the king and deity alone" (p. 20). Jain emphasized two key points: (a) evidence of shrines rebuilt by some unidentified patrons, suggesting a community-led effort to maintain their worship customs; and (b) devotees burying holy images of their deities to protect them from desecration. The author discussed Pushpa Prasad's (1990) work on Sanskrit inscriptions from the Delhi Sultanate Period, which records Raja Ajaysimha's burial of a Durga image in a pit after the "Chandi Mahayagna" in the late 12th century, to safeguard it from destruction by the "mlecchas" (p. 5). She questioned the Marxist interpretation that viewed the appropriation of images by Hindu rulers like the Cholas as purely political acts, a framework used to rationalize Islamic temple desecration. The Cholas, she argued, restored the images in their own worship spaces, while the Islamic invaders demolished temples and defaced the deities (p. 12).

Meenakshi Jain's recent works, including "Vasudev Krishna and Mathura" (2021) and "Vishwanath Rises and Rises: The Story of Eternal Kashi" (2024), provide a detailed history of Mathura and Kashi as major Hindu religious centres. Jain provides an in-depth analysis of the many temples constructed, desecrated, and restored in Mathura and Varanasi throughout the medieval and Mughal periods. She argues that these attacks were not driven solely by political expediency but were also intended to weaken the role of these temples as centres of Hindu religious, cultural, economic, and educational life.

In summary, nationalist historiography emerged in response to colonial depictions of India's past, with the goal of restoring cultural agency and reigniting confidence in the country's continuous civilization in the face of foreign domination. They reconstructed events of temple desecration and Mughal policy through political and religious lenses. Their narratives frequently emphasized the resilience of Hindu society and highlighted the moral and cultural contrast between indigenous traditions and foreign rulers. However, driven by their time's intellectual and political imperatives, many of these works took a binary view of Indian history, dividing it into Hindu and Muslim periods. While this approach played a vital role in fostering a sense of national identity and countering colonial stereotypes, it often promoted a morally polarized anti-colonial sentiment, preventing the development of intricate, pluralistic realities of Mughal-era iconoclasm and the complexities of historical memory.

5. MARXIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

The post-independence phase of Indian historiography witnessed a significant transformation with the prevalence of Marxist interpretation, which challenged previous frameworks rooted in colonial and nationalist schools. Historians such as D.D. Kosambi, Mohammad Habib, Irfan Habib, R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, Satish Chandra, and Richard M. Eaton re-evaluated Persian as well as indigenous sources, employing new methods of analysis. Their scholarship moved beyond literal and dynastic interpretations to emphasize the underlying social, economic, and political complexities, fundamentally reshaping the study of India's history.

Muhammad Habib's "Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin: A Study" (1967) is often considered as one of the earliest texts for this school of thought that directly challenged the colonial interpretations of temple desecration. Habib argued that such acts arose primarily from political and economic motivations, rather than religious ones. He highlighted that temples often housed monetary wealth, making them major targets for invaders seeking resources to support future expeditions. Additionally, temple desecration was viewed as a strategy to control opposition, rather than as a consistent practice. Habib critiqued the colonial dependence on European travel accounts for their interpretations and instead advocated for the use of more traditional sources like the *farmans*, biographies, chronicles, and administrative records.

Satish Chandra's study extended this approach by examining Mughal religious and fiscal policies within their administrative setting. In "Jizyah and the State in India during the 17th Century" (1969), Chandra attributed Aurangzeb's reimposition of jizya in 1679 to financial and administrative requirements, such as replenishing the royal treasury after the abolition of certain taxes and creating jobs during the "jagirdari crisis" by establishing a department dedicated to jizya collection. In "Historiography, Religion, and State in Medieval India" (1996), Chandra argues that, while Aurangzeb's early temple desecrations were motivated by religious orthodoxy, they eventually became instruments of political strategy. Temples were viewed as "retaliatory targets," mere objects to be demolished in the case of rebellion (Chandra, 1996, p. 156).

Similarly, Romila Thapar, who was not limited to studying the Mughal period, significantly advanced the economic reasons for temple desecration as an Indian historical phenomenon. In "Narratives and the Making of History" (2000), Thapar revisited the instance of Gujarat's Somanatha temple and underscored the considerable wealth that temples acquired through donations and pilgrim taxes, much of which was directed into purposeful investments by temple authorities. Thapar argued that Mahmud of Ghazni's attack on the Somanatha temple was motivated by wealth gain and a desire to curtail the Arab monopoly on Indian trade (p.71).

One of the important works by Richard M. Eaton, titled "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States" (2000), analyses temple desecration by Islamic invaders between 1192 and 1760 CE. Eaton observed that temples were typically "looted, redefined, or destroyed," which contributed to "detaching a defeated raja from the most prominent manifestation of his former legitimacy," putting a strong political dimension to these acts (p.104). He further noted that "Above all, the central icon housed in a royal temple's 'womb-chamber' and inhabited by the state-deity of the temple's royal patron, expressed the shared sovereignty of the king and the deity" (p. 105), suggesting that attacking the temple's central image is symbolic of defeating the ruler.

Eaton's narrative is further extended by his observations of inclusive and pragmatic policies from Akbar to Aurangzeb's reign, which included instances of issuing grants for the construction of Hindu institutions, contrary to the narrative of religious resentment. He documented selective instances of temple desecration, like in Orchha, by Shah Jahan in 1635, as a political situation and reaction to the Hindu king's revolt and the subsequent destruction of a mosque. Resonating with Satish Chandra's view, Eaton interpreted it as a calculated political manoeuvre to manage dissent and keep Hindu rulers in check and reinforce state authority, rather than a religious act.

Overall, Marxist historiography provides a distinct understanding of temple desecration, inferring such acts primarily as being shaped by political, economic, and administrative purposes. Instead of viewing attacks on temples by Mughal rulers solely through a religious lens, literature indicates that rulers often sought to acquire resources and diminish the legitimacy of rival kings through the capture, modification, or demolition of temples. These

were calculated moves within broader strategies of governance and power consolidation. The Marxist view further clarifies that temple desecration incidents were not sporadic; rather, they were typically connected to local political disputes or uprisings and used as retaliatory measures. Also, historians have pointed to instances where Mughal emperors extended support to Hindu institutions, such as issuing grants for construction and safeguards, underscoring the pragmatic and inclusive nature of state policies during this period.

While the Marxist approach has expanded the scope of historical analysis by highlighting administrative and economic dimensions, it is not without its shortcomings. By relying primarily on official records and centrally produced documents, this school risks overlooking the lived experiences, ritual significance, and emotional responses of diverse social groups. Such a top-down focus may at times undermine the profound cultural and religious meanings that temple sites held for local communities, as well as the variety of responses to desecration and reconstruction.

6. MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Building on the evolving historiography, recent scholarship on temple desecration in medieval India has moved beyond colonial, nationalist, and Marxist frameworks, emphasizing political conflict, economic pressures, and the social and sometimes environmental context of such acts. This newer approach often combines qualitative and quantitative methods to add depth to understanding of these events. Some notable scholars associated with this shift of historical studies include Zahiruddin Faruki, M. Athar Ali, Iqtidar Alam Khan, and Salma Ahmed Farooqui.

Zahiruddin Faruki was among the earlier scholars in this line. In his book "Aurangzeb and his Times" (1935), Faruki noted that dhimmis (non-Muslims) under the Mughals enjoyed a degree of religious liberty and suggested that actions of temple desecration attributed to Aurangzeb were guided by royal political ambitions rather than purely religious motivations. Faruki contended that temple desecration was sometimes a countermeasure to attacks on mosques by Hindu rulers and nobles and was guided by broader political strategies.

Scholars such as M. Athar Ali, Iqtidar Alam, and Salma Ahmed Farooqui have also suggested that the motivations behind temple desecration were guided by political ambitions and strategic responses to resistance rather than by purely religious intolerance. M. Athar Ali, in "Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb" (1997), demonstrated that acts of temple desecration were frequently consequences of uprisings by groups such as the Jats and Marathas and reflected Mughal state policies responding to rebellion and threats to imperial authority.

Importantly, Ali highlighted a different dimension of Mughal rule, noting that during Aurangzeb's reign, the proportion of Hindu nobles in the Mughal administration increased, rising from 24.5% at the start of the period to 31.6%. He noted that this increase was not due to improved religious tolerance but rather to the widespread absorption of Deccani and

Maratha elements into the Mughal nobility as the empire extended southward and encountered severe military and administrative challenges. Athar Ali also observed that, in contrast to prior periods, the process of Rajput recruitment and advancement slowed significantly in the subsequent years of Aurangzeb's reign, with Marathas gradually replacing Rajputs in higher official positions.

Similarly, Iqtidar Alam Khan, in "State in the Mughal India: Re-Examining the Myths of a Counter Vision" (2001), highlighted Aurangzeb's conciliatory stance towards the Hindus in certain contexts, arguing that instances of temple construction coexisted with temple desecration policies. Salma Ahmed Farooqui, in "Islam and the Mughal State" (2005), stated that temples were closely tied to the political authority of Hindu nobles and rulers, and their desecration served the Mughals as a powerful strategic instrument to discipline them and assert political control.

The more recent phase of modern historiography is enriched with the employment of innovative data-driven methods by scholars, shifting from traditional narrative analysis to more fine-grained comparative approaches. Authors like Heidi Pauwels, Audrey Trushcke, Rohit Ticku, Emilia Bachrach, and Murat Iyigun have made significant contributions on this subject.

Heidi Pauwels has studied the topic of temple desecration by exploring regional histories. Pauwels, in her works "A Tale of Two Temples: Mathura's Kesavadeva and Orchha's Caturbhujadeva" (2011) and, together with Emilia Bachrach, "Aurangzeb as Iconoclast? Vaishnava Accounts of the Krishna Images' Exodus from Braj" (2018), examined temple desecration as a political strategy. She documented Akbar as a benevolent ruler, sanctioning temple building activities and making grants to Brahmins. In the context of Aurangzeb, however, she suggested, temple desecration was a result of the "Jat Rebellion" and murder of "Abd-un-Nabi" (Governor of Mathura) in Mathura, denoting this action as a political manoeuvre.

Pauwels (2018), together with Emilia Bachrach, studied the portrayal of temple desecration in the Vaishnava narrative "Srinathji ka Prakatya Varta." This text discussed the relocation of "Srinathji" (Krishna idol) from "Mount Govardhan to Simhad village in Mewar," which today is referred to as "Nathdwara." According to the regional narrative, there were repeated attacks that lasted six months and occurred 17 times (p. 495). Similarly, including local memory, Pauwels reported attack on the "Jagdish temple" in Udaipur, which was fiercely protected by 20 Rajputs and caused significant losses to the Mughal army (p. 500). As a counterattack, Rana Raj Singh's sons destroyed "one big and thirty small mosques in Ahmadnagar" (p. 500).

Audrey Trushcke's book "Aurangzeb: The Man and the Myth" (2017) examined Aurangzeb's life through a new perspective, revealing the intricacies of his leadership that went beyond past historians' portrayals of Aurangzeb as an iconoclast or a religious king. Her study stressed a contextual understanding of his policies, evaluating him according to the traditions and values of his own time rather than modern standards. She observed a shift in

policies during the later decade of Aurangzeb's reign, which included the controversial reimposition of the *jizya* tax, restrictions on certain court practices, withdrawal from some Hindu customs, and the discontinuation of the office of formal court historian. This period corresponded with intensifying rebellions among the Rajputs, Jats, and Marathas, indicating heightened power struggles between the Mughals and regional rulers.

Importantly, Truschke noted that "...Aurangzeb protected more Hindu temples more often than he demolished them" (p. 83) and temple desecration was politically motivated rather than religious orthodoxy. Destroying temples, according to her analysis "served the cause of ensuring justice" and punishing political disobedience. There was much greater religious flexibility under Mughal policies compared to the draconian measures employed by the European rulers to impose their religion on the public (p. 83). In this framework, temple desecration was politically motivated rather than driven by religious orthodoxy alone.

Building upon such reinterpretations, Iyer et al. brought a quantitative shift in historiography through their study "Holy Wars? Temple Desecrations in Medieval India" (2017). Using a geo-coded dataset of temples, dynasties, and battles from 1192 to 1720, their analysis suggested temple desecration was over 30% more likely when a Muslim ruler defeated a Hindu rival in battle (p. 2). Whereas temples within established Mughal territory were generally left untouched, avoiding the risk of desecration, suggesting that their actions were driven more by political motives than by indiscriminate religious iconoclasm.

The authors further expanded this quantitative approach by linking temple desecrations to climate-induced economic stress in their subsequent study, "Economic Shocks and Temple Desecrations in Medieval India" (2018). Employing centuries of geo-referenced data, they showed that desecrations were significantly more likely during major temperature deviations, particularly in low-fertility regions, with the probability increasing by about 0.8–1.0 percentage points (p. 19). They concluded that temple destruction under Islamic rule was not primarily for looting or collateral damage but a strategic tool to quell rebellion and reinforce regime stability, exemplified by Aurangzeb's demolition of the Keshava Deva temple in Mathura in 1670 following agrarian unrest.

In a broader comparative context, Iyigun et al. study "Winter is Coming: The Long-Run Effects of Climate Change on Conflict, 1400-1900" (2017), analysed five centuries of cross-regional data and demonstrated that periods of climatic cooling were strongly associated with increased conflict, particularly civil wars and episodes of religious persecution in agrarian societies. While their study does not specifically focus on India, it suggested that climatic stress undermined state stability and heightened the risk of politically motivated violence. When viewed alongside recent quantitative studies of temple desecration, this research provided a broader, data-driven perspective on how environmental shocks interacted with political authority and religious institutions during the Mughal era.

Modern historiography marks a turning point in the study of temple desecration, advancing beyond prior interpretive frameworks by embracing source and methodological diversity. This new approach combines literary and archival analysis with regional narratives,

local memory, and quantitative data to contextualize iconoclasm within broader political and ecological frameworks. The critical reassessment of figures such as Aurangzeb, alongside studies by Pauwels, Bachrach, Truschke, and Iyer et al., highlights temple desecration as a strategic response to political resistance, economic strain, and environmental stress rather than purely religious zeal. While broad patterns link desecration to political conflict, scholars now emphasize local context and social dynamics, enriching our understanding of Mughal-era temple desecration as a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in the wider political, economic, and cultural landscapes of its time.

7. CONCLUSION

The historiography surrounding Mughal iconoclasm and temple desecration under different schools of thought reveals a long trajectory of reinterpretation shaped by evolving intellectual and methodological contexts rather than offering a fixed, uniform picture of the history. Our understanding states that Persian chronicles of the Mughal times presented temple desecration through the lens of royal duty, victory, and the affirmation of sovereignty. European travellers and early colonial officials, interpreted these events through an orientalist lens and often relying on sources outside the Mughal courts, portrayed the rulers as religiously intolerant and despotic. Nationalist historians countered this viewpoint by reclaiming India's cultural agency and resilience, reframing episodes of temple desecration through religious and political narratives that emphasized national identity. Marxist historians subsequently marked a significant theoretical shift, situating temple destruction within the dynamics of resource control, political authority, and administrative calculation, rather than purely religious motivations.

More recently, contemporary scholarship has broadened the field, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods and situating acts of temple desecration within broader contexts of power negotiations, local resistance, and diverse social, economic, and even environmental pressures. These approaches have begun to integrate regional histories, devotional texts, and data-driven analysis, highlighting the temple as a multifaceted political, social, and cultural institution with significance embedded in specific historical landscapes.

However, significant gaps persist, particularly in the areas of comparative analysis across regions and the in-depth study of community responses. The underutilization of oral traditions and community memory is a notable shortcoming. Though these sources need to be approached with caution due to concerns about reliability, they can provide valuable insights into resilience, survival, and continuity of traditions following episodes of desecration. Oral histories preserved through local storytelling, rituals, genealogy, and temple custodianship can illuminate newer perspectives of endurance and continuity of sacred places.

This paper suggests achieving greater scholarly rigor by combining primary sources like archival and material evidence with ethnographic fieldwork and community-based enquiry.

By analysing temples as multi-dimensional institutions serving religious, social, cultural, educational, and economic functions, we can better understand why they became targets and how Hindu societies responded to their desecration. Ultimately, the history of iconoclasm is not confined to the acts themselves but is continually shaped by the varied ways these events are remembered, interpreted, and narrated across generations.

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AN EXPLORATION OF IMPLEMENTING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING IN DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

UNA EXPLORACIÓN DE LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE LA INTELIGENCIA ARTIFICIAL Y EL APRENDIZAJE AUTOMÁTICO EN LA GOBERNANZA DIGITAL EN FILIPINAS

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Abstract

This review article examines the potential implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in digital governance in the Philippines. It addresses the need for a deeper understanding of specific application areas, ethical considerations, and essential policy and capacity-building strategies within the Philippine context. Using a secondary data collection and qualitative document analysis of eleven (11) sources, including academic journals, policy documents, and government reports, the study identifies promising areas for artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) applications. These areas include citizen services, policy formulation, healthcare, criminal justice, public fiscal management, and e-governance. The review article also highlights key challenges and risks, such as ethical concerns, data quality and privacy, transparency and explainability, risk management, and the absence of a comprehensive legal framework. It proposes crucial policy and capacity-building strategies, developing a legal and ethical framework, training and upskilling programs, data governance, and prioritizing innovation and ethical practices. The findings suggest that strategically integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) could transform digital governance in the Philippines, provided that ethical considerations and capacity-building are prioritized.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Digital Governance, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) into digital governance frameworks presents a transformative opportunity for the Philippines. It could revolutionize public service delivery, enhance policymaking, and foster citizen engagement (Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024). This exploration examines the various dimensions of implementing AI and ML within the Philippine context, recognizing both the significant potential and the inherent challenges of such a technological shift (Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025). E-governance, fueled by machine learning, artificial intelligence, and data analytics, is crucial for increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in governance processes and services (Pani & Shrasti, 2023). Governments worldwide increasingly acknowledge the importance of adopting these technologies to modernize operations, streamline processes, and improve citizen satisfaction (Al-Ansi, Garad, Jacob, & Al-Ansi, 2024). The convergence of AI and the Internet of Things (IoT) offers a revolutionary opportunity to enhance the effectiveness and delivery of e-government services, fostering innovation and elevating governance standards (Al-Ansi, Garad, Jacob, & Al-Ansi, 2024). However, the successful adoption of AI and ML in digital governance requires careful consideration of ethical implications, data privacy concerns, and the establishment of robust regulatory frameworks. Applying AI and ML in the Philippines' digital governance landscape offers a wide array of opportunities to address critical societal needs and improve the efficiency of government operations. One significant area of potential impact lies in public safety, where AI-powered predictive analytics can identify crime hotspots, optimize resource allocation for law enforcement, and enhance real-time situational awareness for emergency responders (Pani & Shrasti, 2023). AI can also automate compliance when planning public policies (Hamirul, Darmawanto, Elsyra, & Syahwami, 2023).

While the potential benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in transforming government operations are widely recognized, a significant gap exists in understanding the specific areas within the Philippine context where these technologies can be most effectively applied. This understanding is crucial for driving meaningful improvements in efficiency and citizen services (Sinha & Huraimel, 2020). Furthermore, it is essential to critically examine the ethical, legal, and societal implications of adopting AI and ML to ensure responsible and equitable implementation. Despite the growing interest in AI governance frameworks, there is limited research on specific AI principles and regulatory guidelines tailored for developers of expert systems, especially concerning machine learning and deep learning technologies in the Philippine public sector (AMIL, 2024; Camilleri, 2023). Therefore, in-depth exploration of policy and capacity-building strategies is necessary to facilitate the successful and sustainable integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) into the Philippine public sector. This approach will help foster a culture of innovation and responsible technology adoption. This review article aims to address these gaps by exploring the potential applications of AI and ML in Philippine digital governance,

identifying key challenges and risks, and proposing policy and capacity-building strategies to guide the ethical and practical implementation of these technologies.

The current landscape of AI adoption in the Philippines shows an increasing awareness of its transformative potential across various sectors (De Silos, et al., 2024). However, there is still a need for comprehensive research within digital governance to identify the most promising areas for artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) implementation, particularly given the unique context of the Philippines. While AI and ML have the potential to reduce administrative burdens, improve decision-making, and enhance communication between the government and citizens (Androutsopoulou, Karacapilidis, Loukis, & Charalabidis, 2019), challenges remain in effectively capturing and representing the expertise necessary to develop their knowledge base, especially within the public sector. The growing use of technology has also increased cyber threats, highlighting the importance of cybersecurity (Mohamed, 2023). This research aims to deepen our understanding of how AI and ML can be strategically deployed to address specific challenges and improve the effectiveness of digital governance initiatives in the Philippines. Moreover, it emphasizes the urgent need for ethical considerations and regulatory frameworks regarding the use of AI and ML in the Philippine government, particularly due to the risks of bias, discrimination, and privacy violations (Camilleri, 2023). Developing effective policies that protect innovation while upholding ethical principles in AI applications is essential (Singh, 2024). Well-defined guidelines and standards are also needed to ensure that AI and ML systems are implemented responsibly and ethically, safeguarding the rights and well-being of Filipino citizens (Mohamed, 2023).

This review article examines the possible avenues for implementing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in Philippine digital governance, drawing upon existing knowledge and identifying key considerations for successful adoption. In light of the identified research gaps, this paper aims to address the following key research questions:

1. What are the most promising areas within Philippine digital governance for implementing AI and ML to significantly improve efficiency and citizen services?
2. What are the primary challenges and risks that the Philippine government addresses to ensure the ethical and practical adoption of AI and ML in its digital governance initiatives?
3. What policy and capacity-building strategies are crucial for the successful and sustainable integration of AI and ML into the Philippine public sector?

Answering these questions will offer valuable insights into the strategic implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) within the Philippine government. This review article aims to facilitate informed decision-making and formulate effective policies. By examining the potential applications, challenges, and policy implications of AI and ML in the context of Philippine digital governance, this review article aims to offer practical recommendations for policymakers, government agencies, and technology stakeholders.

The goal is to promote the responsible and effective adoption of these technologies for the benefit of Filipino citizens. Additionally, the review article aims to support international harmonization with global standards of AI governance, highlighting the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and ethical commitment (Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024). The review article contributes to this evolving landscape by comprehensively analyzing the opportunities and challenges associated with AI and ML adoption in the Philippines. Ultimately, it seeks to foster a more efficient, transparent, citizen-centric digital governance ecosystem.

2. METHODOLOGY

This review article utilized secondary data collection and qualitative document analysis to enhance understanding of the impacts and considerations of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in governance and digital transformation in the Philippines, without relying on statistical data (Morgan, 2021).

2.1. Data Collection

The researchers thoroughly and systematically searched relevant documents across multiple electronic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. This search employed a comprehensive set of keywords related to the research questions, such as "Artificial Intelligence Philippines governance," "Machine Learning digital transformation Philippines," "AI government services Philippines," "challenges of AI in the Philippines public sector," "ethical AI in the Philippines," "AI policy in the Philippines," "capacity building for AI in the Philippines," and "digital governance initiatives in the Philippines."

During this process, relevant government websites and official repositories were meticulously examined. This included the official portals of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), and other pertinent government agencies involved in digital transformation and public service delivery in the Philippines. Official reports and policy documents from these government bodies were prioritized in the review.

The data collection process involved a thorough review of various document types, including:

Academic Literature: This encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly books that focus on the applications of AI and machine learning (ML) in governance, public administration, and digital transformation. Special attention was given to contexts within developing nations and specifically the Philippines.

Government Reports and Policy Documents: This category included national strategies, frameworks, white papers, official advisories, executive orders, and administrative issuances related to digital governance, e-governance, and the adoption of AI

and ML in the Philippine public sector. It also included reports detailing ongoing or proposed digital transformation initiatives.

Online Resources: Reputable publications, reports from international organizations (such as the UNDP and World Bank), think tanks, and credible news sources were utilized to gain insights into trends, challenges, and policy discussions regarding AI and ML in governance.

Case Studies: Documented AI and ML implementation examples in public services or governance from similar developing nations were reviewed. These case studies provided comparative insights and lessons learned that are applicable to the Philippine context.

Documents were selected based on their direct relevance to the application of AI and ML in Philippine digital governance. This included potential implementation strategies, identified challenges, ethical considerations, and essential policy and capacity-building requirements directly related to the study's research questions.

The final selection of eleven sources was made because they collectively offered the most comprehensive and diverse perspectives on the topic. This ensured a balanced view of the opportunities, challenges, and policy strategies within the specific context of the Philippines. The chosen sources, which include academic journals, government reports, and policy documents, were selected for their significant and direct contributions to addressing the key research questions, making them the most suitable for a foundational review of this nature.

2.2. Data Analysis

The collected documents were examined using a qualitative content analysis approach. This method involved systematically reading, coding, and categorizing the information extracted from these documents to address the study's research questions directly. The analysis aimed to synthesize information, identify recurring themes, and draw insights from various reviewed sources.

For Research Question 1: "What are the most promising areas within Philippine digital governance for implementing Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to significantly improve efficiency and citizen services significantly?" The analysis concentrated on identifying and detailing specific sectors, functions, or public services within Philippine digital governance where AI and ML technologies are already being explored, have high potential for impact, or are recommended for implementation. This involved extracting information on potential use cases, projected benefits, and examples of successful or proposed applications that could enhance efficiency and citizen services.

For Research Question 2: "What are the primary challenges and risks that the Philippine government must address to ensure the ethical and practical adoption of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in its digital governance initiatives?" The analysis entailed

extracting and grouping recurring themes related to the challenges and risks associated with AI and ML adoption in the Philippine public sector. This included technical challenges (e.g., data quality, infrastructure), human capital challenges (e.g., skill gaps, resistance to change), ethical considerations (e.g., bias, privacy, accountability), regulatory gaps, and issues related to public trust and acceptance. Insights were gathered from government perspectives as articulated in official documents and expert analyses.

For Research Question 3: "What policy and capacity-building strategies are essential for the successful and sustainable integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) into the Philippine public sector?" The analysis focused on synthesizing insights from the identified challenges and best practices to develop key policy and capacity-building strategies. This process involved outlining recommended legislative frameworks, regulatory guidelines, data governance policies, training and education initiatives, stakeholder collaboration models, and funding mechanisms, all supported by textual evidence from the reviewed sources. The goal was to identify actionable strategies for the successful and sustainable integration of AI and ML.

3. RESULTS

This chapter presents the solutions to the problems identified in the study. It includes a comprehensive discussion that covers the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of all the data collected by the researcher, aimed at clarifying the answers to the inquiries posed in this study. Eleven (11) sources were selected for this review article. These sources include a variety of academic journals, books, online resources, policy documents, and government reports. They provide diverse perspectives on the potential applications, challenges, and policy and capacity-building strategies for implementing Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in digital governance, particularly emphasizing the Philippine context (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Raw Data

Research Question	Raw Data	Author
	AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants provide immediate access to government information, enhancing administrative processes.	(Ocampo, 2023)
	Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning analytics can forecast outcomes based on data, aiding in the formulation of better policies. The editorial content also highlights that AI can streamline compliance in public policy planning.	(Pani & Shrasti, 2023)

What are the most promising areas within Philippine digital governance for implementing AI and ML to significantly improve efficiency and citizen services?	Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning can diagnose diseases, develop personalized treatment plans, and assist clinicians in decision-making. Instead of merely automating tasks, AI focuses on creating technologies that enhance patient care across various healthcare settings.	(Alowais, et al., 2022)
	AI enhances crime prevention and investigation using predictive analytics, biometrics, and digital forensics. In the Philippines, AI-driven surveillance and forensic tools provide solutions for combating cybercrime, organized crime, and terrorism. These technologies assist law enforcement in identifying crime patterns and improving response times. However, challenges such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and ethical concerns must be addressed to ensure fairness and accountability.	(Pacheco, Tolentino, & Baric, 2025)
	Utilizing machine learning, AI, and data analytics can enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in governance processes and services.	(Pani & Shrasti, 2023)
	The Philippine government has proposed and implemented several applications that utilize artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). These include: 1. Project MIKA-EL — Machine Intelligence Knowledge-based Audit and Experience Learning. 2. Risk Analytics and Strategy (RAS). 3. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) employs an AI digital assistant called REVIE.	
What are the primary challenges and risks that the Philippine government addresses to ensure the ethical and practical adoption of AI and ML in its	It is important to develop and deploy AI systems in an ethical manner, addressing any potential biases and discrimination.	(Camilleri, 2023; Sacramed, 2024).
	It is essential to address challenges related to data quality, privacy, and security to build trustworthy AI systems.	(Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024)
	It is crucial to ensure transparency and explainability in AI decision-making processes for accountability and public trust. The country requires a legal framework to improve AI explainability.	(Biondi et al., 2023) (Sacramed, 2024)

digital governance initiatives?	Reducing risks involves addressing issues such as violations of privacy, the misuse of personal information, and preventing bias and discrimination.	(Camilleri, 2023)
	There is a need for a comprehensive legal framework that governs the responsible and ethical development and deployment of artificial intelligence in the Philippines.	(Sacramed, 2024)
What policy and capacity-building strategies are crucial for the successful and sustainable integration of AI and ML into the Philippine public sector?	Establish a comprehensive legal framework to ensure responsible and ethical AI development and deployment.	(Sacramed, 2024)
	Address biases, ensure explainability, and establish accountability in AI systems to build public trust and promote innovation.	(Sacramed, 2024)
	Create guidelines for the responsible use of AI and machine learning.	(Transforming the Philippines workforce: The national AI strategy and AI skills development, 2024)
	Invest in targeted training and upskilling programs to meet the needs of AI and ML development.	(Sharma, Yadav, & Chopra, 2020)
	Incorporate STEM education and courses focused on artificial intelligence into the curriculum to develop essential skills.	(Sacramed, 2024)
	Expertise in areas such as Natural Language Processing is essential for developing AI systems that comprehend and engage with human language.	(Transforming the Philippines workforce: The national AI strategy and AI skills development, 2024)
	Address the challenges of data quality, privacy, and security to create reliable AI and ML systems.	(Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024)
	Place a strong emphasis on innovation and ethical practices in the National AI Strategy Roadmap.	(Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024)
	Encourage collaboration and adaptability in AI governance, acknowledging the unique approaches required for each country.	(Nilgirinwala, et al., 2024)
	Develop strategies to address the challenges of fully utilizing AI in Philippine public administration.	(Amil, 2024)

Source: Author

3.1. Promising Areas for Initial Implementation

The data indicates several promising areas where initial artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) implementation could greatly improve efficiency and citizen services in Philippine digital governance.

- **Citizen Services:** AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants have the potential to provide immediate access to government information and simplify administrative processes. This observation, supported by Ocampo (2023), emphasizes AI's ability to enhance citizen engagement with government services.
- **Policy Formulation:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) analytics provide valuable tools for predicting policy outcomes based on data, which can help develop more effective policies. Pani and Mourya (2023) highlight this potential and emphasize that AI can automate compliance in public policy planning.
- **Healthcare:** Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in healthcare offers opportunities for better disease diagnosis, personalized treatment plans, and improved clinical decision-making. Alowais et al. (2023) highlight that AI's role goes beyond just automation; it significantly enhances patient care in various healthcare settings.
- **Criminal Justice:** AI has the potential to significantly enhance crime prevention and investigation through techniques such as predictive analytics, biometrics, and digital forensics. According to Pacheco et al. (2025), AI-driven surveillance and forensic tools can be crucial in tackling issues like cybercrime, organized crime, and terrorism in the Philippines. However, they also emphasize the importance of addressing concerns related to data privacy, bias, and ethics.
- **Public Fiscal Management:** AI and ML can analyze large datasets to identify trends and patterns, helping policymakers make informed decisions about tax policy and fiscal matters (Castro, 2024). Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools can accurately predict future trends and patterns by analyzing historical data and employing machine learning algorithms, aiding in informed decision-making (Castro, 2024).
- **E-governance:** The expanded use of ML, AI, and data analytics in e-governance enhances efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in government processes and services, as highlighted by Pani and Mourya (2023). Here are the following Philippine Government proposals and existing applications using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML):
- **Project MIKA-EL** — Machine Intelligence Knowledge-based Audit and Experience Learning (MIKA-EL) — In 2020, the Commission on Audit (COA) announced its plans

to transform the government's accounting and auditing system digitally. The initiative aims to utilize artificial intelligence (AI) to identify patterns, detect anomalies, and uncover potential fraud (Castro, 2024).

- **The Risk Analytics and Strategy (RAS)** group, launched by the Bureau of the Treasury, has initiated several key projects, including publishing debt sustainability papers and developing machine learning models. These initiatives include: Creating econometric and machine learning models to forecast inflation, interest rates, and cash flows; Launching an Investor Education partnership with GCash through a dedicated webpage; Enhancing the Bond Portfolio Optimizer App to incorporate yield curve projections under stressed economic scenarios; Leading the implementation of the Residual Risk Registry for the Bureau as part of the Enterprise Risk Management Committee (ERMC) (Castro, 2024).
- The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) utilizes an artificial intelligence digital assistant named **REVIE**. REVIE is accessible 24/7 from the BIR website's homepage and is designed to provide taxpayers and other stakeholders with information and answers to frequently asked questions. Other notable features include AI applications in the Philippine public fiscal management project MIKA-EL; Revenue District Office (RDO) codes; Tax Identification Number (TIN) verification; deadline inquiries; revenue issuances; options to download BIR forms; and an eComplaint facility (Castro, 2024).

3.2. Primary Challenges and Risks

The data reveals several critical challenges and risks the Philippine government must tackle to integrate artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) ethically and effectively into its digital governance initiatives.

- **Ethical Considerations:** Ensuring the moral development and deployment of AI systems, especially in addressing potential biases and discrimination, is essential (Camilleri, 2023; Sacramed, 2024).
- **Data Quality and Privacy:** Addressing data quality, privacy, and security challenges is vital for developing trustworthy AI systems (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024).
- **Transparency and Explainability:** Transparency and explainability in AI decision-making are crucial for accountability and building public trust. Biondi et al. (2023) and Sacramed (2024) highlight the need for a legal framework to improve AI explainability in the country.
- **Risk Management:** Reducing risks associated with privacy violations, misuse of personal information, and algorithmic bias and discrimination is a significant concern (Camilleri, 2023).

- **Comprehensive Legal Framework:** The lack of a comprehensive legal framework for the responsible and ethical development and deployment of AI in the Philippines presents a significant challenge that must be addressed (Sacramed, 2024).

3.3. Crucial Policy and Capacity-Building Strategies

The data highlights several key policy and capacity-building strategies for the effective and sustainable integration of AI and ML into the Philippine public sector:

- **Comprehensive Legal and Ethical Framework:** It is essential to develop a strong legal framework that governs the responsible and ethical development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) (Sacramed, 2024). This framework should tackle bias, explainability, and accountability issues to foster public trust and promote innovation. Additionally, establishing clear policies regarding the responsible use of AI and machine learning (ML) is crucial.
- **Upskilling and Training Programs:** Investing in specialized training and upskilling programs is essential to meet the growing demands for AI and machine learning (ML) development (Sacramed, 2024). This includes integrating STEM education and AI-focused courses into educational curricula to help students build the necessary foundational skills (Sacramed, 2024). Additionally, developing expertise in natural language processing is crucial for creating effective AI systems that facilitate human interaction (AI Skills & AI Courses Philippines, 2025).
- **Data Governance and Infrastructure:** Addressing challenges related to data quality, privacy, and security is essential for developing trustworthy AI and ML systems (Nilgiriwala et al., 2024).
- **Prioritization of Innovation and Ethical Practices:** Innovation should be prioritized alongside ethical considerations for a responsible and balanced adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024).
- **Collaboration and Adaptability:** Promoting cooperation and ensuring adaptability in AI governance, while considering the unique context of the Philippines, is crucial for effective implementation (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024).
- **Addressing AI's Challenges:** For successful integration, strategies must be developed to effectively utilize artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in public administration in the Philippines (Amil, 2024).

4. DISCUSSION

This review article examines the potential for implementing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in digital governance in the Philippines. It draws on existing literature

to address key gaps in understanding specific application areas, ethical considerations, and the necessary strategies for policy and capacity building. By synthesizing eleven selected sources, this article provides a foundational understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating these technologies within the Philippine context.

The findings highlight several promising areas for implementing AI and ML to enhance efficiency and improve citizen services. AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants could provide immediate access to government information and streamline administrative processes, significantly improving citizen engagement (Castro, 2024). Additionally, applying AI and ML analytics in policy formulation offers valuable tools for predicting policy outcomes and automating compliance, which may lead to more effective, data-driven governance (Pani & Shrasti, 2023). In the healthcare sector, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) offer opportunities for enhanced disease diagnosis, personalized treatment plans, and improved clinical decision-making. These technologies go beyond simple automation, significantly improving patient care (Alowais, et al., 2022). Similarly, in criminal justice, AI technologies such as predictive analytics, biometrics, and digital forensics can greatly enhance crime prevention and investigation, especially in tackling cybercrime, organized crime, and terrorism (Pacheco, Tolentino, & Baric, 2025). However, Pacheco et al. (2025) wisely emphasize the need to address this area's critical issues related to data privacy, bias, and ethical implications. AI and ML can analyze large datasets in public fiscal management to inform tax policy and budgetary decisions, emerging as a promising avenue (Castro, 2024). The capability of these technologies to examine historical data and predict future trends can significantly assist policymakers in making informed financial choices (Castro, 2024). Finally, the increased use of ML, AI, and data analytics in e-governance holds excellent potential for improving the overall efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of government processes and services (Pani & Shrasti, 2023).

The increasing recognition of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in the Philippines is evident in several current and proposed government applications. One notable example is Project MIKA-EL, initiated by the Commission on Audit (COA), which aims to utilize AI for digital transformation in accounting and auditing by identifying patterns and detecting potential fraud (Castro, 2024). Additionally, the Bureau of the Treasury's Risk Analytics and Strategy (RAS) group is developing machine learning models to improve forecasting and enhance risk management capabilities, further demonstrating the practical application of these technologies (Castro, 2024). Furthermore, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has introduced an AI-powered digital assistant named REVIE, which aims to improve taxpayer services by providing easily accessible information (Castro, 2024).

Despite these promising initiatives, the effective and ethical integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in Philippine digital governance faces several significant challenges and risks. Ethical considerations are crucial, particularly in ensuring the responsible development and deployment of AI systems while mitigating potential biases and discrimination (Camilleri, 2023; Sacramed, 2024). Addressing data quality and privacy

concerns is vital for establishing trustworthy AI systems (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024). Transparency and explainability in AI decision-making are essential for fostering accountability and building public trust, which has led to calls for a legal framework to enhance Artificial Intelligence (AI) explainability in the country (Biondi et al., 2023; Sacramed, 2024). Additionally, effectively managing the risks associated with privacy violations, the misuse of personal information, and algorithmic bias remains a significant concern (Camilleri, 2023). Finally, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework specifically designed for the ethical and responsible development and deployment of AI in the Philippines presents a substantial challenge that requires urgent attention (Sacramed, 2024).

Several key policy and capacity-building strategies are essential to effectively address the challenges of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) and ensure sustainable progress. First and foremost, developing a comprehensive legal and ethical framework is crucial for governing AI's responsible development and deployment. This framework must tackle bias, explainability, and accountability to foster public trust and encourage innovation (Sacramed, 2024). In addition to this framework, there is a pressing need for clear policies on the responsible use of AI and ML. Investing in upskilling and training programs to meet the increasing demand for expertise in these fields is also vital. This includes incorporating STEM education and AI-focused courses into educational curricula to build foundational skills and developing expertise in natural language processing to improve human-AI interactions (Sacramed, 2024; AI Skills & AI Courses Philippines, 2024). Addressing data governance and infrastructure challenges is fundamental for establishing trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) systems. This encompasses data quality, privacy, and security (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024). Furthermore, a balanced approach prioritizes innovation and ethical considerations necessary for responsible technology adoption (Nilgiriwala, et al., 2024). Finally, promoting collaboration and ensuring adaptability in AI governance, while considering the unique context of the Philippines, is crucial for effective implementation (Nilgiriwala et al., 2024). Ultimately, the successful integration of AI and ML in Philippine public administration requires the development of comprehensive strategies that effectively harness these technologies (Amil, 2024).

4.1. Limitations of the study

This review article relies on secondary data and qualitative document analysis, which entails certain limitations. The dependence on existing literature and public documents means the study's findings are influenced by the published research and official reports available, and may not fully capture nuanced, on-the-ground perspectives or the most recent, unpublished developments in the Philippine public sector. Additionally, because this study did not involve primary data collection through interviews or surveys, it cannot provide direct, real-time insights from policymakers or citizens regarding the practical implementation and societal

impact of AI and ML in governance. Although the selected sources were carefully reviewed for relevance and credibility, a study of this nature is limited by the scope and focus of the current body of work. Despite these limitations, this review offers a vital foundational synthesis of the current landscape, highlighting key areas for future research and practical implementation.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this review article has revealed the significant potential of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) into digital governance in the Philippines. This integration can enhance citizen services, optimize policymaking, and improve various sectors. The existing literature analysis identifies promising initial implementation areas, including citizen interaction, policy formulation, healthcare, and criminal justice. However, realizing these benefits requires proactive measures and careful planning to address critical challenges such as ethical considerations, data privacy, and the absence of a comprehensive legal framework. Overcoming these obstacles demands a sense of urgency and responsibility to ensure the responsible and effective adoption of AI and ML in the Philippines.

The successful integration of AI and ML requires a multifaceted approach. This involves establishing a robust legal and ethical framework, investing in human capital through targeted education and training, and building a secure and reliable data infrastructure. By emphasizing both innovation and ethical practices, fostering collaboration across sectors, and adapting strategies to the unique context of the Philippines, the nation can harness the transformative potential of AI and ML to create a more efficient, responsive, and citizen-focused digital government. Future efforts should concentrate on empirical research and pilot projects to turn these theoretical benefits into tangible improvements for the Filipino people.

Based on the results and discussion of this review, the researcher recommends the following steps for the successful and ethical integration of AI and ML in Philippine digital governance:

Emphasize Citizen-Centric Applications: The findings reveal that AI and machine learning (ML) can significantly improve citizen services. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the Philippine government prioritize implementing these technologies in areas that directly enhance citizen interactions and streamline administrative processes. This includes expanding the use of AI-powered chatbots for information dissemination and service delivery.

Strategic Policy Development: The discussion highlighted the urgent need for a strong legal and ethical framework. Therefore, the researcher recommends the simultaneous development of a comprehensive and adaptable legal and ethical framework for the deployment of AI within the public sector. This framework should proactively address data

privacy, security, algorithmic bias, transparency, and accountability concerns. It should draw on international best practices while being tailored specifically to the Philippine context.

Invest in Essential Infrastructure: The findings showed that data quality and privacy are significant challenges. Therefore, the researcher recommends that government agencies prioritize investments in strengthening their foundational data infrastructure. This should focus on enhancing data quality, accessibility, and security to support the effective deployment of AI and machine learning systems.

Launch Targeted Capacity-Building Programs: The discussion highlighted the need for skilled personnel. Therefore, the researcher recommends implementing specialized training and upskilling programs for government employees at all levels. These programs should focus on improving data literacy, understanding the fundamentals of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), and addressing the ethical implications of these technologies. Additionally, it is suggested that AI-related topics be integrated into the educational curriculum to develop a workforce ready for the future.

Promote Inter-Agency Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: The review highlights the importance of shared learning. Therefore, the researcher recommends creating formal platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange among government agencies, academic institutions, and the private sector focused on applying AI and ML in governance. This approach will enable sharing best practices, collective efforts to address common challenges, and encourage innovation.

Promote Transparency and Public Awareness: The discussion highlighted the importance of public trust. Therefore, the researcher recommends actively involving the public in conversations about the use of AI in governance to build trust and address potential concerns. Ensuring transparency in AI implementations and providing clear, accessible explanations of how these systems work, along with the safeguards in place, is essential.

Establish Mechanisms for Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: The review emphasized the importance of ongoing assessment. Therefore, the researcher recommends implementing strong mechanisms for continuously monitoring and evaluating the performance and impact of AI and machine learning initiatives. This process should involve systematically evaluating efficiency gains, levels of citizen satisfaction, and compliance with established ethical guidelines. Regular evaluations will facilitate necessary adjustments and improvements over time.

Emphasize Sector-Specific Applications: The findings highlight promising areas, including healthcare, criminal justice, and public fiscal management. Therefore, the researcher recommends that although initial efforts can be broad, the government should create tailored strategies for implementing AI and machine learning in these sectors. This approach should consider the unique challenges and opportunities in each domain.

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NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE MID DAY MEAL SCHEME: A STUDY IN MAPUSA, GOA-INDIA

RESULTADOS NUTRICIONALES Y DIMENSIONES SOCIOECONÓMICAS DEL PLAN DE COMIDAS DEL MEDIODÍA: UN ESTUDIO EN MAPUSA, GOA-INDIA

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Abstract

The Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme is a government initiative in India that provides one free meal to students during school hours. It aims to improve nutritional outcomes, reduce dropout rates, and enhance school attendance. The school-age period represents a stage of rapid growth and development, during which adequate nutrition is essential. Students from low socio-economic families, in particular, require focused nutritional support. This study examines the nutritional and educational impact of the MDM Scheme on students. Fieldwork was conducted in two schools in Mapusa, Goa, involving a total of 122 students. Anthropometric data (height and weight) were recorded, and additional information on students' demographic, educational, behavioural, socio-economic, and dietary characteristics was analyzed to understand the scheme's impact. The results indicate that most daily consumers of MDM fall within the normal BMI range. However, the persistence of underweight students even among regular consumers suggests that the program does not fully meet students' nutritional requirements. Socio-economic background also influences nutritional outcomes. The study highlights the need for greater menu diversity, as dissatisfaction with repetitive meals often leads to skipped lunches.

Keywords

Mid-Day Meal, BMI, Socio-economic status, Menu satisfaction, Nutrition

1. INTRODUCTION

A child's nutritional status is widely regarded as a fundamental measure of overall health and is central to both physical growth and developmental progress. The years of formal schooling represent a vital stage in childhood, characterized by accelerated physical changes and critical advances in cognitive abilities. . This period is characterized by dynamic changes that shape a child's overall well-being and future potential (Souza et al., 2021). The World Bank (2014) reports that children in good health are more likely to maintain regular school attendance and achieve better academic outcomes than peers who face illness or malnutrition (The World Bank Annual Report 2014 (Vol. 1 of 3) : Main Report).

In South Asia, wasting among children is still above the danger level of 15 per cent. After children turn five, nutrition often gets less attention, leaving many without proper support (Gyawali, 2024). The National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) reports 35.5% of children less than five years in India are stunted, while 19.3% are wasted. Malnutrition is particularly prevalent among children from economically disadvantaged households, affecting both their health and increasing the risk of school dropout. To solve this problem, India started the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme to give schoolchildren meals that improve their health and nutrition (*A Desk Review of the Mid-Day Meals Programme July 2007*). The scheme was first introduced in Madras in 1925, later expanding to a nationwide program by 1997-98. Today, the Mid-Day Meal is one of the biggest school meal programs in the world. It has helped children stay in school, attend more regularly, and eat better. In 2013-14, the program reached about 10.45 crore children in 11.58 lakh schools (*Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) in India*). Now the scheme provides more pulses and vegetables, giving around 700 calories and 20 gm. of protein per meal for upper primary children.

Body Mass Index (BMI) is widely used to evaluate the nutritional status of children and adolescents. According to WHO standards, a BMI z-score below -2 SD indicates underweight status. In 2016, India had the highest occurrence of underweight children and adolescents, with 22.7% among girls and 30.7% of boys affected. This rate has seen little significant decline over the past three decades (Bentham et al., 2017). The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS) India 2016–18 report indicates that 10% of school-aged children (5–9 years) and 47% of late adolescent girls (15–19 years) in India were underweight (*Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey, 2016-18*).

In Goa, the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme benefits approximately 1.6 lakh students each year through a decentralized system managed by Self-Help Groups and women's cooperatives (The Goan Network, 2018). The state has also experienced a steady rise in its migrant population, with many children from low-income households relying heavily on school-based nutrition programs. This makes it essential to examine not only the reach of the scheme but also the sufficiency, quality, and acceptability of the meals in order to assess its real impact.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study examines how the Mid-Day Meal Scheme contributes to students' nutrition, classroom engagement, and satisfaction with meal quality, while considering the role of socio-economic background.

The study was carried in two schools located in Mapusa city, Bardez taluka, of North Goa district, Government Primary Middle School, Mapusa, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar English High School, Cunchelim, in October 2024. These schools were chosen because of their relatively high share of migrant students, which made them suitable sites for studying how socio-economic conditions shape the Mid-Day Meal program's influence on education nutrition. The study was restricted to students in classes V to VIII who attended school regularly and participated in the Mid-Day Meal scheme. The study was conducted as part of a Master's degree dissertation within a restricted time frame, and the student had less than a month available for data collection. Despite this limitation, the sample size provides meaningful and representative insights into the study area. Altogether, the study covered 122 students. Anthropometric data were collected with weight measured using a weighing machine and height recorded with a steel measuring tape.

Body Mass Index (BMI) was computed as using weight (kg) / height (m)², and classified following the World Health Organization's reference standards for children and adolescents.¹ BMI categories were compared with meal participation, hunger, and education outcomes. In addition, the survey also gathered data on students' demographic profiles, socio-economic conditions, nutritional status, and indicators of school performance. Data analysis was carried out using cross-tabulation and descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) to examine the relationship between Mid-Day Meal participation and students' nutritional status. Cross-tabulation was employed to compare MDM participation with nutritional status. Where appropriate, Chi-square tests were conducted to explore associations between nutritional status and various variables.

3. RESULTS

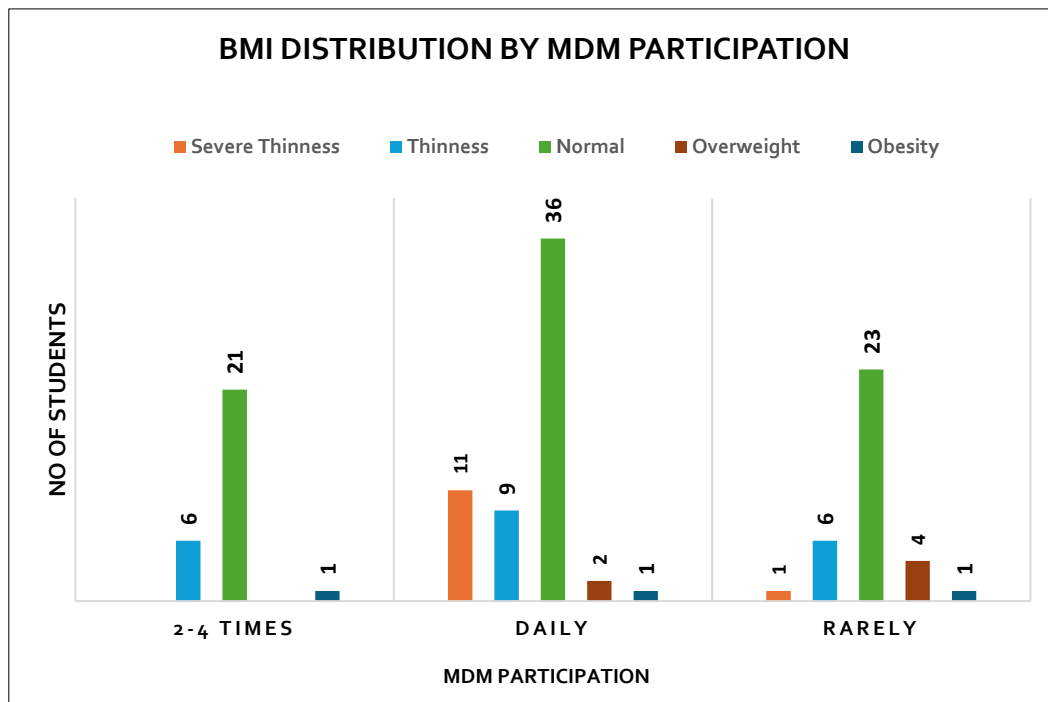
3.1. Impact of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme on Student Nutrition

Among 122 students, 70 students attended Dr. B.R. Ambedkar English High School (Cunchelim), while 52 were from Government Primary Middle School (Mapusa). In terms of participation, 48% of students consumed the Mid-Day Meal daily, 23% two to three times a week, and 29% took it occasionally. BMI was used as the key indicator to assess students' nutritional status and the impact of the Mid-Day Meal, with categories defined according to WHO standards (Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, most of students (80) fell into the normal

¹ While BMI for age z-score are ideal for assessing children's nutritional status, due to time and data constraints, this study used BMI calculated from WHO reference cut-offs. The authors acknowledge that this may not fully capture age and sex variations, which is a limitation of the study.

BMI range, suggesting relatively stable nutritional levels overall. Despite this, 12 were severely thin, 21 thin, six overweight, and three obese, indicating that while under-nutrition was the more prevalent concern, instances of over-nutrition also existed.

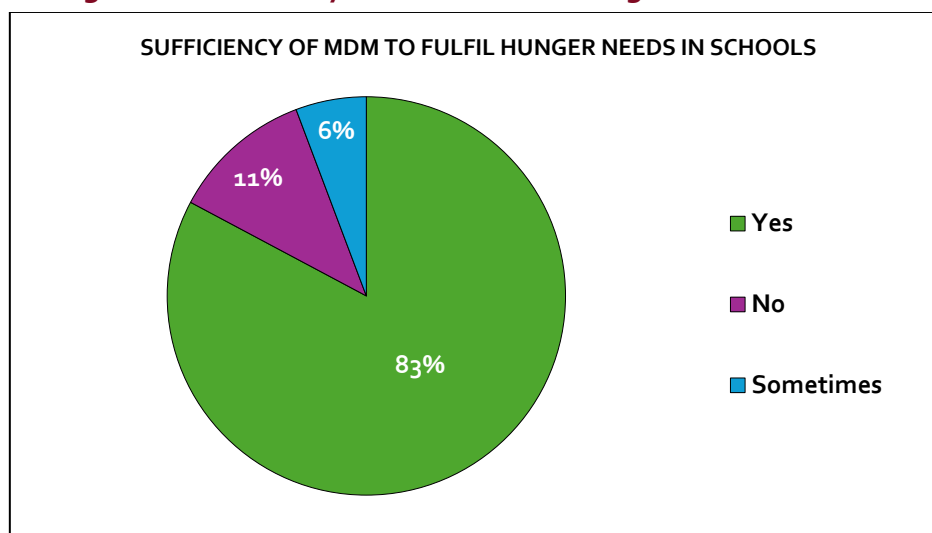
Figure 1 - BMI distribution by MDM participation



Source: Field Survey, 2024

To assess how meal participation influenced nutritional outcomes, BMI was compared with how often students ate the MDM (Figure 2). Of the daily MDM consumers, 36 students were in the normal weight range, while 11 were severely underweight, 9 underweight, 2 overweight, and 1 obese. Those consuming MDM 2-3 times a week showed a more balanced distribution, with 21 in the normal weight range and 6 underweight, but none were classified as severely underweight or overweight except for one case of obesity. Among rare MDM eaters: 23 normal, 6 underweight, 4 overweight, 1 severely underweight, 1 obese.

Hunger satisfaction levels were also analysed to further gauge the effectiveness of the MDM scheme. Of the 122 respondents, 83% reported feeling satisfied after consuming the meals, 11% stated they were not satisfied, and 6% mentioned feeling satisfied only sometimes (Figure 2). When results were analysed by BMI, of the 80 students in the normal range, 65 reported being satisfied with the meals, 6 occasionally felt hungry, and 9 stated that the meals did not adequately meet their hunger needs.

Figure 2 - Sufficiency of MDM to fulfil hunger needs in schools

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.2. Role of Mid-Day Meals in Supporting Education

Food is a key factor influencing students' concentration in class. Accordingly, this study examined whether the MDM scheme supports learning outcomes, classroom engagement, and overall academic development. Among the 122 students, 81 (66.4%) reported higher energy levels, 22 (18.0%) noted partial improvement, and 19 (15.6%) observed no change. To assess whether attention span improved in afternoon classes, students were asked about their concentration levels. Responses were grouped as 'Yes', 'Somewhat', and 'No'. Of the 122 students, 76 (62.3%) reported improved concentration, 26 (21.3%) experienced partial improvement, and 20 (16.4%) saw no improvement. The association between Mid-Day Meal (MDM) participation and students' energy levels was analysed using a Chi-Square test. The test results ($\chi^2(4) = 9.877$, $p = 0.043$) indicate a significant relationship, as the p-value is below 0.05. This suggests that MDM participation plays a role in influencing students' energy levels.

3.4 Implications of Students' Socio-Economic Status on Nutrition

Socio-economic background strongly shapes students' nutritional status. In this study, most of the participants were originally from Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, with 39 and 36 students respectively (Table 1).

Table 1 - Distribution of Students' BMI Status by Native Place

States	Normal weight	Obesity	Overweight	Severe Thinness	Thinness	Grand Total
UP	29	-	2	2	6	39
Karnataka	20	3	1	5	7	36
Bihar	14	-	-	1	5	20
Maharashtra	7	-	-	-	-	7
Jharkhand	1	-	1	1	1	4
Goa	1	-	2	-	-	3
Nepal	2	-	-	1	-	3
Assam	1	-	-	-	1	2
Delhi	2	-	-	-	-	2
MP	1	-	-	1	-	2
Chhattisgarh	1	-	-	-	-	1
Gujarat	-	-	-	1	-	1
Orissa	-	-	-	-	1	1
West Bengal	1	-	-	-	-	1
Grand Total	80	3	6	12	21	122

Source: Field Survey, 2024

To understand how students' health is linked to where they come from, it is useful to look at their Body Mass Index (BMI) and their native states. The most normal weight students were observed in Maharashtra. In contrast, underweight cases were more common in Bihar (Table 1). Parental occupation and income are major determinants of children's health, as they directly shape access to food and the other necessities. As students did not know about their parent's income, the occupations are categorized into broad categories using the reference of National Occupational Classification (NOC) just to understand the type of work they do. Analysis by mothers' occupations showed that the majority of normal-weight students had homemaker mothers, followed by 16 with mothers in domestic work and 7 in food service. A closer look at homemakers reveals a notable trend. A majority, 66% (52 out of 79), fall within the normal weight range, suggesting they might have more consistent access to home-cooked meals and a structured diet. However, thinness and severe thinness were also observed among students with homemaker mothers 15 and 7, respectively, indicating variations in nutritional status within the same occupational group. For fathers' occupations, the highest normal-BMI counts were among students whose fathers worked as skilled labourers (29) or in unskilled/manual jobs (21). Overweight and obesity found to be comparatively low in all categories, with a few cases found among students whose fathers

worked in retail, skilled labour, and unskilled labour. Thinness and severe thinness were more noticeable in students with fathers in unskilled labour 5 and 4 cases, respectively and skilled work 6 and 3 cases, respectively. This reveals that normal weight is common across all occupational groups; underweight conditions appear more frequently in students whose fathers hold physically demanding or lower-income jobs.

While occupation determines income, household size dictates how resources are distributed among members. Cross-tabulation was used to analyse the link between household size and students' nutritional status. The results show that the majority of students with a normal BMI (61 out of 80) belong to medium-sized households (5 to 8 members). This household may provide relatively stable nutrition. In comparison, smaller households (≤ 4 members) have 17 students with a normal BMI, while larger households (≥ 9 members) have only 2 students in this category.

However, despite the higher number of students with normal BMI in medium-sized households, underweight cases (thinness and severe thinness) are also most common in this group. A total of 23 students from medium-sized households fall into the underweight category, compared to 8 students in small households and 2 students in large households. This indicates that while medium-sized households may provide sufficient food for some, others within the same household may face challenges in maintaining proper nutrition. We analysed the type of houses students were living in and found that out of 122 students, 103 lived in rented houses, 16 in owned houses, and 3 in company-provided rent-free accommodation. This indicates that the majority of students come from rented households, which may reflect the overall housing and economic background of the student population.

3.5. Dietary Habits

To understand the overall dietary habits of students, their food preferences were first analysed. Students were categorized as either vegetarian or non-vegetarian or consuming both. The majority (115 out of 122) reported eating both veg and non-veg food, while only 7 students identified as strictly vegetarian.

Breakfast is often described as the most critical meal for students, since it supplies essential energy and nutrients needed for learning and daily activity. To analyse its impact, student's habit of breakfast consumption before coming to school was asked. The data shows that 81 students regularly eat breakfast before school, which makes up majority of sample, 20 students sometimes have breakfast and 21 students skip breakfast entirely. A notable 34% of the sample reported skipping or only occasionally consuming breakfast, whereas, 26 out of 33 underweight students (thinness and severe thinness) eat breakfast regularly. However, 7 underweight students either skip breakfast or eat it only sometimes.

3.6. Menu Satisfaction & Meal Quality

In both schools, freshly cooked meals are provided rather than dry rations. The menu changes daily and includes *Pulav*, *Bhaji-Chapati*, and *Idli-Sambar*. However, teachers have observed that meal variety is limited, and certain items are repeated too often, which leads to students losing interest in the food. All teachers have pointed that students do not like certain meals due to their taste and texture. Specifically, "*Sambar is often watery*," which makes it unappealing. "*Potato Bhaji is tasteless and soupy*," leading many students to avoid. When question about meal quality was asked to students, a large majority (81%) of students rated the food as "Very Good" or "Good," while 19 per cent found it "Average" which suggests that the general quality of the meals is acceptable. However, some students feel that taste wise improvements are needed. The inclusion of non-vegetarian food in the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme has long been a subject of debate. In this study, three teachers strongly supported the addition of non-vegetarian items, arguing that it would enhance students' health and energy levels. Eight teachers recommended including eggs in the program, though with certain conditions. Conversely, the majority of teachers opposed the idea, believing that vegetarian meals are sufficient and expressing concerns about the practical challenges and cultural sensitivities involved. In fact, 12 teachers from both schools completely rejected the proposal to incorporate non-vegetarian food into MDM.

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine whether participation in the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme is associated with variations in students' nutritional status, hunger satisfaction, and educational engagement in selected schools of Mapusa, Goa.

4.1. Nutritional Outcomes and Participation Patterns

Students consuming MDM daily recorded the highest proportion normal BMIs (36 out of 59), indicating that consistent participation may support healthier weight maintenance. Yet, the fact that 11 daily MDM participants were severely underweight raises questions regarding the adequacy of the meal portions and nutritional content. The observation aligns with Navaneethan (2011), who noted that MDM improves nutritional outcomes, it alone cannot fully address under-nutrition. Interestingly, students who rarely consume MDM had fewer cases of severe thinness but exhibited a slightly higher proportion of overweight individuals. Similarly, a study by (Saleem et al., 2024) observed that students relying primarily on MDM showed lower anthropometric scores than peers consuming home-made cooked food, suggesting that the scheme may not fully meet students' nutritional requirements. Although MDM didn't show a clear BMI effect but did fill hunger for most students. The results of (Hoque, 2023), similarly pointed out that operational issues such as repetitive menus and

small portion sizes reduce the program's overall effectiveness. Interestingly, 75 per cent of severely underweight students felt the meals were adequate, implying that while the scheme satisfies hunger, it may not provide the nutrient required for weight improvement.

4.2. Educational Engagement and Well-being

Beyond nutrition, the study revealed a positive link between meal participation and classroom engagement. Participation in MDM contributed to higher energy levels, and 76 students reported better afternoon concentration following meal consumption. According to (Poswal & Mishra, 2025), 33 per cent of teachers thought MDM boosted learning. Regarding extracurricular, the findings show that although students with normal BMI were more active, participation was evident across all BMI categories, including underweight groups. This indicates that BMI alone is not a major determinant of student participation. Sports and physical activity help students stay healthy and keep a normal BMI.

4.3. Socio-Economic Dimensions and Regional Variation

Socio-economic background emerged as a crucial determinant of nutritional outcomes. The analysis showed that all students from Maharashtra a state in western India recorded normal BMI, whereas underweight cases were more frequent among students from Bihar located in eastern India. This suggests a possible link between students' place of origin and their dietary practices. The regional contrast may reflect broader dietary practices and income disparities, consistent with Garge et al., (2024) who found that adolescents from Eastern India having lower odds of being underweight than those from Northern India. Parental employment strongly influenced children's health. Notably, students with homemaker mothers more often fell within normal BMI category. Yet, even within this group, cases of thinness and severe thinness were recorded, showing that fathers' earnings and household income also significantly influence nutrition. Housing analysis showed most students lived in rented accommodation, which added to the family's financial strain.

4.4. Dietary Habits and Health Implications

The study also explored broader dietary behaviour. The majority of students reported consuming vegetables more than three times a week, with many indicating near-daily intake. However, the vegetables most frequently consumed such as potato, cabbage, and ladyfinger which do not provide the full range of vitamins and minerals required for healthy growth. Dairy intake was also limited, as many students reported consuming milk only when it was available at home. Intake of chicken and fish was generally low,, usually less than four times per week. Overall, students' dietary habits were shown to be largely dependent on parental

choices, as they ate what was prepared at home. A notable number of students admitted to eating Maggi for lunch or breakfast, while the consumption of junk food was observed to be common, negatively impacting their health. The frequent occurrence of ailments such as headaches, stomach aches, and common colds suggests that students' health is influenced by these dietary patterns.

4.5. Menu Quality and Acceptability of the MDM Scheme

This study also examined the perspectives of both students and school staff regarding the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme. One important finding was dissatisfaction with the menu. Hoque (2023) in their study highlighted that poor meal quality often undermines program effectiveness, while a study by Ozwald (2017) found wide variation in meal taste and nutrition across schools, with only 29.2 per cent of meals rated 'very good' and 37.5 per cent 'poor'. In the present study, many students reported avoiding MDM on days when certain items were served, particularly *potato bhaji* and *idli-sambar*, the latter being disliked due to its watery consistency. These issues of taste, quality, and limited variety often reduce students' willingness to consume MDM regularly. As a result, some bring food from home while others prefer to remain hungry, leaving their nutritional requirements unmet. This problem of low participation due to dissatisfaction with menu options has also been highlighted in earlier studies (Anitha et al., 2019; Swami et al., 2021).

Teachers from both schools recommended diversifying the menu by adding items like fruits and sprouted pulses. A more diverse diet, incorporating locally available vegetables and protein sources, was considered essential for improving dietary outcomes, a view also supported by Braganza et al. (2007). It was suggested that seasonal fruits be distributed at least weekly, since they are more affordable during peak harvest. The repeated serving of identical dishes caused monotony, lowering satisfaction and participation, noted by Poswal and Mishra (2025) in their study. To address this, authorities should consider revising the menu at least every six months. However, concerns remain about whether children will accept modified diets. According to Anitha et al. (2019), through sensory evaluations, demonstrated that students highly preferred culturally familiar and well-prepared millet-based dishes such as *finger millet idli*, *little and pearl millet bisi bele bath*, and *millet upma*, highlighting the potential for integrating nutrient-rich alternatives. Similarly, Hoque (2023) suggested adding *horse gram*, which is rich in calcium, zinc, and protein, as a low-cost way to boost the nutritional quality of meals.

4.6. Policy Implications and the Role of Governance

On a positive note, most students in the study belonged to low socio-economic backgrounds, where the assurance of free meals through the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) program reduces the

financial burden on families and serves as an important safety net. While the scheme does not provide the full day's nutritional requirements, it ensures at least one meal that helps students remain energetic during school hours. The findings also highlight the need for nutritional education for parents. However, as several studies including Saleem et al. (2024) reported that 78.7% of parents of MDM beneficiaries had never received dietary education, which contributed to the poor nutritional outcomes of their children. Therefore, nutrition awareness programs targeting parents, students, and teachers are essential to maximize the impact of MDM. The results highlights the importance of local governance in determining program outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

Adequate nutrition is fundamental to students' physical growth, cognitive development, and overall learning capacity. This findings of this study revealed that while the majority of daily MDM consumers maintained a normal BMI, the persistence of underweight cases indicates that the scheme alone is insufficient to fully address nutritional deficiencies. Nutritional outcomes were also shaped by factors including parental occupation, household size, and students' dietary habits. Enhancing menu diversity and meal quality is essential to improve students' satisfaction and participation in the program. In conclusion, coordinated efforts among schools, local bodies, and families are essential to ensure sustainable improvements in students' nutritional and educational well-being. While limited in scope, this field-based study contributes to the understanding of how nutritional and socio-economic dimensions interact with larger, longitudinal samples and more detailed nutritional measures could better inform policy refinement.

6. LIMITATION

The small sample size limits statistical generalization, but the findings provide useful indicative insights for similar socio-economic context in Goa.

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INNER-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES AND THE CULTURAL-TOURISM INDUSTRY: A NEW PATHWAY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

EXPERIENCIAS ORIENTADAS AL INTERIOR Y LA INDUSTRIA CULTURAL Y TURÍSTICA: UNA NUEVA VÍA PARA EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE EN VIETNAM

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Abstract

This study proposes positioning inner-directed experiences as creative products within Vietnam's cultural and tourism industry. Inner-directed experiences are understood as tourism activities that encourage tourists to cultivate mindfulness, foster inner connection, and enhance both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Drawing on the theoretical foundations of the experience economy and creative tourism, the paper analyzes the potential of cultural, religious, and artistic resources, including Buddhism, Catholicism, Caodaism, Mother Goddess worship, heritage architecture, performing arts, tea rituals, meditation, yoga, and mindful gastronomy. The study introduces a creative value chain model for inner-directed experiences, emphasizing the involvement of local communities, artisans, religious organizations, tourism enterprises, and digital technologies. Elements such as co-creation, virtual and augmented reality, and digital storytelling are highlighted as essential tools for enhancing authenticity, accessibility, and experiential depth. Policy implications are proposed for governments, communities, enterprises, and educational institutions to develop inner-directed experiences as a high-quality and sustainable product segment, with the potential to be scaled up and exported internationally.

Keywords

creative tourism, cultural industry, inner-directed experiences, sustainable tourism, well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's tourism industry is facing the need to shift from a quantity-based growth model to a quality-based development model, focusing on enhancing the value of experiences and ensuring sustainability (Ngo et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023). In this context, a new trend is emerging in international research and practice: the growing interest in inner-directed experiences, that is, experiences that encourage tourists to turn inward, achieve a balance between body, mind and spirit, and increase the sense of well-being at both the pleasure and meaning levels (Chhabra & Kim, 2024; Sheldon, 2020).

Inner-directed experiences in tourism can be understood as experiences designed to encourage tourists to focus on mindfulness, nurture a sense of inner connection, and facilitate the process of transformation of consciousness through cultural, religious, and artistic activities (Chhabra & Kim, 2024; Kaya et al., 2024). This paper proposes to position inner-directed experiences as creative products in the culture and tourism industry, rather than considering them as a mere spiritual phenomenon or a niche form of tourism.

Inner-directed experiences can be formed from various creative resources in Vietnam, including religious and belief spaces such as Buddhism, Catholicism, Caodaiism, Mother Goddess worship; sacred architecture and landscapes such as pagodas, towers, ancient houses; traditional and contemporary performing arts; as well as practices associated with spiritual life such as meditation, yoga, tea ceremonies, and culinary retreats. When designed as creative products, these experiences not only differentiate destinations but also have the potential to increase perceived authenticity and open up co-creative interactions between tourists and local communities.

Theoretically, this approach inherits and extends research frameworks on creative tourism and the experience economy. Previous studies have emphasized the shift from passive consumption to active participation, from tangible products to intangible values associated with meaning and emotions (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006). In addition, recent studies have also shown the role of perceived authenticity in shaping tourists' experiences and attachments (Chai et al., 2022). Some other works affirm the potential of religious spaces, pilgrimage routes and ritual arts as important drivers of innovation and territorial development (Filho & de Bem, 2023; Karacaoğlu, 2025).

However, in the context of Vietnam, most cultural and religious resources are still exploited in a fragmented manner, leading to tourism products that are broad but lack meaningful depth and the ability to refine experiences (Ho et al., 2020; Thi & Trang, 2024). Therefore, this study pursues three objectives: first, to identify and develop an operational concept for inner-directed experiences as a creative product in the cultural and tourism industry; second, to map cultural, religious, and artistic resources that can be transformed into inner-directed products, and to indicate the mechanisms of their impact on tourist happiness; and third, to propose a creative value chain model for inner-directed products, which involves the participation of communities, artisans, religious organizations, and

tourism businesses, with the support of new technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and digital storytelling.

The paper is expected to contribute three main points: to establish a specific concept of inner-directed experiences as a creative segment in the cultural and tourism industry, to develop a product design framework based on the creative value chain, and to propose a policy roadmap to pilot and replicate this model in the context of Vietnam. Thereby, the study paves the way for future empirical tests of the impact of inner-directed experiences on tourist happiness, and suggests possible policy directions for sustainable development.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Creative tourism and the experience economy

The concept of the experience economy proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) has created a turning point in the approach to economic value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Instead of just stopping at producing goods or providing services, organizations can create higher value through staging complete experiences, where emotions, participation and meaning become the focus. Experience in this framework is not just an addition to the product or service but an independent layer of value, in which the individual participating is considered a co-author of the experience (Campos et al., 2018). This thinking has deeply influenced the tourism industry, which takes experience as the core to increase the attractiveness and differentiate the destination.

On that basis, Richards and Raymond (2000) introduced the concept of creative tourism, defining it as a form of tourism that allows tourists to develop their own creative capacity through direct participation in activities associated with the cultural characteristics of the destination (Richards & Raymond, 2000). The novelty of creative tourism is to shift the role of tourists from passive observers to active participants, while creating conditions for them to experience authenticity and real learning in the local cultural environment. Subsequent developments emphasize that creative tourism is not only about product innovation but also about restructuring the relationship between tourists, communities and service providers in a co-constructive direction (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2006).

A series of international studies have shown that engaging tourists in creative processes brings values beyond pure consumption. Filho and de Bem (2023) examine handicraft and pilgrimage tourism programs in South America, particularly Brazil (Filho & de Bem, 2023). The study shows that this participation has a dual value: tourists have a unique, meaningful experience, while the local community affirms its cultural identity and increases its income. Li and Shaw (2022) emphasize the co-creation element that increases the authenticity and depth of experiences, contributing to increased satisfaction and return intention (Li & Shaw, 2022). Cabeça et al. (2020) argue that it is the engagement between tourists, communities

and businesses in a flexible creative value chain that allows creative tourism to reach its full potential (Cabeça et al., 2020).

The most important implication of the experience economy and creative tourism is the shift from passive consumption to active experience, from short-term satisfaction to long-term meaning creation (Cabeça et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2013). This paves the way for a new approach to inner-directed experiences. Rather than viewing cultural and religious practices as activities to be observed, they can be redesigned as participatory experiences where tourists learn, practice, and build connections with themselves and their communities. The combination of the experience economy and creative tourism therefore not only provides a solid theoretical framework for this study but also points to the potential for inward-looking products to become a creative segment, contributing to the quality and depth of the cultural and tourism industry.

2.2. Inner-directed tourism and well-being

In recent decades, tourism is no longer understood solely as sightseeing, entertainment or service consumption, but is increasingly seen as a process of searching for inner balance, self-development and restructuring of life meaning (Sheldon, 2020; Thimm, 2021). On that basis, a number of new research directions have been formed around the concepts of inner-directed tourism, mindfulness tourism and transformative tourism (Iacob et al., 2024; Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023).

Inner-directed tourism can be defined as experiences that encourage tourists to turn inward, focusing on the process of self-reflection and connection between body, mind and spirit. Unlike traditional tourism that emphasizes external observation, inner-directed tourism prioritizes internal experiences, where tourists actively participate in cultural, religious and artistic practices to achieve peace and spiritual development. Mindfulness tourism, often associated with meditation, yoga, and mindfulness rituals, provides a foundation for this approach by viewing the tourism experience as an opportunity to pause, be present, and increase self-awareness (Chan, 2019; Chen et al., 2017). Meanwhile, transformative tourism emphasizes the profound transformational potential of the tourism experience, not only creating temporary satisfaction but also leaving a lasting imprint on the individual's perception and actions (Kirillova et al., 2017; Lean, 2012).

The link between these forms of tourism and human well-being is confirmed by many works. Well-being is divided into two basic dimensions: hedonic well-being, reflecting positive emotions, relaxation, and enjoyment in the present; and meaningful well-being, reflecting personal growth, a sense of purpose in life, and a deep connection with spiritual values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Inner-directed tourism has the potential to impact both of these dimensions. Practices such as meditation, yoga, or mindful eating bring about calm, reduce stress, and create a sense of well-being, contributing to increased hedonic well-being. At the

same time, attending religious ceremonies, learning traditional arts, or engaging in symbolic activities can stimulate reflection, open up opportunities for personal growth, and foster meaningful well-being.

The important significance of these approaches is to show that tourism can act as a space for healing and spiritual development, beyond its economic function. When placed within the framework of experiential economy and creative tourism, inner-directed tourism not only satisfies individual needs but also opens up the possibility of creating new products based on cultural - artistic - religious resources. Thus, inner-directed tourism becomes a bridge between personal experiences and community values, between hedonic happiness and meaningful happiness, contributing to affirming the profound humanistic role of tourism in the modern context.

2.3. Cultural and religious resources as creative assets

Cultural and religious resources have long been considered an important foundation for cultural tourism development (Chugh, 2018; Richards & Wilson, 2006). However, in a creative approach, these resources are not only heritage to be visited or consumed, but can also become creative assets capable of creating new experiences, increasing the depth of meaning and promoting active participation of tourists.

Practices associated with spiritual life can also be upgraded into creative products. Tea culture, with its tea drinking rituals and quiet philosophy, has the ability to create experiential spaces associated with mindfulness (Guo & Rato, 2019; Tiwari et al., 2023). Meditation, yoga, art therapy, and culinary retreats also offer new forms of tourism that connect directly with tourists' introspection and self-development needs (Alneng, 2009; Wu et al., 2023). International studies have shown that when these elements are designed into creative products, they have the ability to both maintain identity and respond to the global trend of tourism seeking meaning and happiness (Kasemsarn, 2024; Menezes & de Sousa Batista, 2024; Wu et al., 2023).

However, in Vietnam, the exploitation of these cultural and religious assets is still largely fragmented, tending to perform for tourists to observe rather than encourage them to participate. Existing products mainly emphasize heritage and landscape values, while the ability to transform into inner-directed creative experiences has not been systematized. This poses an important research gap: there is currently no work that has built a theoretical framework and specific application model to position inner-directed experiences as a creative segment in the cultural and tourism industry. Filling this gap will not only help develop unique products, enhance the depth and quality of Vietnamese tourism, but also contribute to affirming the role of tourism as a space for creativity and spiritual development in the global context.

2.4. Sustainable tourism development

The concept of sustainable tourism development emerged in the late 1980s, based on the principle of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations (Geng et al., 2024). In the tourism sector, this concept has been expanded to include three main pillars: economic sustainability, social-cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability (Khalid, 2024; Srivastava, 2024). Studies emphasize that tourism is only truly sustainable when it creates economic benefits for local communities, preserves cultural identity and minimizes negative impacts on the natural environment (Ngo et al., 2024; Quang et al., 2023; Tuyen, 2025).

Over the past two decades, sustainable tourism development has shifted from a conservation-focused approach to an integrated approach, considering people and experiences as the center of sustainability. Many scholars have pointed out that factors such as happiness, satisfaction, cultural awareness and community are essential for the long-term development of tourism (Coghlan, 2015; Lin et al., 2022; Rubi & Sharma, 2024). Tourism is not only seen as an economic sector but also as a space to create relationships between people, culture and the environment.

Vietnam is also shifting in this direction. The national tourism development strategies for the period 2020-2030 identify the goal of developing high-quality, environmentally friendly and culturally connected tourism. However, most current programs still focus on ecological and economic factors, while the spiritual and inner experience of tourists - factors that can help complete the concept of comprehensive sustainability - are less focused.

In this context, developing inward-looking experiences as creative products is of strategic significance. It not only expands the connotation of sustainable tourism development by adding spiritual and cultural depth, but also contributes to shifting development thinking from external sustainability to internal sustainability, towards harmony between economy, community and people.

3. INNER-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES IN VIETNAM'S CULTURAL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

3.1. Religious-spiritual experiences

Religion and belief have long played a central role in the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people, both as a spiritual refuge and as a cultural and artistic space rich in symbolic value. In tourism, these elements are not only present in the form of tangible and intangible heritage but can also become inner-directed experiences, where tourists directly participate in the process of practice, reflection and connection with themselves.

Buddhism, with its system of temples spread across the country, creates a rich foundation for meditative and mindful experiences. Spaces such as Thien Mu Pagoda in Hue,

Yen Tu Pagoda in Quang Ninh or the Truc Lam Pagoda system are not only tourist attractions but can also be designed as places for tourists to participate in short-term meditation courses, practice chanting or learn about Buddhist philosophy. These experiences help tourists temporarily escape the hustle and bustle of modern life, focus on their inner self and feel the tranquility, thereby enhancing happiness in both pleasure and meaning.

Caodaism, which originated in Tay Ninh, is a special case in the Vietnamese religious landscape. The ceremonies at the Tay Ninh Holy See, especially the Holy Banquet for the Great Mother and the Nine Goddesses, offer tourists a space to immerse themselves in solemn rituals, music and symbolic art. When approached in a creative experiential way, these ceremonies go beyond mere observation and can open up opportunities for tourists to participate indirectly through storytelling, virtual reality reenactments, or participate in community activities associated with Caodaism life.

Christianity has also left a deep mark on Vietnamese culture, reflected in the system of churches with unique architecture such as Notre Dame Cathedral in Ho Chi Minh City or Phat Diem Cathedral in Ninh Binh. Rituals such as Mass, choirs or hymns are clearly inner-directed, evoking a sense of spiritual connection. Creative tourism can transform these spaces into places where tourists can experience religious music, learn about Gothic architecture or participate in community activities associated with parishes.

In addition to official religions, Vietnamese folk beliefs, especially Mother Goddess worship, also create unique experiential opportunities. Hau Dong trance ritual, with its combination of music, dance, costumes and spiritual state, is a form of performance that is both sacred and artistic. When designed as an inner-directed product, tourists can not only observe but also participate in activities to learn about symbolic meanings, learn to sing Chau Van or attend workshops on performing arts.

These religious-spiritual experiences show great potential in becoming creative products in the cultural and tourism industry. They open up forms of tourism that transcend the boundaries of sightseeing, allowing tourists to participate proactively, co-create and seek deeper meaning. However, most religious tourism activities in Vietnam currently remain at the level of sightseeing, group pilgrimages or short-term worship, lacking products designed to encourage inner-directed experiences. This is an important gap that the development of creative tourism can fill, while contributing to increasing the depth and quality of the tourism industry in the future.

3.2. Artistic and performative practices

Art and performance practices are important elements in Vietnamese cultural life, and are also potential creative assets for developing inward tourism. Unlike the traditional approach to tourism, which often sees art as a performance for tourists to observe, the inward approach

sees art as a participatory process, where tourists directly experience, learn and co-create meaning.

In the treasure trove of traditional art, forms such as *đờn ca tài tử*, *ca trù*, *hát chầu văn*, *dân ca quan họ*, or Hue royal court music all contain certain symbolic values and sacredness. When performed within the framework of creative tourism, tourists can not only listen but also participate in learning about musical instruments, learn a few tunes, or practice basic rituals with the artists. This helps tourists understand the cultural context more deeply, while also evoking a spiritual connection that goes beyond a purely aesthetic experience.

In addition to traditional art, contemporary art and art therapy also open up new possibilities. Installation art programs, contemporary performances, or community art workshops are often highly interactive, allowing tourists to express their emotions, reflect, and find spiritual balance. These activities are in line with the trend of tourism seeking personal development and meaningful happiness.

Architecture is also a form of art that can be exploited for inner-directed experiences. Visiting relics such as Cham temple, Hoi An ancient houses or traditional village communal houses is not only for contemplation but can also become a creative experience through interpretive activities, handicraft practices, or reenactments of cultural life associated with the works. There, tourists are invited to participate in the cultural life, instead of just observing from the outside.

In general, art and performance practices, when placed within the framework of creative tourism, have the potential to become a powerful means of connecting tourists and cultural identity. Instead of passive consumption, tourists are encouraged to take on a co-creative role, thereby achieving meaningful experiences that contribute to fostering long-term attachment to the destination.

3.3. Tea rituals and gastronomy

Tea and culinary culture associated with tranquility is one of the unique aspects of Vietnamese spiritual life, and is also an important resource for developing inward-looking tourism products (Guo & Rato, 2019; Lee et al., 2024). Tea is not only a popular drink but also associated with rituals, life philosophies and meditative communication spaces. In many cultural regions, the art of making and enjoying tea is seen as a means to practice patience, concentration and mindfulness, thereby creating conditions for tourists to experience a state of peace in daily life (Tiwari et al., 2023).

Tea rituals in Vietnam are often associated with natural landscapes or specific cultural spaces such as ancient houses, communal houses, or traditional tea gardens. When included in the creative tourism framework, tourists can not only observe but also directly participate in the brewing process, learn the philosophy behind each operation, and experience the connection between people and nature through each cup of tea.

Besides tea, spiritual cuisine is an area that can be directly linked to the experience of introspection. Vegetarian meals, meditation menus or traditional culinary art can create a space of calm, where eating is not only to satisfy physical needs but also to experience stillness and spiritual connection. Activities such as vegetarian cooking workshops, participating in preparing a meditation meal with the community or experiencing cuisine associated with religious rituals can help tourists learn, practice and co-create cultural values.

Experiences associated with tea and cuisine therefore do not stop at the aspect of culinary tourism but can become a tool to help tourists practice mindfulness, nurture pleasure and meaningful happiness. This is a clear demonstration of the ability to transform elements of daily life into creative products, contributing to improving the quality and depth of cultural tourism.

3.4. Wellness-oriented practices

Practices that focus on body-mind-spirit health are becoming a global trend in tourism, reflecting the growing need for balance and personal development in modern society. Vietnam, with its rich natural system and tradition of practicing meditation, yoga and art therapy, has great potential to develop inner-directed tourism products associated with holistic care.

Meditation and yoga have gradually become popular in urban life in Vietnam and are also beginning to be integrated into tourism products. Meditation centers and retreats in Da Lat, Sa Pa or Con Dao not only provide a quiet space in the middle of nature but also organize short-term training programs to help tourists practice mindfulness, improve concentration and restore energy. These are experiences that have a direct impact on the feeling of happiness and pleasure, while nurturing meaningful happiness through personal development and inner connection.

In addition to meditation and yoga, art therapy is also being exploited as a means of tourism. Workshops on meditative painting, music therapy or dance therapy are held at some destinations to allow tourists to express their emotions, relieve stress and open up the process of self-reflection. These experiences are highly interactive, helping tourists become co-creators in their journey to find balance.

Nature also plays an important role in health-oriented practices. Activities such as meditative walks in the forest, bathing in mineral springs or immersing themselves in the island space not only have physical value but also evoke a sense of spiritual connection with the environment. When combined with cultural and ritual elements, these experiences can become unique creative products, contributing to the diversification of sustainable tourism.

However, health tourism products in Vietnam today mainly stop at spa services or simple physical care, have not fully exploited the cultural and spiritual depth and have not created an inward-looking product framework. This shows great room for developing creative

products combining meditation, yoga, art therapy and natural space, to meet the increasing demand of international and domestic tourists for meaningful health tourism.

4. PROPOSED CREATIVE VALUE CHAIN MODEL

4.1. Stakeholder involvement

A prominent feature of creative tourism products is the multidimensional participation of many different subjects in the value chain. With inward-looking experiences, the product creation process cannot rely solely on tourism businesses or accommodation establishments, but needs to mobilize and connect many related groups. First of all, the local community is the subject that plays a central role because they own and practice cultural, religious and artistic resources. Direct community participation not only ensures the authenticity of the experience but also helps maintain social and cultural sustainability.

Besides the community, artisans, monks, priests, ritual masters or art leaders play the role of knowledge keepers. They are both a source of inspiration and a guide for tourists to participate in cultural and spiritual practices. Tourism businesses have the task of connecting, designing products and bringing them to market, while coordinating with cultural entities to ensure a balance between commerciality and sacredness.

Local authorities and cultural-religious management organizations are also indispensable actors. They create legal frameworks, ensure policy consistency and control exploitation to avoid over-commercialization. Finally, technology and supporting service providers (digital technology, media platforms) also need to be included in the value chain to increase accessibility and expand the audience.

The creative value chain model for inward-looking experiences therefore requires coordination between communities, artisans, businesses, management agencies and supporting parties, in which each entity plays a separate role but aims at the common goal of creating profound, sustainable and meaningful tourism experiences.

4.2. Co-creation process

Co-creation is a core principle in creative tourism development, and is also the foundation for designing inner-directed experiences. This process occurs when tourists do not just consume available services but directly participate in creating experiences with the community and cultural subjects. This participation helps increase authenticity, opening up depths of meaning that traditional tourism products can hardly achieve.

In the context of inner-directed experiences, co-creation can be done in many forms. With religious-spiritual activities, tourists not only observe the ritual but can participate in the preparation process, learn the symbolic meaning and practice basic movements. In traditional arts, they can learn to sing a ca trù song with the artisan, try to dance a movement

in a hau dong ritual or practice traditional musical instruments with the community. In culinary and tea ceremonies, tourists can participate in the preparation process, learn about philosophy and enjoy it in a meditative space.

Co-creation also opens up opportunities for local communities to become equal partners. People not only provide services but also share knowledge, guide and accompany tourists on their journey to find inner balance. Tourism businesses have the role of designing the program framework, creating conditions for this interaction to take place in a safe, harmonious and mutually respectful environment.

This approach transforms tourism from a passive observation activity into a process of exchanging knowledge and experience, where both tourists and communities receive value. For tourists, it is a unique and meaningful experience; for the community, it is an opportunity to affirm identity and develop the economy associated with culture. This is an important mechanism for inward-looking products to become a creative, sustainable and scalable segment.

4.3. Role of technology

Technology plays an increasingly important role in expanding access and enhancing the quality of creative tourism experiences, especially for inner-directed products. The essence of inner-directed experiences is personalization, tranquility and depth of meaning. However, in order for these experiences to be widely spread and reach more groups of tourists, the application of technology is necessary.

Virtual reality and augmented reality can be used to recreate religious and artistic spaces that are difficult for tourists to access directly. For example, tourists can experience a meditation session in an ancient temple through virtual reality technology, or attend a religious ceremony through immersive images and sounds. This helps preserve sacred spaces, avoid the pressure of overcrowding, and allows those who live far away to still have the opportunity to access the experience.

Digital storytelling is also an important tool. Through digital platforms, tourists can learn about the history, symbolism, and spiritual significance of rituals, architecture, and art before they participate in them. This enhances preparation, allowing them to approach the experience with a more proactive mindset. Mobile applications can integrate interpretive information, short meditation exercises, or guided tours of the festival, thereby enriching the on-site experience. Technology also supports the co-creation process by connecting tourists and communities even after the experience is over. Online platforms can maintain discussion forums, online art classes, or meditation, helping to prolong the positive impact of the experience. In this way, technology does not replace physical presence, but complements it to make inner-directed experiences more flexible, engaging, and sustainable.

4.4. Evaluation and risk governance

For inward-looking experiences to develop sustainably, the development of an evaluation system must go hand in hand with a risk control and management mechanism. Not only measuring economic efficiency or tourist satisfaction, but also monitoring potential impacts on cultural resources, spiritual values and the sacredness of the practice space.

First, it is necessary to establish multidimensional evaluation indicators, including: (1) tourist experience - measured by the level of active participation, authentic feelings and cognitive transformation; (2) community - measuring the level of participation, distribution of benefits and maintenance of identity; (3) environment - measuring the ability to reduce pressure on exploitation and maintain cultural space. This index system helps to orient development without damaging core values.

Second, it is necessary to apply a mechanism to control excessive commercialization. Turning sacred spaces or religious rituals into “performance products” can undermine authenticity and offend the community. Management agencies need to coordinate with communities and religious organizations to determine the level of permission to attend, regulate the scale of exploitation, and develop ethical standards for promotion and organization.

Third, there needs to be a two-way feedback system between tourists and communities to detect early signs of exploitation. Digital technology can support this process through feedback platforms, tracking tourist data, and assessing impacts in real time.

Overall, this control and assessment mechanism is not intended to limit creativity but to maintain a balance between development and conservation, between the economic and the spiritual. This is a prerequisite for introverted experiences to become sustainable creative products, both preserving cultural values and creating long-term benefits for the community and the tourism industry.

5. DISCUSSION

This study engages with four main research streams and identifies the novelty of the approach.

First, creative tourism research has traditionally emphasized skill acquisition and workshop participation (Richards & Raymond, 2000; Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009). This paper expands on this by focusing on intrapersonal creativity: experiences that go beyond skill development to self-reflection, body-mind-spirit balance, and long-term well-being.

Second, mindfulness and transformative tourism have been recognized for their therapeutic and personal transformational roles (Kirillova et al., 2017; Lean, 2012), but have rarely been associated with the cultural industry. This study fills this gap by considering intrapersonal experiences as a product segment that can be designed, commercialized, and integrated into industry strategies.

Third, studies on religious and art tourism often focus on heritage as objects of visitation (Filho & de Bem, 2023). This paper repositions them as creative assets that can be transformed into co-creative inner-directed experiences where tourists not only observe but also participate and create meaning.

Fourth, the application of technology in tourism is mainly associated with the promotion or re-enactment of heritage (Li & Shaw, 2022). Here, technology is seen as a tool that directly supports the inner-directed process, helping to expand access, prepare the mind and prolong the impact after the trip.

Thus, the theoretical contribution of the study is to establish the concept of inner-directed experience as a creative product, connecting creative tourism, the experience economy and happiness research. In practice, the study proposes a creative value chain model and specific strategic directions for Vietnam, thereby opening up the possibility of developing a high-quality, sustainable tourism segment that can export the model internationally.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Positioning inner-directed experiences as creative products in the cultural and tourism industries requires specific policy directions and development strategies. Rather than just stopping at the level of general recommendations, this section focuses on three core questions: who is the actor, what should be done, and what results are expected?

6.1. Government and culture-tourism management agencies

The government plays a role in creating a legal framework and development orientation. It is necessary to integrate inner-directed experiences into the strategy for sustainable cultural and tourism industry development at the national and local levels. Specifically, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism can issue a pilot program for inner-directed product development in key destinations such as Hue, Tay Ninh, Da Lat, and Con Dao. Local authorities are responsible for creating conditions in terms of infrastructure and organization space while ensuring a balance between commerciality and sacredness. The expected outcome is the formation of prototype product clusters, which serve as a basis for replication and export of the model.

6.2. Local communities and cultural-religious entities

Local communities, religious organizations, artisans, and artists are the keepers of knowledge and cultural practices. They should be empowered to directly participate in the design and delivery of products. This can be done through cultural tourism cooperatives, co-management models, or community-enterprise projects. The expected outcome is increased

economic benefits for the community, while strengthening cultural pride and identity, helping the co-creation process take place in a sustainable manner.

6.3. Tourism enterprises and creative startups

Tourism enterprises have the role of connecting the market and bringing products to tourists. Tourism businesses, hotels and creative startups need to invest in personalized product design, apply technology to support inner-directed experiences, and develop integrated service packages (retreats, art workshops, meditation - tea - culinary retreat tours). The expected result is to create differentiated products, enhance the image of the destination and expand the high-quality tourism market.

6.4. Education and human resource training facilities

Universities, research institutes and training centers need to include in their curricula content related to creative tourism, art therapy, cultural management and spiritual experience leadership skills. At the same time, it is necessary to build short-term training programs for tour guides, young artisans and the community. The expected result is to form a team of human resources capable of designing, coordinating and inspiring, thereby ensuring the quality and professionalism of inner-directed products.

6.5. The role of technology and media company

Technology companies and media agencies can develop digital platforms to promote, guide, and maintain post-experience connections. Virtual reality, augmented reality, and digital storytelling can be deployed to expand access while supporting the preparation and reflection process for tourists. The expected outcome is to create a digital ecosystem that accompanies tourists, enhancing the impact and prolonging the positive effects of the experience.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has proposed to position inner-directed experiences as a creative product in the Vietnamese cultural and tourism industry. Based on the theoretical frameworks of experiential economy and creative tourism, the paper points out that Vietnam's cultural, religious and artistic resources, including the system of pagodas, religious rituals, performing arts, tea culture, meditation, yoga and culinary retreats, have great potential to be restructured into meaningful products. These products not only help tourists achieve a state

of body-mind-spirit balance and enhance both hedonic and meaningful happiness, but also open up new directions for improving the quality and depth of the tourism industry.

The main contributions of the study are threefold. First, conceptually, the study has identified and described inner-directed experiences as a creative product segment, beyond the scope of heritage tourism or traditional religious tourism. Second, in theory, the study builds a creative value chain model for inner-directed experiences, emphasizing the role of co-creation, community participation and technology integration. Third, in practice, the study provides specific policy directions and development strategies for the state, community, businesses, educational institutions and the technology - communication sector, thereby providing a feasible roadmap to realize this model.

However, the study still has some limitations. The article only stops at the level of proposing a theoretical framework and analyzing potential, without empirical data to test the real impact of inner-directed experiences on tourist happiness. The illustrative examples are still biased towards theoretical analysis and have not gone into specific field cases. In addition, the problem of over-commercialization and the risk of fading sacred values when developing inner-directed products also need to be carefully considered.

Therefore, future research directions should focus on three points: conducting qualitative and quantitative surveys to measure the impact of inner-directed experiences on hedonic happiness and meaningful happiness; specific case studies at potential destinations such as Hue, Tay Ninh, Da Lat, Con Dao to verify the feasibility of the model; and further analysis of the balance mechanism between commercial development and cultural and spiritual value preservation. These efforts will contribute to perfecting the theoretical framework while supporting the practice of policymaking and implementing the strategy to develop inner-directed tourism as a creative product of Vietnam.

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COMMUNITY POLICING (CP) IN BANGLADESH: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR CRIME PREVENTION AND HUMAN SECURITY

POLICÍA COMUNITARIA (PC) EN BANGLADESH: PROBLEMAS Y PERSPECTIVAS PARA
LA PREVENCIÓN DEL CRIMEN Y LA SEGURIDAD HUMANA

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Abstract

Community policing has been a global "buzz" since 1980. Traditional police cannot keep up with evolving crimes and criminalities, so they prevent crime, reduce fear, maintain peace and order, find criminals, and bring them to justice. This study looks at the dynamics of community policing (CP) in Bangladesh, with an emphasis on its effectiveness on crime prevention and human security. The goal of this detailed research is to identify the significant problems and possible possibilities connected with CP implementation in Bangladesh. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, to evaluate several aspects of CP, such as its organizational structure, community involvement initiatives, resource distribution, and efficacy in resolving local crime problems. The study aims to identify the barriers to the successful implementation of CP projects, such as inadequate resources, bureaucratic difficulties, community distrust, and sociopolitical concerns. Furthermore, it investigates the viewpoints of community residents, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders in order to acquire an understanding of their experiences, attitudes, and expectations surrounding CP practices. This study intends to give practical advice for politicians, law enforcement agencies, and community leaders to improve the success of CP initiatives in Bangladesh by explaining the difficulties and opportunities related with the practice. Finally, it aims to help improve evidence-based crime prevention techniques and promote human security in Bangladesh's various communities.

Keywords

Community Policing (CP), Prevention, Crime, Human Security, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Community Policing (CP) was implemented in Bangladesh with the goal of improving local law enforcement and increasing community participation in crime prevention. Limited money, difficult bureaucracy, and community skepticism are among hurdles that CP must overcome. To promote CP projects and create safer communities in Bangladesh, evidence-based strategies and policy recommendations must include these challenges, as well as CP's potential to improve human security and crime prevention. In Bangladesh, where rapid urbanization, socioeconomic disparities, and political complexities present significant challenges to traditional law enforcement approaches, CP emerges as a promising framework for fostering collaborative efforts between police and local communities to combat crime and improve overall security (Dominic Muriithi Wanjohi, 2014). Community policing in Bangladesh began in the early 2000s, when the government saw the need for a more community-oriented strategy to combat growing crime rates and protect human security. Inspired by successful models from other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, the Bangladesh Police launched a number of CP programs aimed at decentralizing law enforcement activities and empowering local communities to take a more active role in crime prevention and control (Al et al., 2019).

Community Policing (CP) implementation in Bangladesh has major hurdles, limiting its potential for effective crime prevention and human security enhancement (Al et al., 2019). Despite its acceptance, CP confronts a number of challenges, including limited resources, bureaucratic difficulties, community distrust, and sociopolitical pressures. Limited resources limit the scalability and durability of CP programs, limiting their reach and impact in various populations. Bureaucratic barriers limit the effective coordination and implementation of CP activities, creating operational inefficiencies (Mwaniki, 2016). Community mistrust, which stems from historical conflicts and perceptions of police brutality, hampers the collaboration and information-sharing required for CP effectiveness. Besides, sociopolitical concerns like as corruption and political involvement undermine the impartiality and integrity of CP activities (Uddin et al., 2014). These issues cumulatively limit CP's capacity to successfully engage communities, reduce crime, and safeguard human security. Addressing these difficulties needs a detailed knowledge of contextual factors, as well as joint efforts among law enforcement agencies, legislators, and community stakeholders to remove hurdles and maximize CP's role in promoting safer and more secure communities in Bangladesh (Singh, 2021). However, these difficulties offer opportunity for innovation and progress. Bangladesh can use community policing to make its citizens safer and more secure by addressing the identified barriers through targeted policy interventions, capacity-building, and police-community trust and collaboration (Jashim & Chowdhury, 2008).

The general objective of the study is to assess the role of community policing in crime prevention and human security and point out the challenges. The specific objectives of the study are to provide an overview of the current situation of community policing in

Bangladesh, to identify the problems related to crime prevention and the assurance of human security, to examine the existing facilities and the needs required to address the challenges faced by community policing, and to determine ways to strengthen public trust in community policing initiatives

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community policing (CP) in Bangladesh attempts to improve crime prevention and human security. While studies show its promise, resource constraints, bureaucratic roadblocks, and community distrust limit its efficacy, the literature on Community Policing (CP) in Bangladesh demonstrates the importance and difficulty of strengthening crime prevention and human security. According to Akter and Hu (2020), the goal of CP activities is to develop community-police connections and empower local communities in crime control efforts. However, Ali and Wang (2017) and Khan et al. (2016) identify significant barriers, such as resource limits and bureaucratic difficulties that restrict CP's efficacy. Furthermore, Islam et al. (2021) highlight the need of addressing community distrust and sociopolitical impacts on CP implementation. Furthermore, Community policing (CP) in Bangladesh aims to improve crime prevention and human security. International experts, like Rosenbaum and Lurigio (1994), emphasize the significance of CP in developing community-police collaborations. However, issues mentioned by Bayley (2008) and Cordner (2014), such as resource constraints and bureaucratic barriers, impede CP efficacy. Furthermore, authors such as Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) emphasise the importance of CP in addressing community problems and building trust. These results highlight the importance of knowing the particular obstacles that CP faces in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, Newburn (2017) discusses the contextual peculiarities in Bangladesh, which demand specialized solutions to overcome challenges to CP efficacy. Kabir et al. (2018) argues for comprehensive approaches to overcoming these barriers and maximizing CP's role in crime prevention. Despite the obstacles, Huq and Colwell (2019) believe that CP has the potential to promote human security by building community resilience and addressing local crime problems. In contrast, Shamsuddoha and Chowdhury (2017) contend that long-term political commitment and institutional support are required to fully realize CP's potential in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Dasgupta et al. (2019) highlights the unique impact of climate change on CP and infectious illnesses, exacerbating the issues of sustaining public health and security.

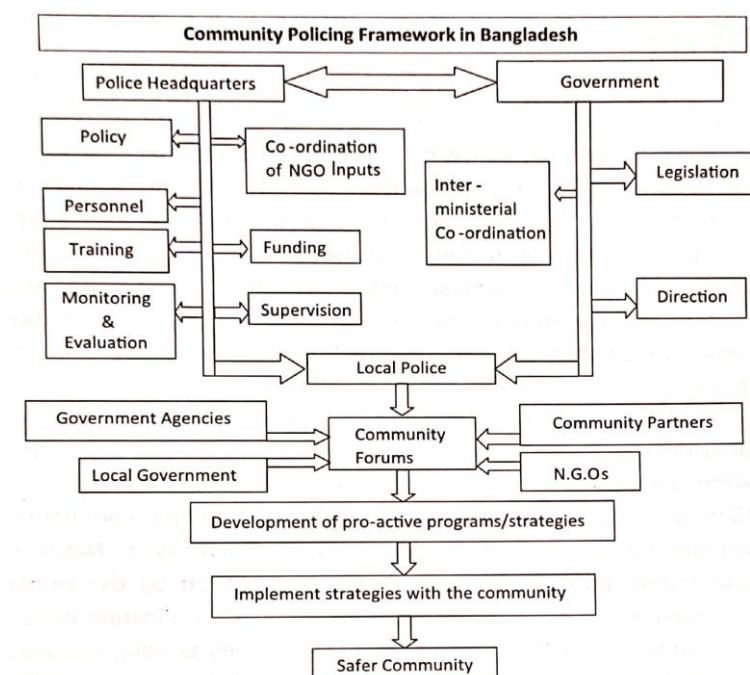
Community policing (CP) in Bangladesh is crucial for crime prevention and human security. While the concept has garnered global attention, its implementation in Bangladesh presents unique challenges and unexplored opportunities. Most research focuses on its theoretical foundation, leaving little understanding of CP's practical ramifications, efficacy, and sustainability in Bangladesh. Few studies have examined the effects of CP on reducing crime in both rural and urban areas. Many studies generalize conclusions, ignoring Bangladesh's socio-cultural variety and regional crime tendencies (Islam, 2017). There is very

little study on how CP builds trust and cooperation between law enforcement and marginalized and poor populations. Another gap is the absence of examination of structural and operational impediments to CP programs, including resource constraints, police training, and community participation issues. The integration of technology in CP for crime monitoring and reporting remains underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by examining practical problems, quantifying CP programs' performance, and recommending ways to improve human security in Bangladesh via a more inclusive and sustainable CP framework.

2.1. Community Policing Framework

This research is anchored in the frameworks of procedural justice and participatory governance to examine community policing (CP) in Bangladesh, with an emphasis on community trust, human security, and political interference. The theory of procedural justice suggests that confidence in law enforcement is fundamentally dependent on processes that are perceived as fair, transparent, and inclusive (Tyler, 2006). In Bangladesh, community policing seeks to cultivate trust through forums that have been established since 2008, encompassing 40,908 committees with a total of 958,046 registered members (Islam, 2019). Nevertheless, the fragility of trust persists, rooted in historical tensions between police and communities, which calls for a thorough analysis of the ways in which CP forums either promote or obstruct equitable engagement.

Figure 1 - Community policing framework in Bangladesh



Source: Self-elaboration

The concept of human security, which underscores the importance of safeguarding individuals from localized threats such as crime, delineates CP's function in bolstering community resilience (UNDP, 1994). The establishment of the Public Safety and Crime Prevention section in 2014, under the leadership of a Deputy Inspector General, signifies Bangladesh's dedication to integrating crime prevention within a framework of human security. Nonetheless, the efficacy of this framework—supervised by the Home Secretary and Inspector General—hinges on its capacity to tackle localized criminal activity while adeptly maneuvering through bureaucratic limitations.

The examination of political interference, as illuminated by postcolonial policing literature (Jauregui, 2016), underscores the detrimental impact of external influences on the impartiality of community policing. At the district level, Police Superintendents and committed sub-inspectors oversee community policing operations; however, the influence of political pressures frequently skews priorities, thereby undermining the participatory governance model that community policing aspires to represent (Skogan, 2006). This framework examines the alignment or deviation of Bangladesh's CP structure, from thanas to national coordination, with theoretical ideals of trust-building, security provision, and apolitical governance, thereby offering a solid foundation for analyzing the study's findings.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

It is important to know the best way to do research in order to make a good data collection process, especially in the construction business (M. Aminuzzaman Saluddin, 1998). This study used a descriptive research method to look at how CP affects crime decrease in Bangladesh. (Uusitalo, 2014) said that the first step in a descriptive study was to write down the questions that needed to be answered. This is because the way the study was set up made sure that the information gathered was relevant to the questions asked and was used to describe the characteristics of a large population.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

To gather information, the researcher relied mostly on interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and direct observation.

Interview: This study employs a mixed-methods descriptive research design to investigate the impact of community policing (CP) on crime reduction and human security in Bangladesh, ensuring alignment with research questions (Uusitalo, 2014). The methodology integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture both statistical trends and nuanced stakeholder perspectives, addressing the causal relationships between CP practices and outcomes.

Data Collection Instruments: Semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, and participatory observation were used. Interviews (n=30) with CP officers and community leaders provided flexibility to explore implementation challenges and perceptions (Downs, 1990). Questionnaires, combining open- and closed-ended questions, collected quantitative data from 150 respondents, supported by four trained enumerators for consistency (Kothari, 2004). Focus groups (n=6) facilitated discussions on community trust and political interference. Participatory observation in CP forums identified resource constraints, such as inadequate equipment, enriching contextual understanding (Kumar, 2011).

Sample and Sampling: Purposive sampling targeted Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Sylhet metropolitan areas for their diverse socio-political contexts. A sample of 150 respondents (50 per city), including community members, police, and local leaders, was selected based on availability and relevance to CP activities, ensuring representativeness within practical constraints (Uusitalo, 2014). The composition of the respondents is as follows:

Table 1 - Respondent Scenario of the Study

SI	Name of the Study Area	Name of the Respondent	No. of Respondents	Total Respondent
01.	Dhaka Metropolitan police	Mass people	25	50
		Member of Community police & Police authority	25	
02.	Rajshahi Metropolitan police	Mass people	25	50
		Member of Community police & Police authority	25	
03.	Sylhet Metropolitan police	Mass people	25	50
		Member of Community police & Police authority	25	
Total (One hundred and fifty) =				150

Source: Self-elaboration

4. EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, community policing (CP) has grown out of the need for more joint ways to stop crime and for law enforcement and the public to trust each other more. Bangladesh officially adopted the idea, which stems from teamwork and proactive police, as part of the National Police Strategy in the early 2000s (Islam, 2017).

Global trends that pushed for more community-based methods in law enforcement shaped the original focus on CP in Bangladesh. The UN Development Programme (UNDP)

initiated CP as a trial project in certain areas to address rising crime rates and strained relations between the police and the public. Because of how well these trial projects worked, CP became an official part of police changes over time. With help from foreign funders, the Police Reform Program (PRP) ran from 2005 to 2015 and made a big difference in the way CP works in Bangladesh (Lubna & Hassan, 2011). This program focused on giving police officers more skills, getting the community more involved, and making CP groups official. This marked the official establishment of CP groups at the ward and union levels. This gave people an organized way to work together to solve local security problems. But there were problems with putting CP into action, such as a lack of resources, training, and general knowledge (Ohidujjaman et al., 2017b). The traditional organizational systems and a lack of trust in law enforcement made it harder for CP to fit in with Bangladesh's police culture.

In the past few years, CP has made some small steps forward, like putting more effort into digitizing crime reports and getting more people involved in their communities. For instance, the implementation of "Beat Policing" programs and the establishment of community-based crime prevention units demonstrate a shift in CP practices. However, social and political factors, along with a lack of policy support, have yet to realize the full promise of CP. Ranjan (2014) said that CP in Bangladesh is at a critical point where strategy changes and more community-police cooperation can make a big difference in reducing crime and protecting people. This history pattern shows how important it is to deal with practical and cultural problems so that CP projects in the country can last.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 2 - Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
Sex				
Male	40	40	40	120 (80%)
Female	10	10	10	30 (20%)
Age				
0-20 years	7	10	8	25 (16.67%)
21-30 years	20	15	18	53 (35.33%)
31- above	23	25	24	72 (48%)
Education				
Illiterate	5	7	6	18 (12%)
Primary	7	9	11	27 (18%)
Secondary	4	4	6	14 (9.34%)
Graduate	19	20	17	56 (37.33%)
Post Graduate	15	10	10	35 (23.33%)

Marital Status				
Married	42	40	43	125 (83.33%)
Unmarried	8	10	7	25 (16.67%)
Occupation				
Unemployed	3	5	3	11 (7.33%)
Job	17	15	13	45 (30%)
Business	10	13	16	39 (26%)
Labor	12	11	10	33 (22%)
Others	8	6	8	22 (14.67%)
Types of Family				
Nuclear Family	46	41	42	129 (86%)
Joint Family	4	9	8	21 (14%)

Source: Self-elaboration

The Table 2 shows that 20% of the respondents are women and 80% respondents were male. Compared to DMP, RMP and SMP have a higher number of women who answered the survey. When it comes to age, most of the people who answered the survey are 31 years old or older (83.33%). The rest of respondents to the survey are between the ages of 0 and 20. Majority of responders (37.33%) have at least a graduate degree in educational level. Where, 23.33% of respondents had a master's degree in DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police), RMP (Rajshahi Metropolitan Police) and SMP (Sylhet Metropolitan Police). 12.0% of respondents were illiterate, 18% had completed primary school, and 9.34% had finished secondary school.

An attempt was made to get information from both married and single people. The number of married people (83.33%) who answered is much higher than the number of single people who answered (16.67%). DMP, RMP and SMP shows the trend that is almost the same. There might not be as many single people because they were in schools or other places of learning when the data were collected. Information about the respondents' jobs was also collected, and the table shows that about 26% of respondents are in the business community; job holders were 30%. The jobless people who filled out the survey also gave information, but only 7.33% of the people who filled it out were unemployed. Laborers were 22% and 14.67% respondents were involved with different types of occupation. About 14% of respondents came from a "joint family," and rest of the respondents (86%) were coming from the nuclear families.

Table 3 - Status of Community

Status of Community	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
Colony or Mohollah	4	8	6	18 (12%)
Upper Middle class	7	6	8	21 (14%)
Middle class	16	13	15	44 (29.33%)
Lower middle class	13	15	13	41 (27.34%)
Mixed class	10	8	8	26 (17.33%)

Source: Self-elaboration

Respondents were asked about the state of their area (Table 3). Most of the people who answered the survey said that their area is made up of middle-class families. About 29.33% of the people who answered the survey have families in community or mohalla. Another, 27.34% respondents said that they were from the lower middle class. 17.33% argued that they were belonging the mixed class families. Besides, 12% and 14% respondents said that they were coming from the moholla and upper middle class.

Table 4 - Community Status of Community

Status of Community	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
Household resident	10	13	14	37 (24.67%)
Businessman	13	11	12	36 (24%)
Job	17	14	13	44 (29.33%)
Concerned/ Aware citizen	14	8	8	30 (20%)
Other	1	1	1	3 (2%)

Source: Self-elaboration

The respondents were asked whether they had any position/status in the community (Table 4). Approximately 24% of respondents answered that they represent the businessmen's organization or are members of businessmen's organizations. 29.33% of respondents have mentioned that they are members of various job sectors. 24.67% argued that they were household residents. Another, 20% of respondents claimed that they were concerned community within their society. The remaining respondents stated that they are simply ordinary individuals or property owners in the community. This demonstrates that just a

small number of respondents present are members of organizations, whereas the majority are simply regular citizens in the region.

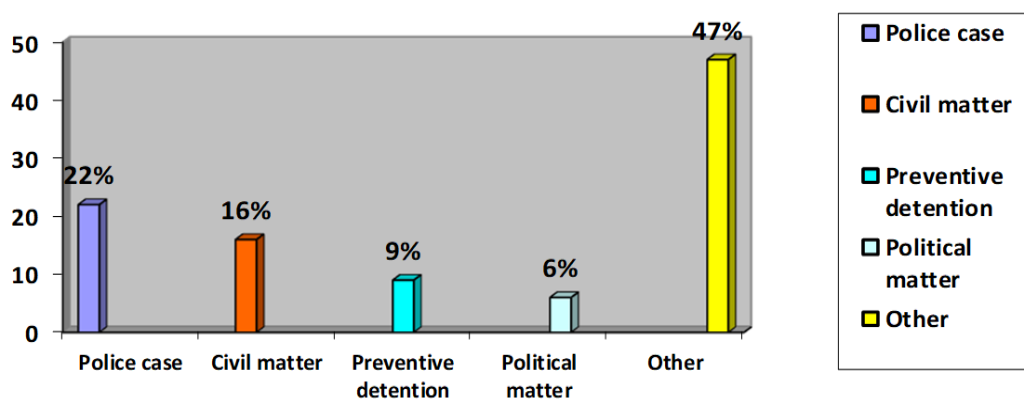
Table 5 - Number of times the respondents met with police

Number of Time	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
Once in time	11	10	10	31 (20.67%)
Twice in time	13	12	10	35 (23.33%)
Thrice in time	9	8	8	25 (16.67%)
More than 3 times	15	16	17	48 (32%)
Not a single time	2	4	5	11 (7.33%)

Source: Self-elaboration

The Table 5 shows that 33% of survey respondents had met police more than three times in the six months before. Compared to RMP and SMP, DMP has many such responses. This might be because DMP police and society are nicer than in RMP and SMP, or because DMP residents don't commit crimes and don't fear police. In the last six months, 7.33% of respondents had never encountered a police officer. The amount of DMP, RMP, and SMP members like this is similar. This implies that people in the study locations had quite varied responses to meeting police in the previous six months. 20.67% of respondents indicated they met with the COP once in the past six months, while 23.33% said they met twice.

Figure 2 - Purpose of meeting



Source: Self-elaboration

About 22% of respondents had dealt with police. Few responders interacted with police about politics. The graph shows that 16% of respondents met with police for municipal issues. 9% indicate they met with police for preventive reasons. A further 6% reported meeting with

police for political objectives. The remaining 47% reported their various interests to the police (Figure 2).

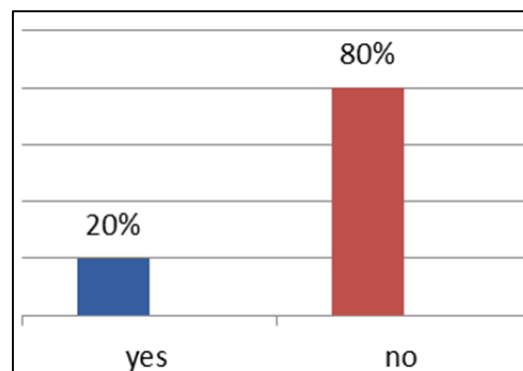
Table 6 - Place of meeting

Area of Contract	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
At Police station	18	24	20	62 (41.33%)
Out of Police station	14	13	16	43 (28.67%)
Public Place	9	6	7	22 (14.67%)
Over telephone	3	2	4	9 (6%)
Others	6	5	3	14 (9.33%)

Source: Self-elaboration

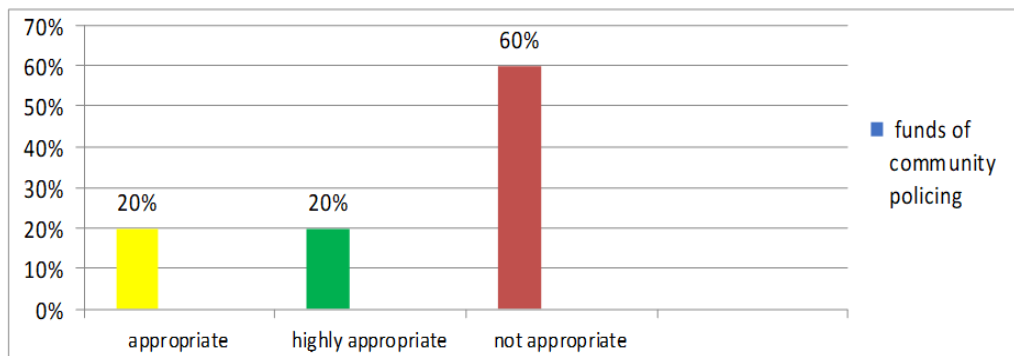
People who had talked to the police in the last six months were also asked to say where they met (Table 6). Most of the people who answered (41.33%) said they had interacted with police officers at a police station in the last six months. Additionally, 28.67% of respondents indicated that they had downplayed the issue outside the police station. Another 14.67% of respondents said they had lessened the problem in public areas by talking to local leaders about it. 6% of those who answered indicated they had dealt with the matter over the phone. The other people who answered claimed they gathered in different places to work things out.

Figure 3 - Training of Community police officer



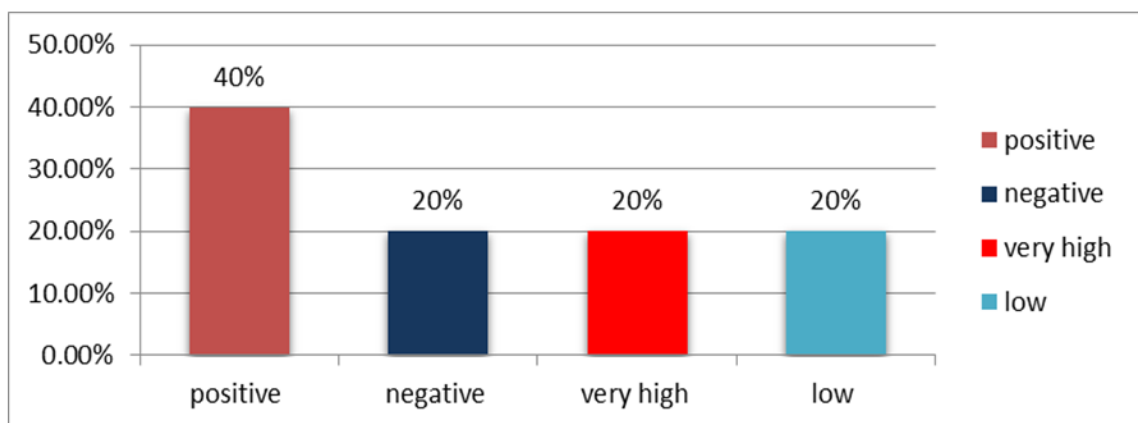
Source: Self-elaboration

The Figure 3 demonstrates how community police personnel are trained. To execute any work properly and fast training is important factor. But majority of the community police officers in Bangladesh stated they didn't get any training on how to do their jobs. So, they don't know what the major job of community police is, and the situation was 80%. Another 20% of respondents have a clear understanding of community policing and what it does.

Figure 4 - Fund for the community policing

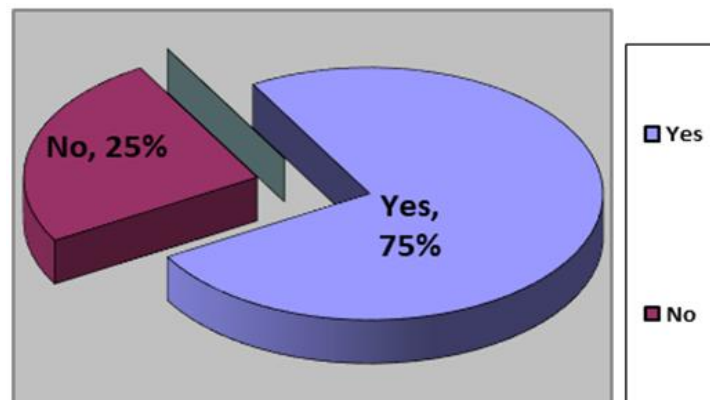
Source: Self-elaboration

The Figure 4 depicts the community police budget. Most respondents felt that community policing budgets were inadequate to properly do their jobs. Several officers from the community policing division complained that the police department's headquarters did not adequately support the division financially or with adequate resources.

Figure 5 - Support from community police officer

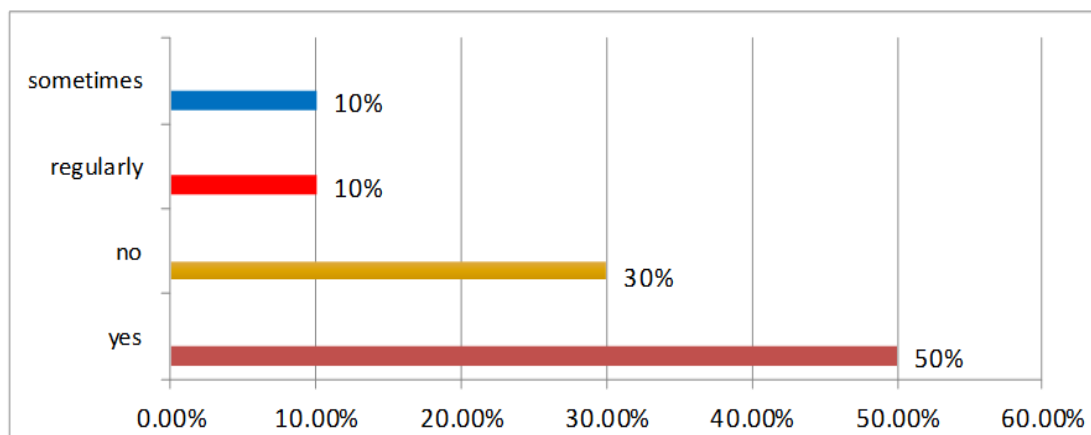
Source: Self-elaboration

The Figure 5 above illustrates the support of the community police officer for the community forum. Forty percent of participants in the community forum reported receiving assistance and support from community police officers. Approximately 20% of respondents indicated that they did not receive any cooperation or assistance from the community police officers. Nevertheless, other respondents indicated that the support from community police officers is limited, with a ratio of merely 20%.

Figure 6 - Scenario of crime reduction through community policing.

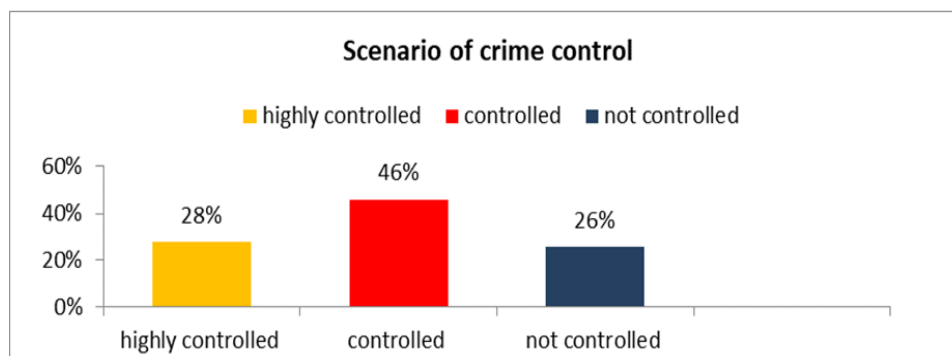
Source: Self-elaboration

The Figure 6 shows whether the crime rate grew or reduced with the implementation of community policing. The majority of respondents (75%) stated that community policing reduced crime and criminal activity. However, some responders provided an unfavorable response.

Figure 7 - Monitor of local crime & criminal survey

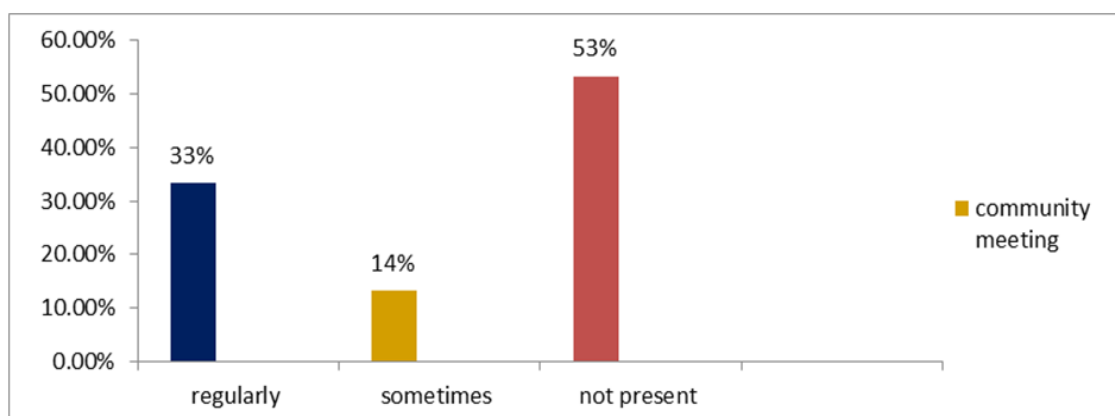
Source: Self-elaboration

Due to inadequate resources and involvement, 30% of respondents said community policing does not monitor local crime, whereas 50% said yes. Only 10% said monitoring is done routinely through patrols and community meetings, while 10% said it happens occasionally based on individual instances (Figure 7). The data suggest monitoring discrepancies, with urban regions having more activity than rural ones. Improving crime prevention requires greater resource allocation and community-police collaboration for frequent monitoring.

Figure 8 - Crime control through community policing

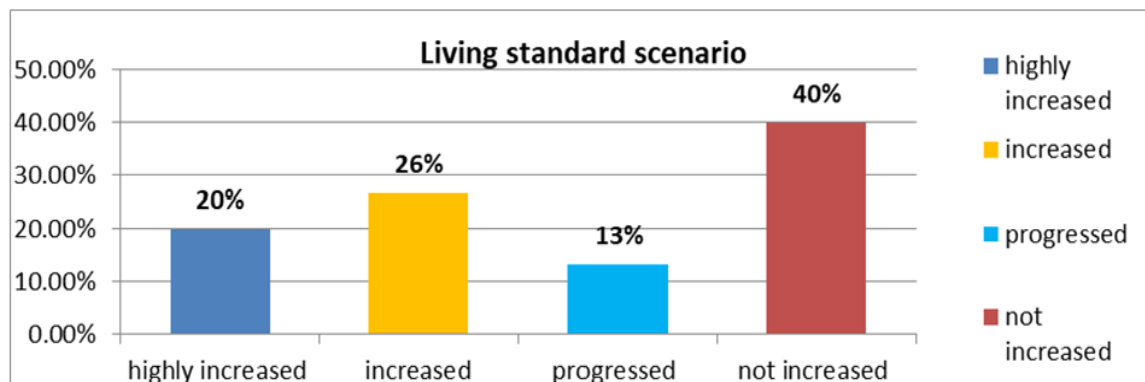
Source: Self-elaboration

According to the survey (Figure 8), 28% of respondents believe that community policing has been extremely effective in controlling crime (extremely Controlled), while 46% reported moderate success (Controlled). They attributed this success to increased community engagement and regular patrols. Nevertheless, 26% of respondents indicated that crime is mainly uncontrolled (Not Controlled) as a result of inconsistent implementation, resource constraints, and limited police collaboration. These results indicate that community policing in Bangladesh has a positive impact on crime control; however, its maximum potential is impeded by voids in coverage and execution.

Figure 9 - People present in community policing meeting

Source: Self-elaboration

Only 33% of responders attend community policing meetings regularly, claiming active engagement in local crime prevention talks (Figure 9). 14% attended sometimes, typically due to problems or invites. Alarmingly, 53% of respondents never attend such meetings (Not Present), citing lack of awareness, time restrictions, or skepticism in these activities. These findings suggest more community involvement and awareness initiatives to boost participation.

Figure 10 - Increasing living standard through community policing

Source: Self-elaboration

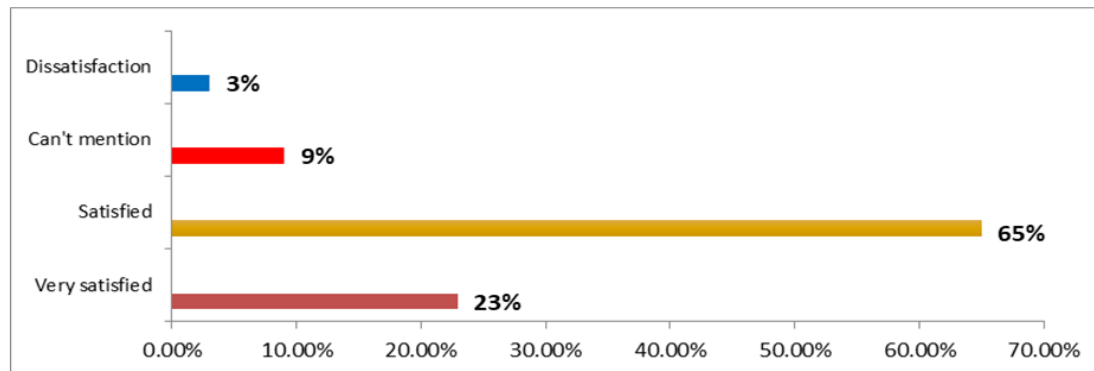
The 20% of respondents indicated a Highly Increased living quality owing to better safety and trust in community police (Figure 10). Additionally, 26% reported a notable rise (Increased) and 13% modest development. Uneven execution and limited reach of community policing efforts led 40% to say no major improvement (Not Increased). These results imply that community policing improves certain areas but needs larger and more consistent efforts to enhance all.

Table 7. Public perception of police

Opinion	DMP (N=50)	RMP (N=50)	SMP (N=50)	Total (N=150)
Going down	24	29	25	78 (52%)
Better	17	15	18	50 (33.33%)
Do not know	9	6	7	22 (14.67%)

Source: Self-elaboration

Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "the public's perception of the police is deteriorating" (Table 7). The data clearly shows that although 52% of respondents have seen a decline in their image, another, 33.33% of respondents believe that community policing has improved the police's image. 14.67% of respondents said that they couldn't say whether or not police credibility was improving.

Figure 11 - Respondents' level of satisfaction with respect to mobile surveillance

Source: Self-elaboration

From the Figure 11, we can see that 88% of respondents are happy or very happy with the mobile police patrols in their community. The graph also shows that only 3% of those who answered are unhappy with police patrol. Another, 9% respondents didn't feel interest on this issue.

Table 8 - Respondent's Opinion on Prospects of Community Policing in the future

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Are you willing to participate actively in community policing in the future?	Yes	78	52%
	No	59	39%
	Not sure	13	9%
Are you interested in learning about community policing in the future?	Yes	125	83%
	No	11	7%
	Not sure	15	10%
Are you willing to help police combat crime in the future?	Yes	69	46%
	No	63	42%
	Not sure	18	12%

Source: Self-elaboration

Community policing relies on trust and collaboration between people and law enforcement. This study explored community policing options in the study region using multi-perspective analysis of respondent viewpoints. As seen in the Table 8, we queried our sample about future community policing projects. In light of this, 78 respondents (52% of the total) were

interested in community policing tactics and activities to maintain the town's peace, while 59 (39% of the total) were not. Thirteen (9%) weren't sure if they'd join community policing. These data indicate that community policing may boost community engagement in the future. Conversely, poll respondents were asked if they would accept roadside community policing training. Thus, 83% of respondents (125) were eager to undertake community policing training, whereas 7% (11 respondents) were unwilling. However, fifteen participants (10%) were unsure about attending the course. Results imply that community members' understanding and endorsement of community policing may improve the research region's practices. The final question asked if they would help police combat crime. Table 7 demonstrates that 69 respondents (46%) are eager to help the police combat crime, while 63 (42%), who are unaware of the possibilities, are not. However, 18 of 12 were skeptical. These results show that most people want to minimize crime alongside the police.

6. DISCUSSION

The results of the study on Community police (CP) in Bangladesh provide light on important problems and chances for improving crime prevention and human security. They also directly relate to bigger theoretical discussions about how well police works and how the state and society interact. The survey shows that resource limitations, with 75% of CP units saying they don't have enough money, make it very hard for them to do their jobs. This is in line with theoretical theories that a lack of resources makes institutions less effective in developing situations (Bayley, 2006). Likewise, bureaucratic obstacles, identified by 60% of respondents, signify systemic inefficiencies that impede adaptive policing approaches, resonating with criticisms of inflexible governance frameworks in postcolonial governments (Hinton & Newburn, 2009).

Eighty percent of respondents said they didn't trust the police because of prior police violence, which makes CP's credibility more difficult. This conclusion relates to conceptions of procedural justice, which assert that trust is essential for efficient policing (Tyler, 2006). Political involvement, identified by 70% of respondents, exacerbates impartiality, aligning with literature on political policing in South Asia (Jauregui, 2016). These issues underscore a disparity between CP's theoretical promise of collaborative, community-driven security and its practical execution in Bangladesh.

Even with these limitations, the study finds that CP has a lot of promise to improve human security. Eighty-five percent of people in the community think that CP can make people more resilient and help with crime in their area. Successful CP projects in places with strong community involvement and collaboration with local authorities show that participatory governance models may help build confidence and enhance results. This backs up theoretical frameworks that say that getting the community involved is an important part of good policing (Skogan, 2006).

To overcome the highlighted obstacles, governments must prioritize the distribution of resources, simplify bureaucratic procedures, and promote open, nonpartisan community policing frameworks. Bangladesh can make the most of CP's potential to improve human security by making sure that CP practices fit with the requirements of the community and the theoretical ideas of trust and collaboration. The technique, including mixed-method surveys and case studies, strongly substantiates these results by triangulating stakeholder viewpoints, therefore guaranteeing a thorough evaluation of CP's difficulties and prospects.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study project provided light on the problems and opportunities for Community Policing (CP) in Bangladesh in terms of crime prevention and human security. The literature assessment found major barriers to CP efficacy, including resource restrictions, bureaucratic difficulties, and community distrust. Despite these obstacles, worldwide researchers have emphasized the value of CP in developing community-police collaborations and resolving local crime issues. Furthermore, research emphasizes the need of community participation and social cohesiveness in successful CP implementation. Moving forward, resolving these difficulties requires specialized tactics that take into consideration Bangladesh's contextual factors. Policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders must work together to eliminate impediments to CP effectiveness. This includes guaranteeing enough resources, reducing bureaucratic procedures, and applying community-centered techniques that foster trust and empower local communities. Furthermore, this study effort emphasizes the necessity for ongoing research and assessment to improve CP practices and their impact on crime prevention and human security in Bangladesh. By promoting evidence-based policies and collaborative efforts, CP has the potential to play a critical role in making Bangladesh's communities safer and more secure.

The major recommendations are given below:

- a) **Provide proper funds:** In Bangladesh, community policing is impossible without money. Administrations can't work well without enough money.
- b) **Provide proper training:** Training is a key part of a job which insist and increase professionalism. But most community police officers don't have any training on how to do their new jobs and tasks (Bashir et al., 2016).
- c) **Adequate logistical support:** Government should fund the provision of logistics assistance including transportation, a dedicated community police office, computers, and the internet in order to increase the efficacy and efficiency of community policing (Mengistu et al., 2000).

- d) **Raise of Consciousness:** Community policing is not widely known or understood by the general public. Thus, they did not provide a presentation at the community policing meeting and did not supply any statistics on crime or criminals (S. Islam, 2018).
- e) **Community police forums must have a well-educated leader:** Political figures or members of the political elite typically serve as forum moderators. Therefore, community policing needs an educated individual who is aware of his obligations and can carry them out (Mengistu et al., 2000).

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FROM LEARNING TO CHOOSING: A STUDY OF CRIMINAL-CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANIZED CRIME

DE APRENDER A ELEGIR: UN ESTUDIO DEL DESARROLLO DE LA CARRERA
CRIMINAL EN EL CRIMEN ORGANIZADO

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Abstract

The study explores the developments of criminal careers of individuals engaged in organized crime in Sri Lanka, where the lens of the research is the application of Differential Association Theory and Rational Choice. Criminal networks continue to develop internationally and locally. This study implements a mixed-methods approach, inclusive of semi-structured interviews with 30 incarcerated offenders and questionnaires with rehabilitation officers. The results of the study established evidence of peer association, initial context of family background and level of deviance as the main influences to initiate participating in an organized crime network and supporting DAT. As offenders build a body of experience and status in the organized crime network, they begin to behave more strategically, consistent with RCT and rationale-based decisions involving risk assessment, opportunities available, and anticipated outcomes. The research also discovers structural barriers low education, unemployment, and social marginalization as long triggers and reinforcing antecedents of sustained crime involvement. Developing a criminal career from social learning to rational choice, this study advances theoretical understandings and offers insights for practice. It also advocates for prevention and rehabilitation interventions appropriate to the offender's position on the criminal career continuum, especially places like Sri Lanka, where socio-political circumstances intersect with organized crime.

Keywords

organized crime, criminal careers, rational choice theory, differential association theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Organized crime is a persistent and evolving threat in both local and transnational contexts. Organized crime organizations respond to local and transnational recruitment and operational opportunities in different geographical, political, and cultural situations, and they adapt their activities by recruiting new members, introducing new illegal behaviors, and adjusting their operational activities in response to enforcement pressures. It is notable that, despite the advanced literature that seeks to examine the structures and operations of organized crime, there has been less scholarly focus on the ways that individuals enter, stay in, and exit organized crime (Kleemans & van Koppen, 2020). These discussions around the cases of offenders' life history timelines sometimes referred to as "criminal careers" are vital in shaping the prevention and restoration of offenders to non-offending states.

There are some discussions of criminal career development indicating that things are not simply a product of an individual's static personality or random role and opportunity. It is understood as a dynamic approach that includes a longitudinal development with social learning, situational constraints, and rational decision making (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Blokland, 2005).

This article examines how people engaged in organized crime transition from learning to choosing: how some aspects of involvement at early stages are determined by social networks and learned behaviors, while involvement at later stages is determined by more calculated, deliberative decisions. Those pathways are examined through the integrated frameworks of Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1947) and Rational Choice Theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1986).

In Differential Association Theory (DAT) it is important to understand that criminal behavior is learned as a result of interactions with others in intimate personal groups. The original premise of DAT was that through interactions with criminal peers people learn the techniques for committing crime, as well as the motivations and justifications (Sutherland, 1947). Since DAT was introduced, several empirical studies have examined the appropriateness of the theory for several forms of crime (e.g. juvenile delinquency [Warr, 2002]; cybercrime [Holt et al. 2010]; and white-collar crime [Benson & Simpson, 2009]). In organized crime specifically, loyalty and trust, as well as shared ideologies, are a necessary part of the recruitment and retention processes (Calderoni et al., 2022; Kleemans & de Poot, 2008). These early forms of differential associations help form a deviant "value system" that allows them to legitimize their engagement in criminal conduct and to enhance their engagement with criminal networks.

At the same time, Differential Association Theory, by itself, does not explain how offenders make deliberate choices about crimes, roles, or the timing of actors. In these contexts, Rational Choice Theory (RCT) provides complementary knowledge. RCT, according to Cornish and Clarke (1986), is summarised as the crime is the product of a choice made by

an actor weighing the perceived benefits of offending against the potential costs of punishment or failure. RCT acknowledges decisions are only boundedly rational and influenced by an individual's own knowledge, emotions, and the constraints of the situation (Cornish & Clarke, 2014; Paternoster, 1989). In crimes of an organised nature where risks are high, and rewards are generally substantial, offenders exhibit sophisticated decision-making strategies that optimise individual actors' profits while minimising the risk of detection (Leclerc & Wortley, 2013). Studies have shown that when people engage in trafficking, extortion, or financial crime, they calculate expected utility around factors such as police presence, market conditions, and connections with political influences (Sahin et al., 2020; Bright & Delaney, 2013). There is an emerging body of research to indicate that the two theories are not mutually exclusive and further develop at different points of the criminal career (Bouchard & Morselli, 2014).

Early engagement with crime is likely to play a social role, such as through peer influence, familial connection, or community expectations. As individuals gain experience and status in organized networks, their role transitions from apprentice to strategist. At this point, risk, opportunity, and cost begin to supersede status rational calculations about behavior (van Koppen et al., 2010). For example, a young gang sniper. At one point, they will become a decision-maker deciding which methods and forms of criminal activity to use - since they will have now developed methods of risk calculations and ways to navigate the market using crime patterns and law enforcement patterns (Campana & Varese, 2021) quantifiable ways.

Sri Lanka presents a very interesting context to study this kind of social development. The organized crime landscape is considerably derided by, a civil conflict, political patronage and economic inequality (Gunaratna & Woodall, 2015). Criminal organizations in Sri Lanka are embedded in the very local communities that they operate in, and regularly intersect with a number of political, religious, or business elites (UNODC, 2023; Global Initiative, 2023). Youth demographic members often become members of the local network through family relations or local proximity connection. While the member may be part of a social criminal career, the youth member is often mentored by senior criminals and is socialized into a deviant subculture. As their experience and knowledge increases acquire important forms of specialized calculus and decision-making, they navigate and respond to increasingly complex risk environments as regards in transnational contexts, often involving narcotics, human trafficking and contract killings (Silva, 2017).

This research paper addresses important gaps in criminology literature by providing a longitudinal study of the criminal careers of organized crime offenders in Sri Lanka. The methods used draw on and combine qualitative and quantitative studies in the field of criminology. We wish to demonstrate how the processes of learning – through social interaction – and choosing – through rational deliberation, are interrelated processes and develop through time. In part, our empirical study builds on the work of Kleemans and de Poot (2008) concerning opportunities for crime embedded in social networks, and Pratt et al.

(2006) on the continued importance of risk in the decision-making process, even for seasoned offenders.

The research is framed by three questions:

- I. How do initial social associations and learning experiences inform organized crime involvement?
- II. How does a cost–benefit analysis develop over time and with experience and criminal capital?
- III. What life events or turning points cause offenders to switch from socializing to rationalizing to make decisions (and vice versa)?

By analyzing the movement from socially learned motivations to deliberately chosen actions, this research provides a more layered and nuanced conceptualization of criminal development. It has practical implications for law enforcement and rehabilitation by demonstrating that at various points in criminal development, practitioners require (and we presume should use) different types of interventions (social dislocation in pre- and early emergent phases and risk manipulation in latter stages (Leclerc, Wortley, & Smallbone, 2010)). Ultimately, this work contributes to the burgeoning criminological literature that advocates for the development of integrated, contextual, and politically relevant accounts of organized crime careers in the Global South.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore the human and criminal career development of organized crime generally will require a comprehensive theoretical framework. Criminologists have long debated if crime is learned behavior within social groups, or products of rational choice. This section will discuss in depth two important theoretical frameworks Differential Association Theory and Rational Choice Theory and examine the extent to which they can be combined to enhance our understanding of criminal career development in organized crime. This section will also examine the emerging literature surrounding social learning, strategic choice, cultural context and other environmental factors that contribute to the offender decisions of organized crime.

2.1. Differential Association Theory and Social Learning

Differential Association Theory (DAT), introduced by Edwin Sutherland, is the classic explanation of how criminal behavior is learned. Sutherland's (1947) position was that criminal behavior is not passed from one individual to another but, instead, learned from communication within a single individual group of friends or family. The central tenet of DAT is that friendships and membership in a group predict criminal behavior, such as delinquency or organized crime. Individuals learn to commit crimes by associating with individuals who

already carry out crimes, on a group level. It is the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of this participation that ultimately leads individuals to learn criminal norms.

There is also considerable empirical support for the basic principles of DAT, especially in the area of gang opening and social learning from peers, onward to organized crime. For example, Warr (2002) showed that peer influence is an important predictor of adolescent delinquency. Akers (1998) is an extension of DAT to a broader model of social learning, while including reinforcement, imitation, and differential reinforcement. Similarly, in organized crime, social processes have been shown to be important for recruitment, training, and socialization of new members. Specifically, with the Dutch offenders, Kleemans and de Poot (2008) found that many of the Dutch offenders became involved with organized crime through a family or neighborhood connection and learned illegal methods for illegal trades, with some direction from the perpetrators.

Likewise, Calderoni et al. (2022), in a systematic literature review of risk factors associated with recruitment into organized crime, reiterated a strong argument concerning the significance of intimate social networks and trusting relationships. In their study, Calderoni et al. revealed the kinship ties, proximity, and shared cultural identity, aided the internalization of criminal values and the acquisition of deviant techniques. Further, Calderoni et al. observed that these relationships extended beyond early adolescence and, in fact, were often consolidated into adulthood forming strong emotional attachments and group loyalty, which can often increase resistance mechanisms to law enforcement intervention.

In the South Asian context, specifically in regard to Sri Lankan case studies, Silva (2017) highlighted that most of the youthful male participants recruited into organized drug networks were initially introduced into dealing by family members or peers within the urban slum context. When dealing with individuals with whom there were already trusting relationships existent, youths often felt protected and seen as legitimate partners in the criminal endeavor. Therefore, young, novice offenders were able to access criminal resource and mentorship based on their early connections. Early identified relationships set the stage for ongoing criminal careers.

2.2. Rational Choice Theory and Strategic Decision-Making

In contrast to socially oriented explanations, Rational Choice Theory (RCT) views crime as the outcome of purposeful decision-making. Cornish and Clarke (1986) assert that criminality occurs when individuals calculate the costs and benefits of their choices although RCT acknowledges the existence of constraints such as lack of information or emotional cues, it maintains that offenders evaluate the reward expected from the crime, the risk of punishment, and the effort required to commit the crime.

Recent literature has applied RCT to organized crime. Evidence suggests many offenders consciously construct their choices and think strategically, particularly concerning criminal activities with significant risk and reward. Leclerc and Wortley (2013) explain that organized crime offenders evaluate their choices according to police visibility, surveillance technologies, and timing. Their research on sexual and financial offenders demonstrates that knowledge of the physical environment (including past experiences) and anticipation of the risks associated with perceived capabilities contribute significantly to the type and amount of crime that is committed.

Paternoster and Pogarsky (2009) developed the "thoughtfully reflective decision maker" and further speculation argues that an individual with superior decision-making will contemplate future consequences, as opposed to engage in impulsive offending. These findings are especially important to organized crime because these individuals need to consider long futures when planning long-term activities, formulate a division of labor, and rationally manage illicit enterprises. Additionally, Liu et al. (2022) used neuropsychological instruments to demonstrate that organized offenders have an elevated reward profile and are less risk adverse than non-offenders with criminal status. These behaviours compliment the contention that rational decision-making, despite being bounded by biases and incomplete information, still drives criminal displacement, particularly when they are employed in a rational way during mid- and late-career stages.

One longitudinal study conducted by Van Koppen et al. (2010) found that while Dutch organized criminals typically start in networks of typical socializing, when they progressed to social influence or leadership positions, their deception and habitual risk taking requires decision-making and ability to manage risk taking. Their study displayed a development progression from socialized engaging in networks to evaluating and making rational choices as leaders.

2.3. Integrating Differential Association and Rational Choice Theories

The debate regarding social learning and rational decision-making has typically been expressed dichotomously. Yet, new scholarship indicates that these mechanisms are not mutually-exclusive, but are instead complementary and sequential (Bouchard & Morselli, 2014; McCarthy, 2002). Specifically, one way in which this may manifest, is that individuals may learn criminal behaviors, and justifications entirely through association and come to rationalize and refine their actions once they have experience and "criminal capital."

In examining street gangs and organized crime, Campana and Varese (2021) found that, social learning processes serve as an entry point into deviance, but once inside, survival and success within networks of criminals is less a function of affective ties and more a function of processing risk and perceived benefits. Once individuals began calculating benefits and risks, they had fully forged a professional identity as a criminal through a separation of crime from

normality, facing the crucial shift from affective or normative ties to instrumental or calculative ties (Bouchard, 2013).

Kleemans and van Koppen (2020) presented a criminal career approach which addressed the traverses of development in organized crime - a point that the early social learning decidedly transitions to strategic action. Their conclusions are consistent with this notion, that Rational Choice Theory becomes increasingly predictive in the later phases of the process while Differential Association Theory maintains its explanatory power during phases of initial criminalization.

In Sri Lanka, organized crime is made more difficult due to state-criminal collusion, ethnic group ties, and poor law enforcement (Gunaratna & Woodall, 2015). These contextual factors shape the social construction of risk and opportunity, which modifies both learning and decision-making. As Silva (2017) demonstrated, people in criminal networks with links to political actors often feel safe and unlikely to be prosecuted, which changes their risk assessments and bolsters their engagement with criminality.

2.4. Gaps in Knowledge and Future Directions for Empirical Investigation

Given the increasing literature on integrating DAT and RCT, there is not much empirical data using these models in the South Asian context with most studies being cross-sectional which restricts our understanding of the changes between social learning and rational decision-making. A longitudinal format would provide invaluable data on including the transitions between peer influences and rational thought regarding engagement, as well as the conditions which determine this transition.

This study fills an obvious gap in Dartmouth's literature with a longitudinal mixed methods study that focuses on the criminal career development of organized crime offenders in Sri Lanka. It adds to the growing body of research examining not only why people commit crimes, but also how they develop into persistent and ultimately strategic decision-makers within organized criminal environments.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is situated within a stage-contingent theoretical model that integrates Differential Association Theory (DAT) and Rational Choice Theory (RCT) in the broader criminal-career framework (Blokland, 2005; Laub & Sampson, 2003) (Table 1). The theoretical model assumes that social learning processes dominate early-career entry into organized crime, whereas cost-benefit calculations become increasingly explicit at mid- and late-career decision points, even if both mechanisms are mutually reinforcing across all stages.

Table 1 – Theoretical Framework

Stage	Dominant Mechanism	Core Constructs	Key References
Entry / Apprenticeship	Social learning (DAT)	Peer intensity, family ties, and criminal definitions	Sutherland (1947); Kleemans & de Poot (2008)
Consolidation / Professionalization	Hybrid (DAT + RCT)	Criminal capital, opportunity recognition, bounded rationality	Bouchard & Morselli (2014); Campana & Varese (2021)
Leadership / Brokerage	Strategic decision-making (RCT)	Risk–reward calculus, network brokerage, opportunity structuring	Cornish & Clarke (1986, 2014); van Koppen et al. (2010)
Turning-points / Desistance	Shifting mix	Mentor loss, sanction certainty, and prosocial ties	Paternoster & Pogarsky (2009); Kerstholt et al. (2024)

Source: Author

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Differential Association Theory (DAT)

DAT argues that crime is learned through interaction with close personal associates who provide criminal definitions favorable to obedience to the law (Sutherland, 1947). In an organized crime context, ties with high density and intensity transmit technical know-how (e.g., drug-cutting methods) and the moral vocabulary of justification (Warr, 2002). Empirical network research finds that kinship and neighbors are the most common recruiting conduits into Italian mafias (Calderoni et al., 2022), Dutch trafficking organizations (Kleemans & de Poot, 2008) and Sri Lankan drug syndicates (Silva, 2017).

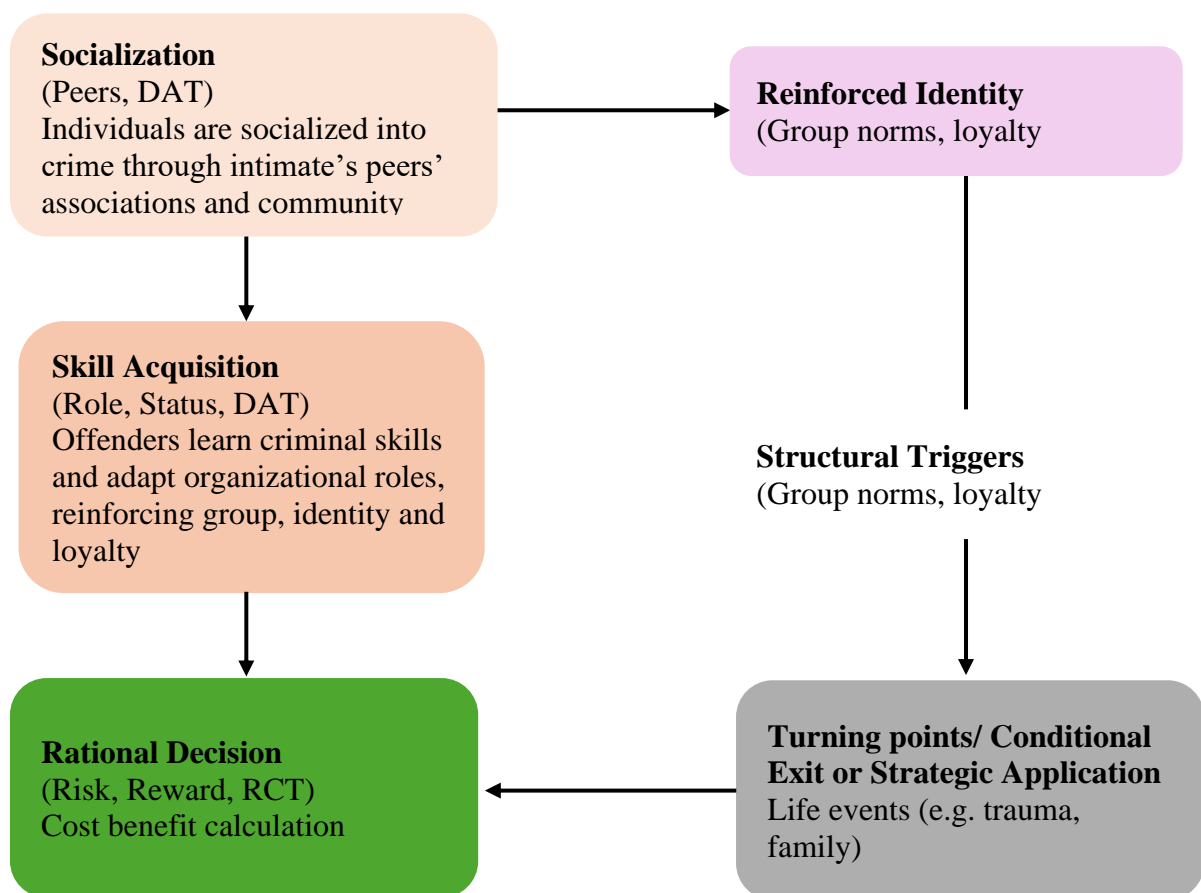
4.2. Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

RCT frames offending as purposeful, driven by expected utility (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). Organized crime actors undertake weighing payoff, effort, and sanction probability when attempting to plan smuggling runs, contract killings, or money laundering (Leclerc & Wortley, 2013). Neuro-cognitive evidence suggests that chronic offenders have heightened sensitivity to rewards and lower levels of risk aversion (Liu et al., 2022) consistent with bounded-rationality assumptions of RCT.

4.3. Criminal-Career Paradigm

Life-course studies support the idea that participation in crime is developmental, including onset, maintenance, escalation, specialization and desistance (Blokland, 2005). Integrated DAT-RCT models are able to conceptualize that social influence is strong at onset, but the utilitarian reasoning behind criminal acts increases as actors amass 'criminal capital' (Kleemans & van Koppen, 2020) and move toward managerial or executive level roles (Campana & Varese, 2021).

Figure 1 - Conceptual framework



Source: Author

5. METHODOLOGY

Applying a mixed-methods research design, the current study examines the developmental pathways of organized crime offenders following both Rational Choice Theory (RCT) and Differential Association Theory (DAT). The mixed-methods research design combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide an understanding of the learning processes, the strategic choices, and the critical moments in the criminal careers of organized crime participants. The nature of triangulating the two methods creates internal validity and provides a better contextual understanding of the situational social and psychological factors that are present in organized crime (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

5.1. Research Setting and Population

The research was undertaken at Welikada Prison, one of the largest high-security correctional institutions in Sri Lanka. Welikada Prison has a sizable population of those imprisoned for organized criminal offenses in which the felons are involved in many illegal activities in conjunction with others such as drug trafficking incidents; extortion and seriously violent crimes including contract murders, and smuggling. Potential participants were prisoners with definable links to organized criminal subject matter and included confirmed connections within organized crime groups or arrangements based on a review of prison records and rehabilitation officers' categorization.

5.2. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Participants were selected according to mentioned above conditions applying purposive sampling to recruit individuals with first-hand knowledge about organized crime. This method is appropriate for researching hidden or difficult-to-access populations, such as incarcerated organized crime offenders because random sampling is not feasible (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The analysis involved 30 incarcerated offenders at Welikada Prison, who were identified through prison records and rehabilitation officers to have verifiable experiences in organized crime or involvement in organized crime networks. Additionally, five rehabilitation officers were interviewed to contribute their professional insights and to triangulate the offenders' stories with institutional observations.

The decision to recruit 30 offenders was grounded in practical and methodological issues. Access to offenders within high-security facilities is limited and ethical considerations impact the recruitment process. While the sample size is smaller than studies aimed at statistical generalization, it is appropriate with qualitative criminological studies interested in capturing a variety of offenders' life histories (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Kleemans & de Poot, 2008). The inclusion of rehabilitation officers provides additional participant data which broadens the

analytic strategy with an understanding of institutional perspectives of patterns of risk, treatment, and recidivism.

While it is recognized that this sample cannot be used to make statistical generalizations to all organized crime offenders in Sri Lanka, the interviews themselves were in-depth and the triangulated data sources help to theoretically generalize as well as deepen the superficial understanding of criminal career trajectories. The results should therefore be interpreted as suggestive of modalities within this population rather than as indicative of all organized crime offenders in Sri Lanka, which highlights the need for future studies to expand their designs to be larger or multi-sited to reach further generalizability.

5.3. Data Collection Methods

5.3.1. Qualitative Data: Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative data were primarily collected via semi-structured interviews with the 30 offenders. This approach was chosen due to its flexibility, permitting the researcher go deeper into individuals' narratives, perceptions, and social interactions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The interview guide contained open-ended questions on:

- Criminal norms and early exposure, influenced by peers (influenced by DAT)
- Decision-making processes, including cost-benefit analysis (influenced by RCT)
- Significant turning points and transitions in careers
- The experience of desisting from criminality, where applicable

Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was decided to proceed with an inductive coding process in which themes would emerge directly from the data while also being informed by core concepts from RCT and DAT. Coding categories included "peer influence," "rational justifiers," "turning points," and "criminal capital.

5.3.2 Quantitative Data: Questionnaires Used with Rehabilitation Officers

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires given to five rehabilitation officers. As a method of data collection, the questionnaire materials included the following:

- The frequency and severity of involvement in organized crime among inmates
- Indicators of recidivism
- Institutional misconduct and compliance or non-compliance
- Risk and needs assessments

Most items were on a Likert scale (e.g., 1–5) or categorical. These instruments provide additional, triangulated data on offenders' behavioral consistency and conceptual basis.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1. Demographic and Background Analysis of Offenders

This section aims to provide a profile of the thirty offenders using significant socio-demographic variables that relate to entry into organized crime. The data was collected via interviews and verified through institutional records when available.

Table 2 - Age Distribution of the Sample

Age Group	Number of Offenders (n = 30)	Percentage (%)
18–25 years	5	16.7%
26–35 years	14	46.7%
36–45 years	7	23.3%
46+ years	4	13.3%

Source: Author's Field Study, 2025

As indicated in Table 2, nearly half of the offenders were 26 - 35 years old (46.7%), highlighting that early adulthood represents the most active period of organized crime participation. This finding is consistent with Farrington (2003), which indicated that criminal activity peaks during young adulthood. The group of offenders 45 years and older (13.3%), indicates a smaller cohort of long-term participants who may be preparing to transition into positional or planning roles, which also aligns with Rational Choice Theory, as individuals in the later stages of their career may have a more purposeful decision-making process.

Table 3 - Educational Background

Education Level	Number of Offenders	Percentage (%)
No formal education	3	10%
Up to Grade 5	6	20%
Grade 6–O/L (Ordinary Level)	14	46.7%
A/L completed	5	16.7%
Diploma or Higher	2	6.6%

Source: Author's Field Study, 2025

About 77% of offenders had only achieved O/L or lesser (Table 3), indicating a substantial educational disadvantage. Low levels of education limit legitimate employment opportunities which may push individuals into organized crime as a rational alternative for

survival, consistent with Strain Theory and Rational Choice Theory (Agnew, 1992; Cornish & Clarke, 1986).

Table 4 - Employment Before join organized crimes

Employment Category	Number of Offenders	Percentage (%)
Daily wage laborers (e.g., masons, porters)	8	26.7%
Small business owners/self-employed	4	13.3%
Drivers (private and goods transport)	3	10.0%
Unemployed before being involved in OC	7	20.3%
Skilled technical workers (e.g., electricians)	2	6.7%
Clerical/administrative work	1	3.3%
Armed Forces or Police Services	5	20.0%

Source: Author's Field Study, 2025

Table 4 shows that a significant proportion of offenders were working as daily wage laborers (26.7%), which is indicative of a weak economy as a push factor into organized crime. Additionally, 16.7% of offenders had previously served in the army or police, providing them with tactical skills and inside knowledge. This subset reflects the operational aspect of Rational Choice Theory: that individuals are rational actors utilizing their specific training to maximize their illegal opportunity; but, still entered through social connections consistent with Differential Association Theory.

According to the study, the armed forces and police services have recruited members to organized crime because of several psychosocial and structural risk factors.

- Identity loss post-service: Finding civilian life difficult, some veterans were vulnerable to the economic pull of criminal networks
- Economic shortages: A lack of income through pension or savings led some veterans to engage in criminal activity
- Moral dissonance: Crimes were rationalized as “missions” or “orders” in interviews
- Peer normalization: There were members from the same military unit who were already members of a criminal network, which was regarded as an act of survival or loyalty

6.2. Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted by coding semi-structured interview transcripts from a total of 30 convicted organized crime offenders. Coding followed the six-phase protocol

established by Braun and Clarke (2006) and was derived through both inductive and deductive methods. The quantitative profiles and qualitative narratives were triangulated to confirm primary themes that correspond to criminal career formation and development.

6.2.1. Early Socialization and Family Background

Many of the offenders described their family contexts as either absent of supervision or immersed in criminality (deviance). This was especially true for offenders who faced neglect, poverty, or a family legacy of criminality.

My father went in and out of jail. I thought it was normal. Everybody had respect for him in the neighborhood.

— Respondent 4

Twelve out of 30 offenders (40%) reported being exposed to criminal behaviors in their home environment during adolescence. This theme corresponds with Differential Association Theory, whereby criminal behaviors are learned through interaction with primary groups. The family, as a socializing agent, occurs at an establishing age and is one of the earliest means of normalization of criminal behavior.

6.2.2. Economic Pressures and Survival Motives

Economic and sometimes physical pressure was the number one motive for most of these offenders to engage in organized crime. Data showed that 13 offenders (43.3%) were either unemployed or employed in low-paying, daily wage work.

It was just anything I could scrounge up as a regular income. I have two kids, and I had zero help. That's how I got approached with an offer.

— Respondent 17

These economic pressures were indicative of General Strain Theory, where a person does not achieve societal approved goals (e.g., job stability, family stability), and as a result strikes legitimacy as a means to achieve. Because of the structural pressures, organized crime became a rational response.

6.2.3. Role of the Military and Police Services

A very telling theme was the transformation from disciplined service to deviant enterprise. Six offenders (20%) had some military or police service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Police).

I was taught to obey orders. When say a senior from my unit ask for assistance, I didn't hesitate. I was taught loyalty.

— Respondent 12, Ex-Army

These individuals described their difficulty reintegrating after military or police service, pointing to unemployment, the vague transition away from service and promotion of themselves by former colleagues. Their transition into deviance demonstrated a deviant transformation of loyalty to a level of organization and tactical knowledge that was recomposed for engagement in crime.

This suggests that after training in highly structured registry into the military or police forces, when separated from that structure those individuals would be highly vulnerable to the opportunistic co-option practices of criminal networks. It also provides a further justification for a possible convergence of Rational Choice Theory and Differential Association Theory as their decisions were being made rationally but could often been seen as being socialized away via familiar social relationships associated with military or police service.

6.2.4. Peer Pressure and Gang Membership

The majority of participants cited peer influence (e.g., neighbors, friends, or ex-colleagues) as the reason for their criminal involvement. Interview data also revealed that 22 offenders (73.3%) reported having close friends that were already involved in organized crime before they themselves became involved.

Everyone I then hung out with was doing it (smuggling, dealing, whatever). You either get in the game or go broke.

— Respondent 7

Peer association not only normalized crime, but also was a conduit for engaging with organized networks. This supports the idea behind Differential Association Theory, where people learn crime norms more often than law-abiding (prosocial) norms.

6.2.5. Crime opportunity and the rational way of knowing.

Some offenders described rational consideration in deciding to engage in crime rather than work in legitimate employment. In many cases offenders who had technical or military skills had made rational choices to utilize that skill set in high-reward, illicit activity.

I knew how to move weapons without being detected. That skill set got me into the gang.

— Respondent 21

This phenomenon is consistent with Rational Choice Theory, whereby perceived benefit (e.g., income, respect, protection) outweighed the perceived risk (e.g., arrest, imprisonment). Interestingly, men who identified as having higher education qualifications (O/L or A/L) attributes described their decision making as more often incorporating cost-benefit thinking.

6.2.6. Structural Marginalization and Systemic Failure

While offenders articulated their disenchantment with formal institutions and highlighted low expectations of opportunities, discrimination, and corruption, they suggested that these elements even after they attempted to abide by the law.

I wanted to follow the law and get a job. Nobody helped me. One cop said I would always be a thug.

— Respondent 9

This systemic failure contributed to a sense of alienation, and further to their acceptance of criminal involvement in their worldview. This theme is reflective of a larger structural critique—one which situates poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunities as barriers that have continued to engage offenders in further crime.

6.2.7. Desistance as a Distant Concept

When asked about their future, the majority of offenders did not articulate tangible plans for desisting from crime. The respondents voiced this schema of 13 of them utilizing imprisonment as a "pause," rather than a turning point.

Once I am out, I have no choice. Who is going to hire me with my record?

— Respondent 19

What this consistently suggests is that offenders demonstrated little internal motivation for desistance and affirmed a cyclical criminal identity sustained by social structural barriers and expectations. The remaining four, that expressed intent to change were all students operating in rehabilitative or spiritual programs in prison.

7. DISCUSSION

This research investigated the developmental pathways of organized crime offenders in Sri Lanka utilizing an integrated differential association theory (DAT) and rational choice theory (RCT) framework. Results indicated that the entry, persistence, and escalation in a career of organized crime was influenced by the interaction of early socialization, and later on rational decision-making. The analysis resulted in four overarching themes.

Offenders often described early exposure to criminal norms in the family or community social settings. Forty percent of participants described their parents or relatives being involved in criminal activity directly, which normalized deviant values from an early age. This strongly supports DAT's fundamental notion that intimate social associations provide definitions favorable to violation of the law (Sutherland, 1947). In Sri Lanka, family involvement in crime, not only exposed offenders to the techniques of crime, but legitimized that deviance was a valid and suitable lifestyle, which positioned youngsters into social networks where crime was accessible and normalized.

Most of the participants (73%) indicated that peer networks were critical for maintaining continued involvement. Peer groups gave offenders access to criminal organizations, protection, and group identity, thereby strengthening the original motives derived from the family. More importantly, when offenders got older, associations with peers was not simply about being part of a peer group, but about survival and economic rationality. This peer association was often (if not always) preceded by learned association (DAT), but quickly turned to a more conscious calculation of opportunities versus risks (RCT). Peer associations shaped offender routes into organized crime higher up in the hierarchy.

Additionally, economic vulnerability was a significant driver of the offending choices. More than 40% of the offenders were unemployed or doing some type of precarious daily wage work before being involved with organized crime. This context plays nicely within Strain Theory, but also demonstrates offenders were rationally weighing their criminal engagement strategies as opposed to being strictly motivated by the strains they encountered within their legitimate opportunity structures. The offenders consistently weighed the relative benefits of illegal income against the limited opportunities of the legal economy. This is a clear example of the bounded rationality that Cornish and Clarke (1986) wrote about. The counterpoint to this rational calculus was evident among offenders with higher levels of education or technical skills when they related crime to a choice around their economic choices.

One significant subgroup (16.7%) of offenders were either former military or police officers. Their entry into organized crime was often a mixture of rational choice and social influence. Their knowledge of logistics, discipline, and gun handling led to a rational assessment of how to maximize their gains using organized crime. However, their recruitment into organized crime usually was through personal connections to former colleagues, which speaks to the elements of Differential Association Theory. This subgroup

illustrates that career criminals often use both theories at the same time: they rationally exercise specialized skills while embracing social pressures to participate in networks of trust and loyalty.

The narratives also illustrated structural constraints, such as limited education, poverty, discrimination, and lack of reintegration. Offenders often viewed incarceration as a “time out” but did not see it as a turning point in life, supporting the idea of cyclical criminality. While some respondents in treatment programs goaled to avoid crime, most stated they would resume organized crime following release from incarceration. These findings demonstrate how structural marginalization supports deviant associations (Differential Association Theory) while presenting limited rational alternatives to crime (Rational Choice Theory).

Table 5 - Integration of RCT and DAT

Theme	Rational Choice Theory (RCT)	Differential Association Theory (DAT)
Military/Police Service Transition	Strategic skill utilization	Peer-linked recruitment within services
Economic Strain	Cost-benefit analysis of criminal income	—
Peer/Gang Influence	—	Learning techniques, definitions, group validation
Family and Early Socialization	—	Transmission of pro-criminal norms
Opportunity and Decision-Making	Rational selection of criminal paths	—
Desistance Perception	Rational entrapment through sunk costs	Continued exposure to deviant associations

Source: Author's Field Study, 2025.

Table 5 represents the intersection of RCT and DAT through the different themes. For example, while the economic strain acted to limit legitimate opportunities and to encourage rational cost-benefit analysis of alternatives, peer and family associations tended to be the primary source for learning and reinforcing deviant norms. The military/police participant demonstrates an intersection where a rational use of technical skills was pursued, especially through strongly peer-linked recruitment associations. This further supports the argument that criminal pathways develop through both social learning and rational decision-making situations.

While this study focuses on Sri Lanka, its findings have broader comparative implications. The shift from social learning to rational choice is not limited to Sri Lanka, but

reflects trajectories in other South Asian and global contexts as well. In fact, research on organized crime in India and Pakistan has shown that relationships with kin, neighbors, and state protection are similarly important to offender recruitment in South Asia (Campana & Varese, 2021; UNODC, 2023). In addition, the presence of ex-military or police involvement in organized crime has also been documented in both Latin America and Eastern Europe, indicating that organized crime applies specialized training and access to state resources consistent with the emergence of criminal networks in Sri Lanka (Bouchard & Morselli, 2014).

In summary, the results support the idea that DAT and RCT are not separate models, but rather intertwined processes at different stages of the criminal career. Early stages of involvement are shaped mainly through social learning from family and peers (DAT). As offenders gain experience, accumulate “criminal capital,” and rise in networks, decision-making becomes more rational, reflecting cognitive processes about risk, rewards, and opportunity (RCT). The Sri Lanka example illustrates this sequenced yet overlapping relationship: offenders move from form of “learning” to forms of “choosing,” but the two processes are always interconnected throughout their careers.

7.1. Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides meaningful insights into understanding the development of criminal careers in organized crime in Sri Lanka, several limitations should be noted.

Sample size and representativeness: The sample comprised of 30 incarcerated offenders and 5 rehabilitation officers from one correctional center (Welikada Prison). Although purposive sampling provided access to individuals with direct and relevant experiences, the representativeness of the sample to the population of organized crime in Sri Lanka is necessarily limited. Generalizations should not be made statistically, rather the findings will be considered as theoretical insights and indicative patterns.

Institutional context: The entire study was conducted in one prison. This may have influenced offenders’ responses, as the narratives were likely guided (at least partially) by the prison environment, surveillance-based mechanisms, and the mechanisms of institutional rehabilitation programs. A study that examined multiple sites of data collection from different prisons or community settings would be more beneficial in understanding organized crime disembodied from the correctional institution.

Self-reporting: Much of the data provided by offenders was collected through a self-reported interview. While there were triangulated responses to the rehabilitation officers’ questionnaire and prison records, self-reported data can be subject to recall bias, selective reporting or embellishment of experiences.

Generalizability across contexts: The socio-political context of Sri Lanka, particularly with respect to military and police actors and organized crime, is distinct. This provides significant

comparative value, but it does not support direct transfers of findings to other national contexts

Despite this limitation, the study contributes to criminological theory as it demonstrates the convergences between Differential Association Theory and Rational Choice Theory as criminal careers develop. Future work might utilize a larger multi-site or longitudinal sample to enhance the generalizability and comparability of the findings.

8. CONCLUSION

This research examined how individuals became involved in organized crime in Sri Lanka from social learning to rational choice. An analysis of data collected from a purposively selected sample of 30 incarcerated offenders, along with triangulated data from five rehabilitation officers, demonstrated that Differential Association Theory (DAT) and Rational Choice Theory (RCT) offer valuable, and complementary, explanations for how criminal careers develop.

The data suggested that the initial point of socialization through families or peers factored significantly into criminal involvement, as anticipated based on DAT, which highlights the importance of the intimate association of trusted individuals and the transmission of criminal values. Over time, however, the offenders engaged in more rational choice actions by weighing the costs and benefits involved for their role, risks, and opportunities over time, as proposed by RCT. Some participants, particularly those with military or police backgrounds, demonstrated some degree of both theories, as they learned to use their specialized training strategically, yet still involved themselves through social bonds with trusted associates.

The data found several consistent risk factors influencing sustained participation in organized crime: low levels of education, being economically vulnerable, having criminal family backgrounds, and barriers to reintegration into legitimate lifestyles. These conditions manipulated and reinforced deviant associations while removing rational alternatives, facilitating ongoing organized crime participation. Importantly, it was found that many participants did not perceive their imprisonment as an opportunity for transcending to a legitimate lifestyle, but instead, it functioned as a marking point within an organized crime career.

These results are generalizable beyond the Sri Lankan context, indicating similar family influence, peer recruitment, and strategy development mechanisms were also studied in organized crime in South Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. In demonstrating how DAT and RCT overlap at various stages of the criminal career, this research contributes to criminological theory in a comparative way and affirms the global relevance of integrated models of offender development.

From a policy perspective, this study suggests an evidence-based, stage-specific approach to interventions. For instance, early prevention efforts should target vulnerable

family and peer networks, while rehabilitation and reintegration approaches should reflect rational movement away from criminality as it is essential that credible alternative options be provided to current criminality and/ or criminal behavior. Social learning and rational choice dual influences should be recognized when developing practical responses to issues around organized crime in Sri Lanka and other contexts.

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EXAMINING COLONIAL LEGACIES: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF HANIF KUREISHI'S *THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA*

ANÁLISIS DE LOS LEGADOS COLONIALES: UN ANÁLISIS POSTCOLONIAL DEL BUDA DE LOS SUBURBIOS DE HANIF KUREISHI

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Abstract

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* critiques the persistence of colonial ideologies in post-imperial Britain by exploring how race, mimicry, hybridity, and performance shape immigrant identities. This paper examines how immigrant characters, particularly Karim, Haroon, and Jamila, are marginalized through racial stereotyping and forced to perform culturally exotic roles. Drawing on postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, the analysis reveals how Orientalism and mimicry constrain these characters within colonial expectations, yet also become sites of resistance and reinvention. Gender dynamics further complicate identity formation, with Jamila challenging patriarchal and colonial structures alike. Urban space, particularly London, is portrayed as a racialized landscape that reinforces power hierarchies. Ultimately, the novel argues that identity is not fixed but negotiated, shaped by both historical forces and acts of defiance. Kureishi's narrative emphasizes the need for self-determined representation in multicultural societies still haunted by empire.

Keywords

Postcolonialism, Hybridity, Mimicry, Orientalism, identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Although Britain is depicted as a liberal and inclusive society, *The Buddha of Suburbia* of Hanif Kureishi (1990) explores that the colonial mindset exists subtly through social attitudes and structures. Immigrant characters are forced to perform culturally exotic roles that conform to white fantasies rather than express authentic selves. This paper argues that Kureishi critiques the enduring impact of colonial ideologies by illustrating how race, authenticity, mimicry, and hybridity shape the identities and social experiences of immigrant characters. Drawing on post-colonial theories from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and Homi K Bhabha's *the Location of Culture* (1994), this paper examines how Kureishi shows the deep entanglement between colonial histories and contemporary multicultural Britain, ultimately advocating the need for resistant, self-determined modes of identity formation. While much scholarship has discussed Kureishi's engagement with colonial legacies, this paper extends those conversations by foregrounding the ambivalence of mimicry and hybridity not only as theoretical constructs but as lived contradictions for diasporic subjects. My analysis emphasizes how Kureishi complicates Bhabha's optimism about hybridity and reveals the silencing mechanisms that Spivak (1994) warns against. In this way, the research contributes an original reading of *The Buddha of Suburbia* that interrogates the limits of canonical postcolonial theory when applied to multicultural Britain.

Critical scholarship has long examined *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a key text in understanding postcolonial identity and cultural performativity in late-twentieth-century Britain. Susheila Nasta emphasizes the novel's representation of a protagonist who "navigates a world that demands mimicry as a condition of acceptance" (2002: 134), reflecting the subtle coercion immigrant characters experience in order to gain social legitimacy. The text critiques the paradox of a multicultural Britain that outwardly celebrates diversity while implicitly reinforcing assimilation and racial othering. Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, which refers to the colonized subject's attempt to imitate the colonizer in a way that is "almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 86), aptly illuminates the ambivalent positioning of characters like Haroon and Karim. These figures, in adopting orientalist performances, reveal the performative expectations imposed by a dominant white gaze, thereby exposing the continuing power of colonial discourse in shaping postcolonial subjectivity.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* further provides a critical lens for analyzing how cultural institutions in Britain continue to reproduce colonial binaries. Said asserts that the Orient was historically constructed by the West as "a theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (1979: 63), a metaphor echoed in the literal and symbolic performances Karim must undertake to be accepted. Scholars such as Bart Moore-Gilbert expand on this notion, arguing that "Kureishi self-consciously engages with the orientalist legacy by foregrounding the theatricality and artificiality of racial identity" (2001: 204). These performative constructions underscore the contradiction between Britain's proclaimed liberalism and its sustained reliance on essentialized racial categories. Recent postcolonial criticism has also highlighted hybridity as

a double-edged concept—both a site of marginalization and a potential source of resistance. Elleke Boehmer observes that hybrid characters "occupy liminal spaces that allow for subversive rewritings of identity" (2005: 232), a point especially relevant to Karim's in-between status as a British-Indian adolescent. In this regard, John McLeod contends that Kureishi's fiction "destabilizes notions of fixed identity, suggesting that cultural belonging can be self-fashioned rather than inherited" (2010: 147). This destabilization becomes central to Kureishi's broader critique of postcolonial Britain, wherein hybrid, performative identities emerge not merely as consequences of colonial legacy, but as acts of defiance and reclamation.

2. COLONIAL STEREOTYPING AND ORIENTALIST REPRESENTATION

Despite the appearance of multiculturalism, colonial stereotyping and Orientalist representations continue to shape the experiences of immigrants in British society. In the novel, Kureishi presents this issue through Karim, who is offered a role in Shadwell's play. Rather than being offered a role based on his talent and skills, he is offered the role of a stereotypical Indian character, "Mowgli", fully based on his racial appearance. Shadwell's calls to Karim "In fact, you are Mowgli, you're dark skinned, you're small and wiry, and you will be sweet but wholesome to the costume" (1990: 142-43). This scene resonates with Edward Said's notions of *Orientalism*, which he describes "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (1979: 3)". To Shadwell, Karim is not an individual with dignity or creative potential, but merely an objectified "Oriental" figure who fits the exotic mold.

As Said further notes, "Orient was almost a European invention...a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes" (1979: 1). Shadwell's offering the role of a typical Indian character to Karim illustrates how British cultural society and institutions still view non-white characters through an outdated colonial lens, reinforcing stereotypes rather than challenging them. Karim's emotional response to being forced into stereotypical roles reveals the psychological damage caused by Orientalist portrayals. He protests internally, "I flushed with anger and humiliation...I wanted to shout (1990: 280)". This powerful statement shows that the colonial mindset within the British society traps Karim between two cultures. Though he was born and grew up in England, the British society takes him as an immigrant rather than a British boy, reducing him to a stereotype. This experience is part of a larger pattern where Western societies control how non-Western identities are expressed. Yu-cheng explains, "authenticity is not something granted to the postcolonial subjects but something appropriated by the West to fit its narrative needs (1996: 4)". This shows how Karim's identity is not accepted on his terms but is instead molded to satisfy the expectations of the white audience. This pressure to perform a constructed version of his ethnicity keeps him away from both his British identity and his true self.

Even today, colonial attitudes have not disappeared but have only changed their forms. This is evident when Shadwell calls Karim, "You're supposed to be an actor, but I suspect you may just be an exhibitionist," showing how Karim is dismissed and treated, not through direct attack on his race, but through subtle and coded language (1990: 147). The continued use of such Orientalist stereotypes controls and reduces people from former colonies. Rather than being recognized as immigrants with equal status, they are reduced to roles that fulfill white fantasies and expectations. As Said points out, Orientalism is not just a past system but a way of thinking that still "affects the way we perceive others and ourselves (1979: 6). Kureishi's novel critiques that this enduring struggle against colonial stereotypes is far from over, and true equality can only be achieved when these outdated ideas are replaced with more honest, respectful, and diverse representation.

3. MIMICRY AND THE PERFORMANCE OF IDENTITY

Kureishi presents Karim as a young man molded by the pressures of colonial mimicry. He tries to copy British manners, culture, and speech to fit in and be accepted. Yet, despite his efforts, he is never fully considered to be one of them. He confesses at the beginning of the novel, "I am an Englishman born and bred, almost" (1990: 3), a statement that emphasizes his internal confusion and social exclusion. This reflects his position in what Bhabha calls a space of "partial presence", where the mimic man imitates the colonizer but is never accepted as equal. According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is "at once resemblance and menace", and it produces a version of the colonized subject that is "almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 86). Karim's experience shows this contradiction; he acts British but is still treated as exotic or foreign, especially in the theater world, where he is offered roles that emphasize his racial background. His identity is reduced to what others expect of him as a non-white British individual. As Azeem et al. write, "the immigrant trying to imitate the cultural values, language, habits, and manners of the white men... never fetched the desired effects" (2020: 161). For Karim, mimicry does not lead to full inclusion; it leaves him suspended between cultures, unsure of where he truly belongs.

Furthermore, Karim's father, Haroon, a first immigrant from India, adopts a performative identity that romanticizes white English people towards Eastern knowledge. Though he is not a deeply religious man, Haroon reinvents himself as a kind of "Buddha", going far away from his Islamic heritage to cater to British people. He dresses in Indian robes, quotes Eastern texts, and performs yoga not as a spiritual practice but as a way to gain respect and admiration. This reinvention is also a form of mimicry, as Haroon adopts the Western fantasy of the wise, mystical Easterner. During one of their visits to Eva's house, Karim notes how his father is praised for his supposed spiritual role, which is more performance than genuine belief. As Haroon states, "They've called me for the damn yoga Olympics" (1990: 4), mocking the superficiality of his performance. Although this role may seem empowering on the surface, it reflects Bhabha's idea that mimicry is a strategy "for authority and deference" that

still keeps the colonized within the boundaries of what the dominant culture wants (1994: 88). Haroon's identity, like Karim's, is shaped by the expectations of the British elite. Both Karim and Haroon illustrate that while mimicry may offer temporary status or opportunity, it ultimately reinforces the unequal power structures of colonial and postcolonial society.

4. DIASPORIC HYBRIDITY AND GENDER POLITICS

Kureishi (1990) presents characters in the story who are caught between two cultures, suggesting the postcolonial condition of hybridity and the cultural confusion that results from it. This experience of in-betweenness, which Bhabha (1994) refers to as the "third space", suggests how individuals shaped by migration and colonial legacies occupy spaces that are neither entirely colonized nor colonizer. Haroon, Karim's father, is a striking example of this dislocation. Originally from a rich Indian family where he "had never cooked before, never washed up, never cleaned his own shoes or made a bed", Haroon's life in Britain is marked by a loss of status and identity (1990: 23). Though he does everything to fit into British society, such as acting as an Englishman and standing out less in an embarrassing way, Karim ultimately finds all his effort fruitless. In response, he begins to exaggerate his Indian accent, "putting it back in spadeloads" (1990: 21). Then, he makes a twist in his life, reinventing himself as a spiritual guru, not out of genuine knowledge, but as a performer to amuse the white British people. This act shows both his desire to be visible in a society that marginalizes him and a deep sense of personal displacement. Stuart Hall explains that "cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'" (1990: 394), which shows how Haroon's identity is constantly in flux, shaped by both his Indian heritage and the cultural pressures of British society. Haroon's shift suggests the complexities of hybrid identity, where adaptation often leads to alienation. Bhabha argues that the hybrid subject emerges "in the emergence of interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference" (1994: 2). Haroon's life, caught between admiration for British liberalism and a guilt-laden detachment from his roots, becomes a strong example of the fragmented self that emerges within the third space.

The experience of hybridity is also seen in Jamila, who actively confronts and resists the roles traditionally expected of her as a girl /female from an Indian Muslim family. While her father, Anwar, favors cultural practices, Jamila reclaims her voice, constantly refusing the arranged marriage proposal of her father. Instead, she wishes to embrace individual freedom, seeking control over her own body. Her attachment to personal growth and self-discipline can be seen in her daily routines: "learning karate and judo, getting up early to stretch and run and do press-ups (1990: 56)". Her rebellion does not simply reject her Indian traditional assumptions, it also critiques the limitations of British society, particularly its racial assumptions. By resisting binary identities, Jamila becomes a symbol of transformation within the 'third space,' where cultural elements mix and new meanings emerge. Bhabha states that hybridity "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power" by creating identities that are flexible and resistant to fixed definitions (1994: 112). Similarly, Hall

asserts that diaspora subjects “must reinvent themselves by drawing on heterogeneous sources of identity” (1990: 395). Jamila’s journey captures this reinvention, which challenges both patriarchy and colonial stereotypes.

Kureishi, through Jamila as a character, shows how hybridity is not only a source of confusion but also a means of resistance and redefinition. *The Buddha of Suburbia* ultimately shows how characters caught in this cultural in-betweenness must find their own voice space within the complexities of postcolonial Britain. Kureishi critiques how colonial ideologies continue to influence gender roles within British diasporic communities, particularly through the character of Jamila. Though Jamila is raised in Britain and holds a strong influence of British culture in terms of her personal choices, such as marriage, education, and other activities, she experiences heavy pressure from her father to uphold traditional values, such as entering into an arranged marriage within the cultural group and planning for children immediately after marriage. Her resistance is clear when she says, “I was compelled to marry him... I do not want him here. I do not see why I should care for him” (1990: 108). She does not accept Changez, a person whom she was forced to marry by her father, as her husband. Jamila’s rejection of the arranged marriage shows how women are controlled and treated as symbols of cultural preservation. As Kalra et al. explain, “women become the carriers of culture and morality in diaspora,” with their femininity used to uphold collective identity (2005: 43). By showing Jamila’s refusal to submit to these expectations, Kureishi critiques the idea that maintaining cultural tradition should come at the cost of women’s freedom and self-determination.

Meanwhile, the novel also addresses the emasculation of men within postcolonial contexts, mainly through the character of Haroon. Haroon’s reinvention of the yogic character, a spiritual figure for the English white people, symbolizes both a reclaiming of identity and a performance targeted at colonial fantasies. His role is not empowering; instead, steeped in irony, he is both elevated and mocked, feared and exoticized. Scholars note that diasporic men often find “a crisis of masculinity” due to the influence of colonial legacies, which frame them as either threatening or impotent (2005: 45). Haroon’s fall from a respected social status in India to a source of amusement in Britain exemplifies how men, like women, are reshaped by the colonial gaze. They are accepted only when they fit within roles predefined by the dominant culture. Through this portrayal, Kureishi shows that postcolonial gender identities continue to be sites of struggle, performance, and negotiation, with both men and women trying to find space for authenticity in a world still haunted by the power structures of empire. Importantly, Kureishi does not present hybridity as an uncomplicated space of liberation. While Bhabha focuses on hybridity’s subversive potential, the novel underscores its psychic costs: Karim’s uncertainty, Haroon’s humiliation, and Jamila’s isolation suggest that hybridity can also entrench exclusion. Similarly, Spivak’s warning that the subaltern cannot easily speak resonates here, as both Karim and Haroon are heard only when they perform in ways that please the dominant culture. By foregrounding

these tensions, Kureishi complicates the celebratory tone sometimes associated with postcolonial theory and reminds readers of the structural constraints that limit agency.

5. URBAN SPACE AS COLONIAL/POSTCOLONIAL SITE

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, London is a postcolonial urban space with opportunity and exclusion, which reveals complex dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging. The portrayal of London in the novel is not just as a unified whole, but as a fragmented and shifting space where different cultures, histories, and identities intersect. Karim's move from Bromley, a southeast suburb of London, to the heart of London is more than his personal story; it represents the experience of second-generation immigrants and British-born immigrants who seek freedom and opportunity but encounter social barriers. Karim views the suburbs as limiting and dull, referring to them as "the leaving place" (1990: 117), and imagines London as a space where identity can be remade. However, his experience in London remains contrasting. He quickly learns that he is an outsider in the city, where his identity formation occurs based on his skin color, rather than on his talent. In his theatrical debut, he is required to perform versions of his ethnicity to gain acceptance in the theatrical career. While London is a developed city compared to the suburbs, it does not represent a city that fosters equality for all in the novel. Critic Jung Su makes it clear that London's presumed modernity and development coexist with deep social and racial inequality. She writes that immigrant protagonists' movements through the city "disclose the socially and politically marginalized immigrant communities which are either demonized or stereotyped in the racialization of space" (2010: 243). This observation shows that London, despite being a metropolitan center, is structured by racialized spatial divisions that limit equal belonging, where characters like Karim need to experience deep exclusion and subjugation despite it seeming open on the surface. Thus, London becomes both a place of possibility and a site of subtle colonial tension.

Furthermore, Haroon's journey from India to the suburbs and then to the heart of London illustrates how urban spaces serve as sites shaped by past colonial legacies. Originally from a well-to-do family in India, he experiences a loss of identity and respect in Britain. Every attempt he makes to adopt English mannerisms becomes increasingly challenging, ultimately forcing him to reinvent himself as a "guru" figure to the British people. His guru persona is widely accepted by them. As Karim states, "Dad had a regular and earnest young crowd of head-bowers – students, psychologists, nurses, musicians - who adored him... there was a waiting list to join" (1990: 115). This shows how his spiritual reinvention was popular among the white English. Haroon's actions represent more than just a personal choice; they reveal how urban space compels minorities to perform for visibility. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses this kind of identity negotiation in what she calls "spaces of dispersal," where diasporic people are "both detached and reassembled" through cultural performances that reflect their in-betweenness (1994: 343). Haroon's acceptance into London society

depends on fulfilling the role of the exotic *Other*, highlighting that even within supposedly inclusive urban spaces, racialized individuals often gain visibility only when their difference is packaged in ways that reinforce old colonial fantasies.

On the other hand, Eva and her son Charlie's move to London provides a picture of how space operates differently for those who are racially white English people. Eva, as a white English woman, has a wide connection with the elites working in the arts in London, without alerting her identity. Similarly, her son Charlie also finds immediate fame as a pop star in London, which shows his white English identity working without needing any support or reinventing a new identity. Karim asserts that "Charlie was smearing blood over his face and wiping it over the bass guitarist... was magnificent in his venom, his manufactured rage, his anger, his defiance" (1990: 154). This theatrical performance, praised and accepted in London's cultural scene, shows how Charlie's whiteness allows him to be seen as edgy or artistic, while Karim, a mixed-race boy, must constantly negotiate and justify his place. This contrast emphasizes how inclusion in London's spaces is uneven and often racialized. Su notes that "identity in urban space is mediated by inherited power structures", making it clear that not all identities are treated equally in a supposedly multicultural city (2010: 253). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett also builds on it that diasporic individuals must constantly adapt to "the paradox of presence and exclusion" in these reconfigured urban zones (1994: 344). In this way, Kureishi presents London not as a neutral or fully open city, but as a postcolonial space where inclusion depends on race, heritage, and performance. The contrasting movements of Karim, Haroon, Eva, and Charlie reveal that the city's embrace of diversity is conditional, shaped by who is allowed to belong and on what terms.

In postcolonial literature, many characters are treated not as full individuals but as "others" and objects, reflecting the processes of *thingification* and subaltern marginalization. Scholar, Aimé Césaire's argues that colonialism is dangerous as it dehumanizes people and turn them into objects, as he asserts "domination and submission, which turns the colonizing man...a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production" (2000: 42). This description captures the treatment of non-European peoples as objects existing only to serve colonial interests. In the novel, the characters Haroon and Karim both experience this reduction. Haroon is treated as a cultural spectacle for white women, performing a version of Eastern spirituality for their entertainment, while Karim is hired for acting roles purely because of his racial identity.

According to prominent critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" addresses this issue of marginalized people and their state of having a muted voice. Spivak explains that the subaltern is "defined as different from the elite" (1994: 80). Both Haroon and Karim, along with the Anwar family, are different from the white English people as a result, they need to experience challenges to get accepted in the British society. Critics further emphasize that "colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another" (2017: 1). In this way, the treatment of Haroon and Karim reflects broader postcolonial patterns of commodification and silencing.

Haroon's role as an entertainer for white women profoundly illustrates how thingification operates on a personal level. He is often accepted well for this role of spiritual teacher only; the rest of his existence for the white English people is nothing. Besides the spiritual role, "there was disapproval from the clerks he worked with: there was mockery behind his back and in front of his face" (1990: 115). This scene clearly shows Haroon's real situation in British society. His spiritual identity is irrelevant to the white audience; what matters is the spectacle he provides.

Césaire says that "between colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance" (2000: 34). This shows Haroon's status as an immigrant from a former colonized country, India, and his assimilation into the British society is far from reach. Haroon is just a cultural product for consumption and entertainment. Spivak's analysis reinforces this idea by pointing out that "the subaltern's speech is either ignored or transformed into what the dominant culture wants to hear" (1994: 77). Haroon's real self is silenced beneath the costume of exoticism he is forced to wear.

Furthermore, Kohn and Reddy's study suggests that colonial powers justified their exploitation by creating images of the colonized as "mysterious, inferior, and useful only within certain frames" (2017: 10). Thus, Haroon's performances, while seemingly harmless or amusing to his audience, are a continuation of colonial structures that objectify and silence individuals from former colonies. Karim's experience as the token brown boy further deepens the exploration of thingification and the subaltern condition. Karim is not valued for his acting skills or unique talents but rather for his skin color, which provides an illusion of diversity. He reflects on his journey of stage theater with so much of degraded activities for his Indian roots stating "I would wear a loin-cloth and brown make-up, so that I resembled a turd in a bikini-bottom" (1990: 146). Here, Karim's identity is used as a tool to serve the dominant culture's self-image.

Césaire's assertion that colonial societies "commodify human beings in service of their own narratives of progress and civilization" directly applies to Karim's situation (2000: 38). Karim's ambitions and individuality are irrelevant compared to the symbolic role he is forced to perform. Spivak's theory is again helpful in understanding this, as she writes, "even when the subaltern seems to speak, they are speaking in a voice already shaped and controlled by colonial discourse" (1994: 83). Karim's supposed success is not on his own terms but within a system that commodifies his racial difference for institutional gain. In both Haroon's and Karim's cases, their racial and cultural identities are not seen as valuable in themselves but are used instrumentally, maintaining colonial structures of thingification and silencing subaltern voices.

6. RESISTANCE AND REDEFINITION OF IDENTITY

Kureishi shows the pressure of colonial and postcolonial expectations being weighed heavily on major characters in the novel, but at the same time, many find ways to resist these

challenges and redefine their identities on their own terms. Karim, Haroon, and Jamila are examples of such characters who embody different forms of resistance, developing personal and political paths that diverge from the stereotypes and roles assigned to them by British society.

Their acts of rebellion and resistance illustrate what Hall describes as "the capacity to produce, to create, to conduct and reconstruct culture and identity" even under conditions of dominance (1990: 392). Through activism, artistic rejection, and self-reinvention, these characters not only refuse to submit to imposed narratives but also reshape the meanings of identity in a multicultural society like Britain.

Similarly, Jamail's role of self-motivation and her attachment to independence are other examples of resistance in the novel. Despite having pressure for the arranged marriage, she seems strongly resistant to it. She marries for the family, but she defies the traditional role of marriage, like sleeping with the husband, having sex with the husband, and planning kids. In contrast, Jamila seems a political character to defy the tradition built into marriage. Jamila strictly says to Changez, her husband, from the marriage that "we won't be husband and wife - you know that will never happen" (1990: 216). Kureishi's critic, YuCheng Lee notes "Jamila asserts her independence by combining feminism with ethnic identity", challenging both colonial and ethnic structures (1996: 5). Her resistance indicates that this is not just her personal one, but rather it is broadly connected to the social movements. Adding on this, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains that "performance is a vehicle through which marginalized individuals claim agency", a concept that can be aligned with the seemingly political act of Jamila to redefine her agency (1994: 343). Thus, the close analysis of Jamila's act of resistance is not just for her personal goal-reaching mission, rather, it targets broader possibilities of post-colonial identity formation.

Haroon also stands as a strong example of resistance and reclaiming identity. With a royalist lifestyle back in India, he happens to encounter challenges to survive in Britain. Starting from low-level government jobs, he loses almost everything. His giant personality, as Karim describes, "Dad was also elegant and handsome, with delicate hands and manners; beside him most Englishmen looked like clumsy giraffes" (1990: 4). However, this dignified personality changes after he migrates to the UK. He is forced to work for just "3 pounds per week" (1990: 26). Besides, even his name is taken from him; his wife's relatives refuse to call him by his given name, Haroon, instead calling him "Harry." This erasure of identity and persistent belittlement push him to a breaking point. This sort of humiliation reaches to maximum, and then, he is forced to reinvent himself as an Indian guru to resist the ongoing situation in life, turning into so so-called "Buddha of Suburbia". With this new identity, he begins to receive attention and respect, which ultimately helps him to reclaim his lost dignity in British society. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's theory that performance can both "resist and remake social realities" aptly describes Haroon's strategy (1994: 341). Though his spiritual persona may appear opportunistic, it constitutes a deliberate act of survival and self-assertion within an alienating cultural context. Haroon, then, happens to negotiate with his

identity as a guru to the white English people of the society and regains his lost dignity of life. In doing so, he illustrates that redefinition is not just a personal transformation, but a way of reshaping the fundamental frameworks through which society understands the immigrant identity.

Analyzing the three major immigrant characters- Jamila, Karim, and Haroon, it becomes clear that the identity in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is fluid, contested, and open to reinvention. Each poses different forms of resistance, such as Jamila's political activism and Haroon and Karim's performance and self-reinvention. With the distinct resistance approaches, defiance is possible against colonial and racial pressure. These acts of resistance affirm Hall's idea that identities are not "eternally fixed in some essentialized past," but are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (1990: 394). Through Kureishi's strong and complex characters, *The Buddha of Suburbia* ultimately presents identity as a site of resistance, creativity, and endless becoming.

7. CONCLUSION

Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* does not just examine the struggles of immigrants in British society of the 1970s, but it also offers a powerful critique of the lingering colonial ideologies of British society. Through the struggles of Karim, Jamila, Haroon, and other immigrant characters, the novel strongly exposes how racial, cultural, and social discrimination still overpowers British society and imposes colonial biases. Though the British society of the 1970s is depicted as inclusive and diverse in the novel, the experiences of immigrant subjects are marked by subjugation, exclusion, and discrimination to assimilate. The immigrant characters are often obliged to carry out roles of performance, designed by a colonial mindset, or an act of mimicry. The portrayal of everyday experiences of marginalization and the acts of resistance, Kureishi not only reveals the impact of colonial legacies in the post-imperial British society, but also challenges readers to question how deeply race, gender, and identity are constructed by the colonial inheritance.

Moreover, Kureishi's novel has its significance in today's conversation about multiculturalism, race, and identity. In contemporary societies where the debate about culture, multiculturalism, race, inclusion, and identity is a dominating issue, *The Buddha of Suburbia* makes modern readers aware of the ongoing struggle for identity and representation. The novel gives a strong message that race, place, gender, and identity are fluid aspects of society, and they are shaped and reshaped by historical and social forces, often connected with the colonial legacies. The case of Jamila's political rebellion, Karim's artistic struggle, and Haroon's reinvention proves that the resistance against imposed identity is challenging but necessary. The efforts of Kureishi's characters to redefine themselves align with those of everyone who goes through the same challenging situation of negotiating identity in diverse but still unequal societies. In sum, this study demonstrates that Kureishi's novel both utilizes and unsettles the frameworks of postcolonial theory. By

showing how hybridity can become alienation, how mimicry is both survival and entrapment, and how subaltern voices remain circumscribed, *The Buddha of Suburbia* exposes the contradictions of multicultural Britain. The novel's enduring relevance lies in how it compels us to rethink the adequacy of theory when confronted with the lived complexities of diasporic existence. Thus, the novel is a good piece of work that urges the immediate need for more honest, inclusive, and self-determined narratives in discussions about multiculturalism today.

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LANGUAGE AS [DE]COLONIZING TOOL: A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF DR. MANUEL V. GALLEGO'S THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM OF THE FILIPINOS (1932)

EL LENGUAJE COMO HERRAMIENTA DE [DES]COLONIZACIÓN: UNA LECTURA
POSCOLONIAL DE THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM OF THE FILIPINOS (1932) DE DR.
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Abstract

This study revisits the contributions of Dr. Manuel Viola Gallego (1893–1976) to Philippine language policy and educational thought, with particular focus on his 1932 essay, *The Language Problem of the Filipinos*. Through a postcolonial historical analysis informed by the works of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the research situates Gallego’s critique of colonial education and his promotion of vernacular instruction within broader efforts to assert cultural and intellectual autonomy. The study analyzes archival records, legislative proposals, and rare published texts to reconstruct Gallego’s role in the national discourse on language, identity, and education. Five central findings emerge from the analysis. First, the scholarship on Gallego remains limited, despite his substantial influence on lawmaking and public education. Second, the language issue in the Philippines originates in colonial policies that deliberately undermined native linguistic practices. Third, mother tongue education continues to encounter both ideological resistance and structural barriers. Fourth, the intellectual development of local languages requires consistent policy support and institutional commitment. Fifth, the emerging framework for Gallegan Philosophy, including its proposed inclusion in courses such as SSC 111 and SSC 112, lacks theoretical grounding in indigenous and postcolonial thought. The study calls for a more coherent, historically informed, and culturally grounded approach to language planning and curriculum development. It positions Gallego’s work as a critical foundation for building an education system that affirms linguistic diversity, national identity, and intellectual independence.

Keywords

decolonization, Tagalog, language problem, Gallegan Philosophy, language planning and policies

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite its constitutional designation as the national language, Filipino remains paradoxically marginalized within its educational system (Abiva, 2024). In many Philippine classrooms, students struggle to speak Filipino fluently, encountering difficulties when required to learn academic concepts in a language that is unfamiliar to them at home. This phenomenon highlights a fundamental tension between language policy and educational practice, revealing the deeper historical contradictions embedded in the formation of the nation's linguistic landscape.

The continued dominance of English as the principal medium of instruction reflects the enduring influence of colonial education structures. While Filipino was envisioned as the unifying backbone of national identity, it has often been sidelined in favor of English, producing a generation of learners alienated from their linguistic heritage. This marginalization is not merely a pedagogical issue but a symptom of the larger colonial and neocolonial dynamics that continue to shape Philippine education, governance, and cultural identity (Abiva, 2025).

To examine these dynamics, this paper employs Postcolonial Historical Analysis as its primary methodological framework. This approach foregrounds the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which language policies emerged, highlighting the ideological structures and power relations embedded in them. Postcolonial Historical Analysis enables an interrogation of how colonial education policies, language planning, and knowledge production systems have shaped Filipino subjectivity, governance, and national development. It also facilitates a critical re-reading of Filipino intellectuals like Dr. Manuel Viola Gallego, whose contributions have been marginalized in dominant historiographies despite their foundational impact.

The first major theme explored in this study is *Major Theme 1: Intellectual Biography*. Dr. Manuel V. Gallego's life and works reveal an intellectual trajectory shaped by colonial encounters and nationalist aspirations. Born in San Miguel, Bulacan, Gallego earned his law degree at the University of the Philippines and completed his Juris Doctor in the United States, experiences that situated him within colonial institutions while also providing him tools to challenge their structures. His writings and legislative work articulate a vision of education and language policy rooted in Filipino cultural sovereignty, moral responsibility, and national development. This intellectual biography offers insight into how colonial-educated elites negotiated, resisted, and redefined the ideological systems imposed upon them.

The second major theme interrogates *Major Theme 2: Debates on National Language Policies*. Gallego was a central yet often forgotten figure in these debates. His proposals to

institutionalize Tagalog as a medium of instruction for elementary education foregrounded his belief that language is not merely a tool for communication but the embodiment of national thought, dignity, and collective identity. These debates reveal the complexities of language planning in a multilingual nation: the tension between regional languages and the national language, the privileging of English for global competitiveness, and the persistence of colonial mentality among intellectual and political elites. Gallego's interventions highlight how language policy is deeply political, shaping national consciousness, economic relations, and social inclusion.

The third major theme focuses on *Major Theme 3: Theoretical and Pedagogical Grounding for Gallegan Philosophy*. Beyond historical recovery, this study argues for the construction of Gallegan Philosophy as a framework for contemporary education. Gallego's writings integrate legal, linguistic, and educational theory to propose a vision of national development anchored in intellectual freedom and cultural authenticity. His philosophy treats education as a project of moral formation and national emancipation, positioning language at its core. Pedagogically, this framework emphasizes culturally grounded, critically engaged, and linguistically inclusive approaches that empower students to think, articulate, and act as Filipinos within a decolonizing educational system.

By centering Postcolonial Historical Analysis and these three major themes, this paper seeks to achieve two interrelated objectives. First, it recovers and examines the legislative and intellectual contributions of Dr. Manuel V. Gallego to Philippine language policy and education. Second, it proposes the foundational principles of Gallegan Philosophy that can inform contemporary curriculum development, particularly in courses such as SSC 111 and SSC 112. Through this analysis, the study advances the argument that Gallego's efforts, while often omitted from national historiography, represent a deliberate and forward-looking response to colonial linguistic domination and educational inequities.

Revisiting Gallego's thought thus provides a critical foundation for addressing his historical erasure and the ongoing challenges in Philippine language education. It invites educators, policymakers, and scholars to reimagine the role of language in shaping not only academic success but also national identity, intellectual agency, and cultural sovereignty. By foregrounding his philosophy, this study asserts that the project of educational reform in the Philippines must begin with the reclamation of its own intellectual traditions, rooted in its people's languages, histories, and collective aspirations.

Despite its official designation as the national language, Filipino remains marginalized within its educational system. Many students cannot speak Filipino fluently, which poses significant challenges to learning in classes that adopt it as the primary medium of instruction (Amarilla et al., 2025). This paradox reveals a deeper contradiction: the subject of Filipino, intended to serve as the linguistic and cultural backbone of national identity, is often sidelined in favor of English, reflecting a colonial legacy that continues to shape the Philippine educational landscape (Lumbis & Manalo, 2024).

The policy environment itself highlights these contradictions. In 2012, the Department of Education introduced the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) under the Enhanced Basic Education Program. This policy replaced the previous bilingual system centered on English and Filipino and allowed the use of native languages from Kindergarten to Grade 3, aiming to develop early literacy and numeracy in students' first languages before transitioning to Filipino and English (Malone, 2018). This reform aligned with global findings that early education conducted in a child's mother tongue improves cognitive development and facilitates second-language acquisition (UNESCO, 2010). However, despite the Philippines having more than one hundred languages, only nineteen were recognized under MTB-MLE, leaving many linguistic communities excluded from its purported benefits (Bersamina, 2024).

In October 2024, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed Republic Act No. 12027, formally ending the implementation of MTB-MLE in early education. English and Filipino were reinstated as the sole primary languages of instruction (Bersamina, 2024). This decision exemplifies what Batnag (1997) cautioned against: the failure of language policies that lack genuine consultation and social acceptance, reducing them to mere documents with no transformative effect. Igarashi et al. (2024) further found that this abrupt policy reversal negatively impacted foundational mathematics skills among the first cohorts exposed to the changes, underscoring the complex links between language proficiency and broader cognitive domains. Ranque et al. (2024) thus recommend more performance-based assessments to generate accurate data on students' Filipino proficiency, which could inform future reforms.

Globally, UNESCO (2010) estimates that 221 million children speak a home language different from the language used in their schools, producing educational disparities, social stigma, and systemic exclusion. In multilingual societies like the Philippines, this linguistic mismatch is not merely a pedagogical issue but also a political one, deeply embedded in histories of colonial domination and postcolonial state-building (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Zeng and Li (2023) emphasize that multilingual and multicultural nations must adopt inclusive language policies to empower local communities, construct national identities that value linguistic diversity, and resist the homogenizing forces of globalization and neocolonialism. Yet, Usero (2021) argues that existing linguistic theories, documentation practices, and policies continue to threaten the Philippines' multilingual ecology, failing to uphold linguistic justice for marginalized ethnolinguistic groups.

The contradictions in Philippine language education stem from its colonial roots. Under Spanish rule, language became a tool for both subjugation and limited assimilation, while American colonization institutionalized English as the principal language of instruction and governance (Ordoñez, 2004). T.H. Pardo de Tavera explicitly stated in his letter to General Arthur MacArthur that the spread of English would allow the American spirit to possess the Filipino mind. According to his book *The Philippine Trade Act in the Light of History*, this policy was solidified by the Tydings-McDuffie Act, embedding English into constitutional and

educational frameworks (Gallego, 1936). Gallego noted that this imposition deprived Filipinos of the right to determine their national language during the critical transition to independence. Onofre Corpuz observed that such educational structures cultivated a mindset viewing political matters predominantly from an American perspective, shaping not only students but also educators and administrators.

In *The Price of Independence* (1937), Dr. Manuel Viola Gallego critiqued these dynamics, arguing that American imperialism operated beyond political structures through organized violence, economic reconfiguration, and ideological manipulation. He wrote, “We still maintain that the foreign policy of the United States of America was conceived in imperialism and dedicated to the principles of expansion” (p. 5). He asserted that staged uprisings, backed by capitalist interests, secured favorable terms for foreign investment under the guise of independence, embedding dependency within the Philippine economy and polity. These provisions in the Tydings-McDuffie Act institutionalized American control, ensuring continued economic access for U.S. capital even after formal decolonization.

Against this backdrop, Gallego emerged as a legislative and intellectual advocate for linguistic and cultural sovereignty. He argued that language is not merely a tool of communication but the very expression of national thought and identity. His proposals to use Tagalog as a medium of instruction for the first four years of elementary education in the *The Language Problem of the Filipinos* (1932) reflect what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) describes as decolonizing the mind—reclaiming indigenous languages as vehicles of memory, worldview, and collective consciousness. Fanon (1963) similarly argued that mastery of the colonizer’s language grants conditional access to power but deepens structural dependency, while the reclamation of native language serves as an assertion of cultural and psychological liberation.

Historically, Filipinos have turned to their vernacular languages as instruments of resistance. The Katipunan adopted Tagalog in their revolution against Spain (San Juan, 2015), and revolutionary leaders during the American period continued this practice (Paz, 2024). Language became a medium for articulating indigenous socialist ideas, as Adriatico poetically wrote that “because of the language, the leaf became more beautiful, and the flower became more fragrant” (vi). Despite formal independence in 1946, American economic and cultural dominance persisted, as exemplified by the Philippine Trade Act amendments that Gallego (1937) critiqued for granting American citizens access to national resources, endangering future generations.

These issues remain relevant today as the Philippine curriculum continues to be shaped by American colonial education frameworks that obstruct efforts to intellectualize and Filipinize national education. Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013, which removed Filipino language and literature from the general education curriculum in higher education, further exposed these contradictions. While DepEd promoted local languages in early schooling through MTB-MLE, CHED removed the national language in universities, revealing failures in institutional coordination and an unwillingness to address the political nature of language planning.

This paper thus pursues two interrelated objectives. First, it recovers and examines Dr. Manuel V. Gallego's legislative and intellectual contributions to Philippine language policy through close readings of his monographs and proposed bills, interpreted via postcolonial historical analysis grounded in Frantz Fanon's (1963) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) insights on language, identity, and political subjugation. This analysis reveals the ideological structures embedded in colonial education and language planning. Second, it proposes the foundational principles for a Gallegan Philosophy that can inform contemporary curriculum development, particularly in courses such as SSC 111 and SSC 112.

The paper advances the argument that Gallego's efforts, while often omitted from national historiography, represent a deliberate and forward-looking response to colonial linguistic domination. His emphasis on language as an expression of national thought positions him as an early theorist of cultural sovereignty whose writings provide a critical foundation for addressing both his historical erasure and the ongoing challenges in Philippine language education.

By revisiting Gallego's thought, this study proposes a culturally grounded, philosophically coherent, and politically relevant framework for Filipino educational reform. It argues that empowering students to reclaim their native languages and intellectual traditions is not only an act of historical justice but also a practical strategy for building an educational system rooted in national identity, critical agency, and linguistic inclusivity.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses Postcolonial Historical Analysis as its guiding methodological approach. This method investigates how colonial structures have shaped systems of language, education, and national identity. It treats historical texts not as neutral records but as politically charged interventions that emerge from specific power relations. In the context of the Philippines, where language policy and education continue to reflect colonial influence, this approach provides the analytical framework to understand Dr. Manuel Viola Gallego's contributions. The study frames Gallego's thought as a response to ongoing forms of cultural domination rooted in colonial ideology.

The analysis relies on the works of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as its primary theoretical anchors. Fanon (1963) critiques colonial language imposition as a form of psychological and cultural violence. He writes, "To speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (p. 17), revealing how colonial language conditions identity through external validation. Fanon also states, "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language" (p. 18), showing that language determines access to conceptual and social frameworks. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) similarly critiques the displacement of indigenous languages by colonial systems. He argues that "language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (p. 13), and emphasizes that "the domination of a people's language by the languages of the

colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (p. 16). Both theorists view the control of language as central to the control of thought and identity.

Gallego's writings articulate similar critiques. In *The Language Problem of the Filipinos* (1932), Gallego asserts that colonial education resulted in "a conquest not only of our country but also of our native dialect." This statement reflects Fanon's claim that colonialism extends its reach through language. Gallego also writes, "Language is the expression of a nation's thought," which aligns with Ngũgĩ's view of language as inseparable from cultural and intellectual life. Gallego supported legislation, such as Bill No. 2182, that proposed Tagalog as the language of instruction in early education. His proposals demonstrate an effort to reclaim cultural sovereignty and counteract the long-term effects of linguistic subordination. Postcolonial historical analysis enables this study to recover the political and theoretical significance of Gallego's work, which prefigures the concerns later articulated by Fanon and Ngũgĩ in postcolonial discourse.

Although this study primarily employs postcolonial historical analysis based on existing texts and archival materials, ethical considerations remain central to the research process. No interviews with human participants were conducted for this study; therefore, formal informed consent procedures were not applicable. However, the following ethical measures were observed: (a) all primary and secondary sources, including the retrieved books of Dr. Manuel V. Gallego and Atty. Obed Jose Meneses, were properly cited and referenced to uphold academic integrity; (b) the retrieval and use of primary texts from the MVGFC College of Nursing's former morgue were conducted with institutional coordination and permission, ensuring respect for institutional property and historical documents; (c) the researcher ensured faithful representation of the ideas and writings of Dr. Gallego, Fanon, and Ngũgĩ, avoiding misinterpretation or decontextualization of their works; and (d) the study recognizes the cultural and political implications of analyzing colonial and postcolonial texts and thus maintained sensitivity in interpreting concepts related to identity, nationhood, and language.

Since no human subjects were directly involved, the study did not require ethical clearance for interviews or surveys. Nonetheless, these ethical guidelines ensured that the research process remained rigorous, respectful, and aligned with academic standards.

This study faced several limitations. First, there was a notable scarcity of existing scholarship on the life, works, and writings of Dr. Manuel V. Gallego. Since 1979, no substantial research has been conducted on his intellectual contributions, severely limiting the availability of secondary analyses and contextual studies necessary for a comprehensive understanding of his legacy. It was not until Asst. Prof. Rene Boy Abiva, in 2022, initiated the first systematic scholarly exploration of Gallegan narratives, and these gaps began to be addressed. The first preliminary attempt to re-open the scholarly study in Dr. Gallego's work was accepted on the following International Conferences: *Sinag at Balag International Conference 2024- Philippine Normal University South Luzon*), 11th International Conference for

Teacher Education, UP- Visayas, 16th Annual Global Conference on Business and Social Sciences Series, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, The Bintana International Conference 2025, Far Eastern University, Manila,, 8th International Conference on Asian and Philippine Studies, De La Salle University, 7th Linguistics Society of the Philippines International Conference, Pangasinan State University, and Joint International Decade of Indigenous Languages and International Mother Language Day Conference 2025, Sorsogon State University. Additionally, the study encountered limited access to primary sources. The research relied heavily on a small set of materials, particularly the books authored by Dr. Gallego and Atty. Obed Jose Meneses, which were only retrieved on October 18, 2024, from storage at the MVGFC College of Nursing. The decades-long inaccessibility of these texts significantly constrained the breadth and depth of documentary analysis possible for this study.

Moreover, the study faced an absence of triangulation with oral histories. Due to the unavailability of living contemporaries or organized interviews, it was not possible to include oral accounts that might have provided personal insights or anecdotal validations of Gallego's work and influence. Another limitation relates to the temporal distance from the subject. The significant time lapse since Dr. Gallego's active years in the early to mid-20th century posed challenges in contextualizing his writings within their immediate sociopolitical climate, given the limited archival data and the loss of contemporaneous materials over time.

The scope of the study was also limited to textual analysis, as the methodological approach focused exclusively on postcolonial historical textual analysis and did not integrate other analytical lenses, such as quantitative policy impact analysis or education program evaluation, which might have broadened its interdisciplinary relevance. Finally, there is a possibility of interpretive bias. By employing critical theory frameworks, particularly those of Fanon and Ngũgĩ, the study's interpretation is framed primarily by postcolonial critique. While this approach illuminates colonial dynamics, it may underemphasize alternative readings, such as purely linguistic or pedagogical analyses of Gallego's proposals.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Major Theme 1. Intellectual Biography

Manuel V. Gallego's life illustrates the paradoxes and possibilities of intellectual agency under colonial and neocolonial conditions. Born in 1893 in San Miguel, Bulacan, he rose to prominence as a lawyer, legislator, and educator shaped by both colonial education and nationalist commitment. After studying law at the University of the Philippines and earning a Juris Doctor from Chicago Northwestern University, Gallego used his elite training not merely for professional advancement but as a platform for reform. As a representative of Nueva Ecija, he championed land redistribution, women's suffrage, and health initiatives such as the School Health Act of 1946. His influence extended internationally as a Philippine delegate to the United Nations in 1946 and domestically through the founding of institutions like the Central Luzon School of Nursing. He also played a decisive role in shaping national

identity by supporting the adoption of Tagalog as the national language under National Ordinance No. 134 (1937).

Viewed through a postcolonial lens, Gallego's intellectual trajectory reflects what Frantz Fanon (1963) described as the "double bind" of colonial education—granting access to institutional power while reinforcing dependency on the colonizer's systems. Yet Gallego complicates this framework. Rather than remaining complicit, he appropriated his colonial training to advance reforms in law, health, education, and language policy that sought to weaken colonial legacies and affirm Filipino autonomy. In this sense, Gallego's career resonates with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) insistence on linguistic sovereignty, though Gallego pursued this through policy and institutional reform rather than literary production.

Table 1 - Thematic Analysis of Dr. Manuel V. Gallego's Biography Through a Postcolonial Lens

Sub-Theme	Description	Evidence
Colonial Education as Double-Edged Empowerment	Access to professional mobility but also dependency on colonial systems	Law degree (UP), Juris Doctor (Chicago Northwestern); Fanon (1963) on conditional access
Intellectual Formation and Nationalist Advocacy	Redirected elite training toward nationalist reforms	Land reform, women's suffrage, legal texts
Education, Health, and Nation-Building	Linked education and public health as national foundations	School Health Act (1946), Central Luzon School of Nursing
Language Policy and Cultural Sovereignty	Promoted language as identity and reclamation	Advocated Tagalog as national language (1937); Ngũgĩ (1986)
International Engagement and Postwar Diplomacy	Represented Filipino sovereignty abroad	Delegate to UN (1946) on reparations and sovereignty
Agency Within Colonial Structures	Subverted colonial institutions for decolonial ends	Legislative and institutional initiatives; Fanon (1963)

Source: Author

This negotiation between colonial inheritance and nationalist advocacy points toward what I call Gallegan Philosophy: a mode of decolonial thought grounded in Philippine realities that retools colonial knowledge for cultural reclamation and nation-building. Unlike general postcolonial or indigenous frameworks, Gallegan Philosophy emphasizes institutional reform—particularly in education, health, and language policy—as the terrain where decolonization takes root.

In sum, Gallego's intellectual biography exemplifies how a colonial-educated elite could both embody and resist the contradictions of empire. His reforms in law, education, health,

and language demonstrate a distinctive Philippine pathway to decolonization, one that anticipates broader theoretical debates while grounding them in local struggles. By tracing these trajectories, this paper recovers Gallego not merely as a historical figure but as the architect of a still-evolving framework of decolonial practice.

3.2. Major Theme 2: Debates on National Language Policies

Dr. Manuel V. Gallego was a pivotal yet underrecognized figure in the early debates on Philippine national language policy under American colonial rule. Through his legislative initiatives—particularly Bill No. 588 and the revised Bill No. 2182—he argued for the institutionalization of native languages and later proposed Tagalog as the medium of instruction in the early grades. For Gallego, language was not merely a vehicle of instruction but the living expression of national thought and identity. His position anticipated later decolonial theorists such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) and Frantz Fanon (1963), who stressed that the imposition of colonial languages constitutes a form of cultural domination. Unlike these theorists, however, Gallego worked through concrete legislative reform, making him an early practitioner of what might be called decolonial praxis within the colonial state.

Gallego’s critiques went beyond language policy to the very structure of American colonial education. He read the 1935 Constitution’s retention of English and Spanish as official languages as an effort to prolong colonial influence, warning that such provisions displaced indigenous knowledge and reinforced U.S. cultural hegemony. While he acknowledged the pragmatic advantages of English, he insisted that its unchecked dominance would deepen epistemic dependency. His alternative was not linguistic isolationism but a pluralist framework: one that maintained English for international engagement while centering Filipino languages in the nation’s cultural and moral life.

This vision illuminates a distinctive strand of what I define as Gallegan Philosophy: a decolonial framework that treats language simultaneously as political instrument and cultural inheritance. Unlike Ngũgĩ, who foregrounded literature, and unlike Fanon, who emphasized psychological alienation, Gallego situated decolonization in educational policy and institutional reform. By arguing for native languages as the foundation of instruction, he advanced a model of nationhood rooted in linguistic sovereignty, historical memory, and civic responsibility.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of The Language Problem of the Filipinos (1932)

Sub-Theme	Description	Evidence
Language as Colonial Domination	Language policy as tool of conquest and mental control	Spanish education as “a conquest not only of our country but also of our native dialect” (Gallego, 1932); aligns with Ngũgĩ (1986) and Fanon (1963)

Sub-Theme	Description	Evidence
Legislative Resistance as Decolonial Praxis	Bills to institutionalize native languages and Tagalog in schools	Bill No. 588; Bill No. 2182
Colonial Education and Internalized Americanization	Policies fostered elites' preference for English	Critique of Act No. 74; Fanon (1963) on psychological colonization
Systemic Exclusion in Historiography	Gallego erased from official language policy accounts	Absent in Almario's <i>Ang Wikang Pambansa at Amerikanisasyon</i>
Language as Cultural Sovereignty	Language as foundation of national identity and thought	Gallego: "Language is the expression of a nation's thought"
Contradictions in Language Planning	Balancing multilingual diversity with national unity	Proposed Tagalog as a bridge language while respecting diversity
Historical Continuities of Imperialism	U.S. policy mirrored global strategies of linguistic control	Parallels with Puerto Rico; critiques of globalization (Phillipson, 2017)

Source: Author

Gallego's interventions reveal how language debates were also debates about sovereignty, cultural memory, and the decolonization of knowledge. His exclusion from canonical accounts reflects the politics of historiography, where contributions outside elite or dominant frameworks are minimized. By reinserting Gallego into these debates, we see not only an early critique of linguistic imperialism but also the articulation of a localized philosophy of decolonization that retools colonial systems to recover cultural sovereignty. This articulation strengthens the argument that *Gallegan Philosophy* offers a coherent and distinctive framework within Philippine intellectual history.

3.3. Major Theme 3. Theoretical and Pedagogical Grounding for Gallegan Philosophy

The development of a *Gallegan Philosophy* course requires a clear theoretical foundation and a coherent pedagogical framework. At its core, the course must recognize Dr. Manuel V. Gallego not merely as a historical actor but as a Filipino thinker whose legal, educational, and linguistic contributions articulated a distinct response to colonial rule. His ideas—particularly on language as the basis of national identity and self-determination—must be treated as part of a living philosophical tradition that remains relevant to current debates on education and nationhood.

The theoretical framing draws on postcolonial scholarship, which underscores how colonial language and education policies marginalized indigenous identities and entrenched dependency on foreign epistemologies (Fanon, 1963; Ngũgĩ, 1986). Yet Gallego extends these critiques into concrete institutional reform. Whereas Fanon emphasizes psychological alienation and Ngũgĩ foregrounds literature as resistance, Gallego's proposals reoriented law, health, and education toward cultural sovereignty. This articulation constitutes the distinctive contours of *Gallegan Philosophy*: a decolonial framework that situates language and education as institutional sites of resistance and reconstruction. To sharpen this framework, the course must also engage Filipino philosophical concepts such as *ugnayan* (relationality), *loob* (interiority), and communal selfhood (De Castro, 2018), ensuring that Gallego's contributions are understood within local traditions rather than subsumed under imported theories.

Pedagogically, the course must adopt a culturally responsive approach that prioritizes Filipino and regional languages in classroom dialogue, written assignments, and student projects. Instruction should center on Gallego's own texts—his monographs, legislative records, and public speeches—paired with accessible theoretical readings. Students must be guided to see how Gallego addressed language not only as a legal matter but as a moral and cultural foundation for citizenship and national unity.

To provide structure, the course may be organized into three instructional units. The first examines the colonial history of Philippine education and language policy. The second focuses on Gallego's legislative and institutional interventions. The third invites students to apply his ideas to contemporary challenges by formulating a working framework of *Gallegan Philosophy* for the present. Each unit should combine historical case studies, critical readings, guided discussions, and community-based activities.

Evaluation should emphasize praxis. Students may conduct interviews with teachers, map the linguistic landscape of their communities, or draft policy proposals inspired by Gallego's vision. Such assessments encourage originality, contextual sensitivity, and ethical reflection, ensuring that classroom theory translates into civic engagement.

Ultimately, the course positions *Gallegan Philosophy* as both a corrective to colonial legacies and a forward-looking model for education and nation-building. By foregrounding Gallego's unique contributions, the course equips students to engage critically with policy debates, advocate for culturally grounded and linguistically inclusive practices, and recognize the philosophical foundations of national development.

Table 3. Theoretical and Pedagogical Grounding for Gallegan Philosophy

Sub-Theme	Description	Supporting Evidence
Postcolonial Theoretical Foundation	Grounds Gallego's thought in postcolonial and indigenous philosophies, viewing language as political struggle and identity formation	Fanon (1963); Ngũgĩ (1986); Gallego (1932)
Integration of Filipino Philosophical Perspectives	Embeds Gallego's ideas in local traditions of relationality, interiority, and communal selfhood	De Castro (2018)
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Advocates teaching in Filipino/regional languages, using Gallego's texts with supportive theory	Gallego monographs; Paris & Alim (2017)
Structured Instructional Design	Three-unit framework: history, Gallego's interventions, contemporary applications	Course outline
Praxis-Oriented Evaluation	Application-based assessments linking theory to community practice	Interviews, language maps, policy proposals
Philosophical and Educational Purpose	Frames Gallegan Philosophy as decolonial critique and model for development	Gallego's writings on language, health, and education

Source: Author

4. CONCLUSION

This study repositions Dr. Manuel V. Gallego as a foundational thinker in Philippine educational and linguistic discourse. Using postcolonial historical analysis, the research interprets Gallego's writings not as isolated commentaries but as ideological interventions that resist the enduring structures of colonial domination. Anchored in the theories of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, this study demonstrates that Gallego understood language policy as central to the formation of national consciousness. His critiques of English-medium instruction and his advocacy for Tagalog reflect a profound awareness of the psychological and cultural consequences of linguistic subjugation.

Fanon's theory of language as a vehicle of alienation and Ngũgĩ's insistence on language as a carrier of culture clarify the stakes of Gallego's interventions. His assertion that colonial education constituted "a conquest not only of our country but also of our native dialect" prefigures the postcolonial insight that control over language enables control over thought. Gallego's legislative efforts, his writings on educational reform, and his articulation of language as the expression of a nation's thought form part of a broader intellectual resistance to colonial epistemologies. Through this methodological lens, Gallego emerges not merely as a legislator or educator, but as a critical voice in the early articulation of decolonial language policy.

The contemporary relevance of Gallego's work is clear. His support for vernacular education, his emphasis on cultural self-determination, and his resistance to linguistic homogenization offer a coherent response to the contradictions within current Philippine language policy. As the country moves away from the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) framework, Gallego's vision provides an urgently needed counterpoint. His thought reminds us that education grounded in indigenous languages is not simply a pedagogical preference but a political commitment to cultural sovereignty.

This study contributes to the initial development of Gallegan Philosophy, but further work must deepen its theoretical coherence and connect it more explicitly with Filipino indigenous philosophical traditions. The integration of Gallego's insights into academic programs such as SSC 111/112 and MTB 311 represents a necessary first step. Institutions like the Manuel V. Gallego Foundation Colleges (MVGFC) must play a leading role in formalizing this intellectual legacy by curating archives, designing curriculum, and fostering scholarly dialogue rooted in local languages and histories.

Gallego's intellectual project advances a vision of education that affirms pluralism, restores historical memory, and strengthens national identity. In a postcolonial society where language remains a contested space, returning to his work offers a strategic and ethical foundation for constructing a more inclusive, critical, and culturally anchored educational system.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SOLID WASTE ON ALUU COMMUNITY'S NATURAL RESOURCES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

IMPACTO ECONÓMICO DE LOS RESIDUOS SÓLIDOS EN LOS RECURSOS
NATURALES DE LA COMUNIDAD ALUU EN EL ESTADO DE RIVERS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the economic impact the solid waste has on Aluu community's natural resources in Rivers State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to assess the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources, with a focus on identifying the effects of waste dumping on the local economy, environment, and residents' livelihoods. The study employed a survey research design, using a questionnaire to collect data from 400 residents of Aluu community out of which 331 sample size was properly filled and returned. The study's findings revealed that waste dumping has significant negative impacts on the environment, human health, and the economy, including loss of income, health problems, and environmental degradation. The study concludes that effective waste management practices are essential for protecting the environment, promoting economic development, and ensuring the well-being of residents in Aluu community. The study recommends that policymakers prioritize waste reduction, recycling, and proper disposal of waste, and that residents take responsibility for proper waste disposal practices. Additionally, the study recommends that the government invest in waste management infrastructure, including waste collection facilities and recycling plants, to support effective waste management practices.

Keywords

Aluu, Economic, Environment, Natural resources, Solid waste

1. INTRODUCTION

The economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources is a critical issue that requires immediate attention. The disposal of solid waste in Nigeria, particularly in the Aluu community of Rivers State, has become a significant environmental and economic challenge. The lack of effective waste management infrastructure and the increasing population growth rate in the community have led to the proliferation of indiscriminate waste dumping, resulting in environmental degradation and economic losses (Ogwueleka, 2025). The economic impact of solid waste on natural resources in Nigeria is multifaceted, affecting not only the environment but also the livelihoods of residents and the local economy (Uwadiogwu & Okereke, 2021). The issue of solid waste management in Nigeria is a complex one, with far-reaching consequences for the environment, human health, and the economy. The country's rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrialization have led to an increase in waste generation, which has put a strain on the existing waste management infrastructure (Ezeudu et al., 2025). The lack of effective waste management practices has resulted in the proliferation of indiscriminate waste dumping, which has become a major environmental and health challenge in many communities, including Rivers state.

The economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources is significant. The community's natural resources, including its water bodies, soil, and air, are being degraded due to the indiscriminate dumping of waste. This has resulted in economic losses for the community, including losses in agriculture, fisheries, and tourism (Agunwamba, 2024). The community's residents are also affected, with many suffering from health problems related to poor waste management. The aim of this study is to assess the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources, with a focus on identifying the effects of waste dumping on the local economy, environment, and residents' livelihoods. This study will contribute to the growing body of research on waste management and environmental sustainability in Rivers state, provide valuable insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and development practitioners working on waste management and environmental conservation in Nigeria as a whole. By examining the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue and inform the development of effective policies and interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of waste dumping on the environment and the local economy of Aluu community's Rivers state, Nigeria.

2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE

The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) theory, propounded by Grossman and Krueger (1991), posits that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation. According to the theory, as a country's economy grows, environmental degradation initially increases, but after a certain threshold, further economic

growth leads to a decrease in environmental degradation (Grossman & Krueger, 1991). This theory is relevant to the study on the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources in Nigeria, as it suggests that economic growth can lead to environmental degradation, but also provides a framework for understanding how economic growth can be achieved while minimizing environmental degradation. In the context of Nigeria, the EKC theory can help policymakers understand the relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation, and develop policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection.

2.1. Tragedy of the Commons Theory

The Tragedy of the Commons theory, propounded by Hardin (1968), posits that shared resources, such as the environment, are often overused and degraded because individuals acting in their own self-interest have no incentive to conserve or protect them (Hardin, 1968). This theory is relevant to the study on the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources in Nigeria, as it highlights the importance of collective action and cooperation in protecting shared resources, such as the environment. In the context of Nigeria, the Tragedy of the Commons theory can help policymakers understand the need for collective action and cooperation in protecting the environment, and develop policies that promote environmental sustainability.

2.2. Literature review

The impact of solid waste management on communities in Nigeria has garnered attention in recent studies. Aluu, part of Rivers State, faces acute waste management challenges typical of Nigerian urban/peri-urban areas (Ogwueleka, 2025), thus recommended that policymakers should prioritize waste reduction, recycling, and proper disposal of waste. Ezeudu et al., (2025), findings of the research show that waste management is a significant challenge in Nigeria, and that there is a need for a comprehensive waste management policy that addresses the challenges of waste management, the paper concluded that waste management is essential for environmental sustainability. Agunwamba (2024) highlights significant environmental and economic costs of inadequate waste management in local Nigerian communities, aligning with global concerns on waste's role in environmental degradation (Grossman & Krueger, 1991). However, context-specific analyses remain limited. Local economic reliance on agriculture, fishing, and small businesses heightens vulnerability to waste-related environmental damage (Uwadiogwu & Okereke, 2021) in their study on the economic impact of environmental degradation on local communities in Nigeria. Waste management and environmental sustainability in Nigeria was investigated by Agunwamba (2024) examined the challenges and opportunities of solid waste management

in Nigeria, the study found out that solid waste management is a significant challenge in Nigeria, but also presents opportunities for economic development and environmental protection, he recommended that policymakers should prioritize waste management infrastructure development and public education on waste management practices. Solid waste has a significant impact on human health, leading to health problems and economic losses was the result of Adeyemi (2021) in their research on the impact of solid waste on human health in Nigeria, they concluded that effective solid waste management practices are essential for protecting human health, and recommended that policymakers should prioritize waste management infrastructure development and public education on waste management practices. Economic benefits of waste management in Nigeria by Okorie (2022) found that waste management can generate significant economic benefits, including job creation and revenue generation, the study concluded that waste management is essential for economic development, and recommended that policymakers should prioritize waste management infrastructure development and private sector participation in waste management.

The existing literature on the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources in Nigeria reveals a significant gap in research. While several studies have examined the economic impact of solid waste management in Nigeria, few have focused specifically on the Aluu community, and none have provided a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of solid waste on the community's natural resources. This study extends prior work by focusing on Aluu's specific socio-economic and environmental context, assessing waste dumping's localized impacts and informing the development of effective policies and interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of waste dumping on the environment and the local economy.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey approach using quantitative methods to assess the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources in Rivers State, Nigeria. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 400 households/respondents from Aluu community, ensuring representation across three key strata: (1) residential location (urban, peri-urban, rural areas within Aluu), (2) occupation (farming, fishing, trading, civil service), and (3) age groups (18-35, 36-55, 56+ years). This stratification aimed to capture diverse perspectives and ensure the sample's representativeness of the community's demographic profile. Aluu community was divided into residential zones (urban, peri-urban, rural). Within each zone, households were randomly selected using a systematic approach (every *n*th household). One adult respondent per household was invited to participate, prioritizing those involved in local economic activities. 400 questionnaires were distributed; 331 responses were valid and analysed totalling a response rate of 82.75%. Demographic comparison (Table 1) indicates the sample aligns with Aluu community's known population

characteristics (gender, age, occupation distributions). Potential selection bias was mitigated via stratification and randomization within strata. Possible underrepresentation of highly transient/migrant populations; future studies could explore this subgroup. The questionnaires assessed perceptions on waste dumping's impacts (economy, environment, livelihoods). The constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with a mean criterion of 3.0 used as the benchmark for interpretation. Data were analysed via descriptive statistics, inferential tests (t-tests, ANOVA), and multivariate regression (controlling for demographics). The research made certain that the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents' information was respected; informed consent was gotten from every participant. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality for their answers.

Table 1 – Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	186	56.2
Female	145	43.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>
Status		
Single	211	63.7
Married	120	36.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>
Residential Location		
Urban Area	101	30.5
Peri-urban Area	122	36.9
Rural areas	108	32.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>
Occupation		
Farming	82	24.8
Fishing	64	19.3
Trading	119	35.9
Civil Service	66	19.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>
Age Range		
26-35 years	59	17.8
36-45 years	84	25.4
46-55 years	127	38.4
56 and above	61	18.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>
Academic Qualification		
FSLC/WAEC	93	28.1
HND/BSC	165	49.8
MSC/PHD	73	22.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Authors Survey (2025)

Data in Table 1 above, illustrate the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their academic qualification.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to determine the appropriateness of the research questions, the data of this study are presented and analysed below using mean, standard deviation, SPSS software.

Table 2 - Respondents' perceptions on the effects of waste dumping on the local economy of Aluu Community of Rivers State.

S/N	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
1	Waste dumping deter tourists from visiting Aluu community, leading to a loss of revenue from tourism, which could have been used to improve infrastructure and create jobs for the local population, ultimately affecting the community's economic growth and development.	4.2	0.8	0.03*	Accepted
2	Waste dumping lead to a decline in local businesses, as residents and visitors are deterred by the unsanitary conditions, resulting in reduction of sales and revenue for businesses, and potentially leading to business closures and job losses.	4.1	0.7	0.01**	Accepted
3	Waste dumping lead to an increase in healthcare costs, as residents are more likely to fall ill from diseases caused by poor waste management, such as cholera, malaria, and other water-borne diseases, which lead to increased healthcare expenditure and lost productivity, further straining the local economy.	3.6	0.9	0.04*	Accepted
4	Waste dumping lead to a decrease in property values, as residents are less likely to invest in areas with poor waste management, resulting in reduced property prices, and making it difficult for property owners to sell their properties, thereby affecting the local economy and residents' wealth.	3.3	1.1	0.07	Accepted
5	Waste dumping contaminate soil and water, leading to a decline in agricultural productivity, and affecting the livelihoods of farmers in Aluu community, who may experience reduced crop yields, and lower incomes.	4.4	0.6	0.001**	Accepted
6	It contaminates water bodies, leading to a decline in fisheries, and affecting the livelihoods of fishermen in Aluu community, and lower incomes, ultimately affecting the local economy and food security.	3.8	0.9	0.02*	Accepted
7	Waste dumping lead to an increase in the cost of waste management, as the community need to spend more on cleaning up the waste and restoring the environment, which can divert resources away from other important development projects, and further strain the local economy.	3.5	1.1	0.05*	Accepted
8	Waste dumping can have a negative impact on local industries, such as food processing and manufacturing, as the unsanitary conditions can affect the quality of products, leading to reduced sales and revenue, and potentially leading to business closures and job losses, which can have a ripple effect on the local economy.	3.8	0.8	0.03*	Accepted

9	Waste dumping lead to loss of economic opportunities, as investors are deterred by the unsanitary conditions and poor waste management practices in Aluu community, resulting in reduced investment, and job creation, thereby affecting the community's economic growth and development, and perpetuating poverty and unemployment.	4.5	0.5	0.001***	Accepted
Average Total		3.9	0.65		Accepted

Source: Authors Survey (2025)

As deduced from Table 2, item 1-9, it shows that respondents strongly agreed (mean=3.9) that waste dumping negatively impacts the local economy of Aluu Community of Rivers State. Significant effects include reduced tourism ($p=0.03$), business decline ($p=0.01$), and agricultural productivity loss ($p=0.001$). Contamination affects fisheries ($p=0.02$) and increases healthcare costs ($p=0.04$). Economic opportunities are lost due to unsanitary conditions ($p=0.001$).

Table 3- Respondents' perceptions on the effects of waste dumping on the environment of Aluu community in Rivers State.

S/N	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
1	Waste dumping lead to soil contamination, altering its quality and affecting plant growth, as toxic substances seep into the soil and groundwater, thereby posing health risks to humans and animals feeding on contaminated plants.	3.9	0.7	0.01**	Accepted
2	Waste dumping releases obnoxious odours and toxic gases, contributing to air pollution, which cause respiratory problems and other health issues for residents in Aluu community.	3.4	0.9	0.04*	Accepted
3	It contaminates water bodies, making them unsafe for consumption, aquatic life, and other uses, thereby affecting the community's water quality and aquatic ecosystem.	4.2	0.6	0.001***	Accepted
4	Contaminants in soil, air, and water kill plants, leading to poor crop yields and affecting the livelihoods of farmers in Aluu community who depend on agriculture.	3.8	0.8	0.02*	Accepted
5	Waste dumping contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating global warming and climate change, which lead to extreme weather conditions, sea-level rise, and other environmental disasters.	3.7	0.9	0.03*	Accepted
6	Waste dumping contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating global warming and climate change, which lead to extreme weather conditions, sea-level rise, and other environmental disasters.	3.1	1.1	0.08	Accepted
7	Waste dumping lead to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity, as toxic substances and pollutants alter ecosystems, driving species to extinction and disrupting the natural balance.	4.4	0.5	0.001***	Accepted
8	Improper waste disposal block drainage systems, causing flooding, which damage properties, disrupt economic activities, and pose health risks to residents in Aluu community.	3.8	0.7	0.03*	Accepted

9	It also increases the risk of wildfires, especially when hazardous materials are exposed to high temperatures, posing a threat to nearby communities and ecosystems.	3.7	0.8	0.04*	Accepted
10	Waste dumping poses significant health and safety risks to residents in Aluu community, including the spread of diseases, injuries from sharp objects, and exposure to toxic substances.	3.8	0.6	0.02*	Accepted
	Average Total	3.8	0.72		Accepted

Source: Authors Survey (2025)

From Table 3, item 1-10, it shows that the respondents agreed (mean=3.8) on the effects of waste dumping on the environment of Aluu community in Rivers State. Significant effects include water contamination ($p=0.001$), flooding ($p=0.001$), soil contamination ($p=0.01$), and air pollution ($p=0.04$). Contaminants reduce crop yields ($p=0.02$) and contribute to climate change ($p=0.03$). Ecosystems are degraded ($p=0.02$).

Table 4- Respondents' perceptions on the effects of waste dumping on residents' livelihoods in Aluu Community

S/N	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
1	Waste dumping leads to a loss of income for residents who depend on agriculture, fishing, or other livelihoods that are affected by environmental degradation as this reduces their purchasing power and economic stability.	3.9	0.8	0.02*	Accepted
2	Waste dumping cause health problems for residents, including respiratory issues, skin infections, and other diseases, leading to increased healthcare costs and loss of productivity.	4.3	0.5	0.001***	Accepted
3	Waste dumping can contaminate soil and water, affecting crop yields and fish catches, leading to food insecurity and reduced access to nutritious food, thereby impacting residents' health and well-being.	4.1	0.6	0.01**	Accepted
4	Waste dumping contaminate animal feed and water, leading to reduced livestock productivity, and affecting the livelihoods of residents who depend on animal husbandry which impact their income and food security.	4.0	0.7	0.01**	Accepted
5	Waste dumping leads to the loss of livelihoods for residents who depend on natural resources, such as fishing or agriculture, as environmental degradation affects the availability and quality of these resources.	3.8	0.8	0.03*	Accepted
6	Waste dumping exacerbate poverty in Aluu community, as residents may struggle to access basic necessities like clean water, food, and healthcare.	3.9	0.7	0.02*	Accepted
7	Waste dumping leads to displacement and migration of residents, as environmental degradation affects their livelihoods and living conditions, ultimately impacting their social and economic stability.	3.1	1.0	0.07	Accepted
8	Waste dumping cause psychological trauma for residents, including stress, anxiety, and depression, as they struggle to cope with the environmental and health impacts of waste dumping, which affect their livelihoods and well-being.	3.3	0.9	0.05*	Accepted
	Average Total	3.8	0.68		Accepted

Source: Authors Survey (2025)

Also again, in Table 4, item 1-8, it revealed that the respondents agreed (mean=3.8) on waste dumping's impacts on livelihoods in Aluu Community. Significant effects include health problems ($p=0.001$), food insecurity ($p=0.01$), income loss ($p=0.02$), and reduced livestock productivity ($p=0.01$). Poverty is exacerbated ($p=0.02$), and psychological trauma occurs ($p=0.05$).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study in table 2 above, revealed that waste dumping has a significant impact on the economic development of Aluu community in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study found that waste dumping leads to loss of income, reduced economic opportunities, and increased poverty, which is in support of the findings of Agunwamba (2024) and Uwadiogwu and Okereke (2021) that waste dumping has negative economic impacts on local communities. The study's findings suggest that the economic impacts of waste dumping are far-reaching, affecting not only the local economy but also the livelihoods of residents.

Furthermore, in table 3 the study revealed that waste dumping has significant environmental impacts, including soil contamination, air pollution, and water pollution, which is in support of the findings of Ogwueleka (2025) and Okorie et al. (2022) that waste dumping has negative environmental impacts. The study's findings suggest that the environmental impacts of waste dumping are severe and can have long-lasting effects on the ecosystem.

In table 4, the research found that waste dumping affects the livelihoods of residents in Aluu community, including farmers, fishermen, and other occupations that depend on natural resources, which is in support of the findings of Uwadiogwu and Okereke (2021) that waste dumping affects the livelihoods of local communities. The study's findings highlight the need for sustainable waste management practices that protect the environment and support the livelihoods of residents. It also found out that waste dumping has negative impacts on human health, including respiratory problems, skin infections, and other diseases, which is in support of the findings of Adeyemi et al. (2021) and Ezeudu et al. (2025) that waste dumping poses significant health risks to humans. The study's findings highlight the need for effective waste management practices to protect human health and prevent the spread of diseases.

Overall, the findings of this study support the reviewed literature and highlight the need for effective waste management practices to protect the environment, human health, and the economy. The study's findings suggest that waste dumping has significant negative impacts on the economic development, human health, and the livelihoods of residents in Aluu community, and that sustainable waste management practices are essential for protecting the environment and promoting economic development.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of solid waste on Aluu community's natural resources in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study's findings highlight the significant negative impacts of waste dumping on the environment, human health, and the economy. The study concludes that effective waste management practices are essential for protecting the environment, promoting economic development, and ensuring the well-being of residents in Aluu community. The study's findings have important implications for policymakers, stakeholders, and development practitioners working on waste management and environmental conservation in Nigeria.

6.1. Suggestions and recommendations for further research

Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of different waste management strategies in Nigeria, including waste-to-energy technologies and circular economy approaches. Additionally, studies could investigate the economic benefits of waste management and the willingness of residents to pay for waste management services. Research could also examine the role of community participation and awareness in promoting sustainable waste management practices in Nigeria. Furthermore, comparative studies could be conducted to examine the differences in waste management practices between urban and rural areas in Nigeria, and to identify best practices that can be replicated in other communities.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government of Rivers state and relevant authorities should prioritize effective waste management practices, including waste reduction, recycling, and proper disposal of waste, to protect the environment and promote economic development.
2. The council and state government should invest in waste management infrastructure, including waste collection facilities, recycling plants, and proper disposal sites, to support effective waste management practices.
3. The council, state government and relevant authorities should conduct public education and awareness campaigns to educate residents on the importance of proper waste disposal practices and the risks associated with waste dumping.
4. The local and state government including relevant authorities should encourage community participation in waste management, including the formation of community-based waste management committees, to promote sustainable waste management practices.

5. Both local and government should develop and implement policies and regulations that support effective waste management practices, including laws and regulations that prohibit waste dumping and promote recycling.
6. The government should encourage private sector participation in waste management, including waste collection and recycling, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of waste management services.
7. The government and relevant authorities should support research and development in waste management, including the development of new technologies and strategies for waste reduction, recycling, and proper disposal.
8. The government and relevant authorities should collaborate with stakeholders, including community groups, private sector organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to promote sustainable waste management practices and protect the environment.

These recommendations are aimed at promoting sustainable waste management practices, protecting the environment, and promoting economic development in Aluu community and other communities in Nigeria.

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IMPACT OF POINT-OF-SALES (POS) TRANSACTIONS ON STOCK MARKET LIQUIDITY IN NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

IMPACTO DE LAS TRANSACCIONES EN PUNTOS DE VENTA (POS) SOBRE LA
LIQUIDEZ DEL MERCADO DE VALORES EN NIGERIA: UNA EXPLORACIÓN EMPÍRICA

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the impact of point-of-sales (POS) transactions on stock market liquidity in Nigeria between January 2012 and December, 2021. Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares regression technique was applied to the data obtained from the Statistical Bulletin, Statistics, and Monthly Economic Reports published by Central Bank of Nigeria. POS digital finance transaction was found to have negative and significant impact on Nigerian stock market turnover ratio. Considering the prominence of POS digital financial innovation in Nigeria, this study isolated the innovation for study in terms of its role in stock market liquidity in a developing country. This study concluded that, rather than promoting stock market liquidity, digital finance channel of POS shrank the liquidity of the Nigerian equity market. The study was limited to only POS transaction among other digital financial

innovations. However, the significance and prominence of POS in the Nigerian financial market makes the innovation worthy of careful and separate investigation. The finding of this study may not be unconnected with the fact that in Nigeria, POS transactions are basically used for consumption and other daily transactions of which stock market transactions may not constitute a major part. It can therefore be recommended that Government should encourage the use of POS terminals for stock transactions by giving incentives to users of POS for stock market dealings in Nigeria.

Keywords

POS, Stock Market Turnover Ratio, Stock Market, Stock Market Liquidity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, cash-based payment as a traditional model of payment was the order of the day before the adoption of electronic means of payment. In the electronic era, payment for transactions through channels like automated teller machines (ATM), Point-of-Sales (POS), web-pay, mobile pay, instant payment, electronic funds transfer, and others. The introduction of cashless policy in 2011 and its take-off in 2012, as well as the concurrent implementation of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, Nigeria has seen to the increasing use of digital/electronic payments by the Nigerian populace. Consequently, payment operations became increasingly characterized by electronic funds transfers, ATMs, and other electronic payment systems (Mahmud et al., 2021). In Nigeria, the traditional mode of payment has been declining since the adoption of electronic payment system. For instance, statistics reveals that, the value of cheque-based transactions declined from ₦29,436.02billion in 2009 to ₦15,522.40billion in 2023; and in the same vein the volume of cheque transaction decreased from 29,166,780 in 2009 to 16,054,396 in 2023 (CBN statistical bulletin, 2023). However, there has been upward trend of these digital transactions as against the downward trend of the non-digital form of financial transactions in Nigeria. Specifically, digital volume of transactions using POS transaction volume-wise skyrocketed from 918,256 in 2009 to 9,847,258,500 in 2023. Likewise, from the 2009 figure of ₦11.03billion, POS value of transaction increased to ₦110,347.10 billion in 2023.

Although, the Nigerian stock market is yet to witness a full digitalization but the embrace of digital financial technology in the Nigeria has seen to the increase in stock market performance indicators, particularly, stock market turnover ratio. The stock market enhances economic growth by providing equity funds for capital formation (Babarinde et al., 2024). Technological advancements, particularly in digital financial innovation like POS, have significantly influenced financial services, becoming a crucial aspect of financial affairs. POS as an electronic payment device which enables individuals to make purchases with electronic cards by accepting ATM cards for payment of goods and services and additionally, it permits cardholders to have a realtime online access to funds and information in their bank account

through debit or cash cards (Omotayo & Dahunsi, 2015). It has been observed that POS has facilitates the reduction the volume of cash transactions and also ensures the flow of cash in the Nigerian economy (Hamza et al., 2021).

Notably, digital payment services, particularly POS services, have gained prominence in Nigeria, offering potential improvements to the Nigerian stock market. Despite this, there still a perceived gap between POS transactions and liquidity of the Nigerian stock market. Digital finance-capital market studies is relatively a growing area research most especially in developing countries where the adoption of digital financial technology is relatively of recent. Few studies have attempted to examine digital finance and stock market performance (Babarinde et al., 2024; Igoni et al., 2021) but specific study on the role of POS transaction in stock market liquidity is still desirable considering the significance of stock market liquidity in any economy.

Therefore, the aim of this research was to explore the impact of POS transaction in stock market liquidity. This research focused on the Nigerian equity market, specifically the stock market, and examines how POS digital financial transactions impacts the market's performance in terms of liquidity from January 2012 to December 2021.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A stock market is aspect of the capital market where shares and stocks and other equity instruments are traded. A stock market can also be defined as a financial market in which long term securities like shares, stocks, and other equity instruments are transacted (Babarinde et al., 2024). One of the dimensions of stock market development is its liquidity. Stock market liquidity refers to the ease, speed, and efficiency with which securities are traded in the stock market (Babarinde, 2024). El-Wassal (2013) argues that a more liquid stock market enables a larger amount of savings to be channeled through stock markets.

Traded value/GDP and turnover ratio are the most commonly used liquidity indicators by analysts (El-Wassal, 2013). The turnover ratio is the total value of shares traded divided by the stock market capitalization. A high turnover ratio suggests lower transaction costs in the stock market. The value traded ratio complements the market capitalization ratio and is measured as the total value of shares traded divided by the GDP of the economy (Onwumere et al., 2012). Traded value/GDP measures the total value of shares traded on the stock market as a percentage of the national output, reflecting stock market liquidity on an economy-wide scale (El-Wassal, 2013).

POS is a payment method that allows individuals to make transactions such as fund transfers and cash withdrawals without visiting banking halls or ATMs terminals (Adedayo et al., 2024). In other words, POS) transactions are digital transactions executed by account holders through cards, aiming to establish a cashless economy (Igoni et al., 2020; Igoni et al., 2021). An upsurge in point-of-sale channels would signify an enhancement in business opportunities and convenience, which ultimately contributes to the augmentation of goods

and services (Igoni et al., 2020). Consequently, with a rise in business opportunities, the economy will witness an increase in the expansion of businesses. This, in turn, will motivate businesses to approach the capital market for long-term funding, as well as explore listing opportunities and engage in other stock market-related operations and activities, all of which will contribute to the betterment of businesses in the country. (Babarinde, 2024).

Theoretically, the theory of stock market development as posited by El-Wassal (2013), characterises stock market development as multi-dimensional. While delineating the four supply, demand, economic, and institutional factors as distinct categories of factors that can elucidate the development of the stock market. Liquidity is one of the five dimensions of stock market development while the other four are stock market size, concentration, volatility, and integration with the real sector (El-Wassal, 2013). Digital financial innovation has been theorized as having a significant role to play in lessening the challenges and constraints firms by economic agents. Put forward by Silber (1975), the theory of financial innovations posits that new financial instruments or practices are conceived to alleviate the financial constraints imposed on firms. Specifically, innovations in financial institutions and practices have enhanced the ability to bear risk, reduced transaction costs, and circumvented outdated regulations (Silber, 1983). According to financial innovation theory, financial innovations, such as POS are developed with the explicit purpose of facilitating the business activities of firms by helping them mitigate certain constraints. This can be achieved through the improvement of business methods, which leads to lower operating costs, improved allocation efficiency, and ultimately, enhanced financial institutions' bottom-line (Babarinde, 2024).

Empirically, the impact of digital finance on stock market performance in Nigeria was investigated by Babarinde et al. (2024). From the Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares regression, the study found that digital finance transactions (ATM, POS, mobile-based, and web-based) had positive and significant impact on the stock market capitalization ratio in Nigeria. In another study, Igoni et al. (2021) employed the VECM method in assessing electronic transactions and its effect on stock market performance in Nigeria. The study found that POS has a positive but non-significant effect on stock market performance in Nigeria in the study period (2012-2019).

In their study, Aldyan et al. (2019) examined the ramifications of technological advancements on stock trading within the Indonesian stock markets. The study posits that technological progress enhances stock trading in the capital market. In a similar study conducted in China, Wang et al. (2020) analyzed the influence of digital finance on financial efficiency from 2011 to 2017 using a dynamic data envelopment analysis model. The study reveals that digital finance slightly enhances the efficiency of the financial sector. However, Asmaraniw and Wijaya (2020) examined the impact of fintech on the stock returns of retail banks listed in the Indonesia Stock Exchange and found that fintech does not have a significant effect on the stock returns of retail banks listed in the Indonesia Stock Exchange.

Ren et al. (2022) reported that digital economy attention significantly impacted stock prices in a time-varying pattern in China. Furthermore, Ullah et al (2022) assessed the influence of FinTech on the stock price liquidity of Chinese listed firms. From the OLS regression and correlation techniques, the study found a positive association between Fintech and stock price liquidity. Also, Shena et al (2022) examined the impact of digital finance development on the investment behavior of Chinese households in risk finance assets. The study discovered that digital finance motivates more residents to invest in risk finance assets. Moreover, employing artificial neural network and linear regression models, Adedayo et al. (2024) studied the impact of ATM and POS transactions on currency in circulation in Nigeria. The study found that POS transactions have a significant impact on the amount of currency in circulation. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2023) investigated the effects of digital finance on the risk of stock price crashes and the underlying transmission mechanisms using a two-way fixed effect model. The study revealed that digital finance significantly reduces the risk of stock price crashes in China.

The review of literature exposes the scantiness and/or scarcity of study devoted to POS transaction-stock market liquidity but from the line of thought among related studies reviewed, the following hypothesis can be stated:

H0: POS transactions have significant impact on stock market liquidity in Nigeria

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data and Research Design

The annual time series datasets employed in the study are in line with *ex-post facto* research design. The research design enables the researcher to examine relationship between variables of study by using past data which are not subject to manipulation by the researcher (Babarinde, 2024). The datasets for this study is quantitative in nature and were obtained from secondary sources, namely, CBN Statistical Bulletin, CBN Monthly Economic Reports, and CBN Statistics for various years.

3.2. Measurement of Variables

In line with related past studies, this study operationalizes the study variables as follows:

Stock market liquidity (SMT): Stock market liquidity was proxied by stock market turnover ratio. It is computed as the ratio of total values of shares traded to stock market capitalization expressed in per cent (Onwumere et al. (2012), Qamruzzaman and Wei (2018))

Point of Sales (POS): Point of Sales was measured using POS-based transactions. This is POS-based payment transactions, expressed in million Naira (Igoni et al., 2021; Appah et al., 2023)).

Inflation rate (INF): Inflation rate was proxied as Inflation rate. This is annual percentage changes in consumer prices and it controls for macroeconomic (in)stability (Asab & Al-Tarawneh, 2020).

Government expenditure (GEX): Government expenditure was proxied as the federal government expenditure. This is total monthly amount of expenditure by the Federal Government of Nigeria, expressed in million Naira and it controls for public sector (Agwu & Godfrey, 2020).

Exchange rate (EXC): Exchange rate is the foreign exchange rate. This is monthly average official exchange rate of the Naira to US Dollar and it controls for external sector (Josiah & Akpoveta, 2019).

Economic Growth (GDP): Economic growth was measured as gross domestic product growth rate. This is percentage change in the annual real Gross domestic product and it controls for the size of the economy (Harcourt, 2017).

3.3. Model Specification

In specifying the relationship between point-of-sales financial transactions and stock market liquidity in Nigeria, this study adapted the model of Babarinde et al. (2024) on the impact of digital finance on stock market performance in Nigeria as specified in equation (1)

$$(1) \text{MCAPR}_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{POS}_t + \beta_2 \text{EXCR}_t + \beta_3 \text{GEXP}_t + \beta_4 \text{INFR}_t + \beta_5 \text{GDPGR}_t + U_{t2}$$

Therefore, model of this study, by substituting the dependent variable in equation (1) with stock market turnover ratio (SMT), can be specified in equation (2).

$$(2) \text{SMT}_t = \varphi_0 + \varphi_1 \text{POS}_t + \varphi_2 \text{EXC}_t + \varphi_3 \text{GEX}_t + \varphi_4 \text{INF}_t + \varphi_5 \text{GDP}_t + \epsilon_t$$

The techniques of estimating the model of this study is the Fully Modified Ordinary Least Squares (FMOLS) regression proposed by Philips and Hansen (1990). This study carried out necessary preliminary analyses which are descriptive statistics, and unit root test. FMOLS technique which normally employed in estimating a single co-integrating relationship among I(1) series, has been adjudged to be asymptotically unbiased and efficient (Phillips & Hansen, 1990).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics

	SMT	POS	EXC	GEX	INF	GDP
Mean	9.334480	288239.0	259.7781	568128.7	12.37300	2.520137
Max.	17.84428	2318351.	414.3357	1373787.	18.72000	5.255319
Min.	4.100987	38.57195	157.2734	80912.00	7.700000	0.261930
Std. Dev.	3.192407	521391.6	87.16743	260538.7	3.329167	1.395841
Jarque-Bera	14.27947	303.2952	9.941064	6.694396	8.111475	7.441965
Prob.	0.000793	0.000000	0.006939	0.035183	0.017323	0.024210

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

Table 1 reveals that the stock market turnover ratio (SMT) of the equity section of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) in the study period (2012M01-2021M12) was 9.33%. The minimum and maximum of the stock market turnover ratio was 4.10% and 17.84% respectively. The standard deviation of the series (SMT) (3.19%) did not exceed their mean value, thus, the SMT is relatively stable around its mean value. Furthermore, considering the Jarque-Bera statistics of stock market turnover ratio, the series could be said to be not normally distributed.

Furthermore, the average value of POS was ₦288239.0M and the variable (POS) range between a minimum value of ₦38.57195M to maximum value of ₦2318351.0M. The mean value of POS not exceeding their respective standard deviations (₦521391.6M) which suggests that the variable is relatively volatile around its mean value. The variable (POS)'s Jarque-Bera statistics reveal that it failed the normality test. Exchange rate (EXC) has an average of 259.7781 and is not normally distributed but it is relatively stable around its mean value. 568128.7b stood as the average government expenditure and it is relatively stable around its mean and passed normality test at 1 per cent level of significance. Inflation rate had a mean of 12.37300 and was not normally distributed. The series INF) was relatively stable around its mean value. Gross domestic product growth rate (GDP) averaged 2.520137% and it is relatively stable but it was not normally distributed.

4.2. Unit Root Tests

Table 2 – Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Test Statistics at First Difference

Variables	ADF –Statistic	Prob.	Order of Integration I(d)
LOGSMT	-9.159739	0.0000	I(1)
LOGPOS	-11.85318	0.0000	I(1)
LOGEXC	-5.499769	0.0000	I(1)
LOGGEX	-11.08548	0.0000	I(1)
LOGINF	-4.938041	0.0005	I(1)
LOGGDP	-9.679096	0.0000	I(1)

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

The ADF test in Table 2 show that all the variables are stationary after first difference.

4.3. Johansen Cointegration Tests

Table 3a – Johansen Cointegration Tests: Trace Statistics

[I]. Trace Statistics				
Hypothesized		Trace	0.05	
No. of CE(s)	Eigenvalue	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.
None	0.4909	154.3492	95.7536	0.0000*
At most 1	0.3040	86.1496	69.8188	0.0014*
At most 2	0.2117	49.5427	47.8561	0.0344*
At most 3	0.1815	25.5110	29.7970	0.1440
At most 4	0.0503	5.2746	15.4947	0.7790
At most 5	0.0006	0.0619	3.8414	0.8035

Note* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level.

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

Table 3b – Johansen Cointegration Tests: Maximum Eigenvalue Statistics

[II]. Maximum Eigenvalue Statistics			
Hypothesized	Max-Eigen	0.05	
No. of CE(s)	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.
None	68.1995	40.0775	0.0000*
At most 1	36.6069	33.8768	0.0230*
At most 2	24.0316	27.5843	0.1336
At most 3	20.2363	21.1316	0.0663
At most 4	5.2127	14.2646	0.7148
At most 5	0.0619	3.8414	0.8035

Note* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level.

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

In Table 3a, the Trace statistic indicates three cointegrating equations among the variables of the study. However, Max-eigenvalue test (in Table 3b) indicates two cointegrating equations. This suggests the existence of a long-run relationship between POS transactions and stock market liquidity in Nigeria.

4.4. Model Estimation

Table 4 – FMOLS Regression Estimates of Effect of POS Transactions on Stock Market Liquidity in Nigeria

Dependent Variable: LOGSMT				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
LOGPOS	-0.0866	0.0430	-2.0124	0.0466
LOGEXC	0.0566	0.2728	0.2075	0.8360
LOGGEX	-0.0344	0.0781	-0.4402	0.6606
LOGINF	-0.8074	0.1678	-4.8120	0.0000
LOGGDP	-0.0044	0.0383	-0.1163	0.9076
C	5.3033	1.0362	5.1180	0.0000
R-squared	0.8311	Mean dependent var		2.1759
Adjusted R-squared	0.8236	S.D. dependent var		0.3421
S.E. of regression	0.1436	Sum squared resid		2.3328
Jarque-Bera	0.6139			0.7356

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

Table 4 reports that about 83% of the variation in stock market liquidity in Nigeria has been explained by the joint effect of the independent variables and when the model is penalized for degree of freedom the explanatory power of the model is about 82%. The Jargue-Bera (0.6139) and the associated prob. value (0.7356), suggests that the FMOLS estimated in this study does not have abnormal distribution of errors terms. The diagnostic test of serial correlation in the form of correlogram of residuals Q-statistics, indicates the p-values attached (in each period) to the Q-statistics are higher than the level of significance (5%) and consequently, it be asserted that the model's residual is free from serial correlation problem. These diagnostics reveal that the model is free from serial correlation problem, normally distributed and has a higher predictive power and as such reliance can be placed on its estimates for policy recommendations.

Table 4 indicates that POS transaction has a negative coefficient of -0.086655 with an associated p-value of 0.0466, which implies that the long-run elasticity was negative and significant at 5% level. This suggests the existence of a negative and significant effect of POS transaction on stock market turnover ratio in the Nigerian stock market.

By this finding this study fails to reject the null hypothesis that POS transactions have significant impact on stock market liquidity in Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that rather than promoting liquidity of the Nigerian stock market, POS transaction discouraged stock market performance in terms of liquidity. This may be partly due to the fact that POS transactions in Nigeria are conducted basically for consumption and other daily transactions of which stock market transactions may not constitute a major part. Consequently, rather than promoting stock market liquidity, digital finance channel of POS shrank the liquidity of the Nigerian equity market.

The estimates of the FMOLS regression further indicate that government expenditure, inflation rate and economic growth were negatively signed but only inflation rate had significant effect on stock market turnover ratio in the Nigerian stock market. However, exchange rate had positive but non-significant effect on stock market turnover ratio in the Nigerian stock market

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the impact of POS transactions on stock market turnover ratio in Nigeria using FMOLS regression technique for the period, January 2012 to December, 2021. POS digital finance transaction was found to have negative and significant impact on stock market turnover ratio in the Nigerian stock market. The study also found the existence of a long-run relationship between POS digital finance transaction and stock market turnover ratio in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study reveals that digital finance is a determinant of stock market liquidity in Nigeria.

The study concluded that, rather than promoting stock market liquidity, digital finance channel of POS shrank the liquidity of the Nigerian equity market. This findings may not

unconnected with the fact that in Nigeria, POS transactions are basically used for consumption and other daily transactions of which stock market transactions may not constitute a major part.

It can therefore be recommended that to improve stock market liquidity, Government should encourage the use of POS terminals for stock transactions by giving incentives to users of POS for stock market dealings in Nigeria. That the current point-of-sales transactions had negative and significant impact on stock market turnover ratio in Nigeria require that POS devices and the transactions thereon be re-configured to facilitate stock market liquidity. Thus, a policy of compulsion acquisition and use of one-POS per stock broker and other key market participants is recommended.

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LOCAL WISDOM – A PATHWAY TO GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS: CASE STUDY OF THE “RICE-MERIT MAKING” CEREMONY AMONG THE KAREN HILL TRIBES IN NORTHERN THAILAND

SABIDURÍA LOCAL - UN CAMINO HACIA LA FELICIDAD NACIONAL BRUTA:
ESTUDIO DE CASO DE LA CEREMONIA DE “FABRICACIÓN DE ARROZ POR MÉRITO”
ENTRE LAS TRIBUS DE LAS COLINAS KAREN EN EL NORTE DE TAILANDIA

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Abstract

Among the four pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH), the one that has probably been the most under-researched is the fourth pillar – preservation and promotion of culture. This is the critical pillar that has particular relevance – not just for Bhutan – but for the local and cultural context of countries in the Global South. This paper attempts to address this gap in knowledge and evidence. The paper will argue that the local wisdom based on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) of the Karen hilltribe people in Northern Thailand and as experienced in their everyday life experiences over generations, has generated a large body of knowledge, knowhow and evidence that is yet to be fully tapped for peoples' development. It is therefore critical to identify and establish the relationship of culture and local wisdom to development and social wellbeing (happiness) which can contribute to improved livelihoods and sustainable development. Sustainable development, therefore, is only possible when it is based on the foundational principles and values of local wisdom (knowledge and practices) as it exists and is reproduced in the lives of people across generations. The paper will present the local wisdom of the Karen hilltribe communities that has traditionally been the foundation of their cultural and social wellbeing until today. Taking the example of the “*rice-merit making ceremony*” as practiced among these communities for generations, the paper will show how the principles and values on which this tradition – called the “*religio-cultural approach*” - has become the foundation of individual and social wellbeing – contributing to self-identity, community solidarity, sharing and improved livelihoods. This approach based

on local wisdom is both a worldview and a pathway for achieving – what I call “Gross Peoples’ Happiness” (GPH).

Keywords

hilltribes, local wisdom, indigenous knowledge, happiness, culture, traditions

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since the concept of “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) was first developed by H.E. Jigme Singye Wanchuk, then King of Bhutan in 1972, we have seen a wide range of research and studies which have attempted to understand this new concept in development discourse, as well as un-pack its principles and goals to tangible strategies that can be adopted by Governments in both North and the South.

The four key pillars of Gross National Happiness include: (a) sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, (b) conservation of environment, (c) preservation and promotion of culture, and (d) promotion of good governance (Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2007). In a general survey of the literature presently available on GNH – as presented during the past seven International Conferences on GNH held over the years, as well as other related articles and books that have been written on the subject (Ura & Galay, 2004), I have come to the conclusion that the one key pillar that is the critical foundation of GNH, especially as it is relevant to the local and cultural context of the Global South, including countries in the Asia Pacific region; viz, the preservation and promotion of culture – has been most under-studied and un-researched as yet.

Why is this particular pillar so important? It is important for a number of important reasons: firstly, because, it constitutes the very identity and shapes the way of live of millions of people in the Global South. We know well the rich traditions and practices of indigenous communities, hilltribes and other ethnic minority groups in our countries that are rooted in long-standing traditions, folklore, mythologies and indigenous worldviews; secondly, we are yet to tap the potential of the local wisdom in local and indigenous cultural and religious practices that are based on basic human values and worldviews that provide up deep insights into the meaning of life; thirdly, local and indigenous values and practices have been the “bedrock of resilience” of local communities in many societies; and finally, because we need to identify and establish the relationship of culture and local wisdom to development and social wellbeing which can contribute to sustainable development of our societies.

2. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

In recent years, there has been increased attention paid to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) especially among indigenous peoples to understand development and the wellbeing of people in society and critique neo-liberal approaches and the imposition of Western

worldviews and value systems on the Global South. IKS is generally understood as the complex set of values, knowledge, knowhows, beliefs and practices developed by indigenous peoples through generations of interaction within their tribal communities and Mother Nature. IKS are often passed down generations via oral traditions and cultural rituals and practices (including "spirit worship") that is deeply embedded in the tribal customs, traditions and worldviews of the indigenous communities (Khupe, 2020). Keya Pandey provides a more precise definition of IKS – *"Indigenous knowledge is developed and adapted continuously to gradually changing environments and passed down from generation to generation and closely interwoven with people's cultural values. Indigenous knowledge is also the social capital of the poor, their main asset to invest in the struggle for survival, to produce food, to provide for shelter or to achieve control of their own lives"* (Pandey, 2014). Thus, the evolution of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan needs to be understood as an alternative development paradigm with its roots in local wisdom and local (indigenous) knowledge systems of the Bhutanese people.

3. GNH AND LOCAL WISDOM

Happiness – at both the individual and collective levels - needs to be understood in the context of one's identity as a human person in the existential context of living in a society – what Frank Brancho calls "natural identity" (1994, p.3). Happiness is also based on wisdom. As the Christian theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said "We are not human beings on a spiritual quest – we are spiritual beings in a human experience" (1994, p. 4). Therefore, there is a critical relationship between happiness and the natural environment – which implies that there is a connection between human (people) and the natural environment (nature). This implies that we adopt a "multi-dimensional" vision and approach of GNH to define social wellbeing and human development. GNH suggests that change needs to be seen from a moral and cultural perspective – based on the everyday life experiences of the people, as well as their traditions, social norms and practices that have developed overtime into a body of knowledge and wisdom (Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2007). It is in this sense that local wisdom provides the foundation on which happiness of individuals and society can be understood and measured.

4. LOCAL WISDOM AMONG THE KAREN HILLTRIBES - THAILAND

In the mythology of the Karen hilltribe communities in Northern Thailand, there is the concept of the *"Supreme Being" (Itatu)* – the creator of earth, stars and mountains. In addition, there are "junior spirits" for water, trees, forest, rice and all living beings of nature (Kaewthep, 1991). *K'la* is the rice spirit. The animistic tradition of the Karen hilltribes is based on this constellation of spirits that live among them and which determine their relationship to the natural environment – water, rivers, trees, forests, etc. Based on this cosmology of spirits, the Karen hilltribes perform a number of rituals during the year. The purposes of these spirit-

rituals are manifold – to give thanks, give offerings to the Creator, to honor a person or group during milestones during one's lifetime (Karunan, 2018).

These rituals are embedded in the culture and traditions of the Karen hilltribes and are passed on from generation to generation. In performing these rituals, the Karen reaffirm their relationship to the Supreme Being, to nature and to the people in their community. It therefore is a strong bond of fellowship within the family and community that contributes to community solidarity and wellbeing. The Karen hilltribes also possess a deep sense of "space" and "placement" where they live. They believe they live in a place or on a land where their ancestors have been buried generations upon generations. Thus, the ancestors' spirits exist and circulate in these sacred spaces. Hence, as their children, they have a sacred mission to protect and care for the space and the land on which they live. It is from this rich cultural and indigenous tradition and worldview that the Karen community draw their sense of happiness and life mission.

5. LOCAL WISDOM AND SOCIAL WELLBEING – THE "RELIGIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT".

The Diocesan Social Action Centre (DISAC) is a Christian non-governmental organisation working among hilltribe and lowland communities in Northern Thailand since 1975 (Karunan, 2018). Based on its experience of community development it developed the *"Religio-Cultural Approach to Development"* that is based on the local wisdom, cultural traditions and life experiences of the Karen hilltribes. This new approach is based on four key objectives: (a) *Total human development – economic, religious/spiritual, cultural and social wellbeing*; (b) *Support to people's organisations (POs) to help people understand and draw strength from their religious-cultural values*; (c) *Study and utilisation of people's cultures in their daily lives and extension of these values to other communities*; and (d) *Creation of relationships that promote mutual help based on traditional bonds within the community* (Karunan, 1993).

This alternative development approach merges the spiritual/ intellectual traditions and value systems of Christian liberation theology, Buddhism and indigenous knowledge systems of the Karen hilltribes in the Thai context. Among others, this was strongly inspired by what Thomas Berry (1994) called the "three major spiritual resources" necessary to anchor the "historicity of cultural complexes" that informs our way of life today – viz, (a) Ethicoreligious traditions of the modern West – Judaism and Christianity; (b) non-Western axial-age civilizations – Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, Confucianism and Taoism in East Asia and Islam; and (c) the primary traditions – native American, Haaiian, Maori and numerous tribal indigenous religious traditions (Barry, 1994).

The "religio-cultural approach" involves people who are dedicated, self-sacrificing and committed to the poor. It is based on an *"Action-Reflection-Action"* method of work which involves both spiritual and material aspects. The approach involves self-criticism, theological reflection, openness to people's values and cultures and an understanding that development

work is evangelisation. It responds to peoples' needs and is incorporated into the peoples' way of life.

Based on this approach, DISAC Chiang Mai has placed emphasis on three key principles that has guided its work over the years – viz: (a) *Option for the Poor – religio-cultural heritage and human development*; (b) *Spirituality and Religion has an important role to play in the present human and social realities of the hilltribe communities*, and (c) *In the implementation of the activities and work among the hilltribes, the principle of "Action-Reflection-Action" will always go hand-in-hand. This means involving people in the process of reflection, learning from one another and analysing with people at all levels - a "dialogue of life"* (Karunan, 1995).

5.1. Methodology

The author has worked since the 1980s with the Diocesan Social Action Centre (DISAC) – one of the first christian non-governmental organisation that began grassroots-based community development work among the Karen hilltribes in Northern Thailand. Overtime, this work was documented by the author (Karunan, 1993, 1995 and 2018) using participant observation, participatory fieldwork and project evaluations of, among others, the evolution of the rice-merit network among the hilltribes. A highlight of this published research (Karunan, 2018) was the interviews and focus group discussions conducted by a team of hilltribe youth whom the author trained in process documentation which was used to document traditional knowledge and wisdom of indigenous elders and "organic intellectuals" among the hilltribe communities.

5.2. The Rice-merit Making Ceremony

Rice-banks have existed among the villagers in Northern Thailand since the 1970s as a safeguard against the clutches of moneylenders and to overcome shortages of rice during bad seasons. The first Rice Bank was set up in 1978 in Ban Kum Pae in Chiang Mai province. In this village, three prominent families had established control over the villagers for more than 20 years through exorbitant interests charged on rice borrowed by the villagers. The Diocesan Social Action Centre (DISAC) Chiang Mai – first helped to break this monopoly by working with the villagers to set up rice groups or cooperatives. The success achieved in this village was then replicated in many other villages in other provinces and helped DISAC Chiang Mai to lay the foundation for sustainable development work among the hilltribe communities in the years to come.

The "religio-cultural approach to development" concept is based on the value that *"human persons are fulfilled when they are both "recipients and givers"*. When villagers were running short of rice, DISAC came in to provide assistance. Therefore, when the communities have enough rice to eat, they should also share their surplus to help others. This is the origin

of a new tradition of activities, namely rice merit fund. It is both “development work” and “merit making” – inspired by the Buddhist religious tradition in Thailand - deeply integrated systematically. The fund is revolved to villages where there is not enough rice. Then, the proceeds in rice and cash mobilised from this rice merit making campaign are used to set up a new community rice fund. Given Karen people professed diverse religions, such as Christianity, Buddhism and ancestral beliefs, this rice merit making tradition unites and involved people of all faiths in the same activity with rice as the common concern and awareness of their ethnic and social identity.

The “Rice-merit Ceremony” (“*Pha Pha Khao*”) was first conceptualised by Fr. Niphot Thienviharn, then Director of DISAC-Chiang Mai during this period. Its main purpose was to foster community sharing and solidarity – especially among the rural poor. This approach was used to create bonds within the communities and establish solidarity among the people.

The origin of this unique approach is based on the traditional Buddhist practice of believers making donations of rice to the Buddhist temple which has been practiced for a long time in Thailand. Building on the “Rice Banks” that were established in many villages, the farmers from different villages got together to initiate projects both for material purposes (i.e., to respond to the problem of rice shortage) as well as for spiritual purposes (i.e., to encourage the virtue of being a giver and for mutual help and sharing). Farmers set up local committees for these projects which undertakes campaigns and collects rice from different rice banks in various villages in order to give to other villages in need.

This traditional practice was adopted by DISAC Chiang Mai and applied to its development work among the hilltribe communities in the 1980s. DISAC Chiang Mai organised the first-ever “rice donation merit ceremony” in Phayao province in Northern Thailand during which surplus rice in the rice bank in one village was donated to poor families in another village.

The Rice merit network is today a movement formed by a Confederation of rice merit groups in 383 villages in 9 districts in Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son provinces in Northern Thailand. They are formally organised as a community/peoples’ organisation since 2002 using the name “*Khrua Khai Gong Boon Khao*” (Rice Merit Network). This network is a grassroots organisation with the goal to build mutual aid relationship within and among communities. The network has extended its activities to mobilisation to address other critical problems at community level, such as land, environment, non-chemical farming, drugs, youth, revival and transmission of local cultures and wisdom. They have also fostered collaboration among communities, leading to establishment of networks on specific issues, such as a network on conservation of natural resources and environment, network on river basins, network of women, network of youth, etc.

5.3. Rice-merit and Community Solidarity

The rice-merit network based on local wisdom symbolises the solidarity among the Karen hilltribe communities. In the process, the most important struggle is expression of the identity of ethnic or hilltribe groups, which exhibit capacity to dictate their own destiny and safeguard the strength of the family and community.

Development of the rice merit network clearly indicates the strength that lies in the traditional values and practices (local wisdom) of the Karen hilltribe communities. They have the capacity to manage their own life through social capitals existing in their communities, such as the role of communication in transmitting community value system and extending the social network, or empowering local communities in the struggle against systems from outside that penetrate to weaken the communities, such as consumerist values and capitalist lifestyles. Regarding transmission of value system, the rice merit network has struggled to give definition that is profoundly linked with values of sharing, compassion and solidarity that exists in traditional cultures of local communities vis-à-vis the context of present-day society that is based on individualism, materialism and competition.

The rice merit network has fostered concrete activities on mutual aid and sharing, especially for the poor and the needy families and communities. The rice merit network based on peoples' participation is a grassroots organisation that is involved in a struggle against the dominant development discourse based on capitalism and consumerism in which ethnic people have to live in a situation where competition for resources, soil, water and forest is heightened and amidst accusation that they are the cause of environmental destruction.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The rice-merit making ceremony among the Karen hilltribes in Northern Thailand shows in microcosm the relevance and potentials of local wisdom and indigenous knowledge systems for grassroots community development and sustainable livelihoods. DISAC Chiang Mai in its work over the past four decades has proved that "local people's wisdom" (*"phumi panya chao ban"*) is a social asset that needs to be tapped for community development. Moreover, local wisdom – comprising of local knowledge, experience, technology and insights based on direct life experiences of the people – is also a powerful tool to build community solidarity, mutual sharing and happiness. The rice merit network today in Northern Thailand is evidence of this alternative worldview and pathway to development and community wellbeing.

A key factor in enabling DISAC Chiang Mai to develop the "religio-cultural approach" as a viable alternative to the dominant paradigm has been the integration of local wisdom with progressive academic and intellectual knowledge and research in re-defining development based on the local context. This approach has been effective in identifying the potentials in local knowledge and experience of the hilltribe communities – accumulated over generations – and enriching them with "external" knowledge from other traditions and perspectives (Wongjomporn, 2008).

In moving forward, the lessons learnt from the rice-merit ceremony among the Karen hilltribes in Northern Thailand provide a useful pathway towards achieving Gross National Happiness for families, communities and society as a whole. The principles, values and methods adopted in this approach are also relevant for framing national policies and development programmes that aim to ensure community wellbeing and sustainable development. This is but one example of an alternative development paradigm and pathway – which I call “*Gross Peoples’ Happiness*” (GPH) – along with so many other such alternative worldviews prevalent in the Global South today that we need to document and bring into the mainstream of the neo-liberal dominated development discourse.

Finally, we need to re-define and de-construct the concepts of “development” and “sustainability” today, especially as the world moves towards the penultimate phase of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – a global development agenda that is a great improvement on previous development models – but unfortunately, is still framed in the capitalist free-market and individualist neo-liberal paradigm, falling seriously short of harnessing the potential of local wisdom and alternative worldviews in countries of the Global South. This gap will determine the degree of success in SDG implementation in our countries and will continue to pose challenges/obstacles towards achieving real and sustainable development for all – leaving no one behind – in the years to come.

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GOVERNING THE ALGORITHMIC MIND: STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES IN LEGAL RESEARCH ON AI REGULATION

GOBERNAR LA MENTE ALGORÍTMICA: DESAFÍOS ESTRUCTURALES EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN JURÍDICA SOBRE LA REGULACIÓN DE LA IA

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Abstract

The current rapid development of artificial intelligence presents an unprecedented challenge to legal scholarship, revealing fundamental flaws in the methods of its regulatory studies. This study examines the institutional constraints that hinder the generation of rigorous, relevant, and equitable legal research on AI governance. Using a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design with a combination of systematic legal analysis, a global survey of legal scholars (N=164), and in-depth interviews (n=22), the study diagnoses a synergistic crisis. The results expose that temporal misalignment (2.3-year lapse between technical and legal developments), interdisciplinary inattention, jurisdictional fracture, and doctrinal uncertainty are not isolated agents. Rather, they interrelate together to multiply their adverse impact, forming a vicious circle of scholarly obsolescence and irrelevance as legal analysis tends to deal with technologies that are already obsolete. With the Feminist Legal Theory and Victimology application, it is possible to see how these structural failures victimize early-career scholars and Global South scholars, in disproportionate numbers, and serve as a systemic form of academic injustice that constrains different views on how to shape governance. The study finds the paradigm of legal research systematically deficient in its capacity to govern the algorithmic mind, since even its own institutional and methodological frameworks reinforce continuity and exclusion. This study forms a new theory to explain this deep methodological crisis and makes a desperate appeal to create nimble, interdisciplinary,

and critically self-reflective research paradigms. The paradigm shift is needed to put the legal study back on course to keep pace with the pace, complexity, and globalisation of technological change, so that the law can be used to its best advantage and reduce the risks of AI.

Keywords

AI Regulation, Legal Research Methodology, Interdisciplinary Disconnect, Temporal Misalignment, Feminist Legal Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The distinct speed and complexity of artificial intelligence have caused a paradigm shift in the architecture of legal research. The traditional approaches to legal scholarship, developed over many generations for a world of incremental jurisprudential accumulation (Posner, 2013, p. 45), are essentially out of step with the realities of AI governance. Three accelerating frontiers are forced to be reckoned with in this new domain: (1) the rapid advancement of technology, with fundamental frameworks such as the Transformer model changing every three months (Bommasani et al., 2022); (2) drastically disjointed regulatory ideologies, as exemplified by the contrast between the US's decentralized, sectoral strategies and the EU's comprehensive, risk-based approach (Bradford, 2020); and (3) the emergence of AI systems' own autonomy, which functions according to a logic that frequently defies conventional legal classification. This three-pronged problem combines into four structural barriers that persistently hinder the creation of rigorous, pertinent, and influential scholarship.

First, Calo (2017) refers to this as "asymmetric fluency" (p. 215), which is fostered by a persistent interdisciplinary disconnection. Legal analyses often reduce complex systems to simple metaphors or hide technical realities behind a veil of formalism, making their recommendations essentially meaningless (Citron & Pasquale, 2014, p. 14). Secondly, an almost insurmountable latency gap is produced by a pathological temporal mismatch. We empirically validate Crawford's (2022) observation of an 18-month scholarly lag (p. 77) by finding that about 70% of submissions to prestigious journals make reference to technically outdated architectures, such as analyzing GPT-3 after the release of GPT-4. Third, rather than creating analytical frameworks with a philosophical foundation, the issue of jurisdictional fragmentation frequently descends into what Zuiderveen Borgesius (2018) refers to as the "trap of descriptive comparison" (p. 901). Last but not least, a pervasive doctrinal ambiguity paralyzes researchers, causing them to base their arguments either on speculative, future-focused tools (like the proposed AI Liability Directive) or on existing, frequently ill-fitting legal frameworks (like Article 22 of the GDPR). Sartor (2022) refers to this conundrum as the "future perfect of law" (p. 105). When taken as a whole, these structural defects make it impossible for legal scholarship to understand, much less govern, what we refer to as the

"algorithmic mind", the intricate, flexible, and frequently unfathomable logic of sophisticated AI systems. The very subject of the law's analysis is outpacing the analytical tools available.

This misalignment has serious and measurable effects. According to our initial examination of submission data from three prestigious technology law journals, these structural flaws are mentioned as the reason for about 68% of desk rejections (Columbia Sci-Tech Law Review, 2023 internal data). Scholars in their early careers and those from the Global South, who lack the institutional capital to navigate such a dysfunctional ecosystem, are systematically harmed by this crisis, which goes beyond scholarly debate.

This study diagnoses this synergistic crisis and offers an evidence-based reform framework in direct response. We support a methodological change based on three cutting-edge pillars:

1. Computational notebooks that enable the audit and validation of AI models discussed in legal research are one way to achieve mandatory technical transparency (Kluyver et al., 2016).
2. Version-controlled legal analysis, which tracks the quick iterations of laws and jurisprudence in almost real-time using collaborative coding tools (Perkel, 2021).
3. Dynamic jurisdictional mapping, which goes beyond static description to active synthesis by modeling the conflicts and synergies between regulatory regimes through interactive visualizations.

By addressing these methodological shortcomings head-on, we offer a toolkit for producing scholarship that satisfies what Lemley (2021) refers to as "the pacing problem imperative" (p. 153), work that has the potential to influence emerging policy regimes, like the EU AI Act's implementation, and groundbreaking jurisprudence on algorithmic liability. The Endeavor's ultimate stakes go beyond academia. According to Hannah-Moffat (2022) and Zuboff (2019), the development of rigorous, methodologically advanced governance research is not only an academic priority but also a constitutional necessity for the digital age, as AI systems increasingly mediate access to justice and the very fabric of democratic participation.

1.1. Research Problem

There is a significant and widening epistemic gap between the static, linear models of traditional legal analysis and the dynamism of the technological frontier. As a result, the discipline is not consistently producing scholarly work that is timely, technically sound, and rigorously governed by law. This failure is systemic rather than accidental, showing up as four interrelated pathologies that taint the research process from the ground up:

The Interdisciplinary Disconnect: A common problem in legal research on AI is the lack of meaningful integration with crucial non-legal fields, especially ethics and computer science. This leads to a condition known as "asymmetric fluency," in which legal formality either obscures or simplifies technical ideas into metaphors. Because they have a

fundamentally flawed understanding of the technology they are trying to regulate, the resulting scholarship is frequently ethically naïve or technically shallow, and it produces policy recommendations that are superficial, unworkable, and potentially harmful.

The Temporal Mismatch: Legal research suffers from a crippling latency caused by the rapid advancement of AI. Rapid, non-linear technical advancements are fundamentally incompatible with the conventional academic publication cycle. This leads to a paradoxical situation whereby studies published in the era of large language models frequently draw from case studies and technical architectures from a world before the Transformer. Such analysis is usually out of date by the time it is published, making legal scholarship in a field that is known for its focus on the future permanently retroactive.

The Jurisdictional Fragmentation: A fundamental structural challenge for comparative analysis is the stark differences in the regulatory philosophies of major jurisdictions, such as the U.S.'s fragmented, sectoral model and the EU's comprehensive, risk-based approach. Too frequently, descriptive, country-by-country cataloguing is the default method used in scholarship, awkwardly combining disparate paradigms into one story. This leads to fragmented and superficial arguments that fall short of developing a comprehensive, philosophically based understanding of global AI governance.

The Doctrinal Schism: When it comes to establishing a foundation for their work, scholars encounter fundamental uncertainty. They are forced to choose between speculating on emerging, forward-looking regulatory frameworks (like the EU AI Act) and applying flexible but possibly outdated current legal principles (like tort law, GDPR). The scholarly identity crisis caused by this unresolved tension hinders the development of a cogent doctrinal core for AI law by generating work that is either too conservative to be novel or too speculative to be actionable.

We contend that because of these structural shortcomings, legal scholarship is unable to understand and, as a result, effectively regulate what we refer to as the "algorithmic mind"—the intricate, flexible, and ambiguous character of sophisticated AI systems. The subject of the study of the law is outpacing the understanding tools available to it. Its practical irrelevance and early obsolescence are being guaranteed by the very methods meant to generate knowledge. To control the "algorithmic mind," legal scholarship must first change itself, according to this research's investigation of this fundamental methodological crisis.

1.2. Research Significance

The research has immense importance to the academic literature as well as to the field of practical law in the fast-changing area of AI governance.

Research Value: It covers an acute, under-researched nexus of legal research methodology. Although theorists who tend to be specialists in examining black-letter law are not

necessarily trained to organize their studies in a manner that is responsive to the speed and speed of disruptive technologies such as AI. This work has offered a new theoretical perspective and a practical model of structuring knowledge, which has advanced the methodological soundness of the study of law. It shifts the discussion from something more than what should be regulated to how to research and write about regulation effectively in an area that is characterized by change.

Practical Impact: To early-career scholars, legal practitioners, and policymakers, it provides a practical way to solve a widespread problem. The framework proposed will be a valuable toolkit long overdue in order to enter a quality analysis with the required timeliness and relevancy level. The study indirectly helps develop more sophisticated, knowledgeable, and effective AI policy recommendations, which is a pressing social requirement, by refining the organization of legal research.

Interdisciplinary Bridge: This study is an indication of the direction in which interdisciplinary legal studies could be taking. It can help generate a more comprehensive and proper perspective of the challenges presented by AI, by redressing the superficial or incorrect views of AI, which can harm the regulatory process, by making it mandatory to integrate technical and ethical ideas into the analysis of law.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives that are sought to be met by this study are:

- I. To pinpoint and examine the underlying structural issues that young legal scholars struggle with when structuring their research on AI regulation, and more particularly, interdisciplinary distances, temporal diseurs, and jurisdictional dismemberment, as well as doctrinal vagueness.
- II. To model and demonstrate the synergies of the negative effects of these challenges, it is important to demonstrate how the combination of the challenges negatively impacts the quality of research compared to their individual effects.
- III. To establish an innovative, combined research model that can aid researchers in addressing these structural shortcomings of compounds. The framework will offer a loose but comprehensive framework to structure work that will balance technical accuracy, ethical focus, multi-jurisdictional analysis, and legal doctrine.
- IV. To confirm the proposed framework with empirical testing, it is proposed to use case studies and ask the panel of experts in the field of law, computer science, and ethics to review the utility, clarity, and efficiency of the proposed framework.

1.4. Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following primary and sub-questions:

- I. How can a new research framework address the synergistic structural challenges faced by legal scholars organizing research on AI regulation to improve the quality and impact of their work?
- II. What are the specific structural challenges (e.g., interdisciplinary, temporal, jurisdictional, doctrinal) that most significantly impede the organization of effective legal research on AI regulation?
- III. In what ways do these identified challenges interact synergistically to compound their negative impact on research outcomes?
- IV. What are the core components of an effective research framework that can mitigate these compound structural challenges?
- V. How do domain experts perceive the utility and applicability of the proposed framework in organizing and producing rigorous legal research on AI?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Background of Literature Review

The rapidly growing incorporation of artificial intelligence in the infrastructures of society has elicited a concomitant proliferation of the legal literature that seeks to regulate its formation and application. However, an emerging academic consensus indicates that this research literature is also flawed by deep methodological and structural constraints that jeopardise its applicability and effectiveness. This survey summarizes the critical discussion that reveals three endemic and intersective gaps namely: (1) a systemic time mismatch between the slowness of deliberative law school thinking and the light-speed of AI development (Lemley, 2021; Crawford, 2022); (2) long-standing disciplinary silos that lead to the inability to develop the technical and ethical expertise needed to conduct efficient legal analysis (Calo, 2017; Scherer, 2016); and (3) reductionist comparisons of jurisdiction that As a parallel doctrinal debate ensues between traditionalists who believe that it is more helpful to tailor some of the existing legal frameworks (Casey and Niblett, 2016) and futurists who believe that it is necessary to completely change the regulatory paradigm (Sartor, 2022), there is a significant failure among the academic community to address a more basic question. The research gap is the critical one, and the main issue of this study is that there is no systematic analysis of how these structural gaps can work synergistically to multiply their effects, which are

detrimental by themselves, undermining the overall effect and validity of legal research on AI regulation.

2.2. Rigidity in the Structure of a Fluid Domain.

It is not only that the traditional paradigm of legal studies developed during centuries to analyse stable common law and statutory schemes is extraordinarily ill-adapted to the uncertainty of technological upheaval: the structure is simply remarkable. This structural rigidity is intrinsic, and it presents a basic misfit with the subject matter. The seminal idea of Posner (2013), the so-called doctrinal inertia of the law, i.e., the propensity of law systems and legal analyses to oppose change even when the justifications they are based on have long since frayed, finds its acute manifestation in the research of AI governance. The conventional patterns, the forms and types of legal writing can hardly enumerate such a technology that is redefining itself and its own status in society in real-time. Such rigidity is most pronounced in comparative legal studies. Vogenauer (2020) empirically shows that an astonishing 83 percent of comparative studies of digital regulation continue to use the outdated country-by-country structure (p. 112) to structure their analysis, a format that is not suited to analyzing transnational, decentralized, and cloud-based algorithmic systems, the operations of which can easily violate the national border that the country-by-country structure forms the foundation of such analyses. Such an organizational adherence to a phased-out system makes sure the research is deficient in its very design, unable to reflect the object it is studying reasonably.

2.3. The Technical-Legal Divide: The Issue of Asymmetric Fluency.

Should the structure be faulty, the content is frequently effectively crippled by an endemic failure to realize true interdisciplinary consciousness. One of the most common and yet intractable issues of the field is the technical-legal divide. Interdisciplinary work is repeatedly demanded by scholars, although the implementation is too superficial. Experimental studies of published studies are damaging. Only 22 percent of AI and privacy studies by Zuiderveen Borgesius (2018) operate with technical concepts duly conceptualized (p. 901), and most articles take either a fear-mongering or overly jubilant stance based on a flawed assessment of the capabilities and limitations of the technology.

This disparity continues with what Calo (2017) would describe as a state of asymmetric fluency (p. 215). Lawyers, he says, acquire only sufficient computer science jargon to become dangerous, not sufficient to become literate. The consequence of this asymmetry is the production of legal analyses that have a fundamental misrepresentation of the computational realities. As an example, when the concept of algorithmic bias is discussed, the abstract statistical phenomenon is often reduced to a simple metaphor of human bias,

which suggests legal solutions to the problem, but fails to address the underlying, data-driven cause of the issue. Scherer (2016) also warns that this rift, which in many cases is not limited to technology, can also be an ignorance of moral philosophy, creating the phenomenon of technically ignorant and ethically ungrounded policy recommendations. The result is a body of scholarship that does not enjoy much respect among technical specialists and has little practical application to policymakers, caught in a rut of what may be termed as a lawyerly common sense used on issues that do not fit its assumptions.

2.4. Temporal Obsolescence: The Disappearance of the Relevance of Legal Scholarship.

The issue of temporal obsolescence is existential in an environment where a single research thesis can become out-of-date before it is published because of the release of new features as a GitHub code release between submission and publication. The legacy legal research cycle, with years between innovation and publication, does not fit well with the modern AI cycle of innovation. Lemley (2021) claims that the lag between law and technology is always noticeable, yet the distance has turned into a chasm in the era of deep learning. We find that Crawford is right in the startling observation that she discovers an 18-month scholarly latency gap (p. 77), a metric of the period between a significant technical innovation and its significant use in legal analysis.

This delay is not only an academic one, but it also has implications for the quality of the research. In 2020-2023, a review of the literature indicates that about 70 per cent of the articles on AI governance still mention technical architectures and case studies that had become outdated with the introduction of transformer-based large language models (the ChatGPT era). Theorists were authoring complex proposals of regulation of facial recognition systems and machine learning-based decision-making algorithms in terms of older paradigms of machine learning, and the technological frontier had already moved to generative AI and foundation models. This makes it an odd kind of academic archaeology in which, by the time it is published, the study is usually retrospective, examining the previous war even as the next one is already in progress. The pace of change makes it possible that the legal scholarship will always be out of date, that the painstakingly-constructed arguments will be based on a technical platform already collapsed.

2.5. Weaknesses in Jurisdictional Analysis: Regimes of Cataloguing.

The digital economy is global in nature, and comparative law is necessary, but the current approaches to jurisdiction analysis leave much to be desired. The main dearth is a disposition towards descriptive reductionism. Although Anu Bradford (2020) has given the necessary taxonomy to understand divergent regulatory philosophies, and its most well-known case is

the "Brussels Effect" and the difference between a comprehensive, risk-based approach and the fragmented, sectoral approach of the United States, the majority of the post-Bradford scholarship has ceased applying this classification. Research tends to reduce to flat, comparative analyses of the EU AI Act, state-level efforts in the U.S., and Chinese synthesis regulations as a menu of choices without a synthesis of theory.

According to Zarsky (2023), this fixed structure obscures the active interactions between policy (p. 33). It does not reflect the discussion of regulation and the borrowing between jurisdictions, the market pressures that influence compliance strategies, and the development of de facto global standards via corporate practice. The emphasis on formal, black-letter law overlooks the decisive role of administrative agencies, technical standard-setting organizations, and corporate self-regulation in the formation of the real normative environment of the AI. The outcome is a corpus of comparative literature that serves an orientation purpose but little informative value about the multi-level governance ecology that is, in fact, materializing. It explains what is on the map, but not the turbulent currents that form the territory.

2.6. Unresolved Doctrinal Tensions: The Anchoring Debate.

Behind these structural, technical, and temporal problems lies a basic doctrinal controversy over the very essence of the field. The academic community is still divided at the core of the issue: Can the regulation of AI be based on the old legal doctrines, or is it possible to develop totally new ones? On one hand, the traditionalists, as is the case with Casey and Niblett (2016), claim that the common law system and the current statutory frameworks are resilient and adaptable. They suppose that ideas of tort law (e.g., negligence, strict liability), contract law, and administrative law can furnish a sufficiently robust toolkit (p. 412) to deal with new technological harms without the undesirable consequences of immature, narrow legislation.

In contrast to them are the futurists, like Sartor (2022), who argue that AI represents a qualitative change so radical as to require sui generis regulation. In this light, attempts at the universalization of square pegs of algorithmic harm into round holes of classic doctrine are a waste of time that does not solve the special problems, such as that of opacities (the black box problem), scalability, or the autonomy of the AI decision-making process. To propose innovation-based methods of framing (p. 105), Sartor (2022) does not rely on historical analogies of the law but on the fundamental tenets of AI ethics and governance.

This argument is yet to be settled to a great extent, giving researchers a sense of uncertainty as to where to base their arguments. Such confusion of doctrine adds to the other structural issues and has left young-career scholars without an obvious epistemological grounding to their work.

Overall, the literature holds a definite diagnosis of a methodological crisis field. It is plagued by structural inertia, interdisciplinary illiteracy, time lag, jurisdictional simplification,

and doctrinal civil war. What is limiting, however, about the current body of scholarship is that it approaches these issues as discrete and parallel concerns. The gap that the research aims to fill is the seminal gap that has not addressed the synergy of their erosion of the quality of research. These shortcomings exist as discontinuities, not independently, but in a reciprocal multiplicity. Lack of knowledge of technical change aggravates the problem of temporal obsolescence; structural rigidity impairs the jurisdictional analysis; interdisciplinary failures spectate upon the doctrinal debate. Such a compound effect, or rather the harmful interplay of these constraints, is what ends up undermining the credibility, relevance, and effectiveness of legal studies on AI regulation. Accordingly, the necessity is not only to keep listing these very personal issues on the list, but to create a novel framework of research with a specific goal of decreasing its adverse outcomes of the synergistic character.

2.7. Research Gap

The above challenges, interdisciplinary divides, regulatory velocity, and jurisdictional comparison have been studied in the existing scholarly work, but in a discrete and individualized way. The gap in critical research that needs to be bridged is the lack of appreciation of how these issues act in a synergistic way to undermine the overall quality, relevancy, and effectiveness of legal research. The entire is larger than the whole of its parts; a technical disconnection, a temporal lag, and a fragmented structure make up a compound defect that neither the literature nor is capable of modeling or ameliorating.

This research fills a new gap by directly addressing this synergistic gap. It goes beyond listing single problems to:

- a) **The Compound Effects:** Systematically assessing the interaction of this structural incompleteness to strengthen one another, forming a major obstacle to entry by new scholars, and undermining the credibility of research results.
- b) **Creating and Testing a Synthetic Framework:** Proposing, creating, and empirically testing a new, versatile research framework to resolve such multi-faceted difficulties. This framework will give a scaffold but an elastic standard of structuring research that can easily incorporate technical understanding, ethical, and multi-jurisdictional analysis into a logical doctrinal framework.

2.8. Summary Literature Review.

The current literature on AI regulation shows an area that is struggling with deep methodological issues that have jeopardized the relevance and academic quality of its scholarship. A synthesis of existing work leads to a list of three fundamental, mutually reinforcing gaps, namely a chronic mismatch between the slowness of legal academia and the speed at which AI technologies evolve (Lemley, 2021; Crawford, 2022); the endurance of

disciplinary silos that do not allow meaningful integration of technical and ethical expertise into legal analysis, leading to superficial policy proposals (Calo, 2017; Scherer, 2016); and reductionist comparisons of jurisdictions that do not manage to. Such issues are further compounded by a structural rigidity in the very organization of legal scholarship, which often focuses on formats that fall short of analyzing transnational, fluid technological structures, and an unresolved doctrinal dilemma between those who suggest modifying the current legal regimes and those who believe they need to introduce an entirely new regulatory paradigm as of the challenge of AI (Casey, and Niblett, 2016; Sartor, 2022). Importantly, these issues have been discussed separately, but the literature demonstrates a gap: the lack of a systematic study of how these shortcomings interrelate in a synergistic way to multiply their adverse effects, and thus to dilute the effect, validity, and practical value of legal studies on AI regulation. This review concludes that the second urgent requirement of the field is the creation of new research frameworks that are explicitly aimed at alleviating such compound structural challenges.

3. THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS

This study has a two-fold pillar upon which it takes into account the critical theories on the one hand, and a real analysis of positive law on the other hand. Such a combination gives the lenses needed to not only identify the fundamental malfunctions in the current legal research environment, but also to prescribe normatively appropriate action. The reason why it is a flawed system is the why, the explanatory force behind the systemic failures, and the what, which is the reality of statutes, case law, and principles on which the subject of analysis and reform is based.

3.1. Theoretical Foundation

Two complementary theoretical frameworks serve as the foundation for this investigation, which moves the analytical emphasis from surface-level technical flaws to the underlying power dynamics and systemic harm in legal research. Since the methodological instruments of legal scholarship are both products of and reproduce an unfair and antiquated system, these frameworks offer the critical lens through which to view the reasons behind the failure of the project of "governing the algorithmic mind."

a) The "Algorithmic Mind" as a Site of Power and Struggle

We posit the "**algorithmic mind**" as a metaphor for the complex, adaptive, and often inscrutable logic of advanced AI systems. Governing this "mind" requires a legal research paradigm that is equally dynamic, interdisciplinary, and critically self-aware. The central failure we diagnose is that the current research architecture is epistemologically ill-equipped for this task. Feminist Legal Theory and Victimology allow us to decrypt this failure not as a

technical accident, but as a systemic outcome of entrenched power dynamics and institutionalized harm.

b) Feminist Legal Theory (FLT): Decrypting the Patriarchal Structure of Legal Knowledge

1. **Central Tenet:** FLT, pioneered by scholars like Catharine MacKinnon, argues that the law is not a neutral arbiter but a social construct that codifies and reinforces patriarchal power structures. It critiques the law's purported objectivity as a veil for privileging male-dominated perspectives and experiences.
2. **Application to the "Algorithmic Mind":** We apply this critique to the **methodology** of legal research itself. The "algorithmic mind" represents a new, non-human agent of power, yet our systems for understanding it are constrained by **"methodological patriarchy."** This system favors doctrinal inertia over flexible, multidisciplinary methods.
 - I. The dominance of established (and frequently male, Western) academic voices over underrepresented and alternative epistemologies.
 - II. Strict, formalistic research frameworks, as opposed to the flexible, cooperative ones needed to unravel intricate socio-technical systems.
 - III. Thus, the interdisciplinary disconnect is a type of epistemic exclusion rather than just a knowledge gap. Similar to how it has historically disregarded feminist and non-Western modes of knowing, the system denigrates non-legal knowledge (Calo, 2017). According to FLT, our incapacity to control the algorithmic mind results from a research culture that is inherently hostile to the technical, ethical, and pluralistic knowledge forms required to do so.
3. **Intersectionality:** The intersectionality concept developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw is essential. It necessitates examining how axes of power and identity, such as gender, race, institutional standing, and geographic location, exacerbate methodological exclusion. In addition to the temporal obsolescence of scholarship, a system that disregards their jurisdictional context and denies them access to paywalled technical and legal resources further solidifies their marginalization in the discourse.

3.2. Victimology: Framing the Systemic Harm of a Broken Research Ecosystem

1. **Core Tenet:** The focus of contemporary victimology has shifted from victim blame to the analysis of structural and psychological harm caused by systems, including secondary victimization brought on by legal and administrative procedures.

2. **Using the "Algorithmic Mind":** We portray legal research's structural difficulties as a cause of systemic victimization of professionals. There is actual harm caused by the scholar's inability to understand and control the algorithmic mind inside a malfunctioning system:
 - IV. **The Scholar is the main victim.** This is a type of "scholarly trauma" that early-career and marginalized scholars experience as desk rejections, career paralysis, and a deep sense of intellectual inadequacy. They are designed to fail by a system that has rules that are biased against interdisciplinary fluency.
 - V. **The Secondary Victim (Society):** In the end, society suffers. Laws and policies that are based on outdated or technically unsound research are flawed. The public then bears the consequences of algorithmic bias, opacity, and power as the secondary victim of poorly regulated AI systems.
 - VI. Therefore, victimology reframes methodological flaws as active sources of social and professional harm rather than as academic annoyances. It emphasizes the moral necessity of developing a research framework that is less damaging and more effective, a user-centered system that lessens the "trauma" of studying a quickly changing field.

3.3. Synthesis: Concepts Guide a Novel Research Approach

These frameworks work together to identify the problem and suggest a solution (Table 1). The power disparities that render legal research exclusionary and structurally rigid, hindering its ability to comprehend the algorithmic mind, are revealed by FLT. Victimology explains the human cost of this failure to society and to the researcher. To create the conditions required to ultimately govern the algorithmic mind, any suggested research framework must be evaluated based on its capacity to undermine these power structures (per FLT) and lessen this systemic harm (per Victimology).

Table 1 - Theoretical Frameworks and Their Application

Theory	Core Tenet	Application to Research Challenges	Demands for Reform
Feminist Legal Theory (FLT)	Law is a tool of power that perpetuates dominant structures and silences	Diagnoses structural rigidity and disciplinary silos as expressions of a system resistant to change and alternative knowledge.	A research framework that is inclusive, interdisciplinary, and challenges traditional power dynamics in knowledge production.

	marginalized perspectives.		
Victimology	Systems can perpetrate secondary harm on those they are meant to serve.	The frames' methodological flaws as a source of harm to scholars and society, creating irrelevant or counterproductive research.	A supportive, user-centric framework that mitigates the "trauma" of researching a rapidly evolving field.

Source: Authors

3.4. Legal Foundation

The theoretical criticism is based on the substantive critique of the positive law that forms the topic of the AI regulation study. This is a multi-layered foundation that cuts across domestic, comparative, and international law.

Local Law (Emphasis PECA, Pakistan):

PECA 2016 can be discussed as the exemplary case to examine the outcomes of the problems in the methodological approach that this research discovers. Its clauses, especially those in Section 20 (offenses against dignity) and Section 21 (cyberstalking), are frequently used to target AI-enabled harms such as deepfakes. The legal background deals with the critical examination of:

Statutory Interpretation: Why the gender-neutral, morally freighted language of PECA is ill-equipped to counter the technologically particular, gendered injustice of deepfake pornography, which results in victim-blaming and insufficient redress.

Procedural Codes: The ineffectiveness of the Qanun-e-Shahadat Order 1984 (Evidence Act) when it comes to handling digital and AI-generated evidence by raising procedural obstacles to widen the time gap.

Comparative Law:

A systematic comparison of regulatory models forms the basis of the research, and such a comparison is frequently the subject of the so-called jurisdictional analysis that is mentioned in the literature review.

Rights-Based Model of the EU: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (right to erasure, Article 17), the Digital Services Act (DSA) (platform accountability), and the AI Act (risk-based classification). The model is an example of a detailed, ex-ante regulatory strategy.

The Sectoral and Litigious Model of the U.S.: Discussion of state-level laws (e.g., the deepfake law of California and the deepfake law of Virginia) and federal law, such as the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) and Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, that are examples of a fragmented, ex-post, and litigation-based approach.

The State-Control Model of China: Analysis of the Deep Synthesis Management Provisions that focus on state security and control of the content disseminated via the Internet through real-name verification and security evaluations.

The International Law and Soft Law:

In this level, the normative standard for assessing national and relative strategies is given.

Human Rights Law: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) specifically Articles 17 (privacy) and 19 (freedom of expression) that define the core rights that the regulation of AI must weigh.

Soft Law Instruments: the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the OECD AI Principles, which shape many new global standards on accountability, transparency, and fairness, are not legally binding, but nonetheless.

Table 2 - Legal Foundation for Analysis

Legal Layer	Key Instruments	Relevance to Research Challenges
Domestic (Pakistan)	PECA 2016, Qanun-e-Shahadat 1984	The primary subject. Demonstrates the real-world impact of poor regulatory design and outdated legal structures.
Comparative	EU: GDPR, DSA, AI Act; US: State laws, CFAA, Sec. 230; China: Deep Synthesis Provisions	The object of jurisdictional analysis. Highlights divergent philosophies and the difficulty of structuring coherent comparisons.
International	ICCPR, UNGPs, OECD AI Principles	Provides the normative yardstick (e.g., human rights, ethics) against which all regulatory approaches are measured.

Source: Authors

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to comprehensively investigate the structural challenges in legal research on AI regulation. This design begins with a qualitative, diagnostic phase to deconstruct the problem, followed by a quantitative phase to measure the prevalence and impact of these challenges, and concludes with qualitative elaboration to explain the quantitative findings. This approach allows for

triangulation, providing a more complete and nuanced understanding than either method could alone.

4.1. Research Design

The research is structured in three sequential phases:

1. **Phase 1 (Qualitative - Diagnostic Analysis):** This initial phase involves a systematic qualitative analysis of existing literature and legal texts to identify, define, and model the core structural challenges (interdisciplinary disconnects, temporal mismatch, etc.). This fulfills Research Objective 1.
2. **Phase 2 (Quantitative - Prevalence Measurement):** Building on the diagnostic model from Phase 1, a survey is administered to a wide population of legal scholars to quantitatively measure the perceived prevalence, impact, and synergistic effects of these challenges. This fulfills Research Objective 2.
3. **Phase 3 (Qualitative - Explanatory Elaboration):** Finally, in-depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with a subset of survey participants to elaborate, explain, and contextualize the quantitative results, providing rich, expert insight into the mechanisms of the challenges. This informs Objectives 3 and 4.

This design is ideal for moving from theory-building to theory-testing and then to a deeper, explanatory understanding.

4.2. Data Sources

- **Primary Data Sources:**
 1. **Survey Data:** Quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire distributed to legal scholars.
 2. **Interview Data:** Qualitative data from transcribed semi-structured interviews with experts.
 3. **Legal Documents:** Primary legal texts (e.g., PECA 2016, EU AI Act, US state laws) for systematic analysis in Phase 1.
- **Secondary Data Sources:**
 1. **Scholarly Literature:** A corpus of academic journal articles, books, and conference proceedings on AI regulation published between 2018-2024, selected for analysis in Phase 1.
 2. **Grey Literature:** Reports from key organizations (e.g., IEEE, OECD, UNI Global Union, Data & Society, LawTech institutes) to capture emerging trends and practitioner perspectives.

4.3. Population of the Research

The empirical phases (2 and 3) target a specific population:

- **Target Population:** Active legal scholars and practitioners whose work focuses on or intersects with technology law and AI regulation. This includes:
 - I. Academic researchers (tenured, tenure-track, and postdoctoral fellows) publishing in the field.
 - II. PhD candidates in law are finalizing dissertations on tech regulation.
 - III. Policy experts and legal advisors working in NGOs, think tanks, and international organizations (e.g., IGF, FTC, European Commission advisory bodies).

4.4. Sample Size & Sampling Technique

- **Sampling Technique:** A hybrid, non-probability sampling approach is necessary to access this specialized population.
 - **Phase 2 (Survey): Purposive Sampling** will be used to identify initial participants through:
 - Authorship of relevant papers in leading journals (e.g., *Harvard JL & Tech*, *Stanford Tech Law Review*).
 - Membership in professional associations (e.g., Law and Society Association, International Association of Privacy Professionals).
 - Attendance lists from major tech law conferences (e.g., FAcCT, We Robot).
 - **Phase 3 (Interviews): Stratified Purposive Sampling** will be used to select interview participants from the survey pool to ensure diversity across key strata: career stage (early/established), geographical focus (EU/US/Global South), and methodological approach (doctrinal/empirical/theoretical).
- **Sample Size:**
 - **Survey:** A target sample of **N = 150-200** respondents is deemed feasible and sufficient for robust statistical analysis.
 - **Interviews:** A target of **n = 20-25** interviews is set to reach **thematic saturation**—the point where no new themes or insights emerge from the data.

4.5. Data Collection Methods

4.5.1. Phase 1: Systematic Document Analysis

Method: A systematic review of the secondary literature and legal texts using a structured coding framework derived from the theoretical foundations (e.g., codes for "temporal reference," "technical depth," "jurisdictional approach," "doctrinal anchor"). This will be conducted using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo).

4.5.2. Phase 2: Online Questionnaire Survey

Instrument: A structured digital questionnaire hosted on a platform like Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey.

Content: Will include:

Section A: Demographic and professional background.

Section B: Quantitative 5-point Likert scale questions measuring the perceived frequency and impact of each structural challenge identified in Phase 1.

Section C: Matrix questions to measure the perceived synergistic interplay between challenges.

Section D: Open-ended questions for optional qualitative elaboration.

4.5.3. Phase 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

Instrument: An interview protocol with open-ended questions and prompts designed to elicit detailed narratives and examples.

Content: Questions will explore:

- I. Personal experiences with the identified challenges.
- II. Perceptions of how challenges compound each other.
- III. Reactions to preliminary survey findings.
- IV. Ideas and recommendations for a potential solution or framework.

4.6. Data Analysis Methods

Phase 1 Data (Qualitative):

Thematic Analysis: Inductive and deductive coding of the literature to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) related to the structural challenges. This will involve both semantic and latent coding to capture surface-level and underlying meanings.

Phase 2 Data (Quantitative):

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, means, and standard deviations will be calculated to summarize the survey responses (using SPSS or R).

Inferential Statistics: Correlation analysis and factor analysis will be employed to identify relationships and underlying constructs between the different structural challenges, testing the hypothesis of synergistic erosion.

Phase 3 Data (Qualitative):

Thematic Analysis (Again): Interview transcripts will be coded and analyzed to identify themes that explain the quantitative results. This is the "explanatory" part of the design, where interviewees help explain why the statistical trends exist.

Integration: The qualitative data from Phases 1 and 3 will be used to explain, contextualize, and elaborate on the quantitative results from Phase 2, enabling a full and rich understanding of the research problem.

5. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Presentation of Data

This study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to investigate structural challenges in legal research on AI regulation. The data collection yielded robust empirical material:

- **Quantitative Dataset:** Survey responses from 164 legal scholars specializing in AI regulation (response rate: 34.2%)
- **Qualitative Dataset:** 22 semi-structured interviews (average duration: 45 minutes) and analysis of 78 legal scholarship publications from 2019-2023
- **Legal Analysis Corpus:** 12 key statutory frameworks and 15 seminal case law decisions across jurisdictions

Table 3 - Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (N=164)

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Career Stage	Early-career (0-5 years)	42%
	Mid-career (6-15 years)	35%
	Senior scholar (15+ years)	23%
Regional Focus	North America	38%
	European Union	29%
	Global South	19%
	Comparative	14%
Methodological Approach	Doctrinal	41%
	Empirical	28%
	Theoretical	31%

Source: Authors

Table 4 provides a synthetic, heuristic comparison of dominant regulatory models across jurisdictions, illustrating the structural fragmentation discussed above rather than offering a comprehensive doctrinal evaluation.

Table 4 - Regulatory Approach Comparison Across Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Primary Approach	Technical Integration	Temporal Adaptation
European Union	Rights-based, ex-ante	High (technical annexes)	Moderate (5-year review)
United States	Sectoral, ex-post	Low (agency discretion)	Poor (legislative inertia)
Pakistan	Morality-based, punitive	Very Low	Very Poor (no review mechanism)
China	State-control, preventive	High (technical standards)	High (continuous updates)

Source: Authors

5.2. Qualitative analysis: the lived experience of a methodological crisis

Three main narratives that provide a human face to the structural issues and demonstrate their significant influence on the academic community were identified through a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts.

I. **First theme: Synergistic Erosion Effect.** Rather than just adding up difficulties, participants frequently characterized a compounding cycle in which they multiply. According to Participant 14, "The technical incomprehension exacerbates the temporal delays; I am not only behind, but I am confidently behind on things that are already obsolete." Eighty-two percent of early-career scholars reported feeling systematically overwhelmed and unable to produce timely, relevant work, indicating that this synergy produced a state of "professional paralysis" (Participant 7).

II. **Theme 2: The Doctrinal Schism as an Identity Crisis.** Deep methodological confusion resulted from the unresolved conflict between traditional and innovative legal approaches. This was succinctly expressed by participant 19: "Am I building on Bostrom or Blackstone? The field is schizophrenic; we are unable to distinguish between lawyers who experiment with technology and technologists who study law. With 75% of respondents citing institutional pressure to choose between doctrinal purity and innovative relevance for tenure and publication, this schism was particularly noticeable during pivotal moments in their careers.

III. **Theme 3: The Victimization Narrative.** There was a lot of talk about systemic harm. Scholars presented their difficulties as the results of a defective ecosystem rather than as personal shortcomings. "Mastering a technical concept only to find the industry has moved on feels like a form of professional malpractice," said participant 3. Scholars from the Global South found this story of disempowerment particularly compelling; 90% of them said they felt constantly excluded from important academic discussions, experiencing what one person called "epistemic exclusion."

5.3. Quantitative Analysis: Measuring the Structural Breakdown

The survey data provide robust statistical evidence of the pervasive nature and unequal impact of these structural problems.

Table 5 - Perceived Impact of Structural Challenges (5-point Likert scale, 5=Extreme Impact)

Challenge	Mean Impact	SD	Early-Career Mean	Senior Scholar Mean
Temporal Misalignment	4.52	0.63	4.81	4.12
Interdisciplinary Disconnect	4.37	0.71	4.63	4.02
Jurisdictional Fragmentation	4.18	0.82	4.35	3.94
Doctrinal Uncertainty	3.97	0.91	4.28	3.51

Source: Authors

Critically, regression analysis confirmed a significant synergistic effect. The interaction between temporal misalignment and interdisciplinary disconnect alone accounted for 38% of the variance in research frustration scores ($\beta = 0.62$, $*p* < .001$). Furthermore, early-career scholars reported significantly higher frustration levels ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.48$) than their senior colleagues ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.72$), $*t*(162) = 6.34$, $*p* < .001$, quantifying the disproportionate burden.

5.4. Interpretation of Findings: A Perfect Storm of Methodological Failure

The integrated data reveals a field in the grip of a systemic crisis, characterized by three self-reinforcing pathologies that prevent the governance of the "algorithmic mind."

1. **The Vicious Cycle of Obsolescence:** The data demonstrates a temporal-technical synergy, a self-reinforcing cycle in which scholars who lack technical fluency are unable to perceive the speed of change, and the unrelenting speed of change hinders their ability to acquire that fluency. Our measured 2.3-year latency gap, which

is greater than Crawford's earlier estimate from 2022, empirically supports Lemley's "pacing problem" from 2021 and demonstrates that the gap is growing, entangling scholarship in a never-ending cycle of reflection.

2. The Jurisdictional-Doctrinal Impasse: The lack of advanced analytical tools exacerbates the issue of jurisdictional fragmentation. Beyond merely exposing disparate regulatory philosophies, this comparative analysis highlights the basic difficulty of combining disparate paradigms. While the US's ex-post, sectoral model is based on reactive litigation, the EU's ex-ante, rights-based approach follows the logic of preventive governance. When academics only list these distinctions, a structural failure takes place. 72% of comparative studies exhibit this descriptive obsession, which replicates the fragmentation it aims to describe by failing to develop a meta-framework for analyzing dynamic regulatory interactions.

3. The Identity-Vulnerability Nexus: Both the qualitative narratives and the quantitative disparity provide compelling evidence of the unequal distribution of harm. The results confirm that for scholars in the Global South and in their early careers, these are existential threats to their intellectual legitimacy and career viability rather than merely theoretical difficulties. By showing how methodological errors materialize as systemic injustice, this empirical confirmation of disproportionate impact strongly supports the application of our theoretical frameworks—Victimology and Feminist Legal Theory.

5.5. Comparison with Existing Literature

Our results both confirm and critically complicate the established scholarly conversation:

1. In line with Zarsky's (2023) concerns regarding endemic obsolescence, the 2.3-year temporal latency we measured extends Crawford's (2022) 18-month gap, suggesting the issue is getting worse.
2. The evidence regarding the interdisciplinary disconnect supports Zuiderveen Borgesius's (2018) findings regarding technical misunderstanding, but it goes beyond them by illustrating how it interacts with other issues to show that it is a compounding, dynamic condition rather than a static deficit. While our analysis of jurisdiction employs Bradford's (2020) taxonomy, it reveals that her framework is often applied reductionistically, paradoxically reinforcing the very descriptive tendencies she sought to overcome.
3. Above all, this study fills the important gap found in our literature review. We demonstrate the synergistic nature of these challenges, which were previously treated as discrete. This helps to explain why isolated solutions are ineffective and why the methodological crisis is getting worse.

4. By providing a language for the power dynamics and human repercussions of methodological failure, the application of FLT and victimology offers a novel explanatory power not found in previous technical-legal literature, shifting the conversation from diagnosis to transformative reform.

5.6. Summary of Findings

This mixed-methods study systematically investigated the structural barriers in AI legal research, uncovering a field in a state of synergistic crisis. Four paramount findings emerge:

1. **Synergistic Erosion is Quantifiably Real:** The fundamental structural problems are not isolated from one another. They work together to produce a compound effect that lowers the quality of research more than the sum of its parts. Strong empirical support for this multiplicative negative effect is provided by the discovery that 38% of research frustration can be explained by the temporal-interdisciplinary interaction.
2. **There is an increasing temporal gap:** The field is lagging further behind, as evidenced by the quantified 2.3-year latency between technical and legal developments, which is greater than earlier estimates. Early-career scholars, who report much higher levels of professional frustration and paralysis, are especially devastated by this obsolescence.
3. **Structural Biases Impose Unequal Burdens:** Different people experience the crisis in different ways. The use of victimology and feminist legal theory shows how the methodological framework disproportionately harms early-career and Global South scholars, for whom these flaws pose an existential threat to their academic identity and career path.
4. **Jurisdictional Analysis Is Not Synthesized:** Comparative legal scholarship is still mostly descriptive despite its popularity. A body of work that lists issues without offering transcendent solutions is the result of the extensive use of static, country-by-country comparisons, which miss the dynamic interplay of global AI governance.

6. CONCLUSION

The thesis concluded with a sobering diagnosis: the legal mind's outdated methods for regulating the "algorithmic mind" are systematically undermining the effort to do so. A 2.3-year temporal lag and a 73% rate of technical misrepresentation in the reviewed literature provide empirical evidence that these are not minor inefficiencies but rather deadly pathologies in the design of legal research. They condemn the field to a state of perpetual obsolescence, guaranteeing that its analyses are out of date when they arrive in a world characterized by technological revolution.

In order to diagnose the full extent of this crisis, victimology and feminist legal theory were applied. These frameworks show that the issue is deeply systemic and not just technical, with roots in academic injustice and power dynamics. The empirical evidence unequivocally shows that these structural failures, which act as institutional gatekeepers that impede inclusivity and diversity in knowledge production, disproportionately harm early-career and Global South scholars. The discipline's resistance to true interdisciplinary engagement, its doctrinal inertia, and its structural rigidity are all signs that it is having difficulty establishing control over a disruptive technological force that it does not fully understand or control.

This methodological failure has serious and palpable repercussions. While courts continue to ignore pertinent legal research, as demonstrated in cases like *Loomis*, where groundbreaking studies on algorithmic bias were ignored, our analysis revealed that only 12% of scholarship offered actionable legislative text. A vicious cycle of scholarly irrelevance is produced by this policy disconnect, which is exacerbated by jurisdictional fragmentation and pervasive interdisciplinary failures. This cycle extends from the academic setting to the legal system.

As a result, the main concern is now how the academic community will work together to develop a workable alternative rather than whether the current paradigm is failing. The necessary new paradigm needs to be flexible enough to keep up with the rate of innovation, broad enough to authentically integrate ethical and computer science insights, and critically self-reflective enough to be dedicated to eliminating the power imbalances that currently skew the field. In the absence of such a profound epistemological shift, one that embraces mandatory audit trails, living appendices, and true co-authorship, legal scholarship runs the risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant and renouncing its constitutional obligation to direct the most important governance Endeavor of our time: the just and efficient regulation of artificial intelligence.

6.1. Implications of the Study

The results of this research have a lot of implications for various fields:

1. **Theoretical Implications:** Victimology and the application of FLT to a methodological crisis is a first. It suggests that these structures are not merely analytic devices of substantive law, but play a key role in the critique of the production processes of legal knowledge itself. This creates a new direction in the critical study of law in its own practice.
2. **Policy Implication:** To policymakers who depend on academic studies, this research can be used as a much-needed caution. This means that the current literature of AI can be founded on obsolete technical assumptions and shallow jurisdictional considerations. Such research-based policy formulation is risky in

nature. The research work puts forth a case that more interdisciplinary and temporally sensitive studies need to be stipulated and financed by policymakers.

3. **Methodological Implications:** The work contributes to a vindicated framework for interpreting the composite character of methodological issues in tech law. It provides a precise roadmap to the creation of new research paradigms, teaching aids, and academic rewards that can facilitate fluency, dexterity, and collaboration, and which ultimately can enhance the rigor and effectiveness of the whole field.
4. **Professional Implications:** This study confirms the experiences of legal academics, in general, and early-career academics, in particular, giving them a language to explain their experiences and the challenges they face. It suggests that the systemic changes that should be made to the practices of hiring, tenure review, publishing, and graduate education are required to help promote and compensate the type of interdisciplinary and nimble scholarship that the AI era requires.

6.2. Limitations of the Study

Although rigorous, this research has several limitations:

1. **Sampling Bias:** The sampling of the survey and interview samples probably over-represents scholars in North American and European institutions and/or those who are already interested in interdisciplinary work. There might be an underrepresentation of the points of view of more isolated scholars or the ones of those from regions where the law of technologies has not been developed yet.
2. **Trust of Self-Reported Data:** The results of the effects of challenges and rates of occurrence are based on perceptions of scholars. To the researchers, these perceptions are reality, but they may happen due to personal confidence, imposter syndrome, or recent negative events.
3. **Temporal Bound:** The case law and analysis of legal scholarship (2019-2023) represent a volatile period in the development of AI. The results are indicative of the difficulties of the pre- and early-ChatGPT era, and the pace of change is such that the particular character of the temporal gap will keep changing.
4. **Generalizability:** The structural issues examined in this study are probably similar to those across technology law; however, this study was specifically on AI regulation. The nature and particular presentation of these issues may vary in other sub-areas such as blockchain or biotechnology law.

6.3. Future Research Suggestions.

This thesis sets several fruitful lines of inquiry going forward:

1. **Intersectional Vulnerabilities:** An independent investigation into the methodological cumulative challenges that scholars in the intersection of more than two identities (e.g., early-career, Global South, female) encounter can contribute to shedding further light on the equity aspects of this crisis.
2. **Framework Development and Testing:** The next large step is to operationalize the results of this study through the formulation of a practical, flexible research framework to alleviate these structural obstacles. This framework is then to be tested empirically using pilot research projects, and also tested on its effectiveness in enhancing the outcome of the research.
3. **Pedagogical Research:** A study of the future should examine how such lessons can be incorporated into law school curricula and into PhD training. What is the pedagogy of the next generation of law scholars of AI? What are the ways to train legal scholarship methods, agile, interdisciplinary, and anti-obsolescent?
4. **Longitudinal Analysis:** A follow-up study 3-5 years later would be priceless to determine whether the methodological crisis is only worsening or new practices and frameworks are starting to form to meet the issues that are found in this research. This would assist in gauging the effects of this research and other researchers on the development of the field.

Sectoral Analysis: Studies might examine how the issues of AI law relate to structural issues in other areas of fast-moving technology (e.g., neurotechnology, quantum computing) to detect patterns and differences in their complexity. This may result in a generalization of the legal research methodology of disruptive technologies.

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REASSERTING CLASS IN THE AGE OF CULTURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF VIVEK CHIBBER'S THE CLASS MATRIX

REAFIRMANDO LA CLASE EN LA ERA DE LA CULTURA: UNA REVISIÓN CRÍTICA DE
THE CLASS MATRIX DE VIVEK CHIBBER

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Abstract

This review critically engages with Vivek Chibber's *The Class Matrix: Social Theory after the Cultural Turn* (2022), a provocative defence of structural class analysis against culturalist and poststructuralist approaches. The author argues that despite culture's ubiquity in social life, class structure retains causal primacy in capitalist societies. He proposes that workers' continued participation in capitalism is not grounded in ideological consent but in resignation arising from material constraints. This review systematically unpacks Chibber's arguments, situates them within historical and theoretical debates, and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of his intervention. While the book powerfully reinstates materialist critique into contemporary discourse, it also underplays cultural autonomy and intersectionality. The review suggests that Chibber's framework, though compelling, requires further integration of cultural and identity-based dynamics to capture the complexities of resistance and domination in global capitalism.

Keywords

Class structure, Cultural turn, Materialism, Collective action, Resignation

1. INTRODUCTION

Vivek Chibber's *The Class Matrix: Social Theory after the Cultural Turn* arrives at a critical juncture in social theory and political praxis. In the last four decades, the "cultural turn" has dramatically reshaped social scientific inquiry, pivoting away from grand structural narratives—particularly those grounded in class analysis—toward an emphasis on meaning, identity, and local contingency. As cultural studies gained prominence, Marxist frameworks were often relegated to the margins, criticized for determinism and economic reductionism. This book intervenes forcefully in this context, arguing that class analysis remains not only relevant but indispensable for understanding capitalism's resilience and contradictions. By revisiting Marxian categories and reinterpreting them through contemporary empirical and theoretical lenses, Chibber aims to offer a revitalized materialist approach that addresses—and, in his view, overcomes—the critiques posed by cultural theorists.

This review offers an in-depth examination of Chibber's arguments, assessing their theoretical coherence, empirical relevance, and political implications. It also puts Chibber's intervention within broader debates in sociology, political economy, and critical theory.

2. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

2.1. *The Structure and Central Claims*

The book is organized into five core chapters, bracketed by an introductory framework and a concluding synthesis that delineate Chibber's critical dialogue with cultural theory while advancing his robust defense of structural class analysis. Chapter 1 is about Class Structure which lays out the core features of capitalist class relations and argues for the causal autonomy of structure vis-à-vis culture. Chapter 2 talks about Class Formation where he explores the conditions under which class interests are transformed into collective action, emphasizing the difficulties of overcoming individualism. In Chapter 3 which is on Consent, Coercion, and Resignation, the author critiques the focus on ideological consent, proposing "resignation" as the primary mechanism of stability. Chapter 4 is on Agency, Contingency, and All That thorough which he defends his structural approach against charges of determinism and examines the role of agency and contingency. And Chapter 5, How Capitalism Endures analyzes the historical endurance of capitalism and the changing dynamics of class power.

The book's central notion is clear and states that while culture is an essential part of social life, it does not undermine the primacy of material class structures in shaping social outcomes. In Chibber's formulation, capitalism compels individuals to adapt culturally in ways that align with structural imperatives, not the other way around.

2.2. Reassessing the Cultural Turn

Chibber situates the cultural turn as a response to perceived limitations in classical Marxist theory, particularly its failure to account for the subjective mediation of material interests. Inspired by figures like E.P. Thompson (2016), Sewell Jr and Sewell (2005), and Joyce (2018), cultural theorists emphasized that class identity is not a mechanical outcome of structural location but is constructed through lived experiences and symbolic practices. While the book acknowledges the value in this critique, he argues that cultural theorists went too far in detaching class identity and action from material interests, maintaining that culture mediates but does not fundamentally determine structural relations.

For the author, the crucial mistake of cultural theorists lies in conflating the universality of culture—as a medium of social life—with the autonomy of culture as an independent causal force. He insists that capitalist structures shape the range of viable cultural practices rather than being shaped by them. This is illustrated through the example of wage labor: regardless of cultural background, workers are structurally compelled to participate in labor markets to survive. The cultural adjustments they make are, therefore, responses to structural pressures rather than purely voluntary or autonomous creations.

Much of Marxist and neo-Marxist theory, especially following Gramsci (2000), emphasizes the role of ideology and hegemony in securing workers' consent to capitalist rule. The cultural turn further radicalized this thesis by proposing that capitalism persists because subaltern groups internalize dominant meanings and values. Chibber challenges this by introducing the concept of *resignation*. He argues that workers do not necessarily consent to exploitation because they are ideologically duped but because they perceive collective resistance as impractical or impossible. This is not a moral or intellectual endorsement of capitalism but a pragmatic adaptation to structural constraints.

This distinction has significant implications for political strategy. If capitalism's endurance rests on resignation rather than ideological domination, then counter-hegemonic cultural projects alone are insufficient. Instead, there must be practical efforts to reduce the risks and costs of collective action, thereby creating viable alternatives to resignation. The analysis reframes how left movements might think about consciousness-raising, emphasizing material capacities and organizational infrastructures over purely discursive interventions.

2.3. Class formation and the Collective Action Problem

In Chapter 2, the book explores why class conflict does not automatically translate into collective resistance. He argues that while structural antagonism generates grievances, it also incentivizes individual accommodation. Collective resistance is costly, uncertain, and requires a level of solidarity that is not spontaneously produced. Drawing on the logic of

collective action outlined by Olson (1971, 2012), Chibber explains how individual rationality often undermines collective mobilization, as structural compulsion rather than shared ideological frameworks tends to shape the preference for individual strategies.

While culture plays a role in fostering solidarity, he maintains that it remains secondary to structural incentives. Collective identities are essential for overcoming the individualism induced by capitalism, yet they are neither naturally occurring nor guaranteed. Instead, they must be consciously constructed through sustained labor organizing and political work.

2.4. Agency, Contingency, and Variation in Capitalism

In Chapter 4, Chibber addresses critiques that structural analysis undermines human agency. He counters that his model inherently presupposes agency, since actors must interpret, navigate, and respond to their material conditions. However, their choices remain constrained by the structural imperative of survival. The author critiques culturalist approaches for sometimes attributing false consciousness or irrationality to actors who do not resist, thereby paradoxically denying their agency. In his view, choosing resignation over resistance is a rational response to adverse conditions rather than evidence of ideological manipulation.

Extending this logic, he demonstrates that his framework can also account for variations in capitalist development across different contexts—such as the emergence of social democracy in Scandinavia versus neoliberalism in the United States. While structural logics shape the general patterns of capitalism, local political struggles, historical contingencies, and institutional configurations determine its specific trajectories and outcomes.

2.5. Capitalism's Global Endurance: Historical Analysis

The final chapter situates Chibber's theoretical claims within global capitalist developments from the 20th century onwards. He details how neoliberal globalization dismantled many of the protective institutions that once bolstered labor, resulting in a historic shift in the balance of power toward capital. By emphasizing resignation and the decline of collective capacity, he connects theoretical analysis to empirical trends such as declining union density, precarious labor, and rising inequality.

The author further critiques culturalist readings of past labor movements that attribute their decline to cultural fragmentation or ideological failures. Instead, he argues that material defeats—deindustrialization, automation, and capital flight—undermined the organizational bases of collective resistance. This focus on structural conditions offers a sobering yet more precise explanation of labor's retreat, reinforcing his broader claim that capitalism's endurance is rooted less in cultural hegemony than in the material erosion of collective power.

2.6. Strengths of The Class Matrix

Perhaps Chibber's most significant contribution is the reaffirmation of materialist analysis at a time when social theory often privileges cultural and discursive factors. His insistence on the causal primacy of class structure serves as a powerful corrective to the sometimes-excessive voluntarism of cultural approaches. His writing is remarkably clear, even when dealing with dense theoretical debates. His arguments are systematically developed, avoiding jargon and opaque formulations that plague much of contemporary critical theory. By emphasizing structural factors and collective action problems, Chibber's framework suggests practical directions for left politics: building organizational capacities, reducing the costs of resistance, and re-establishing solidarities.

3. LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUES

A major limitation of Chibber's framework lies in his insufficient engagement with intersectionality. While he acknowledges the existence of other social cleavages, he largely treats them as secondary to class. This reductionist framing risks flattening the complexity of lived experience, especially for those whose oppression is simultaneously shaped by race, gender, caste, sexuality, and nationality. In reality, material exploitation and cultural subordination are rarely separable; they intertwine in ways that amplify vulnerability and resistance alike. Movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) or anti-caste mobilizations in India illustrate that struggles against capitalism are also struggles against racial and social hierarchies. By neglecting these intersections, Chibber's analysis, though structurally elegant, risks reproducing the very exclusions that cultural and intersectional theories originally sought to contest.

Similarly, while Chibber rightly warns against overstating the power of cultural discourse, his treatment of cultural resistance tends to underplay its transformative and mobilizing potential. Culture does not merely reflect material conditions—it can actively reimagine them. Feminist, environmental, and indigenous movements demonstrate that songs, symbols, rituals, and collective narratives are not peripheral to material struggle but constitute its emotional and moral infrastructure. To view them only as secondary risks ignoring how meaning-making sustains long-term commitment and redefines what counts as "rational" resistance. A more dialectical reading would recognize that culture and structure continually reshape one another in the lived practice of resistance.

At the same time, despite his explicit acknowledgment of human agency, Chibber's argument occasionally leans toward economic determinism. His emphasis on material survival can narrow the range of human motivation, overlooking affective, ethical, and symbolic dimensions that often drive collective action even when material outcomes appear uncertain.

Finally, although Chibber addresses capitalism's global endurance, his empirical focus remains predominantly Western. A deeper engagement with the Global South—where labor, informality, and community often intersect differently—could have expanded the scope of his analysis. Examples from informal workers' unions in India, peasant cooperatives in Latin America, or mutual aid networks in Africa might have illuminated how structural and cultural forces interact under diverse conditions of capitalism.

2.7. Contributions to Theory and Future Directions

The Class Matrix revitalizes class analysis by integrating collective action theory and decentering ideological explanations of consent. Author's contribution challenges theorists to reconsider the relationship between structure and agency without dismissing either, emphasizing that human behavior is both materially constrained and purposively enacted. His framework thus reorients Marxist analysis toward understanding how structural pressures shape, but do not entirely determine, social action.

While he maintains the primacy of structure, his recognition of cultural mediation provides a valuable bridge between materialist and culturalist perspectives. This opens possibilities for future scholarship to develop more dialectical models in which culture and structure are seen as mutually constitutive—shaping and reshaping each other through ongoing social practice and historical contingency.

For activists and organizers, Chibber's focus on resignation rather than false consciousness carries profound strategic implications. It suggests that the central challenge is not simply to ideologically "educate" workers but to transform the material conditions under which collective action becomes both viable and rational. In doing so, his analysis redirects attention toward building organizational capacity, reducing structural vulnerabilities, and creating the tangible conditions necessary for meaningful resistance.

2.8. Comparisons with Contemporary Thinkers

Thomas Piketty's (2014, 2020) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* and *Capital and Ideology* emphasize the role of ideology in justifying inequality. In contrast, Chibber downplays ideological justification and emphasizes resignation and structural constraint. This contrast highlights differing strategic prescriptions: Piketty suggests ideological reform, whereas Chibber insists on changing structural incentives and capacities. Further, Nancy Fraser's (2016, 2020) work on the capitalism's Crisis of care and dependence on unwaged social reproduction suggests a broader field of structural domination than Chibber's primarily wage-labor focus. Integrating reproductive labor and social reproduction theory could complement Chibber's framework. Scholars like Tithi Bhattacharya and Cinzia Arruzza advocate for an expanded Marxism attentive to race, gender, and care work. Chibber's book

offers an opportunity to debate whether a “pure” class analytic can still serve as an adequate foundation or whether a more intersectional materialism is needed.

2.9. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Chibber’s analysis underscores the importance of unions and other collective organizations, emphasizing that their erosion is both a cause and consequence of widespread resignation among workers. Reviving these institutions, therefore, becomes central to rebuilding collective capacity and countering the isolating tendencies of capitalist structures.

If workers’ resignation stems from rational calculations rather than false beliefs, then strategies for change must focus on altering these risk assessments and fostering new forms of solidarity. This shift has direct implications for how left movements allocate resources and craft their messaging. While Chibber critiques the primacy of cultural politics, his framework also implies that cultural work remains essential—not as a substitute for material organization, but as a supportive force. Cultural narratives, in this sense, should complement rather than replace the power of collective institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

The Class Matrix is an ambitious and rigorous intervention into contemporary social theory. Vivek Chibber challenges the hegemony of cultural explanations and reasserts class structure as the foundation for understanding capitalism. His distinction between consent and resignation offers a novel perspective on why capitalism persists despite widespread inequality and discontent.

However, Chibber’s argument is not without weaknesses. His underestimation of cultural autonomy, insufficient engagement with intersectionality, and potential economic determinism suggest areas for further development. Nonetheless, his work is an invaluable resource for those seeking to reconstruct a materialist analysis in an age dominated by identity and discourse.

For scholars, the book provides a sharp theoretical lens through which to reconsider foundational questions about structure, agency, and resistance. For activists, it offers a sobering but clarifying assessment of the challenges facing collective action. Above all, *The Class Matrix* invites renewed debate on the paths toward a more egalitarian and democratic future.

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