HORIZON JOURNALS
VOL. 7 (1) JUL. 2025

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research

About the Journal

Overview

Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (JHSSR) is an **open-access academic journal** published by BP Services, independently owned, dependent upon contributions and run on a non-profit basis for the benefit of the world-wide social science community. It neither accepts nor commissions third party content. It is an online scientific journal and does not impose any publication or page fee on authors intending to publish in the journal. It publishes the scientific outputs.

Recognized internationally as a leading peer-reviewed scholarly journal devoted to the publication of original papers, it serves as a forum for practical approaches to improving quality in issues pertaining to social and as well as the humanities.

JHSSR is currently a **bi-annual** (*July* and *December*) periodical that considers for publication original articles as per its scope. The journal publishes in **English** and it is open to authors around the world regardless of the nationality.

The Journal is available world-wide online.

Aim and scope

Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research aims to develop as a pioneer journal for the social sciences with a focus on emerging issues pertaining to the social sciences as well as the humanities.

JHSSR is a principal outlet for scholarly articles. The journal provides a unique forum for theoretical debates and empirical analyses that move away from narrow disciplinary focus. It is committed to comparative research and articles that speak to cases beyond the traditional concerns of area and single-country studies. JHSSR strongly encourages transdisciplinary analysis of contemporary and historical social change particularly in Asia, or beyond by offering a meeting space for international scholars across the social sciences.

Scope of the journal includes HUMANITIES– Field of Languages, Linguistics, Literature, and Education. SOCIAL SCIENCES–Anthropology, Economics, Law, psychology, Political Sciences, sociology, music, sport, and Technology Management.

History and Background

A premier journal in its field, JHSSR was established in 2019, and has been in circulation continuously since then. Horizon is an open access scholarly journal that currently publishes *semi-annually*. The journal uses a stringent yet relatively rapid **double-blind peer-review process**, which translates to benefits such as timeliness of publication, widespread dissemination, high visibility, and likelihood of high citations and broader impacts. JHSSR follows code of conduct stipulated by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

It primarily publishes for dissemination of academic research meant for scholars and scientists worldwide. We seek to present the cutting-edge innovations and/or latest insights and strive to maintain the highest standards of excellence for JHSSR. The journal publishes on a non-profitable basis and does not have any income from subscription or other sources. It does not impose any publication or page fee on authors intending to publish in JHSSR.

JHSSR is distributed worldwide to more than 1000 institutions via e-alerts, in addition to authors upon request. To provide expert evaluation of the various segments of the broad spectrum of Humanities and Social Sciences research, the editorial office is assisted by scholars who serve as Associate Editors, editorial board members, Emeritus editors and international advisory board members from academic institutions across 35 countries, and ad-hoc reviewers chosen for their expertise. They provide constructive evaluation and, fair and rapid editorial processing. The frequency of citations to articles published in JHSSR by scientists, students, and others increases each year.

To facilitate review, the Editor-in-Chief and the Chief Executive Editor previews all submitted manuscripts and independently or in consultation with an Associate Editor, decides if a manuscript is appropriate for review by members of JHSSR's editorial board and/or *adhoc* reviewers. Manuscripts outside of the scope of JHSSR or those articles in poor English are returned without the delay of a full review, generally within a week of submission. Authors may contact the Chief Executive Editor in advance to inquire about the potential suitability of their research topic for review.

Manuscript submissions and inquiries are encouraged. Manuscript style and formatting are described in the "Instructions to Authors". Manuscript submissions should be made using JHSSR online manuscript submission system, or manuscripts should be mailed through email to the Chief Executive Editor. Direct inquiries to CEE.horizon@gmail.com

Goal

Our goal is to bring the highest quality research to the widest possible audience. Our objective is **"Today's research, tomorrow's impact"**.

Quality

We aim for excellence, sustained by a responsible and professional approach to journal publishing. Submissions are guaranteed to receive a decision within 14 weeks. The elapsed time from submission to publication for the articles averages 3-4 months.

Editorial and International Advisory Board

The editorial and the advisory board of the Horizon has a presence of an international base of renowned scholars from various disciplines of research with diverse geographical background.

Our editorial team is engaged with **universities in 35 countries across the world** including **Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Finland, Germany, India, Iran, Jordon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA,** and **Vietnam**.

Abstracting and indexing of *Horizon*

As is the case with any new journal, indexing in all prestigious relevant databases takes some time, and is heavily dependent upon citations the articles generate.

The Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (Online ISSN 2682-9096) is a *high-quality, peer-reviewed* academic journal in its field.

It is a Gold Open Access journal and indexed in major academic databases to maximize article discoverability and citation. The journal follows best practices on publication ethics outlined in the COPE Code of Conduct. Editors work to ensure timely decisions after initial submission, as well as prompt publication online if a manuscript is accepted for publication.

The journal has been indexed and abstracted in: SSRN, CrossRef, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ProQuest. The journal has been listed in: CiteFactor, Cornel University Library, CrossCheck, DRJI, Journalseek, openaccessarticles.com, Open Access Library, Rubrig, Scirus, Ulrichs. In addition, the journal has been archived in: Academia.edu, National Library of Malaysia, and Malaysian Citation Index (MyCite).

The journal editors and the publisher continue to do their best for this journal to be included in the top abstracting and bibliographic databases around the world; however, for the journal to be indexed in any indexing body is beyond the Journal's direct control. Nevertheless, the journal ensures that the papers published are of high quality. The publisher from time to time recommends the journal to the indexing and abstracting bodies.

The authors must also ensure that the manuscripts they submit to JHSSR are of top quality and are innovative.

Citing journal articles

The abbreviation for *Horizon* Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research is ***Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.***

Publication policy

Horizon publishes original work and its policy prohibits an author from submitting the same manuscript for concurrent consideration by two or more publications, and is not under concurrent consideration elsewhere at the time of submitting it to Horizon. It prohibits as well publication of any manuscript that has already been published either in whole or substantial part elsewhere in any language. It also does not permit publication of manuscript that has been published **in full** in Proceedings.

Originality

The author must ensure that when a manuscript is submitted to Horizon, the manuscript is an original work. The author should check the manuscript for any possible plagiarism using any software such as **TurnItIn, i-Thenticate** or any other similar program before submitting the manuscripts to the Horizon journal.

All submitted manuscripts must be in the Journal's acceptable **similarity index range:**
< 25%– PASS; **30-35%**– RESUBMIT MS; **> 35%– REJECT**.

Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

Code of Conduct

The Horizon Journals takes seriously the responsibility of all of its journal publications to reflect the highest in publication ethics. Thus, all journals and journal editors abide by the Journal's codes of ethics. Refer to Horizon's **Code of Conduct** for full details at the Journal's web link https://horizon-jhssr.com/code-of-conduct.php

Copyright and permissions form

To publish an article and make it available, we need publishing rights from you for that work. We therefore ask authors publishing in Horizon journals to sign an author contract which grants us the necessary publishing rights. This will be after your manuscript has been through the peer-review process, been accepted and moves into production. Our editorial office will then send you an email with all the details. Horizon publishes under the open access publishing— **Attribution (CC BY) under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License**.

In case of any queries, contact the Journal's Editorial office via email to info@horizon-jhssr.com

Article Processing Charges (APC)— Open Access Journal

Open access publishing proposes a relatively new model for scholarly journal publishing that provides immediate, worldwide, barrier-free access to the full-text of all published articles. Open access allows all interested readers to view, download, print, and redistribute any article without a subscription, enabling far greater distribution of an author's work than the traditional subscription-based publishing model. Many authors in a variety of fields have begun to realize the benefits that open access publishing can provide in terms of increasing the impact of their work world-wide.

Horizon JHSSR **does not impose** any submission fees, publication fees or page charges for those intending to publish their research in this journal. However, as JHSSR is an open access journal, in norms with all open access journals, the journal imposes an Article Processing Charge (APC). To publish in JHSSR, authors are currently required to pay an APC of **USD100 per article** (*subject to revision*). A waiver to this available for academics with a heavily subsidized fee of USD50 per accepted manuscript.

In addition, this journal offers discount on Article Processing Charges to authors based in any of the countries which were classified by the World Bank as Low-income economies or Lower-middle-income economies. All requests can be sent directly to the journal's Chief Executive Editor.

In an open access model, the publication costs of an article are paid from an author's research budget, or by their supporting institution, in the form of Article Processing Charges. These Article Processing Charges replace subscription charges and allow publishers to make the full-text of every published article freely available to all interested readers. In addition, authors who publish in JHSSR open access journal retain the copyright of their work, which is released under a **"Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License,"** enabling the unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction of an article in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited.

However, in case of a print version, if it is necessary for the figures to be reproduced in color, a charge of USD50 per figure will apply.

International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)

An ISSN is an 8-digit code used to identify periodicals such as journals of all kinds and on all media–*print and electronic*. All Horizon journals have an e-ISSN.

Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research: **e-ISSN 2682-9096**.

Lag time

A decision on acceptance or rejection of a manuscript is reached in 3 to 4 months (average 12 weeks). The elapsed time from submission to publication for the articles averages 4-5 months.

Authorship

Authors are not permitted to add or remove any names from the authorship provided at the time of initial submission without the consent of the Journal's Chief Executive Editor. Requests for changes to authorship must be directed to the journal's chief executive editor. Changes in authorship will only be permitted where valid reasons are provided and all authors are in agreement with the change. Post-publication changes to authorship will typically be made via a published correction and authors may be charged for this additional service.

One author will need to be identified as the corresponding author, with their email address normally displayed in the article. Authors' affiliations are the affiliations where the research was conducted. If any of the named co-authors moves affiliation during the peer-review process, the new affiliation can be given as a footnote. Please note that no changes to affiliation can be made after your paper is accepted.

Manuscript preparation

Refer to Horizon's **INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS** at the back of this journal or visit
https://horizon-jhssr.com/manuscript-prepparation.php

A well-formatted manuscript follows all journal instruction. All elements of the manuscript are printed in English with 1-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides. Right margins are unjustified. Horizon journals accept manuscript submissions which uses any consistent text— Format-free Submission! This saves you time and ensures you can focus on your priority: the research.

However, citations/ references must be formatted by you as per APA format.

Checklist for Manuscript Submission

- Cover letter
- Declaration form
- Referral form
- Manuscript structure

(Title, Author details and affiliation, Abstract, Keywords, etc. using the **IMRAD** style).

Each submission must fulfil the following criteria and documents listed below must be submitted along with the manuscript for intended publication.

1) Cover letter

Your cover letter should be complete and make a strong pitch. The cover letter should include all these details:

- Author(s): Full contact details (email, institutional address, telephone number, etc.) of all authors listed including who the corresponding author will be [full name(s) written as First Name then Last Name]. Understand the differences between lead author and co-author(s). Lead-author: who has done most of the research and writing; Co-author: Has collaborated with the lead author and contributed some parts.
- A brief explanation of your article's relevance and impact.
- Disclosure of whether you have published this study previously elsewhere or if it is in consideration by another journal.
- Disclosure of any commercial or financial relationship that may be viewed as any potential conflict of interest.
- A brief statement explaining why the journal should publish your study.

(Refer to sample available at https://horizon-jhssr.com/download.php).

2) Declaration form

Do not forget to complete the declaration form and submit it along with your manuscript. Sign the declaration that your manuscript is original, you have NOT published this study previously elsewhere in any language and is not under concurrent consideration elsewhere at the time of submitting it to Horizon.

3) Referral form

The authors are strongly recommended to complete the "Reviewers Suggestion" form along with the manuscript during submission. Authors should suggest up to 3 names of potential reviewers experts in the subject area of the manuscript, and are not the co-authors listed in the manuscript submitted. The suggested reviewers may be from any part of the world. The journal is not, however, bound by these suggestions.

4) Language and flow

A well-written manuscript has greater chances of acceptance. Some tips:

- Avoid long, complicated sentences; keep it simple. Your sentences should be understandable.
- Your ideas should flow smoothly.
- Use correct terminology, avoid excessive jargon and grandiose language.
- Make sure there are no grammatical mistakes.
- It is highly recommended to approach an editing service for help with polishing your manuscript. The journal has a long-term proven affiliation with a good certified editor at Beyond Proofreading Services PLC.

You may contact **Dr. Brown at Beyond Proofreading,** beyondproofreading@gmail.com at your own discretion.

Language Accuracy

JHSSR **emphasizes** on the linguistic accuracy of every manuscript published. Articles must be in English and they must be competently written and argued in clear and concise grammatical English. Contributors are strongly advised to have the manuscript checked by a colleague with ample experience in writing English manuscripts or a competent English language editor.

Author(s) **should provide a certificate** confirming that their manuscripts have been adequately edited. A proof from a certified editing service should be submitted together with the cover letter at the time of submitting a manuscript to Horizon.

All editing costs must be borne by the author(s). This step, taken by authors before submission, will greatly facilitate reviewing, and thus publication if the content is acceptable.

Refer to JHSSR's **Manuscript Format Guide** at https://horizon-jhssr.com/online-submission.php

Editorial process

Authors are notified with an acknowledgement containing a *Manuscript ID* upon receipt of a manuscript, and upon the editorial decision regarding publication.

JHSSR follows a **double-blind peer-review process**. Authors are encouraged to suggest names of at least three potential reviewers at the time of submission of their manuscript to Horizon using the **Referral form**. The editors are not, however, bound by these suggestions.

The Journal's peer-review

In the peer-review process, three referees independently evaluate the scientific quality of the submitted manuscripts.

Peer reviewers are experts chosen by journal editors to provide written assessment of the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of written research, with the aim of improving the reporting of research and identifying the most appropriate and highest quality material for the journal.

The Review process

What happens to a manuscript once it is submitted to *Horizon*? Typically, there are seven steps to the editorial review process:

1. The Journal's chief executive editor and the editorial board examine the paper to determine whether it is appropriate for the journal and should be reviewed. If not appropriate, the manuscript is rejected outright and the author is informed. Linguistically hopeless manuscripts will be rejected straightaway (e.g., when the language is so poor that one cannot be sure of what the authors really mean).

2. The chief executive editor sends the article-identifying information having been removed, to three reviewers. Typically, one of these is from the Journal's editorial board. Others are external specialists in the subject matter represented by the article. The chief executive editor requests them to complete the review in three weeks.

   Comments to authors are about the appropriateness and adequacy of the theoretical or conceptual framework, literature review, method, results and discussion, and conclusions. Reviewers often include suggestions for strengthening of the manuscript. Comments to the editor are in the nature of the significance of the work and its potential contribution to the literature.

3. The chief executive editor, in consultation with the Editor-in-Chief, examines the reviews and decides whether to reject the manuscript, invite the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or seek additional reviews. Final acceptance or rejection rests with the Editor-in-Chief, who reserves the right to refuse any material for

publication. In rare instances, the manuscript is accepted with almost no revision. Almost without exception, reviewers' comments (to the author) are forwarded to the author. If a revision is indicated, the editor provides guidelines for attending to the reviewers' suggestions and perhaps additional advice about revising the manuscript.

4. The authors decide whether and how to address the reviewers' comments and criticisms and the editor's concerns. The authors return a revised version of the paper to the chief executive editor along with specific information describing how they have answered' the concerns of the reviewers and the editor, usually in a tabular form. The author(s) may also submit a rebuttal if there is a need especially when the author disagrees with certain comments provided by reviewer(s).

5. The chief executive editor sends the revised paper out for re-review. Typically, at least one of the original reviewers will be asked to examine the article.

6. When the reviewers have completed their work, the chief executive editor in consultation with the editorial board and the Editor-in-Chief examine their comments and decide whether the paper is ready to be published, needs another round of revisions, or should be rejected.

7. If the decision is to accept, an acceptance letter is sent to all the author(s), the paper is sent to the Press. The article should appear in print in approximately three months.

The Publisher ensures that the paper adheres to the correct style (in-text citations, the reference list, and tables are typical areas of concern, clarity, and grammar). The authors are asked to respond to any minor queries by the Publisher. Following these corrections, page proofs are mailed to the corresponding authors for their final approval. At this point, **only essential changes are accepted**. Finally, the article appears in the pages of the Journal and is posted on-line.

SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Owing to the volume of manuscripts we receive, we must insist that all submissions be made electronically using the **online submission system™**, a web-based portal. For more information, go to our web page and click **"Online Submission"**.

Please do **not** submit manuscripts to the Editor-in-Chief or to any other office directly. All submissions or queries must be directed to the **Chief Executive Editor** via email to CEE.horizon@gmail.com

Visit our Journal's website for more information at https://horizon-jhssr.com/index.php

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

Horizon Journal of
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

JHSSR

Vol. 7 (1) July 2025

HORIZON JOURNALS

An international peer-reviewed scientific journal published by BP Services

Horizon JHSSR

Volume 7
Issue 1 *Regular Issue*

July 2025

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research

An Open access Peer-reviewed Scholarly Journal

Recommended Citation
Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.

Available at: https://horizon-jhssr.com/index.php

Established in 2019, this scholarly journal is brought to you without any subscription and open access by BP Publishing. JHSSR serves the worldwide academic communities and contributes to the progress and application of humanities and the social sciences with its publication.

For more information, please contact info.JHSSR@gmail.com

Do not raise the bar unnecessarily by exaggerating requirements for successful publication, but rather encourage young researchers to try and experiment. Researchers can raise their ambition level through gained experience.

HORIZON JOURNALS

JHSSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNAL

EDITORIAL OFFICE
MAIN OFFICE:
6121 W. J. Voaz Road
Fort Worth, TX 76169
Texas, USA.
Tel: +1 (209) 302-9591.

E-mail: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com

PUBLISHER
B.P. Services
Office of the Director
Persiaran Rimba Permai
Cyber 10, Cyberjaya 63200
Malaysia.

Gen Enq.: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

HORIZON JOURNALS

JHSSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNAL

EDITORIAL OFFICE
MAIN OFFICE:
6121 W. J. Voaz Road
Fort Worth, TX 76169
Texas, USA.
Tel: +1 (209) 302-9591.

E-mail: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com

PUBLISHER
B.P. Services
Office of the Director
Persiaran Rimba Permai
Cyber 10, Cyberjaya 63200
Malaysia.

Gen Enq.: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

ABSTRACTING/INDEXING
Horizon JHSSR adheres to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines for transparency and integrity.

The journal has been indexed and abstracted in EBSCO, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Academia, Crossref, ISC, Rubriq, MCC, MyCite and National Library of Malaysia.

HORIZON JOURNALS

JHSSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNAL

EDITORIAL OFFICE
MAIN OFFICE:
6121 W. J. Voaz Road
Fort Worth, TX 76169
Texas, USA.
Tel: +1 (209) 302-9591.

E-mail: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com

PUBLISHER
B.P. Services
Office of the Director
Persiaran Rimba Permai
Cyber 10, Cyberjaya 63200
Malaysia.

Gen Enq.: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

ABSTRACTING/INDEXING
Horizon JHSSR adheres to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines for transparency and integrity.

The journal has been indexed and abstracted in EBSCO, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Academia, Crossref, ISC, Rubriq, MCC, MyCite and National Library of Malaysia.

HORIZON JOURNALS

JHSSR

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNAL

PUBLISHER
B.P. Services
Office of the Director
Persiaran Rimba Permai
Cyber 10, Cyberjaya 63200
Malaysia.

Gen Enq.: INFO.jhssr@gmail.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

ABSTRACTING/INDEXING
Horizon JHSSR adheres to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines for transparency and integrity.

The journal has been indexed and abstracted in EBSCO, DOAJ, Google Scholar, Academia, Crossref, ISC, Rubriq, MCC, MyCite and National Library of Malaysia.

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
Vol. 7 (1) Jul. 2025

Contents

FOREWORD

Editor's Foreword and Introduction to Vol. 7 (1) Jul. 2025

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first regular issue of JHSSR for the year 2025. As a peer-reviewed, open-access journal (eISSN 2682-9096), JHSSR continues its mission of advancing critical inquiry across the humanities and social sciences. Independently owned and published by BP Services on a **not-for-profit** basis, we strive to serve the global scholarly community by publishing rigorous, interdisciplinary research that fosters academic dialogue and practical insight. Find out more here.

Recognizing the Publishing Team Whose Precision, Commitment, and Behind-the-Scenes Efforts Ensure the Journal's Scholarly Excellence and Timely Publication

This special issue features **13 carefully selected articles** spanning a wide spectrum of themes, disciplines, and geographies. From empirical studies and conceptual analyses to opinion essays and a book review, the diversity of contributions reflects our commitment to inclusive, cross-disciplinary scholarship.

We open with **eight original research articles**:

1. **Dr. Kamaljeet Kaur et al.** (Malaysia) investigate *impulsive buying behaviors* among Malaysian youth in AI-driven retail environments, using the SOR and TAM frameworks. The study offers actionable insights for digital commerce and policy.

2. **Dr. Võ Thanh Tuyền et al.** (Vietnam) explore how *street vendors in Ho Chi Minh City* adapt to sidewalk fee policies, highlighting tensions between urban governance and informal livelihoods through the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

3. **Qing Wu** (China) examines the relationship between *religion and health decision-making* in the Chaoshan region of China, offering valuable perspectives at the intersection of tradition, ethics, and public health.

4. **Muhammad Fairul Azreen et al.** (Singapore) present a practice-based study on *spoken word in contemporary dance choreography*, demonstrating its potential to enhance narrative expression and communication in the performing arts.

5. **Dr. Mai Hồ Xuân** (Vietnam) raises an urgent call to preserve the *languages of ethnic minorities* in Central Vietnam, emphasizing the sociocultural risks of language loss among younger generations.

6. **Dr. Caesar Dealwis et al.** (Malaysia) delve into the role of *translanguaging* in ESL classrooms in Sarawak, Malaysia, underscoring its importance as a pedagogical strategy for students with low English proficiency.

7. **Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh et al.** (Vietnam) analyze the *social networks of young migrant workers* in Vietnam's industrial zones, revealing the significance of both strong and weak ties in workplace adaptation and community integration.

8. **M. Amala Freeda et al.** (India) explore *motherhood and trauma* in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*, contextualizing gendered violence within Native American communities through trauma theory and narrative analysis.

The issue also includes a **thought-provoking opinion piece** by **Professor Brij Mohan** (USA) titled *"Marxiology Beyond Darwin and Freud."* This philosophical essay critiques modern civilization's trajectory through a Marxist and existential lens, calling for a renewed ethical framework rooted in solidarity and selfless action.

Three **concept papers** broaden the intellectual scope:

Dr. Ayad Neissi (Iran) proposes *innovative strategies for teaching Arabic*, integrating modern pedagogy with linguistic and cultural sensitivity.

Dwayne Bynum (USA) addresses *public speaking anxiety*, tracing its historical and psychological roots while offering practical solutions grounded in educational psychology.

Thendral S et al. (India) examine *narrative justice* in Ira Mukhoty's *Songs of Draupadi*, reinterpreting mythology through a feminist and postcolonial framework.

We close the issue with a **compelling book review** by **Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal** on *Devinder Singh Chahal'sNanak and His Philosophy* (USA). The review applauds the book's rational reinterpretation of Guru Nanak as a natural philosopher advocating a scientific and ethical worldview, inviting readers to rethink traditional religious paradigms.

This diverse collection of articles reinforces our commitment to fostering reflective, impactful research that engages with contemporary social, cultural, and philosophical issues. We thank our contributors, reviewers, and editorial team for their dedication and invite readers to explore this rich and dynamic volume.

As we celebrate the journal's accomplishment of surpassing **1,316 submissions**, with only *257 accepted* and published, we acknowledge the rigorous standards maintained in the review process. This high acceptance rate reflects our commitment to ensuring the publication of high-quality research that aligns with the journal's scope and contributes significantly to the academic community.

Our Quality

All the papers except the book-review published in this edition underwent a rigorous yet relatively rapid **double-blind peer-review process** involving a minimum of three reviewers comprising internal as well as

external referees, which translates to benefits such as timeliness of publication, widespread dissemination, high visibility, and likelihood of high citations and broader impacts. This was also to ensure that the quality of the papers justified the high ranking of the journal, which hopes to be one at par with one of the renowned and heavily-cited journals not only by authors and researchers in Malaysia and America but by those in other countries around the world as well.

While I hope this issue will have particular appeal to new readers across this region and beyond, I am confident that the articles published will raise interest among our regular readership of scholars and postgraduate students elsewhere, thanks to the relevance and diversity of contributions on a region whose future bears central importance to us all.

I would also like to express gratitude to all the contributing authors for their trust, patience, and timely revisions, who have made this issue possible, as well as the reviewers and editors for their professional contribution. Last but not least, the assistance of the journal's editorial office in Texas, particularly Jessica Whitsitt, Lucy Fernandez, and Judy Meester—my adorable assistants, is greatly appreciated.

The Editorial Board of JHSSR welcomes your contributions and looks forward to many years of fruitful research to come. We continue to welcome submissions in all fields of humanities and social sciences. Horizon JHSSR is currently accepting manuscripts for its **2025-26 issues** based on original qualitative or quantitative research that opens new areas of inquiry and investigation. Empirical articles should demonstrate high rigor and quality. Original research collects and analyses data in systematic ways to present important new research that adds to and advances the debates within the journal's fields. The editors hope that the authors publishing in this journal can support the noble cause of JHSSR in reaching its goals.

JHSSR also invites call for proposals for **2025-26 Special Issues**. Our journal aims to provide a platform for researchers and technical experts to publish original papers, reviews and communications on all aspects of humanities and social sciences research. We strive to maintain a high standard of scientific objectivity, and we ensure that all submitted articles undergo a stringent yet relatively rapid double-blind peer-review process, which translates to benefits such as timeliness of publication, widespread dissemination, high visibility, and likelihood of high citations and broader impacts. Alongside a mission-driven Editor-in-chief, the globally diverse Editorial Board works with prominent scientific community to create a fast moving and rigorous editorial reviews. JHSSR follows code of conduct stipulated by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Proposals can be submitted directly via email to cee.horizon@gmail.com

Let me conclude by saying that with the publication of this issue, we are now leaping forward into the seventh year of continuous and successful scholarly publication of Horizon JHSSR. Changing publishing norms and expectations have given rise to a new wave of publishing standards that we'll be riding into 2026 soon and beyond. I am confident that the upcoming year will bring yet another challenging year of emerging scholarly articles.

Only time will tell what the next decade has in store, but one thing for sure is we will likely see greater innovation in all areas of scholarly publishing with emphasis on A.I. If you are observing other scholarly publishing trends, please do share your thoughts with the Chief Executive Editor!

Thank you for your continued support. We hope you find these articles thought-provoking and valuable in your academic pursuits, and look forward to further enriching the scholarly discourse in future issues.

Warm regards,

Chief Executive Editor
Nayan Deep S. KANWAL, FRSA, ABIM, AMIS, Ph.D.
CEE@horizon-jhssr.com

Jul. 2025.
ISSN 2682-9096 Online
DOI: doi.org/10.37534

PUBLISHED: 2025-06-30.

CITE THIS ARTICLE

Kanwal, Nayan D.S. Foreword From The Chief Executive Editor. *Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.* 7 (1), 1–4 (2025). https:// doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id0016.p1-4

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 1 – 15 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Impulsive Buying in AI-Driven Retail: An SOR Model Perspective on Omni-Channel Usefulness

Kaur Kamaljeet[1]*, Noor Inayah Yaakub[2], Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid[3], Chan Sai Keong[4] and Singh Jaspal[5]

[1&3]*Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL), Malaysia*
[2]*University College of MAIWP International, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*
[4]*Southern University College, Skudai, Johor Bahru, Malaysia*
[5]*Sunway University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 12-Feb-25
REVISED: 09-May-25
ACCEPTED: 14-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Kaur Kamaljeet
E-mail: kamaljeet@iukl.edu.my

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Noor Inayah Yaakub
E-mail: noorinayah@ucmi.edu.my

Author 3: Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid
E-mail: abubakarhamid@iukl.edu.my

Author 4: Chan Sai Keong
E-mail: skchan@sc.edu.my

Author 5: Singh Jaspal
E-mail: jaspalj@sunway.edu.my

Citation: Kaur Kamaljeet, Noor Inayah Yaakub, Abu Bakar Abdul Hamid, Chan Sai Keong and Singh Jaspal (2025). Impulsive Buying in AI-Driven Retail: An SOR Model Perspective on Omni-Channel Usefulness. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1285.p1

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study investigate how AI-driven retailing affects impulsive buying behavior among Malaysian youth. It investigates the role of perceived usefulness as a mediator, using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as foundational frameworks. **Methods:** The study collected from 401 online respondents and used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data, using SmartPLS software. **Results:** The findings show that omni-channel retailing explains 57.2% of the variance in perceived usefulness and 38.3% in impulsive buying behavior. **Discussion:** The results underscore significant implications in emphasizing the urgent need to improve digital financial literacy among Malaysian youth to address the risks associated with impulsive spending in AI-driven retail environments. **Conclusion:** This research provides key insights into the dynamics of impulsive buying in AI-driven omni-channel platforms, and practical recommendations for managing technology-driven consumer behavior responsibly.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Impulse Buying Behaviour, Omni-Channel Retailing, Perceived Usefulness.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancements in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) have catalyzed the evolution of Society 5.0, characterized by the integration of cyberspace and physical environments to enhance human satisfaction and productivity (Pereira et al., 2020). Society 5.0 emphasizes artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool for interconnectedness and efficiency (Salimova & Vukovic, 2021). Among industries, the retail sector has experienced profound transformations, with omni-channel strategies reshaping consumer shopping experiences (Liu & Xie, 2022). These AI-enabled platforms have expedited changes in consumer behavior, a trend further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (McKinsey, 2021). Despite the benefits of

AI-driven retailing, concerns have arisen regarding its influence on impulsive purchasing, a phenomenon that remains underexplored (Mishra et al., 2020).

Malaysia, with its rapidly growing digital economy, presents a compelling case for examining the impact of AI-driven omni-channel retailing on consumer behaviour, particularly among youth (MCMC, 2019). Generation Z, known for high digital engagement, is particularly susceptible to impulsive buying and financial mismanagement (Wan Rasyiday & Syadidah, 2023; AKPK, 2022). In this study, the focus would be on fashion apparels due to its dominance in the Malaysia's e-commerce landscape. Report has shown that up to 68% of Malaysians have purchased fashion apparel through social media platforms in which this high consumer activity provides a rich dataset for AI applications and making fashion apparel an appropriate data-driven choice for AI research in the Malaysia. This study aims to bridge the existing research gap by exploring how AI-integrated retailing influences impulsive purchasing tendencies. The findings will provide insights for developing strategic frameworks that mitigate adverse consumer behaviours while optimizing AI's role in retail.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Impulse Buying Behaviour

Impulse buying is characterized by spontaneous and unplanned purchases driven by emotional and environmental stimuli (Lehman et al., 2019). While early research focused on the retailer's perspective (Clover, 1950), later studies examined consumer-centric factors such as personality traits and store environments (Rook, 1987; Zhu et al., 2020). Despite significant research in traditional and e-commerce settings, the implications of AI-driven omni-channel retailing on impulsive buying remain insufficiently explored (Krishna et al., 2021; Pereira et al., 2023)

2.2 Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

The SOR model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) explains consumer responses to environmental stimuli, mediated by emotional states. This framework has been widely applied to consumer behavior studies, particularly in understanding impulsive buying triggered by retail stimuli (Octavia, 2016; Chen & Yao, 2019). In the omni-channel retail environment, AI-generated promotions, personalized recommendations, and seamless channel transitions act as stimuli that trigger cognitive and emotional responses, leading to impulsive purchases (Chan et al., 2017; Sarilgan et al., 2022). To ensure the study reflects AI based retailing, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is introduced in the framework.

2.3 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM, was derived from innovation diffusion and social psychology theories, evaluates technology adoption through perceived usefulness and ease of use (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). While TAM is widely applied in online retailing studies, its role as a mediator in impulse buying behaviours within AI-driven omni-channel retail remains underexplored (Alwie et al., 2024; Habibi et al., 2023). This study integrates TAM with the SOR model to assess the influence of AI-enabled omni-channel retailing on impulsive purchases among Malaysian youth.

The SOR theory posits that external stimuli influence individuals' internal states (organism), leading to a behavioural response. In this context, the study examines how cognitive (perceived usefulness) reactions affect the impulse to buy fashion apparel online. The research builds on the premise that impulsiveness, as a psychological state, drives impulsive buying tendencies, and aims to expand the empirical application of TAM in measuring such behaviours (Fortmann et al., 2019; Kamboj et al., 2018; Chen & Yao, 2018).

2.4 Research Framework and Hypotheses Development

Based on the extensive literature review the following framework is suggested with the incorporation of the SOR (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) and TAM Model (Davis, 1989).

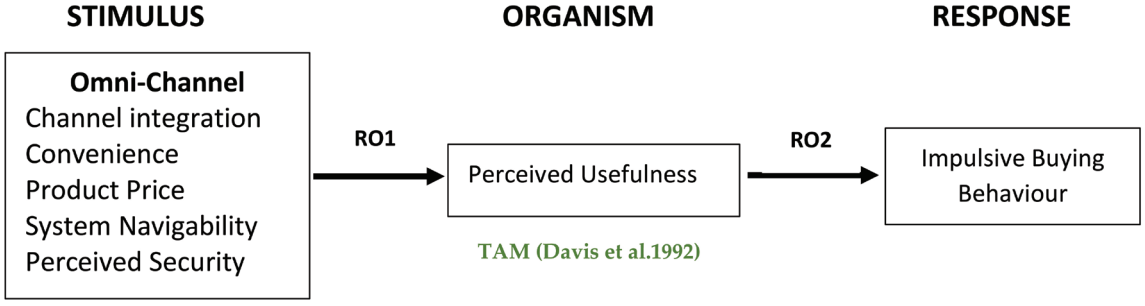


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework.

The first research objective is to examine the relationship of external factors (channel integration, convenience, perceived pricing, system navigability and perceived security) and perceived usefulness. Perceived usefulness is an individual's perception of how technologies or a particular technology are set to improve the individuals' tasks or roles in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (Davis, 1989; Bolodeoku et al., 2022). The technology referred in this study is the AI enabled omni-channel retailing platform.

This study proposes a research framework incorporating external stimuli, perceived usefulness, and impulsive buying behaviour.

2.4.1 Channel Integration and Perceived Usefulness

Channel integration, as defined by Bendoly et al. (2005) and Mirsch, Lehrer, and Jung (2016), refers to how different channels within a retail environment interact to provide a seamless customer experience, consistent brand image, and effective data sharing. This integration is a key feature of the omni-channel business model, offering multiple touchpoints for customers (Verhoef et al., 2015). Channel integration is conceptualized as an object-based belief, reflecting customers' perceptions of how well omni-channel technology unifies various channels (Yurova et al., 2017). While previous research has explored channel integration (Li & Chen, 2018; Shen et al., 2018), studies have not specifically addressed its relationship with hedonic response. Recent research in Indonesia found a significant relationship between channel integration quality and perceived value in omni-channel retailing (Khevin, 2023). This study aims to extend this area by investigating the impact of channel integration on perceived usefulness and impulsive buying behaviour among Malaysian youth in fashion apparel purchases.

H1: There is a relationship between channel integration and perceived usefulness.

2.3.2 Convenience and Perceived Usefulness

Convenience in retail is defined as the retailer's ability to offer fast and easy shopping experiences, a concept traditionally discussed in the context of physical retail channels (Seiders et al., 2000; Gielsens et al., 2021). However, there is a need to explore convenience in omni-channel retailing, where technologies such as interactive kiosks and digital transactions inside physical stores enhance the shopping experience (Margetis et al., 2019; Bennett & Azhari, 2015). Studies have shown that convenience positively influences repurchasing behaviour due to ease of use, as evidenced in research by Jiang et al. (2019) and Zeqiri et al. (2023). While Moon et al. (2022) empirically supported the link between convenience and ease of use in Starbucks, literature on the relationship between convenience and perceived usefulness in omni-channel platforms remains limited.

H2: There is a relationship between convenience and perceived usefulness.

2.3.3 Perceived Price and Perceived Usefulness

While omni-channel retailing offers retailers a competitive advantage by attracting more customers, it complicates the development of optimal pricing strategies due to customers frequently comparing prices and promotions across channels (Wu et al., 2020; Song & Jo, 2023). Omni-channel pricing strategies provide real-time price information across all channels, enhancing customer experience and simplifying interactions (Bahremand, Soltani & Karimi, 2022). This transparency helps remove barriers to purchase, adding to the perceived usefulness of omni-channel platforms. However, customers are highly sensitive to price discrepancies between channels, making pricing transparency essential (Li, Zhang & Tayi, 2020). While research has examined omni-channel pricing strategies and competition between online and offline channels (Mousavi et al., 2019; Cai & Lo, 2020), there is limited empirical evidence on the relationship between pricing and perceived usefulness in omni-channel retailing, particularly in fashion apparel purchases among Malaysian youth.

H3*:* There is a relationship between perceived price and perceived usefulness.

2.3.4 System Navigation and Perceived Usefulness

Consumers prioritize ease of system navigation on omni-channel retailing platforms for a seamless experience. Research shows that consumer satisfaction is influenced by elements like last-mile fulfilment and the integration of online and offline store images, ensuring consistency (Larke, Kilgour & O'Connor, 2018; Tyrvainen & Karjaluoto, 2019). Studies also confirm a positive relationship between easy navigation and increased customer loyalty, with enhanced personalization and seamless interfaces improving the overall journey (Swaid & Wigand, 2012; Simone & Sabbadin, 2018). Retailers can boost consumer value by synchronizing physical and digital touchpoints, creating a unified shopping experience across channels (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015). However, inconsistent navigation can diminish the perceived usefulness of omni-channel platforms, particularly for utilitarian shopping, although instant connectivity improves both utilitarian and hedonic shopping value (Shin et al., 2022; Hure, Picot-Coupey & Ackermann, 2017).

H4: There is a relationship between system navigation and perceived usefulness.

2.3.5 Perceived Security and Perceived Usefulness

Perceived security refers to consumers' belief that retailers will meet security requirements, such as authentication, integrity, and encryption, ensuring protection against risks (Kim, Ferrin & Rao, 2008; Linck et al., 2006; Zuroni & Teng, 2019). Studies indicate that low perceived security deters customers from engaging in electronic payments (Tsiakis & Stephanides, 2005; Zuroni & Teng, 2019). The surge in online transactions, particularly post-COVID-19, has heightened consumer anxiety over data privacy and personal information misuse (Farah et al., 2018; Indiani & Fahik, 2020). Security concerns, including data breaches and fraud, are critical in online shopping adoption (Meskaran, 2015; Neame et al., 2016). Perceived security is seen as a key factor influencing trust and consumer behavior within the SOR theory (Johnson & Grayson, 2005; Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). Despite its importance, the relationship between perceived security and perceived usefulness in omni-channel retailing lacks sufficient empirical research (Indiani & Fahik, 2020; Chowdhury, 2023).

H5: There is a relationship between perceived security and perceived usefulness.

2.3.6 Perceived Usefulness and Impulsive Buying behaviour

The second objective of the study is to determine if the perceived usefulness of external factors and impulsive buying behaviour. Users tend to perceive a favourable relationship between usage and performance when a system scores high on perceived usefulness, as it reduces search costs related to time, convenience, and security (Dam, 2023). Numerous studies have found perceived usefulness to be a significant mediating factor between ease of use and usage intention, with notable findings in various contexts (Santhanamery & Ramayah, 2017; Muftiasa et al., 2021; Mazan & Cetinal, 2022). In the realm of omni-channel retailing, related research in Australia has focused on the mediating role of perceived value and omni-channel shopping habits (Sharma & Fatime, 2024).

Given the limited research on perceived usefulness as a mediator specifically in the context of impulsive buying behaviour on omni-channel retailing platforms, this study aims to bridge that gap. It seeks to explore how perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between external factors such as channel integration, convenience, product price, system navigability, and perceived security, and impulsive buying behaviour among Malaysian youth purchasing fashion apparel. This research proposes testing the hypothesis that perceived usefulness has a mediating effect on these factors within the omni-channel retail environment.

H7: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship of channel integration and impulsive buying behaviour.

H8: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship of convenience and impulsive buying behaviour.

H9: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship of product price and impulsive buying behaviour.

H10: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship of system navigability and impulsive buying behaviour.

H11: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship of perceived security and impulsive buying behaviour.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Sampling Approach

This study adopts a quantitative research design to empirically test the proposed hypotheses. Given the lack of official statistics on the number of Malaysian youths utilizing AI-powered omni-channel retailing platforms, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. The unit of analysis comprises Malaysian youth aged 18 to 30 years, a demographic characterized by high engagement in fashion apparel consumption and relatively greater disposable income (MCMC, 2023; Statista, 2023). This classification adheres to the definition established by the Malaysian Ministry of Youth and Sports, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines and allowing participants to provide informed consent without parental approval (TheStar, 2023; Themalaysianreserve.com, 2023; Mathews, 2023; Hashim & Dusuki, 2023).

3.2 Measurement and Instrumentation

All constructs in this study were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, with measurement items adapted from established scales in prior literature. These indicators underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing in previous studies and were further evaluated through a pilot study to ensure robustness.

3.3 Data Collection and Sample Size

Data were collected using an online survey administered via Google Forms, yielding a total of 401 valid responses. The sample size satisfies the minimum threshold recommended for structural equation modelling (SEM) (Hair et al., 2012), ensuring adequate statistical power for hypothesis testing.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Statistics 26.0 for data screening, including the detection of missing

values, descriptive statistics, and internal consistency reliability assessment. For hypothesis testing and model evaluation, this study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for analyzing complex theoretical models (Hair et al., 2012), its ability to accommodate non-normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2021), and its effectiveness in exploratory research contexts (Hair, 2009). This analytical approach facilitates path analysis, construct validation, and hypothesis testing, ensuring a rigorous evaluation of the proposed research model.

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The survey sample comprised 50.62% female and 49.38% male respondents, aligning with findings from the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2021), which indicate that women engage in online shopping more frequently than men.

In terms of age distribution, respondents were categorized into three groups using the visual binning method in IBM SPSS V.24. The largest proportion (49.13%) fell within the 18–21 years category, followed by 22–23 years (32.42%), and 24–30 years (18.45%). This distribution reflects the study's focus on youth consumers, who are actively engaged in digital retail environments.

The ethnic composition of the sample was representative of Malaysia's diverse population, with 38.40% Malay, 26.43% Indian, and 24.94% Chinese, along with smaller percentages from other ethnic groups. Educational attainment varied across respondents, with 28.43% holding a diploma and 25.44% possessing a degree, indicating a well-educated consumer base.

Regarding marital status, the majority of respondents were single (67.08%), and a significant portion (57.34%) were students, reflecting the study's focus on young consumers. The monthly income distribution showed that 66.33% earned RM1,500 or less, consistent with the predominance of students and early-career professionals within the sample.

Occupationally, the largest group comprised students, while 21.95% were professionals, including doctors, lawyers, and engineers, indicating a segment with financial stability for discretionary spending. This occupational profile suggests that despite lower income levels, respondents exhibit purchasing power, particularly within omni-channel retail settings.

4.1 Measurement Model

In the initial phase of the measurement model evaluation, the focus was on assessing item reliability and validity. According to Hair et al. (2017a; 2022), the structural model can only be tested once the measurement model meets all necessary criteria. Measurement items are deemed reliable when they consistently capture the intended constructs, while validity ensures that the items accurately assess their designated concepts. To establish the robustness of the measurement model, this study conducted tests for convergent validity and discriminant validity.

First, inter-item reliability was examined through an analysis of factor loadings. Second, convergent validity was assessed by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE), ensuring that all values met the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Erasmus, Rothmann, & Van Eeden, 2015). Third, internal consistency reliability was evaluated using composite reliability (CR), with values exceeding 0.60 considered acceptable. The results of these analyses, as presented in Table 1, confirm the convergent validity and reliability of the measurement model, ensuring its suitability for further structural model analysis.

4.2 Discriminant Validity

In this study, the HTMT ratio analysis was employed to assess discriminant validity. This approach was chosen in response to recent critiques of Fornell and Larcker's criteria. As noted by Abbas and Sağsan (2019) and Gurer and Akkaya (2022), potential issues with discriminant validity may arise if the HTMT value surpasses 0.85. As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85 (Gurer & Akkaya, 2022), thereby confirming the establishment of discriminant validity.

4.2 Hypotheses Results

Using the Smart PLS 3.0 bootstrapping technique, T-statistics are calculated for all paths to determine the significance threshold. The bootstrapping parameters are a one-tailed test, a significance threshold of 0.05, and 5,000 subsamples. For a one-tailed test, the critical values for a 1% (=0.01), 5% (=0.01), and 10% (=0.01) significance level are 2.33, 1.645, and 1.33, respectively (Ramayah et al., 2018).

4.2.1 Direct Effect

The direct effect uses the t-test, which aims to determine the effect of the variable partially independent of the dependent variable. This hypothesis can be accepted if P Values < 0.05. Table 3, shows the supported and not supported hypotheses based on the P values.

Based on the table above, it shows that of the six (6) hypotheses that have a direct effect, there is two hypothesis that is rejected, namely convenience and perceived security to perceived usefulness due to the value of T-Statistics < 1.96 and P - Values > 0.05 while

Table 1: Measurement Model.

Constructs	Standardized Factor Loadings (>0.40-0.70)	Cronbach Alpha (≥0.7)	Composite reliability (≥0.6)	Average variance Extracted (≥0.5)
Channel Integration				
CH1	0.569			
CH2	0.662			
CH3	0.838			
CH4	0.665	0.849	0.886	0.680
CH5	0.801			
CH6	0.797			
CH7	0.729			
Convenience				
CV1	0.738			
CV2	0.763	0.700	0.886	0.642
CV3	0.788			
CV4	0.611			
System Navigability				
SN1	0.732			
SN2	0.628			
SB3	0.786			
SN4	0.679	0.845	0.882	0.518
SN5	0.732			
SN6	0.667			
SN7	0.799			
Perceived Security				
PS1	0.784			
PS2	0.739	0.834	0.878	0.590
PS3	0.704			
PS4	0.798			
PS5	0.811			
Perceived Price				
PP1	0.717			
PP2	0.783			
PP3	0.849	0.825	0.874	0.516
PP4	0.585			
PP5	0.740			
PP6	0.707			
Perceived Usefulness				
PU1				
PU2	0.795			
PU3	0.820	0.767	0.851	0.588
PU4	0.731			
	0.717			
Impulsive Buying Behaviour				
IBB1	0.771			
IBB2	0.744			
IBB3	0.752	0.821	0.874	0.581
IBB4	0.787			
IBB5	0.757			

.Source: *Authors, 2025*

the other four hypotheses are accepted because the T - Statistics value > 1.96 P -Values < 0.05.

4.2.2 Indirect Effect

Indirect influence analysis is useful for testing the hypothesis that a dependent variable has an indirect effect on an independent variable mediated by an intermediate variable (Julian, 2018). In this case, perceived usefulness is the mediator of the independent variable and the dependent variable which is impulsive buying behaviour. Table 4, shows the results of the indirect effect.

Based on the table above, it shows that from the relationship that has an indirect effect, there is two (2) hypothesis that is rejected, namely convenience and perceived security to impulsive buying behaviour mediated by perceived usefulness because the value of T-Statistics < 1.96 and P - Values > 0.05 while the other three (3) hypotheses are accepted because the value of T - Statistics > 1.96 P -Values < 0.05.

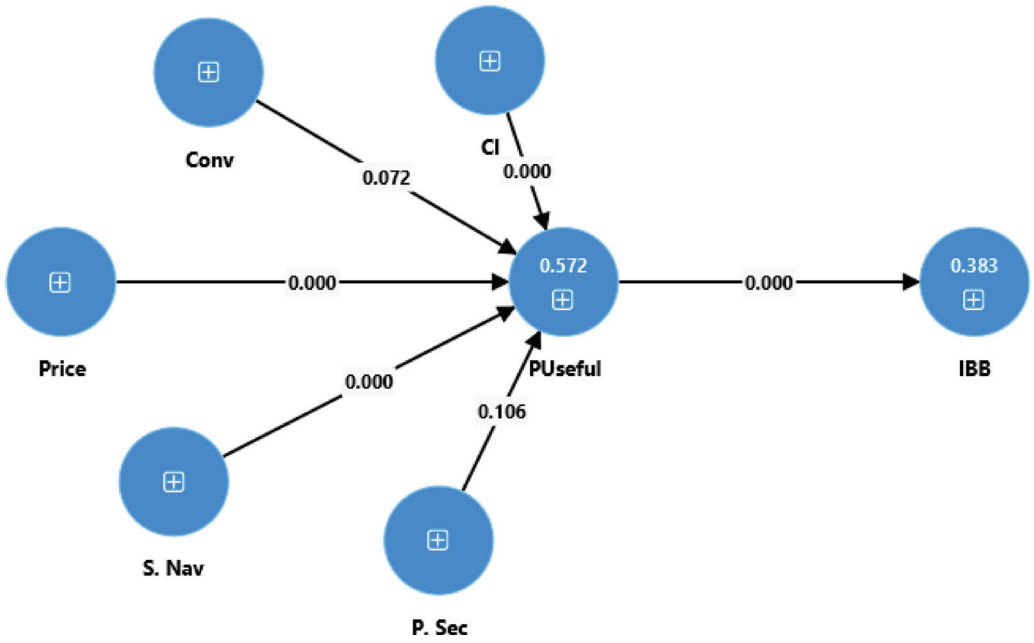


Table 2: HTMT Table.

	CI	Conv	IBB	P. Sec	PUseful	Price	S. Nav
CI							
Conv	0.229						
IBB	0.292	0.499					
P. Sec	0.443	0.315	0.325				
PUseful	0.58	0.605	0.751	0.42			
Price	0.388	0.743	0.574	0.532	0.831		
S. Nav	0.406	0.497	0.381	0.627	0.684	0.648	

Source: *Authors, 2025*

Note: *CH - Channel Integration, CV - Convenience, PP - Product Price, SN - System Navigation, PS - Perceived Security, PU - Perceived Usefulness, IBB - Impulsive Buying Behaviour*

Table 3: Structural Model Assessment.

H	Path	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	T- Statistics	P Values	Results
H1	CH->PU	0.269	0.032	8.396	0.000	Supported
H2	CV->PU	0.081	0.045	1.798	0.072	Not Supported
H3	PP->PU	0.434	0.047	9.245	0.000	Supported
H4	SN->PU	0.242	0.044	5.519	0.000	Supported
H5	PS->PU	-0.071	0.044	1.616	0.106	Not Supported
H6	PU->IBB	0.619	0.034	18.296	0.000	Supported

Source: *Authors, 2025*

Table 4: Indirect Effect.

H	Path	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	T- Statistics	P Values	Results
H7	CH->PU->IBB	0.167	0.021	7.753	0.000	Supported
H8	CV->PU->IBB	0.05	0.028	1.772	0.077	Not Supported
H9	PP->PU->IBB	0.269	0.035	7.764	0.000	Supported
H10	SN->PU->IBB	0.149	0.027	5.594	0.000	Supported
H11	PS->PU->IBB	-0.044	0.027	1.628	0.104	Not Supported

Source: Authors, 2025

4. DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the relationships between external factors (channel integration, convenience, perceived pricing, system navigability, and perceived security) and perceived usefulness. A total of six hypotheses were tested, with all but H2 and H5 being supported. The analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0.

4.1 Direct Relationships

The results indicate that H1, which examines the relationship between channel integration and perceived usefulness, is statistically significant. These findings align with Yen (2023), who demonstrated that channel integration in online food delivery applications enhances perceived usefulness, thereby influencing user intentions. Similarly, Chen and Chi (2021) found that omni-channel integration positively affects perceived usefulness among U.S. consumers, reinforcing the present study's results. This suggests that seamless integration across retail channels enhances consumer perception of platform utility, thereby supporting H1.

H2 (Convenience → Perceived Usefulness), however, was not supported. This contrasts with prior studies (Bansah & Agyei, 2022; Wardana et al., 2022) that established a significant relationship between convenience and perceived usefulness. A potential explanation for this inconsistency could be the demographics of the respondents, primarily aged 18 to 21 years, a cohort that has grown up with ubiquitous digital access and thus perceives 24/7 platform availability as a given rather than an added convenience (MasterCard, 2021; Thomas-Arnold, 2023). This assumption may have diminished the perceived value of convenience in influencing usefulness, leading to the rejection of H2.

Conversely, both H3 (Perceived Pricing → Perceived Usefulness) and H4 (System Navigability → Perceived Usefulness) were supported, indicating that price perception and ease of navigation significantly impact how useful consumers find the platform. The significance of H3 is consistent with findings from Cuong (2023) in Vietnam, as well as previous studies (Park et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2022; Lee & Chen, 2021). Similarly, the confirmation of H4 aligns with Tsai et al. (2017), who found that ease of system navigation is strongly correlated with perceived usefulness. As consumers encounter fewer navigation barriers, their perceived utility of the platform increases, thereby reinforcing the findings of H4.

Interestingly, H5 (Perceived Security → Perceived Usefulness) was not supported, indicating that consumers did not perceive security as a critical determinant of platform usefulness. This aligns with Tahar et al. (2020), who found that youth in Indonesia did not prioritize perceived security when using digital retail platforms. This suggests that digital natives may assume a baseline level of security in e-commerce platforms, reducing its influence on perceived usefulness.

Finally, H6 (Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying behaviour) was significant, corroborating previous findings by Lee and Chen (2021) and Zuo and Xiao (2021). This suggests that when consumers perceive a platform as highly useful, they are more likely to engage in impulsive purchasing behaviours, particularly in omni-channel retailing contexts.

Mediating Effects of Perceived Usefulness

The study also examined six hypotheses (H7–H12) regarding the mediating role of perceived usefulness in influencing impulsive buying behaviour. H7 (Channel Integration → Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying behaviour) was supported, confirming a significant positive mediation effect. This finding aligns with Pereira et al. (2023), who applied the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) Model to examine impulsive buying behaviour in Brazilian consumers. The results suggest that well-integrated retail channels enhance perceived usefulness, which in turn stimulates impulse purchases.

In contrast, H8 (Convenience → Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying Behaviour) was not supported, indicating that convenience does not indirectly influence impulsive buying through perceived usefulness. This reinforces the earlier rejection of H2, further emphasizing that digital-native consumers expect seamless platform accessibility, thereby weakening the influence of convenience on impulse purchasing behaviour. A study by Faisal et al. (2020) found that hedonic shopping motivations such as social media had a substantial impact on impulsive motivations among young Malaysians compared to utilitarian factors like convenience. Similarly, a study by Lim and Zainal (2025) highlighted the psychological factors were the most important factor which drives impulsive purchases.

Both H9 (Perceived Pricing → Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying Behaviour) and H10 (System Navigability → Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying Behaviour) were supported, demonstrating that perceived usefulness serves as a significant mediator between these factors and impulse purchases. Gen Z consumers, known for their price sensitivity, are more likely to engage in impulse buying when offered attractive discounts and promotions (Statista, 2022; Saw & Tin, 2023). Omni-channel platforms further amplify this effect by enabling real-time price comparisons, thereby reinforcing spontaneous purchasing

behaviours (Stefanska & Smigielska, 2020; Ipsos, 2023; Lina et al., 2022).

For H10, the findings confirm that enhanced system navigability facilitates impulsive purchases through perceived usefulness. Advancements in AI-driven recommendation systems and frictionless checkout processes further enhance this effect by streamlining browsing, selection, and payment, as supported by prior research (Xu et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2023).

Finally, H11 (Perceived Security → Perceived Usefulness → Impulsive Buying Behaviour) was not supported, indicating that perceived security does not significantly mediate the relationship between security concerns and impulsive buying behaviour. This further reinforces previous findings that youth consumers do not prioritize security concerns when engaging in omni-channel shopping. A study by Ummah et al. (2021) found that although perceived security positively influences purchase intention, but it is not the most important factor in comparison to perceived usefulness and personalization on young Malaysians. Moreover, Lim and Zainal (2025) indicated psychological factors such as hedonic shopping values are the most important variable in impulse purchases among Malaysians and further suggesting that security concerns are secondary.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the influence of AI-driven omni-channel retailing on impulsive buying behaviour among Malaysian youth in the fashion apparel industry. Using the SOR Model and TAM as theoretical frameworks, the research examined the mediating role of perceived usefulness, with findings demonstrating its significant impact on impulsive purchases. The results, derived from SEM analysis of 401 respondents, indicate that perceived usefulness explains 57.2% of omni-channel retail adoption and 38.3% of impulsive buying behaviour. While seven hypotheses were supported, four were not, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing consumer behaviour in AI-powered retail environments, in this study focusing on omni-channel retailing.

These findings offer several theoretical and practical implications. First, they contribute to omni-channel retailing literature by highlighting the critical role of channel integration, pricing strategies, and system navigability in shaping consumer perceptions of usefulness and impulsive buying behavior. Second, the study underscores the evolving digital expectations of Gen Z consumers, demonstrating that convenience and security may no longer be primary determinants of retail platform adoption. From a managerial perspective, retailers should focus on seamless channel integration, competitive pricing strategies, and intuitive platform design to enhance consumer engagement and drive impulse purchases.

The study provides empirical evidence on the role of external factors in influencing perceived usefulness and impulsive buying behaviour within omni-channel retailing. While channel integration, pricing, and navigability significantly impact perceived usefulness, convenience and security concerns appear less relevant to Gen Z consumers. Moreover, perceived usefulness mediates the impact of pricing and system navigability on impulsive buying, emphasizing the importance of user-centric retail experiences.

6. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with all research, this study has a few limitations. The first is, this study deployed the non-probability sampling technique which does not allow for generalization of the findings to the broader population, which means not every individual in the population has an equal change of being included in the sample. The risk of selection bias and thus limits the representation of the sample. Therefore, in the future research probability sampling should be explore and using cross-cultural differences in impulsive buying behaviour can be researched. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods or experimental designs could offer deeper insights to the field of study.

Secondly, this study focused primarily on Malaysian youth. Future studies might want to explore other consumer segments or regions. A comparative study across different age, countries or cultural aspect would be an area to explore. Other product category such as electronic products, house appliances, food and beverages or services can be tested by future researchers.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

Abbas, J., & Sağsan, M. (2019). Impact of knowledge management practices on green innovation and corporate

sustainable development: A structural analysis. *Journal of cleaner production*, *229*, 611-620.

AKPK (2022). Transforming Lives: Moving from Transactional to Transformational. https://www.akpk.org.my/sites/default/files/202402/Annual%20Report%202022.pdf. Retrieved on June 2023

Alwie, A. F. (2024). Post-Pandemic Analysis of Governance and Performance in Indonesia's Regional Development Banks. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, *3*(8), 1081-1092.

Arnold, T., Frost, M., Timmis, A., Dale, S., & Ison, S. (2023). Mobility hubs: review and future research direction. *Transportation Research Record*, *2677*(2), 858-868.

Bahremand, M., Soltani, R., & Karimi, R. (2022). A multiobjective pricing model in omnichannel retailing with emphasis on state interventions. *IEEE Access*, *10*, 49184-49197.

Bansah, A. K., & Darko Agyei, D. (2022). Perceived convenience, usefulness, effectiveness and user acceptance of information technology: evaluating students' experiences of a Learning Management System. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, *31*(4), 431-449.

Bendoly, E., Blocher, J. D., Bretthauer, K. M., Krishnan, S., & Venkataramanan, M. A. (2005). Online/in-store integration and customer retention. *Journal of Service Research*, *7*(4), 313-327.

Bennett, D. R., & El Azhari, J. (2015, September). Omni-channel customer experience: An investigation into the use of digital technology in physical stores and its impact on the consumer's decision-making process. In *XXIV AEDEM International Conference*. European Academy of Management and Business Economics (AEDEM).

Bolodeoku, P. B., Igbinoba, E., Salau, P. O., Chukwudi, C. K., & Idia, S. E. (2022). Perceived usefulness of technology and multiple salient outcomes: the improbable case of oil and gas workers. *Heliyon*, *8*(4).

Bughin, J. (2020). Artificial intelligence, its corporate use and how it will affect the future of work. In *Capitalism, Global Change and Sustainable Development* (pp. 239-260). Springer International Publishing.

Cai, Y. J., & Lo, C. K. (2020). Omni-channel management in the new retailing era: A systematic review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *229*, 107729.

Cao, G., Duan, Y., Edwards, J. S., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2021). Understanding managers' attitudes and behavioral intentions towards using artificial intelligence for organizational decision-making. *Technovation*, *106*, 102312.

Chan, T. K., Cheung, C. M., & Lee, Z. W. (2017). The state of online impulse-buying research: A literature analysis. *Information & Management*, *54*(2), 204-217.

Che Hashim, R., & Dusuki, F. N. (2023). Minors and Their Incapacity to Contract: A Revisit. *UUM Journal of Legal Studies (UUMJLS)*, *14*(1), 269-295.

Chen, C. C., & Yao, J. Y. (2018). What drives impulse buying behaviors in a mobile auction? The perspective of the Stimulus-Organism-Response model. *Telematics and informatics*, *35*(5), 1249-1262.

Chen, C. C., & Yao, J. Y. (2019). What drives impulse buying behaviors in a mobile auction? The perspective of the Stimulus-Organism-Response model. *Telematics and informatics*, *35*(5), 1249-1262.

Chowdhury, S., Dey, P., Joel-Edgar, S., Bhattacharya, S., Rodriguez-Espindola, O., Abadie, A., & Truong, L. (2023). Unlocking the value of artificial intelligence in human resource management through AI capability framework. *Human resource management review*, *33*(1), 100899.

Clover, V. T. (1950). Relative importance of impulse-buying in retail stores. *Journal of marketing*, *15*(1), 66-70.

Cuong, D. T. (2023). Determinants affecting online shopping consumers' satisfaction and repurchase intention: Evidence from Vietnam. *Innov. Mark*, *19*, 126-139.

Dam, K. M. A., Fan, C., Yang, Z., & Bjorkman, P. J. (2023). Intermediate conformations of CD4-bound HIV-1 Env heterotrimers. *Nature*, *623*(7989), 1017-1025.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS quarterly*, 319-340.

e-Commerce Consumer Survey (2019). Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). Retrieved https://www.mcmc.gov.my/en/home.

El Abed, M., & Castro-Lopez, A. (2024). The impact of AI-powered technologies on aesthetic, cognitive and affective experience dimensions: a connected store experiment. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *36*(3), 715-735.

Erasmus, E., Rothmann, S., & Van Eeden, C. (2015). A structural model of technology acceptance. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *41*(1), 1-12.

Faisal, M., Nabilah, K., Sadik, M. Z., Hassian, U. K., Abidin, M. I., & Ibrahim, K. (2020). Malaysian Gen Y and Impulsive Shopping Behavior? Roles of Hedonic Shopping Motivation. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 10*(3), 281–291. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i3/7051

Farah, G. A., Ahmad, M., Muqarrab, H., Turi, J. A., & Bashir, S. (2018). Online shopping behavior among university students: Case study of Must University. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, *5*(4), 228-242.

Fortmann, L., Haffke, I., & Benlian, A. (2019). Navigating Through Digital Transformation Using Bimodal IT: How Changing IT Organizations Facilitates the Digital Transformation Journey at Deutsche Bahn Vertrieb GmbH. *Digitalization Cases: How Organizations Rethink Their Business for the Digital Age*, 393-410.

Gurer, M. D., & Akkaya, R. (2022). The influence of pedagogical beliefs on technology acceptance: a structural equation modelling study of pre-service mathematics teachers. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, *25*(4), 479-495.

Habibi, A., Riady, Y., Samed Al-Adwan, A., & Awni Albelbisi, N. (2023). Beliefs and knowledge for pre-service teachers' technology integration during teaching practice: An extended theory of planned behavior. *Computers in the Schools*, *40*(2), 107-132.

Hair J. F. Jr., Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L., & Kuppelwieser, V.G. (2014a). Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) An emerging tool in business research. *European Business Review*, 26(2), 106-121.

Hair, J. F. Jr., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M. & Sarstedt, M. (2017), A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, (2nd ed.), Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J. & Anderson, R. E. (2010), Multivariate Data Analysis, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., Malhotra, R. E. & Tatham, R. L. (2006). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Paper presented at the (6th Edition) Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). A primer on partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hlee, S., Park, J., Park, H., Koo, C., & Chang, Y. (2023). Understanding customer's meaningful engagement with AI-powered service robots. *Information Technology & People*, *36*(3), 1020-1047.

Huré, E., Picot-Coupey, K., & Ackermann, C. L. (2017). Understanding omni-channel shopping value: A mixed-method study. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, *39*, 314-330.

Indiani, N. L. P., & Fahik, G. A. (2020). Conversion of online purchase intention into actual purchase: the moderating role of transaction security and convenience. *Business: Theory and Practice*, *21*(1), 18-29.

Indiani, N. L. P., & Fahik, G. A. (2020). Conversion of online purchase intention into actual purchase: the moderating role of transaction security and convenience. *Business: Theory and Practice*, *21*(1), 18-29.

Jain, S., & Gandhi, A. V. (2021). Impact of artificial intelligence on impulse buying behaviour of Indian shoppers in fashion retail outlets. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, *13*(2), 193-204.

Jiang, J., Gu, H., Dong, Y., & Tu, X. (2019). The better I feel, the better I can do: The role of leaders' positive affective presence. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *78*, 251-260.

Johnson, D., & Grayson, K. (2005). Cognitive and affective trust in service relationships. *Journal of Business research*, *58*(4), 500-507.

Kamboj, S., Sarmah, B., Gupta, S., & Dwivedi, Y. (2018). Examining branding co-creation in brand communities on social media: Applying the paradigm of Stimulus-Organism-Response. *International Journal of Information Management*, *39*, 169-185.

Kaur, V., Khullar, V., & Verma, N. (2020). Review of artificial intelligence with retailing sector. *Journal of Computer Science Research*, *2*(1), 1-7.

Kazancoglu, I., & Aydin, H. (2018). An investigation of consumers' purchase intentions towards omni-channel shopping: A qualitative exploratory study. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *46*(10), 959-976.

Khevin, A. P. (2023). The influence of electronic word of mouth through Tiktok on purchasing intention of skincare products in Indonesia.

Kim, D. J., Ferrin, D. L., & Rao, H. R. (2008). A trust-based consumer decision-making model in electronic commerce: The role of trust, perceived risk, and their antecedents. *Decision support systems*, *44*(2), 544-564.

Kim, M. J., Lee, C. K., & Jung, T. (2020). Exploring consumer behavior in virtual reality tourism using an extended stimulus-organism-response model. *Journal of travel research*, *59*(1), 69-89.

Krishna, A., Ried, S., & Meixner, M. (2021). State-trait interactions in regulatory focus determine impulse buying behavior. *Plos one*, *16*(7), e0253634.

Larke, R., Kilgour, M., & O'Connor, H. (2018). Build touchpoints and they will come: transitioning to omnichannel retailing. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *48*(4), 465-483.

Lehman, D. W., O'Connor, K., Kovács, B., & Newman, G. E. (2019). Authenticity. *Academy of Management Annals*, *13*(1), 1-42.

Li, G., Zhang, T., & Tayi, G. K. (2020). Inroad into omni-channel retailing: Physical showroom deployment of an online retailer. *European Journal of Operational Research*, *283*(2), 676-691.

Li, W., & Chen, J. (2018). Backward integration strategy in a retailer Stackelberg supply chain. *Omega*, *75*, 118-130.

Linck, K., Pousttchi, K., & Wiedemann, D. G. (2006). Security issues in mobile payment from the customer viewpoint.

Lim, W. M., & Zainal, S. R. M. (2025). *Factors influencing impulse buying behaviour during online shopping among young consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia*. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 15(3), 23–38. https://kwpublications.com/papers/detail/IJARBSS/15312/

Liu, N., & Xie, F. (2022). Sustainable Practices in Fast Fashion. In *Operations Management in the Era of Fast Fashion: Technologies and Circular Supply Chains* (pp. 29-45). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Margetis, G., Ntoa, S., Stephanidis, C. (2019). Smart Omni-Channel Consumer Engagement in Malls. Springer, pp. 89–96, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23525-3_12

Mathai, S. T., & Haridas, R. (2014). Personality-its impact on impulse buying behaviour among the retail customers in Kochin city. *Journal of Business and Management*, *16*(4), 48-55.

Mathews, B. (2022). Adolescent capacity to consent to participate in research: a review and analysis informed by law, human rights, ethics, and developmental science. *Laws*, *12*(1), 2.

Mazan, İ., & Çetinel, M. (2022). Effects of Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness as Mediators of the Relationship between Individual Culture and Intention to Use Digital Tourism Applications and Services. *Journal of Tourism and Gastronomy Studies*, *10*(3).

McKinsey (2021). Future of retail operations: Winning in a digital era. https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/future%20of%20retail%20operations%20winning%20in%20a%20digital%20era/mck_retail-ops-2020_fullissue-rgb-hyperlinks-011620.pdf. Retrieved: March 2023

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). A measure of arousal seeking tendency. *Environment and Behavior*, *5*(3), 315.

Meskaran, F. (2015). the Effect of Perceived Trust, Perceived Security and Attitude on Online Purchase Intention in Malaysian Public Universities. *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*.

Mirsch, T., Lehrer, C., & Jung, R. (2016). Channel integration towards omnichannel management: a literature review.

Mishra, R., Singh, R. K., & Paul, J. (2020). Factors influencing behavioural intention to avail omnichannel service among Gen Y consumers. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*.

Moon, S., Armstrong, J., Hutler, B., Upshur, R., Katz, R., Atuire, C., & Wolff, J. (2022). Governing the access to COVID-19 tools accelerator: towards greater participation, transparency, and accountability. *The Lancet*, *399*(10323), 487-494.

Mousavi, E. S., Hafezalkotob, A., Makui, A., & Sayadi, M. K. (2021). Hotel pricing decision in a competitive market under government intervention: A game theory approach. *International journal of management science and engineering management*, *16*(2), 83-93.

Muftiasa, A., Wibowo, L. A., Hurriyati, R., & Rahayu, A. (2023). Intellectual Capital and Firm Performance within the Telecommunications Industry during the New Normal Era. E&M Economics and Management, 26(1), 126–144. https://doi.org/10.15240/tul/001/2023-1- 008

Neame, C., & Forsyth, R. (2016). Identifying needs and opportunities for academic development. In *Advancing practice in academic development* (pp. 41-55). Routledge.

Octavia, D. (2016, March). The differences of online and in-store impulse buying behavior using stimulus and response model. In *3rd International Seminar and Conference on Learning Organization* (pp. 149-151). Atlantis Press.

Ummah, A., Abidin, N. Z., & Ariffin, S. K. (2021). *The determinants of purchase intention on omni-channel retailing among young Malaysian consumers*. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 11(8), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i8/10412

Pangarkar, A., Arora, V., & Shukla, Y. (2022). Exploring phygital omnichannel luxury retailing for immersive customer experience: The role of rapport and social engagement. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *68*, 103001.

Park, K., & Ryu, G. (2019). The effect of price fluency and duration framing in price advertisements. *International Journal of Advertising*, *38*(4), 511-527.

Parsad, C., Prashar, S., Vijay, T. S., & Sahay, V. (2019). Role of in-store atmospherics and impulse buying tendency on post-purchase regret. *Journal of Business & Management*, *25*(1).

Pereira, M. L., de La Martinière Petroll, M., Soares, J. C., Matos, C. A. D., & Hernani-Merino, M. (2023). Impulse buying behaviour in omnichannel retail: an approach through the stimulus-organism-response theory. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *51*(1), 39-58.

Rook, D. W. (1987). The buying impulse. *Journal of consumer research*, *14*(2), 189-199.

Salimova, T., Vukovic, N., Guskova, N., & Krakovskaya, I. (2021). Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0: Challenges and Opportunities, The Case Study of Russia. IPSI BgD Transactions on Internet Research, 17(1).

Santhanamery, T., & Ramayah, T. (2015). Understanding the Effect of Demographic and Personality Traits on the E-Filing Continuance Usage Intention in Malaysia. Global Business Review, 16(1), 1–20

Sarilgan, A.E., Akan, S., Bakir, M., and Sulec, H. (2023). The impact of advertising creativity on purchase intention in the airline industry: A stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) perspective. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, V. 30, pp3014

Seiders, K., Berry, L. L., & Gresham, L. G. (2000). Attention, retailers! How convenient is your convenience strategy? *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *41*(3), 79.

Seiders, K., Simonides, C., & Tigert, D. J. (2000). The impact of supercenters on traditional food retailers in four markets. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *28*(4/5), 181-193.

Sharma, M., Gupta, M., & Joshi, S. (2020). Adoption barriers in engaging young consumers in the Omni-channel retailing. *Young Consumers*, *21*(2), 193-210.

Sharma, N., & Fatima, J. (2024). Influence of perceived value on omnichannel usage: Mediating and moderating roles of the omnichannel shopping habit. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *77*, 103627.

Sharma, N., & Fatima, J. (2024). Influence of perceived value on omnichannel usage: Mediating and moderating roles of the omnichannel shopping habit. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *77*, 103627.

Sharma, P., Sivakumaran, B., & Marshall, R. (2010). Impulse buying and variety seeking: A trait-correlates perspective. *Journal of Business research*, *63*(3), 276-283.

Shen, X. L., Li, Y. J., Sun, Y., & Wang, N. (2018). Channel integration quality, perceived fluency and omnichannel service usage: The moderating roles of internal and external usage experience. *Decision Support Systems*, *109*, 61-73.

Sherman, E., Mathur, A., & Smith, R. B. (1997). Store environment and consumer purchase behaviour: mediating role of consumer emotions. *Psychology & Marketing*, *14*(4), 361-378.

Shin, J., Lee, C., Lim, C., Shin, Y., & Lim, J. (2022, August). Recommendation in offline stores: A gamification approach for learning the spatiotemporal representation of indoor shopping. In *Proceedings of the 28th ACM SIGKDD Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining* (pp. 3878-3888).

Simone, A., & Sabbadin, E. (2018). The new paradigm of the omnichannel retailing: key drivers, new challenges and potential outcomes resulting from the adoption of an omnichannel approach. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *13*(1), 85-109.

Song, H.G. and Jo, H. (2023). Understanding the Continuance Intention of Omnichannel: Combining TAM and TPB. Sustainability 2023, 15, 3039. [CrossRef]

Standish, J., Ganapathy, V., 2020. AI in Retail: Time to Stop Experimenting and Start Delivering Value at Scale. Available at: https://wwd.com/

Swaid, S. I., & Wigand, R. T. (2012). The effect of perceived site-to-store service quality on perceived value and loyalty intentions in multichannel retailing. *International Journal of Management*, *29*(3), 301.

TheStar (2022). Why some Malaysian youths are going bankrupt-Insolvency Dept: Over 20% bankrupts are youth https://www.thestar.com.my/news/education/2022/11/27/young-and-broke. Retrieved on December 2022

Tsai, T. H., Chang, H. T., Chen, Y. J., & Chang, Y. S. (2017). Determinants of user acceptance of a specific social platform for older adults: An empirical examination of user interface characteristics and behavioral intention. *PloS one*, *12*(8), e0180102.

Tsiakis, T., & Stephanides, G. (2005). The economic approach of information security. *Computers & security*, *24*(2), 105-108.

Tyrväinen, O., & Karjaluoto, H. (2019). A systematic literature review and analysis of mobile retailing adoption. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, *18*(2), 221-247.

Venkatesh, V., & Davis, F. D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: Four longitudinal field studies. *Management science*, *46*(2), 186-204.

Ventre, I., & Kolbe, D. (2020). The impact of perceived usefulness of online reviews, trust and perceived risk on online purchase intention in emerging markets: A Mexican perspective. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, *32*(4), 287-299.

Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J. (2015). From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing: introduction to the special issue on multi-channel retailing. *Journal of retailing*, *91*(2), 174-181.

Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J. (2015). From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing: introduction to the special issue on multi-channel retailing. *Journal of retailing*, *91*(2), 174-181.

Wardana, A. A., Kingwascharapong, P., Wigati, L. P., Tanaka, F., & Tanaka, F. (2022). The antifungal effect against Penicillium italicum and characterization of fruit coating from chitosan/ZnO nanoparticle/Indonesian sandalwood essential oil composites. *Food Packaging and Shelf Life*, *32*, 100849.

Wu, Y., Xin, L., Li, D., Yu, J., & Guo, J. (2021). How does scarcity promotion lead to impulse purchase in the online market? A field experiment. *Information & Management*, *58*(1), 103283.

Yurova, Y., Rippé, C. B., Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Sussan, F., & Arndt, A. (2017). Not all adaptive selling to omni-consumers is influential: The moderating effect of product type. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, *34*, 271-277.

Zeqiri, J., Dania, T. R., Adriana, L. T. D., Gagica, K., & Gleason, K. (2023). The impact of e-service quality on word of mouth: A higher education context. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *21*(3), 100850.

Zheng, Y., Yang, X., Liu, Q., Chu, X., Huang, Q., & Zhou, Z. (2020). Perceived stress and online compulsive buying among women: A moderated mediation model. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *103*, 13-20.

Zhu, L., Li, H., Wang, F. K., He, W., & Tian, Z. (2020). How online reviews affect purchase intention: a new model based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, *72*(4), 463-488.

Zhu, W., Yan, R., & Ding, Z. (2020). Analysing impulse purchasing in cross-border electronic commerce. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, *120*(10), 1959-1974.

Zuroni, Md-J., & Teng, Y.J. (2019). Perceived security, subjective norm, self-efficacy, intention, and actual usage towards e-payment among UPM students. Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 12(2), 8-22.

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Associate Professor Dr. Kamaljeet Kaur is the Acting Vice President of Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur and a faculty member at the Faculty of Business, Information & Human Sciences. With over 25 years of experience in multinational corporations and academia, she bridges industry and education. A prolific researcher, she has published extensively in high-impact journals and supervised over 50 postgraduate students.

Her expertise spans consumer science, digital marketing, omni-channel strategies, and branding, making her a key thought leader driving innovation in these fields.

Dr. Kamaljeet Kaur
Associate Professor
Faculty of Business, Information & Human Sciences
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
E-mail: kamaljeet@iukl.edu.my

Dato' Professor Dr Noor Inayah Yaakub is the Chief Executive Officer & Vice Chancellor of University College MAIWP International (UCMI) and former President and Vice Chancellor of Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur. She has held top leadership roles, including President & Vice Chancellor of Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur and CEO & Rector of Baitulmal Professional College. A law graduate of IIUM, she earned her Master's from the University of Bristol and a PhD from the University of Manchester.

Recognized for her contributions to Islamic finance, education, and leadership, she has received numerous awards, including the Women Leader Lifetime Achievement Award in 2024.

Dato' Professor Dr Noor Inayah Yaakub
University College MAIWP International (UCMI)
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
E-mail: noorinayah@ucmi.edu.my

Professor Dr. Abu Bakar A. Hamid, a distinguished academician in business and management, is currently a Professor at Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL). He holds a BBA and MBA from Northrop University (USA) and a PhD from the University of Derby (UK). With over 30 years of experience, he has supervised 65 PhD graduates, 25 ongoing candidates, and 30 post-doc fellows. He has published over 400 works in international journals, books, and conferences.

A dedicated educator and researcher, he continues to shape future scholars and business leaders.

Professor Dr. Abu Bakar A. Hamid
Faculty of Business, Information & Human Sciences
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
E-mail: abubakarhamid@iukl.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chan Sai Keong is the Vice President (Corporatisation and Internationalisation) of Southern University College. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Media Studies from Universiti Malaya, followed by a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Marketing from Universiti Putra Malaysia. Continuing his academic journey, he achieved a Doctorate in Marketing from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Dr. Chan boasts over 20 years of professional experience, beginning with an 8-year tenure in the marketing industry. He then transitioned to academia, where he has dedicated the past 14 years to teaching and research, demonstrating his versatility and commitment to the field of marketing.

He has presented papers at various international and national conferences and published articles in peer-reviewed international journals.

Associate Professor Dr. Chan Sai Keong
Vice President Corporatization and Internationalisation
Southern University College
Skudai, Johor Bahru
Malaysia
E-mail: skchan@sc.edu.my

Associate Professor Dr. Jaspal Singh, a member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants, holds a PhD in Accounting and has over 25 years of experience in academia, administration, and research at Sunway University. Before academia, he worked in management accounting for a multinational corporation and in accounting information systems in the public sector. His research focuses on corporate governance, ethics in accounting, and accounting information systems.

With extensive industry and academic expertise, he continues to contribute to the field through research and mentorship.

Associate Professor Dr. Jaspal Singh
Sunway Business School
Sunway University
Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia
E-mail: jaspalj@sunway.edu.my

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 16 – 35 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Adapting to Change: Livelihood Strategies of Street Vendors Under Ho Chi Minh City's Sidewalk Fee Policy in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Võ Thanh Tuyền[1*,♦] and Trần Đăng Khoa[2]

[1,2]*University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*
[3]*Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 14-Feb-25
Revised: 07-May-25
Accepted: 12-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Võ Thanh Tuyền
E-mail: vothanhtuyen@hcmussh.edu.vn

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Trần Đăng Khoa
E-mail: khoatran1111@outlook.com

Citation: Võ Thanh Tuyền and Trần Đăng Khoa (2025). Adapting to Change: Livelihood Strategies of Street Vendors Under Ho Chi Minh City's Sidewalk Fee Policy in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 16–35. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1286.p16

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sidewalks are essential to the socio-economic fabric of urban areas, particularly for informal vendors who rely on them for their livelihoods. However, the introduction of the sidewalk fee policy under Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND has significantly affected both fixed and mobile vendors. This study examines how these vendors adapt their livelihood strategies in response to the policy's implementation in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, and evaluates its impact on their economic stability. This study contributes theoretically by integrating the Sustainable Livelihood Framework with Rational Choice Theory to better understand how urban informal workers adapt to regulatory changes. **Methods:** A mixed-method research approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative fieldwork. A total of 160 fixed and mobile vendors were surveyed, supplemented by in-depth interviews and field observations. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) developed by DFID was used to analyze the factors influencing vendors' adaptation strategies, including financial, physical, social, human capital and public capital. **Results:** The findings indicate that both fixed and mobile vendors experience increased business costs, reduced trading spaces, and shifts in social and economic networks due to the policy. Fixed vendors, despite the challenges, tend to continue their businesses, whereas mobile vendors demonstrate greater adaptability but remain more vulnerable to displacement and enforcement measures. The study reveals that while sidewalk vending persists as the preferred livelihood strategy, it is increasingly constrained by regulatory pressures and declining access to essential livelihood assets. **Discussion and Conclusion:** The study highlights the unintended consequences of sidewalk management policies on informal laborers. While urban management efforts aim to regulate public spaces, they must also consider the socioeconomic realities of street vendors. Policymakers should explore alternative regulatory frameworks that balance urban planning objectives with the need to sustain livelihoods. This research contributes to the broader discourse on urban informality and suggests measures to create a more inclusive and sustainable policy environment for informal vendors..

Keywords: fixed vendors, mobile vendors, livelihoods, livelihood strategies, sustainable livelihoods framework, sidewalk fee policy.

♦Võ Thanh Tuyền is currently pursuing her 2nd Master's degree at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sidewalks are a crucial component of public space, serving not only as pedestrian pathways but also fulfilling economic, social, and cultural functions (Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2003; Tuyền, 2023). As an integral part of public space, sidewalks accommodate multiple roles, including pedestrian circulation, technical infrastructure, greenery, and urban aesthetics.In her study of Ho Chi Minh City, Annette M. Kim (2020) highlighted sidewalks as the **"most important public space"** reflecting the city's diverse everyday life while being closely tied to the livelihoods of its residents.

Sidewalks play a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of many urban residents, particularly those in low-income groups engaged in the informal economy (Khoa, 2025). In District 1, Ho Chi Minh City—a densely populated area with a high volume of tourists—sidewalks are utilized as strategic locations for small businesses, food services, street vending, and other flexible commercial activities. These activities contribute to the **street economy**, enriching and energizing the urban economic landscape.The main participants in the street economy include two primary groups. The first group consists of **fixed vendors,** which include formal businesses with storefronts that utilize sidewalks and informal small-scale traders operating on sidewalks. The second group comprises **mobile vendors**, primarily informal street hawkers who move from place to place (Nguyệt, 2018).

The utilization of sidewalks for economic activities offers both benefits and challenges. While playing a crucial role in securing livelihoods for a segment of urban residents, the **street economy** also poses risks, including disruptions to traffic flow, impacts on urban aesthetics, and limitations on pedestrian access to public space. To address these conflicts and ensure a balance of interests among stakeholders, the **People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City** issued **Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND** on **July 26, 2023**, regulating the temporary management and use of portions of roadways and sidewalks within the city.

Under the sidewalk fee policy introduced by **Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND**, fixed and mobile vendors are affected differently due to specific regulations tailored for each group (Tuyền, Khanh & Khoa, 2024). Their livelihoods remain **highly vulnerable** to shifts in urban management policies. According to the **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)** developed by **DFID**, vendors must adjust their **livelihood strategies** to cope with policy changes in order to sustain their economic activities. These adjustments may include **continuing sidewalk-based businesses or transitioning to alternative forms of income generation** (Carney, 1998).

While the literature on urban informality is rich, few studies explore how local-level fee-based policies influence livelihood strategies, particularly in the Vietnamese context.This study focuses on analyzing and assessing the **new livelihood strategies** adopted by vendors in response to the policy changes and proposes **appropriate recommendations** within the context of the current regulatory framework.

This study aims to examine how street vendors in District 1 adapt their livelihood strategies in response to Ho Chi Minh City's sidewalk fee policy. It tests the following hypotheses: (1) Hypothesis of Continuing Business on Sidewalks, (2) Hypothesis of Continuing Business on Sidewalks While Developing Additional Livelihoods, (3) Hypothesis of Discontinuing Business on Sidewalks.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating **quantitative and qualitative research methods,** including **surveys, interviews, document synthesis, and analysis, specifically:**

Primary data were collected through **participant observation, interviews, and a survey of 160 fixed and mobile vendors** operating on **11 pilot streets** where sidewalk and roadway usage fees were implemented in **District 1, Ho Chi Minh City.** The questionnaire was designed with a combination of **closed-ended and open-ended questions** to align with the research objectives. To assess the **livelihood assets** of fixed and mobile vendors, the study adopts the **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)** developed by the **UK Department for International Development (DFID)** as the analytical foundation. Given that the study includes **street vendors**, who belong to the informal economy and are difficult to comprehensively enumerate, a **non-probability sampling method** was employed. Specifically, **convenience sampling** was used for data collection. To examine differences in livelihood assets between fixed and mobile vendors, the study ensured **equal sample distribution**, with **80 respondents in each group**. The study employed convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings due to potential sampling bias. Primary data were collected over the period **from August 1, 2024, to October 15, 2024**.

All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Additionally, the study incorporates **secondary data** from academic articles, theses, statistical reports, and policies related to **urban livelihoods, the street economy, public space, and public policy**. These data sources were collected from **government agencies, scientific journals, and reports from social organizations** in both Vietnam and international contexts.

The collected data were processed and analyzed using **content analysis** and **descriptive statistics**, with the support of **SPSS 28** to assess the impact of the policy on the **livelihood factors** of **fixed and mobile vendors** in **District 1.**

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Sidewalk fee policy in District 1, Ho Chi Minh city

The temporary management and usage of roadways and sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City were initially regulated under **Decision No. 74/2008/QĐ-UBND**, issued by the **People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City** on **October 23, 2008**. By 2023, a **draft replacement for Decision No. 74**was proposed, based on **Proposal No. 5424/TTr-SGTVT**, submitted by the **Department of Transport** on **May 19, 2023**, along with an **appraisal report from the Advisory Council (Report No. 1234/BC-HĐTVTĐ, dated March 24, 2023)**.As a result, on **July 26, 2023, Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND** was officially enacted, replacing **Decision No. 74/2008/QĐ-UBND**. This new regulation aimed to **update and refine the existing legal framework** governing the **temporary management and use of roadways and sidewalks** in Ho Chi Minh City.

Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND, issued by the **People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City**, came into effect on **September 1, 2023**, with the objective of regulating the **temporary use of sidewalks and roadways** to ensure **traffic safety** and maintain **urban aesthetics** across the city.According to the Decision, sidewalks may be used for various activities, including **business operations, event organization, vehicle parking, and waste transfer**, provided that the allocated space complies with regulatory guidelines. Notably, a **minimum pedestrian walkway of 1.5 meters** must be preserved and remain unobstructed.

The regulation also clearly distinguishes between cases where **sidewalk use does not require a permit but is subject to a usage fee** and cases where a **permit is mandatory**.For activities such as **cultural, sports, and festival events**, establishing **temporary parking areas for events, nighttime transportation of construction materials**, or operating **paid parking spaces**, **district-level People's Committees** are responsible for granting permits.Meanwhile, **business activities on sidewalks** do not require a permit but are subject to a **sidewalk usage fee**. The **duration and scope of usage**are specifically regulated, with strict adherence to **traffic safetymeasures** as mandated by law.A detailed summary of these regulations is presented in **Table 1**.

Additionally, the activities of mobile and fixed vendors on sidewalks are governed by key legal documents aimed at ensuring the management and protection of urban traffic infrastructure. The **Law on Road Traffic (2008)** and the **Law on Construction (2014)** provide the legal foundation for managing traffic and construction activities on sidewalks.**Decree No. 11/2010/ND-CP** and its subsequent amendments and supplements **(Decree No. 100/2013/ND-CP)** explicitly regulate the management and protection of road traffic infrastructure. Furthermore, circulars issued by the Ministry of Transport, such as **Circular No. 50/2015/TT-BGTVT** and **Circular No. 37/2018/TT-BGTVT** (and their recent amendments), detail the operation, exploitation, and maintenance of road infrastructure. Similarly, circulars from the Ministry of Construction, including **Circular No. 04/2008/TT-BXD** and **Circular No. 16/2009/TT-BXD**, provide guidelines for urban road management, ensuring sidewalk use complies with legal regulations.

Table 1. Key contents of the sidewalk fee policy in District 1, as per Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND of the Ho Chi Minh city People's Committee.

POLICY ASPECTS	DETAILS
Effective Date	01/09/2023
Primary Objective	Manage the temporary use of sidewalks and roadways to ensure traffic safety and urban aesthetics.
Sidewalk Usage Activities	Business operations, event organization, parking, waste transfer, etc.
Minimum Pedestrian Space	At least 1.5 meters
Permit Requirement	No permit required, but a usage fee is applicable.
Fee per Square Meter (Central Streets)	100,000 VND/m²/month (for streets categorized as central by the Department of Transport).
Fee per Square Meter (Võ Văn Kiệt Street)	50,000 VND/m²/month (in Võ Văn Kiệt Street, Cô Giang Ward, District 1).
Cases Requiring Permits	Cultural, sports, and festival events; establishing temporary parking for events; nighttime transportation of construction materials; and paid parking spaces.
Pilot Streets in District 1 (from 09/05/2024 to 30/09/2024)	Hoàng Sa, Mạc Đĩnh Chi, Hải Triều, Chu Mạnh Trinh, Lê Thánh Tôn, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Chu Trinh, Hàm Nghi, Trần Hưng Đạo, Cô Bắc, Võ Văn Kiệt.

Source: Tuyền, V. T., Khanh, T. T .L, Khoa. T. Đ, 2024

In cases where individuals engage in independent, regular commercial activities without requiring business registration, the regulations outlined in **Decree No. 39/2007/ND-CP**, issued on March 16, 2007, apply. This decree explicitly prohibits commercial activities in certain areas, streets, and locations, including road sections such as entrances to apartment complexes, residential areas, alleys, and sidewalks (Government, 2007).

These legal documents have established a **rigorous management framework** for sidewalk usage, aimed at maintaining order and protecting urban traffic infrastructure. These regulations have also brought about **significant changes** to the business operations of fixed and mobile vendors. At the same time, the legal framework has created opportunities for those affected to adjust and adapt to the policies, thereby safeguarding their rights and sustaining their livelihoods in the new context.

3.2. Theoretical foundations for the livelihood strategies of fixed and mobile vendors

3.2.1. Theoretical foundations of livelihoods and livelihood assets

Livelihoods are understood as the range of activities that people engage in to achieve their living goals, leveraging available resources such as natural resources, labor, capital, and advancements in science and technology (Huyền, 2015). Carney (1998) defines livelihoods as the sum of capabilities, assets (both material and social), and activities required to sustain life.

Many international organizations, including **DFID, CARE, Oxfam**, and **UNDP**, have adopted or adapted the definition by Chambers and Conway (1992) to develop the **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)**. According to this framework, a livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from shocks, maintain and enhance assets, and create livelihood opportunities for future generations without harming the environment or community (DFID, 1999).

The concept of livelihoods is commonly analyzed based on five key types of assets: **human capital, financial capital, natural capital, physical capital, and social capital.**

- **Human capital** of vendors focuses on factors such as knowledge, skills, and health, enabling them to achieve livelihood goals through education, training, and labor.
- **Financial capital** relates to income, expenses, customer flow, and the ability to sustain business operations.
- **Physical capital** refers to infrastructure and goods that support production, such as tools, transportation systems, and sidewalk infrastructure.
- **Social capital** is built through social relationships, networks, trust, and cooperation with customers, other vendors, and regulatory authorities, helping individuals overcome challenges and seize opportunities to develop sustainable livelihoods.
- **Natural capital** includes resources such as land, water, forests, and seas, which are the foundation of many rural livelihoods (DFID, 1999).

In the urban context, **natural capital** is often replaced by **public capital**, acknowledging the significant role of public services and social welfare in supporting livelihoods (May, C., et al., 2009).

3.2.2. Theoretical foundations of livelihood strategies

Livelihood strategies refer to the set of choices, decisions, and activities that individuals or households undertake to effectively utilize available resources to achieve livelihood goals and improve their quality of life. According to Kollmair and Gamper (2002), livelihood strategies should be understood as a process of action in which people combine activities to meet needs at different times, within diverse geographical and economic contexts, with variations even within a single household. Ellis (2000) emphasizes that livelihood strategies depend not only on the assets and resources available but also on the ability to manage and utilize them effectively to generate income. Similarly, DFID (1999) defines livelihood strategies as the ways in which individuals or households leverage resources to meet essential needs and improve their living standards. The Asian Development Bank (2007) further elaborates that these strategies involve investing in livelihood assets, choosing income-generating activities, conserving and managing assets, developing necessary skills, and coping with risks.In essence, livelihood strategies represent how people integrate resources and skills into economic activities to sustain and improve their living conditions in a sustainable manner.

Analyzing the livelihood strategies of fixed and mobile vendors on sidewalks helps to understand how they utilize resources and respond to changes in economic, social, and policy environments, particularly under the context of **Decision No. 32/2023/QĐ-UBND** on sidewalk usage fees. This analysis clarifies the factors affecting their livelihoods, their adaptive capacity, and supports the development of policies that balance urban management objectives with ensuring sustainable livelihoods for vendors.

3.3. Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory focuses on explaining individual behavior based on the principle of maximizing

expected benefits. Specifically, it provides a foundation for analyzing the adaptive decisions made by fixed and mobile sidewalk vendors to secure their livelihoods. Although originating in economics, this theory has expanded into various fields of social sciences, including sociology, due to its robust capacity to explain not only individual behaviors but also macro-social phenomena (Bích, 2010).

Individual actions are goal-oriented, shaped by personal preferences, principles, or standards, and influenced by two primary factors: **resource scarcity** and **social institutions** (Friedman & Hechter, 1988). Resource scarcity forces individuals to weigh their objectives, with **opportunity costs** representing the value of forgoing one choice to achieve a desired outcome. In the context of this study, the resources refer to the **livelihood assets** possessed by fixed and mobile vendors.Moreover, individual behavior is constrained by institutions characterized by organizational structures and clear processes. **Information** serves as the basis for rational decision-making, and variations in its quality or quantity can significantly influence individual choices in different contexts.Ultimately, the aggregation of individual actions leads to collective social outcomes. Rational Choice Theory thus provides a valuable lens for understanding how sidewalk vendors navigate resource limitations, institutional constraints, and information availability to adapt their livelihood strategies in response to policy changes and external pressures.

Hechter also proposed hypotheses about individuals' rational choices. These hypotheses are summarized and presented in Table 2.

Finally, one of the key highlights of **Rational Choice Theory** is its emphasis on the relativity of rationality, which depends on the context and the level of analysis. Smelser (1998) pointed out that behavior may be considered rational under certain conditions but irrational in another context.For instance, **sidewalk vending** is rational from a livelihood perspective, as it meets the convenience and cost-saving needs of both sellers and buyers. However, from an environmental protection standpoint, street vending generates waste, undermines urban aesthetics, and negatively impacts the community.Moreover, this theory provides a unique analytical framework to link individual behavior with broader social phenomena (Crotty, 1998). Coleman emphasized that macro-level phenomena must be explained through the behavior of individuals, the fundamental units that constitute society. This not only reaffirms the academic value of the theory but also unlocks its potential for practical application by enabling interventions at the individual level to address social issues.

3.4. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

The **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)**, developed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), is a comprehensive approach to analyzing livelihoods through five key assets: **human capital (H), physical capital (P), social capital (S), financial capital (F)**, and **natural capital (N)**. These assets interact closely with the **vulnerability context** and are influenced by **transforming structures and processes**, which in turn shape **livelihood strategies** and result in specific **livelihood outcomes**. This framework is particularly useful for understanding how communities, households, or individuals utilize their resources to adapt to economic, social, and policy challenges in real-world contexts.

In the highly urbanized environment of **District 1**, where informal labor dominates, traditional **natural capital(N)** becomes less relevant. Instead, **public capital**, such as urban infrastructure, public services, and social support policies, plays a crucial role. Additionally, **physical capital(P)**, including the condition of sidewalks, transportation systems, and vending spaces, is identified as a core factor influencing the sustainability and growth of business activities.

Social capital (S)—comprising networks, trust, and support from the local community or organizations—also

Table 2. Assumptions of rational choice for individuals.

No.	Assumptions
1	Humans always act with specific goals, and their actions are directed toward achieving those goals.
2	Individuals have hierarchies of preferences or personal interests.
3	In choosing their course of action, individuals calculate rationally and consider:
	- The benefits of choosing an action based on its compatibility with their goals.
	- The costs associated with the action, including potential risks or losses.
	- The overall effectiveness in optimizing expected benefits.
4	Social phenomena arise from the rational choices of individuals. These choices are shaped by:
	- The distribution of resources among individuals.
	- The arrangement and characteristics of institutional frameworks and rules within the context.

Source: *Turner, J. H., & Turner, P. R., 1978*

significantly impacts access to opportunities and resources. Social capital is often less tangible than other assets and less understood, yet it serves as a vital mechanism for expanding access to other forms of capital and securing livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999). Furthermore, social capital can enhance the development of **human capital** (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).

Regarding **human capital (H),** skills, health, and experience are pivotal in shaping livelihood strategies. Vendors with strong communication skills and adaptability often have a competitive edge in utilizing public spaces and responding to policy changes.

Lastly, financial capital (F) is critical for coping with rising costs, such as space usage fees or necessary investments in infrastructure. This financial capacity enables vendors to sustain their businesses and adapt to evolving challenges effectively.

Based on the SLF theoretical framework, the livelihood strategies of fixed and mobile vendors in District 1 can be analyzed as the result of the complex interaction between their livelihood assets and the vulnerability context they face under the implementation of the sidewalk fee policy. Developing appropriate livelihood strategies not only helps them mitigate risks and stabilize their income but also ensures long-term sustainability by enabling asset accumulation and flexible adaptation to changes in the policy environment.

3.5. Integrating Rational Choice Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to Analyze Sidewalk Vendors' Livelihood Strategies

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) can be integrated to form a powerful analytical model that explains how fixed and mobile vendors in District 1 make decisions to sustain and improve their livelihoods under the impact of the sidewalk fee policy.

RCT offers a foundation for understanding individual behavior through the lens of goal-oriented actions based on benefit-cost calculations in contexts of imperfect information, resource scarcity, and institutional constraints. Meanwhile, SLF expands the analysis by emphasizing internal resources—namely, the five types of livelihood assets (H: human, P: physical, F: financial, S: social, and N: natural/public)—and their relationships with the vulnerability context (e.g., sidewalk fee policy, pandemics, or urban volatility).

The integration of these two theories facilitates a three-step logical analysis of livelihood decision-making behavior among sidewalk vendors:

1. Starting Point – Livelihood Assets (SLF):

Fixed and mobile vendors have varying levels of access to livelihood assets:

- **P:** the physical condition of the sidewalk (wide or narrow), whether vending is permitted or not
- **F:** ability to afford fees, invest in carts, shelters, or seating
- **S:** customer networks, community or charity support
- **H:** communication skills, site selection experience, knowledge of how to handle inspections
- **N:** the urban environment and public infrastructure (in urban settings, "natural capital" is broadened into "public capital")

2. Choice Behavior – Rational Choice Theory (RCT):

Based on available resources and constraints (institutional factors such as fee policies, enforcement rules, or intensity of inspection), vendors will:

- Calculate potential **benefits**: sales revenue, strategic location advantages, sidewalk usage costs
- Consider **costs and risks**: fines, eviction, or investment loss
- Make **decisions:** relocate, change vending mode (fixed/mobile), share space with others, or exit the occupation

3. Outcomes and Adjustment – SLF + RCT:

- Chosen behaviors lead to specific livelihood **outcomes**: stable income, risk reduction, or failure
- Based on these outcomes, vendors may **adjust their long-term strategies: enhance social capital (e.g., join groups to share information), upgrade skills, or transition to alternative occupations**

3.6. Research model and hypotheses

To construct the research model for analyzing the livelihood strategies of fixed and mobile vendors on sidewalks in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, this study is based on the **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework** by **Chambers and Conway (1992)** and the livelihood approach adopted by organizations such as **DFID, CARE, Oxfam**, and **UNDP**.

This model integrates elements from international studies and applications to fully reflect and align with the context of urbanization and the non-agricultural nature of livelihoods in Ho Chi Minh City. The components of livelihood assets include:

From the factors summarized in Table 3, the proposed research model is as follows:

This research model is developed to measure and analyze the livelihood assets of fixed and mobile vendors under the context of the sidewalk fee policy implemented in District 1. The model aims to understand the resources (livelihood assets) owned by fixed and mobile vendors and to identify their livelihood strategies for maximizing benefits while minimizing opportunity costs.From the perspective of **Rational Choice Theory**, individual livelihood decisions form the basis for the livelihood

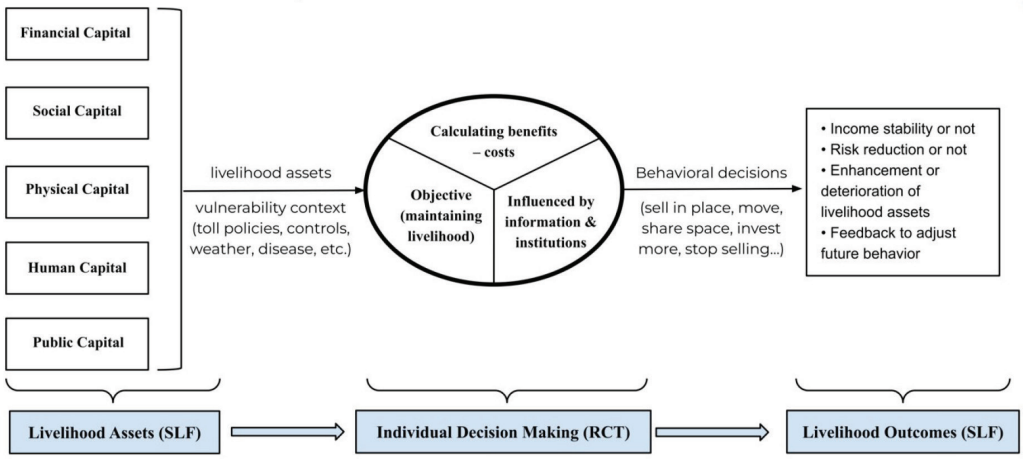


Diagram 1: Integrated model of RCT and SLF in analyzing livelihood strategies of sidewalk vendors in District 1

Source: *Turner, J. H., & Turner, P. R., 1978; Chambers, R., & Conway, G, 1992*

Table 3. Components of Livelihood Assets.

Livelihood Assets	Mobile Vendors (Street Vendors); Fixed Vendors
Natural capital	Non-renewable resources including minerals and land (types of land and climate conditions - rainfall, etc.) and renewable resources such as nutrition cycles and ecosystem services (e.g., water resources, water quality, soil fertility) (Eidse, 2009; Bebbington, 1999; Arisanty, 2020; Kabir et al., 2012). Ownership of resources (land, crops, livestock, aquaculture) (Arisanty, 2020; Timalsina, 2012).
Physical capital	Infrastructure built and developed by humans (electricity, water, sanitation, etc.) (Timalsina, 2012; Arisanty, 2020). Use of space (perceptions of public space, mobility, safety, and quality of road infrastructure) (Conticini, 2005; Eidse, 2009; Timalsina, 2012; Kabir et al., 2012).
Human Capital	Skills (professional skills and others) (Eidse, 2009; Ellis, 2000; Timalsina, 2012; Kabir et al., 2012). Education and training levels (Eidse, 2009; Ellis, 2000; Timalsina, 2012; Arisanty, 2020; Conticini, 2005). Labor capacity (work experience, job stability, participation of family members in economic activities) (Eidse, 2009; Ellis, 2000; Arisanty, 2020; Kabir et al., 2012). Health conditions (Eidse, 2009; Ellis, 2000; Arisanty, 2020; Conticini, 2005; Kabir et al., 2012).
Financial Capital	Income (regular, supplementary, cash in hand) (Timalsina, 2012; Arisanty, 2020; Eidse, 2009; Conticini, 2005; Kabir et al., 2012).
Social Capital	Social relationships and trust (relationships, trusted friends, decision-making capacity, cooperation, trust networks for resilience or upward mobility) (Turner & Nguyen, 2005; Portes, 2000; Woolcock & Narayan, 2006; Timalsina, 2012; Arisanty, 2020; Conticini, 2005; Kabir et al., 2012).
Public Capital (Substitute for Natural Capital)	Public services (libraries, local organizations, and community involvement) (May, 2009). Welfare policies (housing and social benefits) (May, 2009).

Source: *Tuyền, V. T., Khanh, T. T .L, Khoa. T. Đ, 2024*

strategies of both fixed and mobile vendor groups. Understanding these strategies is essential for proposing recommendations to help the business community sustain their livelihoods effectively.

According to the **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**, vendors possess a set of livelihood assets, including **financial, physical, human, and social capital**. The increase in sidewalk usage fees can deplete their financial capital, which in turn affects other aspects of their livelihood strategies. Small businesses and street vendors often lack sufficient financial capital to cover the additional costs arising from the fee, forcing them to reduce business scale or cease operations altogether, which negatively impacts their livelihoods (Chambers, R., & Conway, G. R., 1992).Therefore, the research hypothesizes that this policy has a negative impact on livelihood assets. Based on this, the official measurement scales for the factors are designed as follows (**Table 4)**:

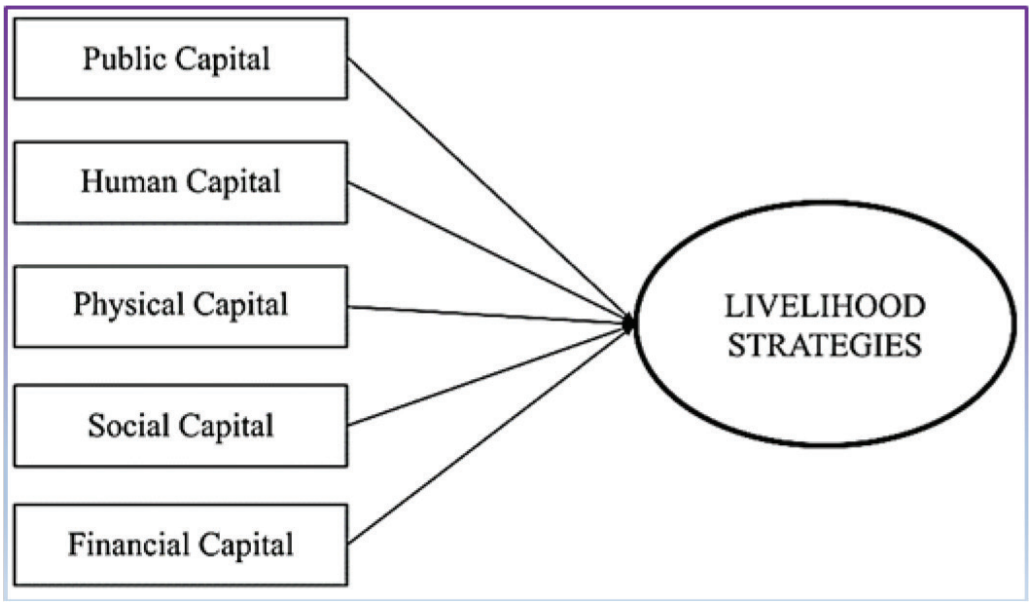


Diagram 2. The Authors's Research Model.

Source: *Authors, 2025*

Based on the theoretical analysis presented above, the study develops the following research hypotheses:

(1) Hypothesis of Continuing Business on Sidewalks

- **(H1):** Vendors, particularly those in the informal sector, will continue to operate on sidewalks as their sole livelihood strategy.
- **(H2):** Due to limited access to relevant information, this strategy is considered less effective for informal vendors (including both fixed and mobile vendors).
- **(H3):** Vendors will not choose to rent/purchase space and register for sidewalk usage for business purposes, as this is not viewed as a rational choice.

(2) Hypothesis of Continuing Business on Sidewalks While Developing Additional Livelihoods

- **(H4):** Fixed vendors are more capable of developing additional livelihoods due to possessing more livelihood assets compared to mobile vendors.
- **(H5):** Mobile vendors will not sacrifice part of their livelihood assets to pursue this livelihood strategy.

(3) Hypothesis of Discontinuing Business on Sidewalks

- **(H6):** Fixed and mobile vendors with higher levels of human capital and financial capital will decide to shift their livelihoods as a rational decision.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Current Status of Livelihood Assets of Vendors in District 1

4.1.1. Sample Description

This study was conducted using a questionnaire designed to survey **160 individuals**, including **80 fixed vendors** and **80 mobile vendors**. The survey results indicate a gender imbalance in the sample, with a predominance of women. Specifically, among fixed vendors, **60% were women** (48 cases), while among mobile vendors, the proportion of women was even higher at **70%** (56 cases), demonstrating that the majority of vendors in the study area are women.

In terms of age groups, most respondents were within the working-age population (18–60 years old):

- **35.63%** were aged **46–60 years**,
- **33.75%** were aged **31–45 years**, and
- **16.9%** were aged **18–30 years**.

Notably, **13.12%** of the sample were over 60 years old, and one case being a **15-year-old** mobile vendor. This finding highlights that, in addition to the working-age population, some vendors outside the working age still actively participate in sidewalk business activities.

In terms of educational attainment, the majority of vendors have only completed primary education (**76.875%**), while those with higher education levels, such as secondary school, high school, or college/university, represent a small proportion. Most of these individuals are migrants from other provinces (**90.625%**) and have been living and working in Ho Chi Minh City for an average of **20.57 years**, with the longest duration being **53 years**. A significant portion (**56.875%**) has been engaged in sidewalk vending for **5 years or more**.

Regarding the types of goods and services sold, vendors primarily trade in:

- **Food (34%)**,
- **Beverages (28.22%)**,
- **Motorbike taxi services (11%)**,

Table 4. Measurement Indicators for Livelihood Assets.

Research Factors	Code	Measurement Indicators
Financial Capital	**TC1**	1. Negative impact on income since January 2024.
	TC2	2. Increased business operating costs.
	TC3	3. Increased product prices.
	TC4	4. Decreased customer volume.
	TC5	5. Difficulty in maintaining business operations.
	TC6	6. Lack of financial support from relatives.
Social Capital	**XH1**	1. Negative changes in relationships with customers.
	XH2	2. Reduction in employees or workers.
	XH3	3. Poor interactions with other vendors.
	XH4	4. Tensions with regulatory authorities.
	XH.CD1	5. Mobile vendors occupying sidewalk space illegally.
	XH.CD2	6. I will stop mobile vendors from operating on sidewalks.
	XH.DD1	7. I prevent fixed vendors from operating on sidewalks.
	XH.DD2	8. Pedestrians no longer purchase my goods.
Physical Capital	**VC1**	1. Unclear sidewalk allocation for business purposes.
	VC2	2. Insufficient space on the sidewalk for business operations.
	VC3	3. Worry about being fined by regulatory authorities.
	VC4	4. Concerns about safety and order.
	VC5	5. Feeling restricted from using public spaces.
	VC6	6. Difficulty accessing public utilities (e.g., electricity, water).
Human Capital	**CN1**	1. No desire to pursue further education.
	CN2	2. Feeling job instability.
	CN3	3. Lack of professional skills for career shifts.
	CN4	4. Lack of family support for business activities.
	CN5	5. Poor physical health.
	CN6	6. Poor mental health.
Public Capital	**CC1**	1. Difficulty accessing public administrative services.
	CC2	2. Difficulty accessing social resources.
	CC3	3. Limited access to vocational training and career guidance support.
	CC4	4. Guidance for "Checking and registering temporary sidewalk use in District 1."
	CC5	5. Lack of language support for business operations.
	CC6	6. No subsidies or support for regulatory policy compliance.

Source: *Tuyền, V. T., Khanh, T. T .L, Khoa. T. Đ, 2024*

- **Lottery tickets (9.8%)**,
- **Souvenirs (5.52%)**,
- **Household goods (2.45%)**,
- and other miscellaneous items.

The study also reveals differences in vendors' awareness of the sidewalk fee policy. Only **31.9%** of survey participants were aware of the policy's existence, while **68.1%** were unaware. Nevertheless, a large majority of **fixed vendors (97.5%)** expressed their intention to continue operating, compared to **82.5% of mobile vendors**, who also intended to stay in business. However, **17.5%** of mobile vendors expressed a desire to transition to more stable jobs due to difficulties in adapting to the changing policy environment.

4.1.2. Model reliability testing

Using the proposed research model, the reliability of the model was tested via **SPSS**before analyzing the relationships between the policy and livelihood factors. The **Cronbach's Alpha reliability test** was employed to assess the reliability of the measurement scales. A scale is considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha value falls within acceptable thresholds. Specifically (Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H., 1994; Hair, J. F., et al., 2010):

- **Item-total correlation coefficient > 0.3**: Indicates that the item correlates well with the total scale.
- **Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.7**: The scale is considered reliable and suitable for use.
- **0.6 ≤ Cronbach's Alpha < 0.7**: The scale has acceptable reliability.

- **Cronbach's Alpha < 0.6**: The scale has low reliability, is not satisfactory, and requires adjustment or elimination.

Based on the reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha, the measurement scales for **"Financial Capital," "Social Capital," "Physical Capital," "Human Capital,"** and **"Public Capital"** are presented as follows (Table 5):

The results in **Table 5** indicate that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are greater than **0.6** and less than **0.95**, and the item-total correlation coefficients for each component factor within the scales are all greater than **0.3**. Therefore, the above scales are considered reliable and suitable for further analysis.

4.1.3. Current Status of Livelihood Assets of Fixed and Mobile Vendors

- **Financial Capital**

The implementation of the sidewalk usage fee policy in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, has posed certain challenges for the business operations of both fixed and mobile vendors. To evaluate the financial capital of these two groups, the study focused on analyzing aspects such as customer volume, revenue, financial support from family, difficulties in maintaining business, and the impact of the policy on income and operating costs.

Firstly, regarding customer volume and revenue, mobile vendors are less concerned about losing customers compared to fixed vendors, with average scores of **3.08** and **2.48**, respectively (Table 6). The mobile vendor group exhibited higher consensus (standard deviation of **1.339**), reflecting a shared perception of their ability to flexibly adapt by moving to areas with higher customer demand. Meanwhile, fixed vendors expressed significant concern about a decline in customer volume due to the limitations of their fixed business locations.

However, revenue for both groups was notably affected, particularly for mobile vendors. This indicates that a loss of customers does not directly correlate with a proportional decline in revenue but instead reflects the unique characteristics of each group's business model.

The nature of business operations also determines the initial costs associated with each type of business. Fixed vendors incur higher initial costs for renting space, purchasing business equipment, accessing utilities, advertising, and other expenses compared to mobile vendors. Survey results indicate that the operating costs of both groups are rated below average (standard deviation **1.372**) and are lower for mobile vendors. This suggests that the costs evaluated by the two groups are not fixed initial costs but tend to fluctuate with market conditions.

Notably, neither group opted to raise product prices to offset additional costs, highlighting the sensitivity of pricing to customer demand in a highly competitive environment. This consensus is evident with a standard deviation of approximately **1.4**. To maintain their operations, vendors are forced to accept reduced profits, face intense competition, and refrain from increasing product prices to balance costs.

In summary, **mobile vendors** demonstrate greater financial adaptability, primarily due to their flexibility in finding customers and financial support from their families. In contrast, **fixed vendors** face greater challenges in maintaining customer loyalty and stabilizing revenue. While both groups clearly perceive the negative impact of the sidewalk fee policy on income and costs, differences in financial support access have resulted in uneven levels of impact between the two groups. These findings underscore the need for tailored support solutions to help both groups of vendors adapt more effectively to the sidewalk fee policy.

- **Social Capital**

Social capital plays a crucial role in maintaining sidewalk business operations. It is measured through social relationships, including those with customers, other vendors, employees, and sidewalk management authorities. These relationships not only help vendors sustain their livelihoods but also create a support network that minimizes risks in a highly volatile business environment.

Firstly, positive relationships between fixed vendors, mobile vendors, and sidewalk management authorities are vital for business stability. Mobile vendors often build cooperative relationships and avoid conflicts with other vendors, as this increases their chances of receiving support and stabilizing their business locations. Similarly, maintaining harmony with authorities transforms enforcement actions such as asset confiscation or administrative fines into more empathetic approaches like warnings and reminders, reducing the pressure of regulatory enforcement.

While these social relationships provide benefits, stability remains difficult to achieve due to increasingly strict policies on sidewalk use. Mobile vendors exhibit a higher dependence on social relationships with other vendors and authorities, reflected in high average scores and low standard deviations (below 1). This highlights the vulnerability of this group in the absence of community and government support.

One major challenge is the decline in relationships with regular customers, noted across both vendor groups, with relatively high agreement levels (standard deviation of 1.268) (Table 7). Regulatory measures limiting access to stable business locations have made it harder for vendors to maintain connections with loyal customers. At a macro level, sidewalk businesses are further affected

Table 5. Reliability Test of the Scale.

	Mean if Item Deleted	Variance if Item Deleted	Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Scale: "Financial Capital," Cronbach's Alpha = 0.687				
TC1	15,32	20,334	0,528	0,609
TC2	15,06	22,517	0,341	0,67
TC3	14,14	22,375	0,336	0,672
TC4	14,74	19,814	0,57	0,595
TC5	13,65	23,537	0,321	0,674
TC6	14,66	19,131	0,429	0,647
Scale: "Social Capital," Cronbach's Alpha = 0.674 (5 non-significant measurement items were removed)				
XH1	7,05	3,897	0,32	0,816
XH2	-	-	-	-
XH3	5,81	3,801	0,568	0,49
XH4	6,15	3,323	0,616	0,404
XH.CĐ1	-	-	-	-
XH.CĐ2	-	-	-	-
XH.DĐ1	-	-	-	-
XH.DĐ1	-	-	-	-
Scale: "Physical Capital," Cronbach's Alpha = 0.769				
VC1	16,16	21,273	0,468	0,746
VC2	16,83	17,08	0,654	0,694
VC3	16,44	21,33	0,519	0,734
VC4	15,58	22,761	0,386	0,765
VC5	16,23	20,644	0,629	0,709
VC6	15,61	22,025	0,447	0,751
Scale: "Human Capital," Cronbach's Alpha = 0.82				
CN1	12,98	30,44	0,556	0,784
CN2	12,64	31,023	0,61	0,773
CN3	12,91	29,132	0,619	0,77
CN4	12,55	31,243	0,461	0,808
CN5	13,04	29,967	0,663	0,767
CN6	12,91	32,402	0,573	0,782
Scale: "Public Capital," Cronbach's Alpha = 0.776 (1 non-significant measurement item was removed)				
CC1	7,96	12,087	0,526	0,743
CC2	-	-	-	-
CC3	8,8	10,84	0,198	0,76
CC4	10,01	9,534	0,686	0,683
CC5	10,18	10,983	0,685	0,69
CC6	10,38	14,1	0,406	0,779

Source: *Tuyền, V. T., Khanh, T. T .L, Khoa. T. Đ, 2024*

by economic downturns, including rising operating costs, reduced profits, and declining customer purchasing power.

Despite these challenges, the spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding among vendor groups has created an important support network. Fixed vendors generally do not obstruct the sidewalk business activities of mobile vendors (average score: 3.88; agreement level below 1) (Table 7), while mobile vendors feel comfortable operating with high consensus (standard deviation below 1). This underscores the essential role of inter-vendor relationships in sustaining sidewalk livelihoods.

In conclusion, beyond relationships with loyal customers and authorities, collaboration among vendor groups is a critical factor for maintaining sidewalk business operations amidst competition and volatility.

Table 6. Average Scores for the "Financial Capital" Scale of Vendors.

Observed Variables	Fixed Vendors		Mobile Vendors		Both Groups	
	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation
TC1	-	-	2,15	1,433	2,19	1,384
TC2	-	-	2,23	1,405	2,45	**1,372**
TC3	-	-	-	-	**3,38**	1,408
TC4	2,48	1,396	**3,08**	1,339	2,78	1,396
TC5	**3,56**	1,339	-	-	**3,87**	1,224
TC6	2,68	1,704	**3,04**	1,810	2,86	1,762

Source: *Primary data processed, 2024*

Table 7. Average Scores for the "Social Capital" Scale of Vendors.

Observed Variables	Fixed Vendors		Mobile Vendors		Both Groups	
	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation
XH1	-	-	2,48	1,387	2,46	1,268
XH2	-	-	**4,28**	0,968	-	-
XH3	**3,66**	1,221	**3,73**	0,779	**3,69**	1,021
XH4	**3,28**	1,302	**3,44**	0,912	**3,36**	1,123
XH.CĐ1	**3,34**	1,349	X	X	X	X
XH.CĐ2	**3,88**	0,832	X	X	X	X
XH.DĐ1	X	X	**3,94**	0,862	X	X
XH.DĐ2	X	X	**4,11**	0,729	X	X

Source: *Primary data processed, 2024*

Social capital among vendors not only helps address immediate difficulties but also serves as a foundation for building long-term livelihood strategies.

- **Physical Capital**

Physical capital is a critical aspect of sidewalk business operations, encompassing factors such as access to space, perceptions of business locations, access to utilities (e.g., electricity, clean water), and local security and order.

Survey results highlight differences in how fixed and mobile vendors evaluate these factors. Both groups reported relatively few restrictions on sidewalk business activities before and during the initial implementation of the sidewalk fee policy (with a standard deviation of **1.17**) (Table 8). However, fixed vendors (**3.39**) had a clearer understanding of permissible sidewalk spaces for business compared to mobile vendors (**3.21**). Furthermore, fixed vendors (**2.79**) were significantly more satisfied with their ability to access sidewalk spaces than mobile vendors (**2.29**), reflecting discrepancies in space allocation for mobile vendors.

Despite this, consensus within both groups regarding adequate access to sidewalk space was low, with standard deviations of **1.748** for fixed vendors and **1.511** for mobile vendors. This indicates that while fixed vendors may perceive fewer restrictions, this does not equate to a stable business location. Conversely, mobile vendors expressed greater concern due to their lack of fixed business locations.

Regarding security and access to utilities, both groups showed high agreement on the positive role these factors play in maintaining business operations (standard deviations of **1.214** and **1.231**, respectively). Mobile vendors scored higher on average, indicating fewer concerns about security issues at fixed locations and better access to utilities such as electricity and clean water, sufficient to sustain their business operations.

In terms of penalties, mobile vendors were less concerned about being fined due to their mobility (**3.1**), whereas fixed vendors faced a higher likelihood of inspections and fines (**2.76**) for failing to meet business requirements.

In summary, during the initial pilot phase of the sidewalk fee policy, both groups reported minimal restrictions on their business activities. Fixed vendors had a better understanding of permissible spaces and higher satisfaction with access to sidewalk space compared to mobile vendors. However, fixed vendors were not entirely stable in their business locations, as consensus on adequate sidewalk access was low within this group. On the other hand, mobile vendors, despite facing

Table 8. Average Scores for the "Physical Capital" Scale of Vendors.

Observed Variables	Fixed Vendors		Mobile Vendors		Both Groups	
	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation
VC1	**3,39**	**1,410**	-	-	**3,21**	**1,318**
VC2	**2,79**	**1,748**	**2,29**	**1,511**	**2,54**	**1,648**
VC3	**2,76**	**1,295**	**3,10**	**1,132**	**2,93**	**1,224**
VC4	**3,49**	**1,350**	**4,10**	**0,976**	**3,79**	**1,214**
VC5	**3,25**	**1,268**	**3,04**	**1,061**	**3,14**	**1,170**
VC6	**3,70**	**1,462**	**3,83**	**0,952**	**3,76**	**1,231**

Source: *Primary data processed, 2024*

Table 9. Average Scores for the "Human Capital" Scale of Vendors.

Observed Variables	Fixed Vendors		Mobile Vendors		Both Groups	
	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation
CN1	-	-	2,45	1,683	2,43	1,576
CN2	-	-	2,35	1,442	2,77	1,411
CN3	-	-	2,02	1,492	2,49	1,621
CN4	2,90	1,556	2,83	1,777	2,86	1,665
CN5	2,70	1,570	2,03	1,354	2,37	1,499
CN6	2,61	1,258	2,38	1,344	2,49	1,303

Source: *Primary data processed, 2024*

challenges in securing space and lacking stable locations, demonstrated flexibility through mobility, reducing concerns about fines.

Notably, fixed vendors benefit from more stable business spaces but face greater concerns about security and penalties compared to mobile vendors. While both groups exhibited relatively high agreement on these issues, mobile vendors were less concerned about security problems due to their mobility, which allows them to avoid fines. Meanwhile, fixed vendors face higher risks of inspections and penalties if they fail to comply with business regulations. The paradox lies in the fact that fixed vendors, despite having more stable spaces, bear greater risks related to security and penalties compared to mobile vendors, who trade stability for flexibility.

- **Human Capital**

The observed variables measure aspects related to education, skills, health, and family members' participation in business activities. Overall, the average values for human capital were rated below a positive significance threshold (below **3**), indicating that sidewalk vendors face significant challenges in job stability, health, and the ability to develop skills or transition to more stable employment.

First, regarding the desire to continue education (**standard deviation: 1.576**) and professional skills for job transition (**standard deviation: 1.621**), both groups scored among the lowest in human capital factors (Table 9). The variation in group consensus reflects differing perspectives on this issue. Although vendors understand that continued education is positively correlated with transferable job skills, the precarious nature of their work prevents them from pursuing further education. Notably, among mobile vendors, awareness of the need for specialized skills to transition jobs is higher, but their ability to invest in education and skill development is lower than the overall average.

A hidden factor limiting human capital is the current state of physical and mental health and the stability of business operations. For both groups, concerns about health while working outdoors and using part of the sidewalk are almost a luxury. Physical health among mobile vendors (**2.03**) is significantly lower than that of fixed vendors (**2.7**) due to the demands of continuous movement to find customers. However, low job stability (**2.35**) might explain the greater impact on the mental health of mobile vendors (**2.38**).

A positive aspect is the support from family members in business operations, which helps maintain some level of human capital stability for both fixed and mobile vendors. The average scores for fixed vendors (**2.9**) and mobile vendors (**2.83**) do not differ significantly, with relatively similar standard deviations (**1.665**) for

both groups. This indicates that vendors do receive family support, though in some cases, family members are not physically present to assist.

In general, sidewalk vendors, particularly mobile vendors, face numerous challenges regarding human capital. Their desire for education and skills development for job transitions is low, reflecting job insecurity and insufficient investment in personal development. Both their physical and mental health are severely affected, especially among mobile vendors, who are required to move frequently and lack job stability. However, family support remains a positive factor that somewhat maintains human capital stability, albeit unevenly.

The analysis highlights the need for policies to improve human capital conditions, including health support, job stability, and opportunities for skill development and professional growth for both groups.

- **Public Capital**

Access to national public services is essential for citizens' livelihoods and supports the formal business registration needs of both groups. Fixed vendors reported greater ease in accessing public administrative services (**4.4**) to complete legal procedures, including registering for partial sidewalk use for business purposes, with high consensus within the group (**standard deviation: 1.039**) (Table 10). For mobile vendors, although the score was significantly lower than average (**3.35**), it still indicates reasonable access. This demonstrates that urban public administrative services in District 1 are inclusive of all residents and workers in the area.

Additionally, vocational training and skill enhancement support are necessary to help both fixed and mobile vendors transition to more stable jobs. Scores highlight a clear disparity favoring fixed vendors, who are better positioned not only to receive support for job transitions but also to continue stable sidewalk businesses. In contrast, mobile vendors received insufficient support (**2.53**). However, the positive aspect for mobile vendors is their ability to continue business with access to other forms of support, including social infrastructure.

Finally, analyses of access to business support initiatives, such as the "Lookup and Register for Temporary Sidewalk Use in District 1" software, language learning for selling to tourists, and social subsidies for job transitions, show that both groups have very low levels of access. Support for using the software has not been highly effective, as the initiative was launched only after the policy was enacted, creating an information gap between the government and citizens. Vendors, particularly in District 1 with a large influx of tourists, expressed a strong need for English language training but have not received adequate support. Additionally, both groups reported not receiving subsidies to support job transitions after the new policy regulations were implemented. These limitations exacerbate the challenges of maintaining sustainable livelihoods while complying with legal requirements for sidewalk businesses.

In summary, fixed vendors in District 1 have better access to public administrative services than mobile vendors, particularly for legal procedures such as registering for sidewalk use for business. Although mobile vendors are not excluded from these services, they still face significant difficulties in accessing them. Support for vocational training and skill enhancement, especially for mobile vendors, is a critical factor to help them transition to more stable jobs. However, both groups face major barriers in accessing business support initiatives, such as sidewalk management software, language training for tourism, or social subsidies. These challenges hinder their ability to maintain sustainable livelihoods and meet the legal requirements for sidewalk businesses.

4.2. Analysis of Livelihood Strategies for Adapting to the Sidewalk Usage Fee Policy by Fixed and Mobile Vendors

Under current regulations, registering for sidewalk usage requires vendors to own a business space,

Table 10. Average Scores for the "Public Capital" Scale of Vendors.

Observed Variables	Fixed Vendors		Mobile Vendors		Both Groups	
	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Average Score	Standard Deviation
CC1	**4,40**	1,039	**3,35**	0,765	**3,88**	1,051
CC2	-	-	**3,63**	0,933	-	-
CC3	**3,55**	1,018	2,53	1,432	**3,04**	1,341
CC4	2,30	1,626	-	-	1,83	1,344
CC5	2,03	1,312	-	-	1,65	1,077
CC6	1,59	0,882	-	-	1,45	0,767

Source: *Primary data processed, 2024*

creating significant financial pressure when deciding to continue operations. If they choose to cease their business, they must seek alternative employment as a different livelihood strategy. Survey results regarding the saving habits of fixed and mobile vendors highlight the challenges of securing initial capital for job transitions.

For **fixed vendors**, including both formal and informal businesses, the results show that:

- **38.75%** save regularly,
- **31.25%** save occasionally, and
- **30%** do not save at all.

For **mobile vendors**, only:

- **16.25%** save regularly,
- **26.25%** save occasionally, and
- **57.5%** do not have any saving habits.

Those without savings indicated that their income is frequently consumed by basic expenses, such as rent, living costs, food, and reinvestment in their business, leaving them unable to accumulate savings.Based on these findings, fixed and mobile vendors can adopt three different livelihood strategies, guided by the framework of **Rational Choice Theory**.

Livelihood Strategy 1: Continuing Sidewalk Business Operations

Survey results show that the majority of fixed vendors (**97.5%**) and mobile vendors (**82.5%**) opted to continue their sidewalk business operations despite the pressures of the sidewalk fee policy. This underscores the essential role of sidewalks in supporting livelihoods, particularly for the informal sector—individuals with low educational attainment (**76.875%**) only completed primary school) and limited financial capital.

This strategy primarily revolves around leveraging the low skill requirements (**CN1**) and lack of formal qualifications (**CN3**) needed for sidewalk-based jobs. Although physical health (**CN5**) and mental health (**CN6**) scores were not high, vendors prioritized continuing their operations on sidewalks. Additionally, both fixed and mobile vendors maintain good relationships with neighboring vendors (**XH3**) and local authorities (**XH4**), which reduces friction and supports uninterrupted business activities.

The vendors operate in various sectors, including:

- Food (**34%**)
- Beverages (**28.22%**)
- Motorbike taxi services (**11%**)
- Lottery ticket sales (**9.8%**)
- Souvenirs (**5.52%**)
- Household goods (**2.45%**)
- Other services

According to reports by the Research Institute for Development, the motivations behind these activities include: low capital requirements, lack of skill demands, flexible hours (**Thu & Long, 2023; Hà & Vạn, 2023**), supplemental income, simplicity, older age, stable work (**Hà & Vạn, 2023**), lack of street-facing storefronts, competitiveness, and shared sidewalk space with local residents (**Thu & Long, 2023**). These factors illustrate that vendors maximize the advantages of using sidewalks as a rational choice for generating livelihoods while accounting for their limited livelihood assets.

Mobile vendors, in particular, rely heavily on social capital, despite constraints in human capital and diminishing financial capital. They continue operating as a reasonable choice because alternative livelihood options would likely have higher opportunity costs. When social capital is low, human capital significantly influences income; however, when social capital is high, its impact diminishes (**Boxman, De Graaf, & Flap, 1991**). Switching jobs often results in losing the existing livelihood assets that support their current work, making this transition irreversible.

Under current policies, mobile vendors remain part of the informal economy. Their decisions to sustain their livelihoods face significant challenges related to access to public capital. For instance, mobile vendors encounter greater difficulty than fixed vendors in accessing skill enhancement and vocational training opportunities (**CC3**)—a critical prerequisite for competing within their occupation.

Policy implementation still has limitations, particularly in disseminating information to relevant groups, including both fixed and mobile vendors. Despite efforts by local authorities to promote awareness of the policy, a significant portion of informal fixed vendors and mobile vendors remain uninformed. Survey results reveal that over **60%** of respondents were unaware of the policy. Among fixed vendors, **31 respondents** knew about the policy, while **59 respondents (61.3% of the total fixed sample)** did not. For mobile vendors, **75%**(**60 cases**) were unaware of the policy.

Finally, the prospect of mobile vendors renting or owning a storefront to use sidewalks for business purposes is unrealistic due to the substantial capital investment required and the ongoing expenses exceeding the financial capacity of informal workers. Mobile vendors can only rely on their livelihood assets—especially social capital—to sustain their business until they face vulnerabilities such as fines, confiscation of goods, poor health, eviction from sidewalk spaces, or the loss of social connections supporting their work. Conversely, fixed vendors have a higher likelihood of implementing alternative livelihood strategies.

Livelihood Strategy 2: Continuing Sidewalk Business and Establishing Additional Livelihoods

The strategy of continuing sidewalk business while simultaneously establishing additional livelihoods reflects a creative adaptation to the pressures of the sidewalk fee policy. This approach demonstrates the ability to flexibly leverage existing livelihood assets, particularly among fixed vendors. However, examining the differences in livelihood assets between fixed and mobile vendors reveals varying impacts.

Fixed vendors often have significant advantages in physical capital and public capital. With high average scores in variables such as **VC1 (3.39)**,**VC5 (3.14)**, and **VC6 (3.76)**, they are well aware of the sidewalk spaces they use, face fewer obstacles in accessing business locations, and can easily access utilities such as electricity and water. These conditions provide a favorable foundation for expanding or diversifying livelihoods, such as adding new products or partially transitioning to other forms of business.

Additionally, with more stable access to education and vocational training opportunities (**CC3: 3.55 average score**), fixed vendors can invest in developing the necessary skills to enhance business efficiency or transition to other, potentially more lucrative, industries. Their social capital is also highly rated, reflected in strong relationships with neighboring vendors (**XH3: 3.69 average score**) and local authorities (**XH4: 3.36 average score**), facilitating opportunities to expand or diversify their livelihoods.

Fixed vendors can be further divided into two subgroups: formal and informal businesses. While the advantages of physical capital and public capital are widely acknowledged among fixed vendors, in practice, **formal fixed vendors** are better positioned to invest in expanding their business spaces on sidewalks. **Informal fixed vendors**, however, still face bans on sidewalk sales and risk reductions in their physical and public capital.

In summary, fixed vendors, with their superior access to physical and public capital, are better equipped to adopt this strategy of maintaining sidewalk business while diversifying or transitioning to additional livelihoods. However, the advantages vary significantly between formal and informal fixed vendors, with the latter facing more challenges due to regulatory restrictions.

In contrast to fixed vendors, **mobile vendors**often lack the favorable conditions needed to implement this strategy. Although they effectively leverage social capital, they face significant limitations in **financial, human, and public capital**. Additionally, variables **CN1 (2.43 points)** and **CN3 (2.49 points)** indicate that they show little interest in skill development or formal education—key factors necessary for establishing a new livelihood. Limited financial capital is also a major barrier, as most mobile vendors **lack the savings needed** for initial investments or to sustain supplementary business activities.

To continue sustaining their livelihoods in **District 1**, mobile vendors **maximize their existing advantages in social and financial capital**. They rely on relationships with other vendors and landlords who share sidewalk space, **regular customers, family support**, and **sympathetic enforcement officers** who tend to be lenient toward those in poverty (**Kim, 2020**), rather than actively seeking new livelihood opportunities.

Furthermore, with **low scores in access to vocational training opportunities (CC3: 2.53 points)**, mobile vendors struggle to remain competitive if they attempt to pursue two livelihood strategies simultaneously. This

Figure 1. Formal Fixed Vending Activities on Phan Bội Châu Street, District 1

Source: *Photo by Trần Đăng Khoa, taken on September 30, 2024.*

Figure 2. Informal Vending Activities on Hàm Nghi Street, District 1.

Source: *Photo by Trần Đăng Khoa, taken on September 17, 2024.*

explains why they are often unwilling to risk their **limited livelihood assets** in testing a new strategy, especially given the volatile nature of the informal economy.

Combining sidewalk business with new livelihood creation requires careful consideration of risks and long-term impactsto ensure the strategy is both effective and sustainable for **both fixed and mobile vendors**.

For **fixed vendors**, potential risks include:

- **Rising operational costs**, such as taxes and sidewalk usage fees.
- **Intensifying competition**, as more vendors enter the market.
- **Limited education and business management skills**, making it difficult to expand or diversify business activities.

For **mobile vendors**, major challenges include:

- **Increased regulatory scrutiny** and enforcement.
- **The risk of losing key social connections** that help sustain their livelihoods.
- **Insufficient financial and human capital**, making it difficult to implement a dual livelihood strategy.

In the long run, these challenges could lead to **widening economic and social inequalities** if mobile vendors are unable to sustain their businesses. Additionally, **psychological stress and pressure** from failing to meet increasingly stringent business requirements could force them out of the market entirely. Without **adequate policy support**, they risk losing their livelihoods altogether.

Livelihood Strategy 3: Discontinuing Sidewalk Business

The third livelihood strategy—**discontinuing sidewalk business**—is the most **feasible** and aligns with the current policy environment. However, vendors must carefully consider **the benefits and costs** associated with this decision in relation to their personal needs.

Based on their **livelihood assets, vendors will choose a livelihood strategy** that aligns with their **existing resources**, meaning they will seek jobs that match their **basic skills** or jobs related to their prior experience.

A **2023 sidewalk economy study** found that **48.7%** of vendors migrated to **Ho Chi Minh City** with the goal of starting a business, but **33.5%** lacked professional qualifications. Additionally, **66.7%** considered sidewalk vending as their **primary occupation (Thu & Long, 2023**). Given the lack of **investment in vocational training and skill development**, discontinuing their business operations would likely lead vendors to **low-skill jobs** comparable to their previous work.

Survey data from **2019**(**Hà B. M. & Vạn N. T.**) showed that before entering the sidewalk economy:

- **25.4%** of vendors worked in **agriculture**, and
- **20.3%** were **unemployed**.

Fixed and mobile vendors generate both **benefits and drawbacks** in the sidewalk economy (**Table 10**). However, consumer surveys indicate that **sidewalk businesses remain essential to the city** for several reasons, including:

- **Proximity to homes and workplaces**,
- **Convenience along major streets**,
- **Time savings**,
- **Affordable prices**, and
- **A diverse range of goods**(**Thu & Long, 2023**)**.**

This suggests that the **current policy framework has not yet fully adapted** to the **market demand** and the **broader economic benefits** of sidewalk vending in **District 1**.

Table 11. Benefits and Drawbacks of Sidewalk Business.

Significance	Advantages/Disadvantages	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Benefits	Convenience/Time-saving	372	72,2
	Affordable prices	359	69,7
	Job creation	165	32,0
	Cultural and traditional values	54	10,5
	Poverty alleviation	52	10,1
	Tourism Development	26	5,0
Drawbacks	Traffic obstruction and inconvenience for pedestrians	217	42,1
	Unsanitary food products	177	34,4
	Disorder, insecurity, and lack of order	161	31,3
	Lack of safety/environmental concerns	94	18,3
	Loss of urban aesthetics	76	14,8
	Tax revenue loss	17	3,3

Source: *Survey results by Thu. P. X. & Long. H. V., 2023*

Current vendors need to balance supply and demand factors while adapting to the existing policy environment. **Formal fixed vendors** can leverage their advantages in **physical capital, social capital, and public capital** to expand their business beyond the sidewalk, either directly operating on the extended space or attracting customers. This includes using sidewalks to display goods, provide parking for customers, or as spaces for seating, cooking, and dining for food and beverage businesses (**Lệ, 2023**). Therefore, this livelihood strategy may not be a rational decision for formal fixed vendors.

On the other hand, **informal fixed vendors** are not covered under the policy framework. Continuing their business exposes them to high risks, including **disputes over sidewalk usage rights**and**penalties from enforcement authorities**.

Mobile vendors, typically with low educational attainment, have limited opportunities for formal employment in urban areas. They participate in the sidewalk economy as a means to absorb surplus labor, unemployed individuals, and vulnerable groups in society (**Lệ, 2023**). Their consideration of the third livelihood strategy—discontinuing sidewalk business—is often more influenced by policy restrictions than a voluntary choice.

Livelihood Strategy 3: Discontinuing Sidewalk Business, while aligned with the current policy environment, requires **sufficient livelihood assets** to implement effectively. **Formal fixed vendors** can utilize financial and social capital to transition, whereas **informal fixed vendors** and **mobile vendors** face significant challenges, particularly in terms of **skills and financial resources**, which limit their ability to find stable alternative employment.

This underscores the necessity of **supportive policies** that provide **skills training, access to financial resources, and career guidance** to mitigate the negative impacts of leaving the sidewalk economy. Future research should focus on improving economic opportunities and ensuring equity for vulnerable groups within the current policy context.

4. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored how fixed and mobile street vendors in District 1, Ho Chi Minh City respond to the implementation of the sidewalk fee policy, using an integrated lens of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The findings highlight the diverse and complex livelihood strategies adopted by vendors, influenced by varying access to capital assets and institutional constraints.

While the policy contributes positively to public revenue and urban space management, it has also created new barriers for informal vendors—especially those with limited financial and human capital. The research confirms several hypotheses related to behavioral adjustments, capital constraints, and unequal access to adaptive resources. A notable divide exists between fixed and mobile vendors: the former benefit from more stable networks and economic resources, while the latter face vulnerability and restricted mobility.

In reality, current livelihood strategies among sidewalk vendors receive insufficient institutional support. This undermines their capacity to sustain and adapt their businesses under shifting regulatory frameworks.

To improve the policy's relevance and mitigate unintended consequences, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Develop targeted support programs for mobile vendors, including access to microfinance, legal aid, and low-cost vending zones.
- Enhance human capital through vocational training, digital skills programs, and business literacy workshops.
- Promote inclusive stakeholder engagement by involving street vendors in the planning and negotiation of public space policies.
- Strengthen access to public services, including health insurance, social welfare registration, and access to clean water and sanitation in vending areas.
- Monitor and evaluate policy outcomes regularly to ensure that implementation aligns with broader goals of social equity and economic inclusion.

By adopting a more inclusive and supportive policy framework, local authorities can promote not only urban order but also equitable livelihood opportunities for one of the city's most vulnerable economic groups.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

Asian Development Bank. (2007). *Handbook on poverty assessment and participatory markets.* https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/33763/files/handbook-poverty-social-analysis.pdf

Bích, L. H. (2010). *The formation and development of rational choice theory*(Unpublished master's thesis).University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood.

Boxman, E. A., De Graaf, P. M., & Flap, H. D. (1991). The impact of social and human capital on the income attainment of Dutch managers. *Social Networks, 13*(1), 51-73. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733(91)90013-J

Carmona, M., Heath, T., Oc, T., & Tiesdell, S. (2003). *Public places - Urban spaces* (1st ed.). Architectural Press.

Carney, D. (1998). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: What contribution can we make?* Papers presented at the Department for International Development's Natural Resources Advisers' Conference, July 1998 DFID.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*, 95-120. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2780243

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Sage. https://philpapers.org/rec/CROTFO-13

Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century(IDS Discussion Paper No. 296). Institute of Development Studies.* https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/sustainable-rural-livelihoods-practical-concepts-for-the-21st-century/

Department for International Development (DFID). (1999). *Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets.* DFID. https://worldfish.org/GCI/gci_assets_moz/Livelihood%20Approach%20-%20DFID.pdf

Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198296959.001.0001

Friedman, D., & Hechter, M. (1988). The contribution of rational choice theory to macrosociological research. In*Sociological theory* (pp. 201-218). https://doi.org/10.2307/202116

Government of Vietnam. (2007). *On individuals engaging in independent and regular commercial activities without business registration.* Retrieved from Thư Viện Pháp Luật: https://thuvienphapluat.vn

Hà, B. T., & Vạn, B. T. (2023). Street vending – A type of sidewalk activity in Ho Chi Minh City. In *Proceedings of the Conference on Management and Utilization Solutions for Sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City* (pp. 4-22). People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall.

Huyền, N. T. (2015). Ensuring livelihoods for sustainable poverty reduction. Retrieved from *Communist Review*: https://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn

Kim, A. M. (2020). *Saigon sidewalk life.* Dân Trí Publishing House.

Kollmair, M., & Gamper, S. (2002). *The sustainable livelihoods approach: Input paper for the integrated training course of NCCR North-South Aeschiried (9-20 September 2002).* University of Zurich. https://alnap.org/help-library/resources/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-input-paper-for-the-integrated-training-course-of/

Khoa, T. Đ. (2025). *Assessing the impact of the sidewalk usage fee policy on the livelihoods of fixed and mobile vendors in Ho Chi Minh City: A case study of District 1* (Bachelor's thesis). University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City.

Lệ, T. T. (2023). Groups participating in the utilization of sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City – Benefits and challenges. In *Proceedings of the Conference on Management and Utilization Solutions for Sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City* (pp. 232-241). People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City.

May, C., Brown, G., Cooper, N., & Brill, L. (2009). *The sustainable livelihoods handbook: An asset-based approach to poverty.* Church Action on Poverty & Oxfam GB.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Nguyệt, B. N. (2018). *The sidewalk economy in Hải Châu District: Current situation and solutions.* Da Nang Institute for Socio-Economic Development Research.

People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City. (2023). *Decision 32/2023/QĐ-UBND on the management and temporary use of roadways and sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City.* Retrieved from https://thuvienphapluat.vn

Smelser, N. J. (1998). The rational and the ambivalent in the social sciences. *American Sociological Review, 63*, 1-16. https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/1997_asa_presidential_address_smelser.pdf

Turner, J. H., & Turner, P. R. (1978). *The structure of sociological theory.* Dorsey Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/1317384

Tuyền, V. T. (2023). *The demand for public green space for recreation among residents in resettlement apartments in Ho Chi Minh City* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City.

Tuyền, V. T., Khanh, T. T. L., & Khoa, T. Đ. (2024). The impact of the sidewalk usage fee policy on vendors' livelihoods: A case study of District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. *Journal of Human Resource Development Science, 04*(18), 32-54.

Thu, P. X., & Long, H. V. (2023). Sidewalk business in Ho Chi Minh City: Current situation and solutions. In *Proceedings of the Conference on Management and Utilization Solutions for Sidewalks in Ho Chi Minh City* (pp. 104-145). People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City.

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Võ Thanh Tuyền, born in Vietnam in 1991, holds a Master's degree in Urban Studies (2016) and a PhD in Ethnology (2023), both from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City. She currently serves as the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Urban Studies at the same institution.

Her research interests focus on *public space, urban communities,* and *urban socio-economics.* An active scholar, she has published over twelve articles in academic journals and presented her work at international conferences, contributing valuable insights to the field of urban studies.

Dr. Võ Thanh Tuyền
Faculty of Urban Studies
University of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
E-mail: vothanhtuyen@hcmussh.edu.vn
2431414@student.hcmute.edu.vn

Trần Đăng Khoa, born in Vietnam in 2003, is a young, dynamic, and enthusiastic scholar in the field of Urban Studies. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Urban Studies from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City.

As an emerging researcher, Trần Đăng Khoa has published five academic articles, contributing valuable insights into urban development and community studies. His primary research interests include **Sustainable Cities, Public Policy Impacts, and Social Equity.**

Through his work, Trần Đăng Khoa is committed to advancing knowledge and proposing practical solutions to improve the quality of life for marginalized groups in urban settings.

Mr. Trần Đăng Khoa
Faculty of Urban Studies
University of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Email: khoatran1111@outlook.com

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 36 – 40 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Religious Practices and Health Challenges in the Chaoshan Region of Peripheral China

Qing Wu*

Shenzhen College of International Education, 3 Antuoshan Sixth Road, Futian, Shenzhen, Guangdong, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 20-Dec-24
Revised: 26-Apr-25
Accepted: 05-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Qing Wu
E-mail: S21180.wu@stu.scie.com.cn

Citation: Qing Wu (2025). Religion and Health in Chaoshan, China. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 36–40. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1279.p36

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Religious practices have long been integral to the cultural fabric of Chaoshan, a rural region in south-eastern China. These traditions offer emotional solace and social cohesion. However, when religious beliefs become overly superstitious or fanatical, they can adversely affect individual health outcomes, particularly by discouraging the use of modern medicine. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative ethnographic approach, supported by field observations, interviews, and case studies, to investigate how religious practices in Chaoshan influence healthcare decisions. It explores the intersection of traditional belief systems with factors such as education, cultural norms, and family dynamics. **Results:** Findings reveal that while many religious traditions in Chaoshan promote psychological well-being and reinforce cultural values, some beliefs lead to the rejection of professional medical treatment. This avoidance is often rooted in low health literacy, rigid cultural expectations, and strong intergenerational influence. **Discussion:** The results underscore the need for critical engagement with religious practices that may inadvertently cause harm. Encouraging informed health choices while respecting cultural traditions is essential for improving public health outcomes in such contexts. **Conclusion:** Chaoshanese communities must remain vigilant in distinguishing between beneficial and harmful aspects of their religious practices. Culturally sensitive health education and community dialogue are crucial for balancing traditional beliefs with the demands of modern healthcare.

Keywords: Chaoshan, Religious practices, Health behavior, Superstition, Traditional culture, Modern medicine, Underdeveloped.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Shantou, a city in the Chaoshan region renowned for its strong folk and religious beliefs, this study examines the impact of religious belief systems on healthcare habits. Religious culture is fundamental to Shantou, influencing daily existence, individual choices, and group identity. Although Buddhism and Taoism are regarded as the two main religions in the area, there is a highly syncretic spiritual landscape where institutional religions, ancestor worship, and folk beliefs coexist.

Cheng (1997) reports that there are currently 316 major and minor Buddhist religious activity sites in Shantou, while there are just five Taoist sites. However, Taoist gods are frequently worshipped in Buddhist places. In addition to having altars devoted to the Taoist Xuantian God (also called Emperor Zhenwu), many temples and nunneries, including Qingyun, Jisheng, Jufeng, Jinlan, Baolian, Tielin, and Anshou Temples, provide divination and fortune-telling, which are rare in Buddhist temples in the north (Li, 2024). Historically, both Buddhist and Taoist practices were practiced at Jiutian Chanyuan, originally known as Baihuajian Temple. This theological mingling is seen in other institutions such as Suiyuanju and Kunde Temple, whose official classification frequently depends

on organizing bodies or registration preferences (Lai, 2018).

In addition to Buddhism and Taoism, Shantou officially acknowledges Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam. There are 446 permitted and registered religious activity locations, with around 100,000 believers overall—accounting for one-seventh of all venues and one-tenth of religious adherents in the province (Eng & Lin, 2002). In charge of religious matters in Shantou, Chaozhou, Jieyang, and Shanwei is the Catholic Diocese of Shantou, which has an estimated 130,000 followers, or more than half of the province's Catholic population. There is just a modest presence of Islam, with only one temporary halal restaurant and 500–1,000 believers, primarily migrant workers from northwest regions like Qinghai and Xinjiang (Eng & Lin, 2002). About 40,000 people follow Christianity in 76 churches and public places, while 48 Catholic churches are also in operation, housing close to 20,000 followers. With over 40,000 regular participants and 317 officially authorized religious activity locations, Buddhism continues to be the most institutionally visible religion (Lee, 2009; Lee, 2018).

Due to a mix of cultural familiarity and limited access to biological care, field study indicates that people of Chaoshan frequently seek religious or spiritual healing. People are frequently exposed to herbal treatments, such as ginkgo biloba, for conditions like tinnitus from an early age, which fosters a lifetime faith in conventional medicine. Residents of rural communities like Wudui often seek treatment from traditional spiritual healers and invest in talismanic water rituals that are thought to ward off illness. These rituals provide cultural resonance and emotional comfort, despite their high expenses in relation to income. In a similar vein, those with little money might turn to illicit but reasonably priced drugs like metamizole while still engaging in rituals that are in line with Loong Shi, a regional religion. These instances demonstrate the ways in which cultural and economic variables interact to promote a preference for spiritual coping strategies and religious rituals over official medical care.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the ways in which cultural identity, religious institutions, and folk belief systems interact to affect public health outcomes and healthcare choices in Chaoshan. This study uses a combination of qualitative interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and basic statistical analysis to provide light on the sociocultural determinants of health in an area where belief frequently replaces scientific certainty.

2. METHODS

Using a mixed-methods ethnographic approach, this study investigates how religious practices, health behaviours, and sociocultural factors intersect in the Chaoshan region. Field observations, semi-structured interviews, case studies, and a small-scale physiological experiment with talismanic water were used to gather data.

Convenience sampling was used to pick participants for the interviews and experimental trials from three villages in Chaoshan. The selection process was focused on the accessibility and variety of religious activities. During field visits, twenty adult volunteers between the ages of 20 and 50 were directly approached. Prior to data collection, verbal informed consent was sought, and participation was voluntary. The study's overall goal and the participants' freedom to leave at any moment were explained to them.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, with a focus on cultural sensitivity and respect for religious beliefs. All participants were guaranteed anonymity, and no identifying information was recorded. Data were used exclusively for academic purposes, and participants were debriefed following the study to clarify the nature of the hypothetical scenario used during emotional priming.

Systolic blood pressure was taken both before and after a ritual utilizing talismanic water to examine the possible placebo impact of religious practices. To create mild tension and mimic a real-life situation, a made-up scenario with a local health concern was presented. Although this approach provided a useful means of monitoring physiological reaction, it had a number of drawbacks, including the fact that emotional priming was not consistent among participants and that results may have been impacted by differences in ritual belief. Furthermore, the data cannot conclusively identify the religious practice as the cause in the absence of a control group. Randomized controlled trials should be used in future research to increase the validity of the results.

3. RESULTS

In order to investigate how religious practices in Chaoshan affect health behaviors and results, this study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data.

Systolic blood pressure was measured before and after participants drank talismanic water, a practice originating in Chaoshan mysticism, in order to assess the physiological effects of religious ceremonies. Twenty individuals' blood pressure readings before and after the practice are shown in Table 1. To find out if the difference between the systolic blood pressure before and after the ceremony was statistically significant, a paired t-test was used.

A paired t-test compares two related samples—in this case, the same participants' blood pressure before

Table 1: The blood pressure of Chaoshan inhabitants before and after religious practices.

Paired t-test on blood pressure of Chaoshanese before and after religious practices

Trials	Before	After
Blood Pressure	133	128
	138	120
	132	125
	135	128
	120	115
	129	129
	126	115
	131	126
	136	127
	142	132
	129	118
	140	132
	128	119
	129	122
	132	128
	133	136
	118	120
	120	118
p-value	0.006074177	

Source*: Author, 2024*

and after the intervention—to assess whether the mean difference is statistically significant.

The p-value, which reflects the probability that observed changes are due to chance, was 0.0061. Since this is below the standard threshold of 0.05, the difference is considered statistically significant.

Following the religious rite, participants' blood pressure consistently dropped. For instance, the blood pressure of Participant 1 decreased from 133 to 128 and that of Participant 6 decreased from 120 to 115. The findings imply that religious practices may cause a relaxing physiological reaction and lessen anxiety.

Twenty-five participants were split up into five economic ranges in order to investigate the relationship between money and reliance on religious healing. Every year, each group (n = 5) reported how frequently they participated in religious activities related to health. With a pronounced inverse association between income level and ritual frequency, Table 2 and Figure 1 demonstrate that those with lower incomes engaged in these behaviors more regularly.

In contrast, participants with higher incomes are more likely to seek biomedical care and treat religious rituals as supplemental rather than primary healthcare, while those with incomes below 15,000 RMB reported up to 18 religious rituals annually, while those with incomes over 100,000 RMB averaged just two. This trend suggests that access to modern healthcare is limited by economic constraints increasing reliance on spiritual practices.

4. DISCUSSION

This study looked into how local healthcare practices are influenced by religious and cultural belief systems in Chaoshan. Religious practices, like the use of talismanic water or spiritual healing rituals, continue to play a crucial role in health management, especially in communities with limited access to biomedical care, according to research conducted through fieldwork, interviews, and small-scale physiological testing. By showing how spirituality, poverty, and cultural tradition interact to influence medical decision-making, these findings directly address the research issue.

Following ritual participation, there was a noted drop in systolic blood pressure, which may indicate a stress-relieving or placebo-like effect. This is consistent with local beliefs that spiritual practices release "negative energy." Due to methodological constraints, such as the small sample size (n=20), lack of a control group, and emotional priming, these results should be regarded with caution. These elements provide valuable insight into regional healthcare practices while avoiding oversimplified generalizations.

Chaoshan's dependence on spiritual cures is consistent with previous accounts of the area's religious establishment. Though Taoist characters and practices are strongly ingrained in Buddhist contexts, Cheng (1997) noted that Shantou has 316 operational Buddhist temples compared to just five Taoist ones. According to Li (2024), fortune-telling and divination are frequently used in temple ceremonies and provide a symbolic and emotional kind of care. This overlap highlights the cultural embeddedness of healing and depicts a syncretic religious environment where institutional differences are blurred in practice.

The state of the economy and the infrastructure are also correlated with these habits. Although Shantou has 446 recognized places for religious activities, Eng and Lin (2002) noted that the distribution of formal healthcare services is still unequal, particularly in rural villages. Religious organizations provide as both practical and spiritual resources in this situation. According to Eng and Lin (2002), Muslims and other minority religious groups are marginalized, and their lack of halal accommodations is a reflection of wider service exclusion. The similar trend may be seen in low-income Taoist and Buddhist

Table 2. Income Brackets and Frequency of Religious Practices.

	0 < I ≤ 15000	*15000 < I ≤ 30000*	*30000 < I ≤ 60000*	*60000 < I ≤ 100000*	*100000 < I ≤ 250000*
Frequency	18	13	9	4	2
Cumulative Frequency	18	31	40	44	46

Source: *Author, 2024.*

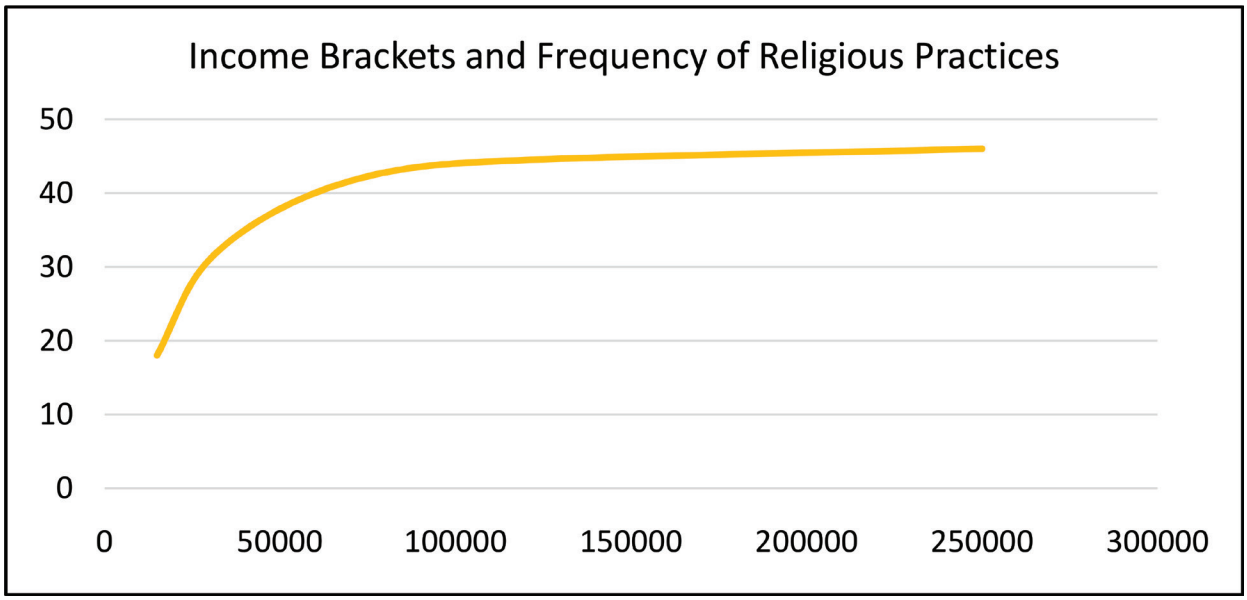


Figure 1: Cumulative Frequency Graph of Religious Practices Based on Income Brackets.

adherents, who frequently turn to ritual-based healing as an affordable substitute for expensive or unreliable medical treatment.

The persistent use of harmful or prohibited drugs is much more worrisome. In one field instance, a participant used metamizole, which is prohibited in China as an analgesic, before finally crediting their recovery to Loong Shi-style ritual worship. This illustrates the twofold vulnerability of those with minimal financial resources: their reliance on spiritual systems for both hope and healing, as well as their restricted access to risky medical solutions. Although Peterson (2007) warns of the dangers of metamizole, its accessibility and affordability allow it to remain in use in areas with little official medical supervision.

Although the whole Chaoshan region cannot be represented by these cases, they do show recurring trends: a high correlation exists between economic precarity, cultural tradition, and a lack of adequate health facilities and the use of spiritual healing. As demonstrated by Lee (2009; 2018), despite Buddhism's numerical dominance in the religious landscape, its role frequently goes beyond theory into areas such as crisis assistance, family rituals, and personal well-being.

These results highlight the necessity of culturally aware public health initiatives. Policymakers should acknowledge the role that folk and religious practices play in providing psychosocial support and bridging service gaps, rather than seeing them as barriers. Working together with regional religious leaders and including culturally appropriate practices into outreach initiatives could boost biomedical involvement, decrease dependence on dangerous substitutes, and enhance trust.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study advances knowledge of how spiritual practices and religious belief systems influence healthcare behavior in Chaoshan, especially in marginalized or economically disadvantaged groups. The study demonstrates how ancient rituals and folk healing continue to offer emotional relief, perceived therapeutic value, and social stability—often in lieu of biomedical treatment—by integrating field interviews, physiological testing, and cultural analysis.

The results show that religious practices are more than just symbolic; they are culturally embedded health strategies and coping mechanisms, particularly in situations when conventional healthcare is unavailable, mistrusted, or prohibitively expensive. This study offers fresh perspectives on the unique dynamics of the syncretic religious landscape of Chaoshan, where Buddhist and Taoist practices frequently coexist and folk healing traditions serve as commonplace medicine.

Policy interventions should give culturally responsive healthcare outreach top priority in order to address these trends. To promote trust, health authorities might train clinicians in traditional health practices, include religious leaders as mediators, and integrate local beliefs into health education programs. Reliance on dangerous substitutes, such as prohibited drugs, can be decreased in rural regions by increasing access to reasonably priced, evidence-based care.

Larger sample sizes and controlled trials should be used in future studies to investigate these dynamics and more thoroughly examine the physiological impacts of spiritual practices. In culturally multiple countries, comparative research between Chaoshan and other areas with comparable religious cultures would also assist put the findings in context and guide more comprehensive healthcare policies.

Through recognizing the cultural validity of religious healing and addressing its drawbacks, this study paves the door for more successful and inclusive public health strategies that are grounded in local meaning and science.

Acknowledgements

I thank my uncle for hosting our field visits and assisting with the research. I am grateful to my field work mentor Mr. Zuohong Chen and my Math teacher Ms. Alpha Liu for her comments on statistical methods of this article. I dedicate this study to my grandparents who inspired me to undertake this study.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Cheng, C. (1997). Chaozhou people and Chaozhou culture. American Journal of Chinese Studies, 4(1), 101–120. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44289219

Eng, I., & Lin, Y. (2002). Religious festivities, communal rivalry, and restructuring of authority relations in rural Chaozhou, Southeast China. The Journal of Asian Studies, 61(4), 1259–1285. https://doi.org/10.2307/3096442

Lai, Y. (2018). The folk belief, charitable undertakings and belief economy of Chaoshan charitable temples: The triple-agent model of Shantou XY Charitable Temple's operation as an example. The China Nonprofit Review, 10(1), 161–190. https://doi.org/10.1163/18765149-12341344

Lee, J. T. (2018). Christianizing maritime Chaozhou-Shantou. In Christianity and Chinese culture (pp. 1–14). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72266-5_1

Lee, J. T.-H. (2009). Christianity and state-building in Republican Chaozhou, South China. In F. Assandri & D. Martins (Eds.), From early Tang court debates to China's peaceful rise (pp. 67–88). Amsterdam University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n0hp.8

Li, G. (2024). Reflection on the spread of Chinese popular religion: A case-study of the Han Yu belief in the Chaozhou region. Religions, 15(12), 1523. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121523

Peterson, M. (2007). Should the precautionary principle guide our actions or our beliefs? Journal of Medical Ethics, 33(1), 5–10. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27719773

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Qing Wu was born in China in 2006. He is a senior student at Shenzhen College of International Education.

His main areas of research interest are sociocultural anthropology, religions, traditions, public health, and science.

Qing Wu
Shenzhen College of International Education
3 Antuoshan Sixth Road
Futian, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province
China, 518043
E-mail: S21180.wu@stu.scie.com.cn
kenqw0@gmail.com
Mobile:. (+86) 13728986994
ORCID iD: 0009-0007-3107-3308

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 41 – 59 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Intervention of Spoken Word in Making Contemporary Dance Choreography

Muhammad Fairul Azreen bin Mohd Zahid[1]*, Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman[2], Ahmad Kamal Basyah Sallehuddin[3] and Syahrul Fithri Musa[4]

[1]*LASALLE College of the Arts, School of Dance and Theatre, Singapore*
[2,3&4]*College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 20-Jan-25
REVISED: 16-Apr-25
ACCEPTED: 23-Apr-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Muhammad Fairul Azreen Mohd Zahid
E-mail: fairul.zahid@lasalle.edu.sg

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman
E-mail: mohdkipli@uitm.edu.my

Author 3: Ahmad Kamal Basyah Sallehuddin
E-mail: akamalbasyah@uitm.edu.my

Author 4: Syahrul Fithri Musa
E-mail: sfitri315@uitm.edu.my

Citation: Muhammad Fairul Azreen bin Mohd Zahid, Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman, Ahmad Kamal Basyah Sallehuddin and Syahrul Fithri Musa (2025). Spoken Word in Contemporary Dance Choreography. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 41–59. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1282.p41

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The integration of spoken word into contemporary dance choreography has gained increasing attention as a means of addressing complex societal and political themes. However, scholarly understanding of its function as a choreographic tool remains limited. **Methods:** This study adopts an auto-ethnomethodological approach, combining principles of embodied cognition and performative analysis, to investigate the choreographic process behind the work 1st APPEAL. The analysis draws on the choreographer's reflective practice and experiential insights. **Results:** The findings reveal that the selective use of spoken word can enhance the thematic resonance and conceptual clarity of a choreographic piece. Furthermore, dancers' comprehension of the spoken content was found to significantly influence the embodied realization of choreographic intent, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between verbal articulation and physical expression. **Discussion:** These results underscore the importance of integrating spoken language intentionally within dance to preserve the expressive balance between movement and text. The spoken word emerges as a dynamic choreographic tool that deepens interpretive engagement and narrative coherence in performance. **Conclusion:** This study contributes to the evolving discourse on choreographic methodologies by highlighting the potential of spoken word to bridge meaning and motion. It offers valuable insights for choreographers seeking to expand their performative vocabulary through the thoughtful integration of language and movement.

Keywords: Auto Ethnomethodology, Choreography, Constative, Contemporary Dance, Embodied Cognition, Performative Acts, Speech Act, Spoken Word.

1. INTRODUCTION

Spoken word is a dynamic and interactive art form that involves the oral performance of poetry or literary works, distinguishing it from traditional poetry, which is typically read silently (Banes, 2019). With roots in ancient oral traditions, spoken word gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s through poetry slams and open mic events (Wengrower et al., 2019). According to Schneider and Scales (2015), spoken word performances are often dynamic and interactive experiences. While spoken word is frequently associated with social and political commentary, the genre encompasses a broad range of themes and styles. Some artists incorporate spoken word into choreography to explore personal emotional experiences, whereas others utilize spoken word to address issues like racism, gender inequality, and social

justice. The integration of spoken word in contemporary dance choreography enables choreographers to convey complex narratives that may be difficult to express through movement alone, particularly when addressing heavy issues (O'Sullivan, 2007). As Allies (2015) noted in "Dance and Spoken Word: Making Polos," spoken word intervention highlights the limitations of movement in conveying meaning. Fiske (1990) supported this idea, suggesting that the human body can be challenging to "read" due to its inherent ambiguity.

This paper argues that the incorporation of spoken word into choreography facilitates a dynamic equilibrium between movement and language, ensuring that neither medium dominates the other. This integration serves as an alternative choreographic tool, particularly effective in conveying complex narratives. The strategic use of spoken word can augment the emotional resonance of a performance, introducing layers of depth and nuance that may be difficult to achieve through movement alone (Fortuna, 2016). By combining spoken word with choreography, dancers and choreographers can explore innovative storytelling methods and convey social messages or commentary (Zarrilli, 2017), including emotions that may be difficult to express through bodily movement. The incorporation of spoken word can add variety to a performance, engaging audiences through both verbal and nonverbal elements. Ultimately, the decision to include spoken word in a dance piece depends on the choreographer's artistic direction and goals. By examining the relationship with spoken language as well as considering how it influences broader cultural contexts, this research can gain valuable insights into lived experiences and their sociocultural significance. Goodridge and Goulish (2006) note that the incorporation of spoken word into contemporary choreography has been driven by various factors, including an increasing interest in interdisciplinary art forms as well as a desire to discover new modes of expression.

Choreographers have also been encouraged to incorporate spoken word into their works as a response to social and political concerns. For instance, Bill T. Jones' "Still/Here" (1995) explores themes of mortality and illness through dance, music, and spoken word. Crystal Pite (2016) also uses spoken words in her contemporary choreography. Pite's work "Betroffenheit" utilizes spoken word to explore the impact of trauma, providing viewers with an intensely personal and robust experience. By integrating spoken word and movement, choreographers can delve deeper into complex themes and emotions (Pite, 2016). This approach is exemplified by Liz Lerman (2006), who uses spoken words to provide context for her dances. Similarly, the Urban Bush Women dance company frequently incorporates spoken words to share stories about the experiences of black women. Other notable choreographers, such as Okwui Okpokwasili (2014) and Mette Edvardsen (2011, 2014), have also successfully combined dance and spoken word to explore themes like sexuality, power dynamics, and personal history. In my own choreographic work, 1st APPEAL, I employ Auto Ethnomethodology to address the intervention of spoken word in exploring heavy societal and political issues in Malaysia.

To effectively convey complex narratives in contemporary dance, the integration of spoken word serves as a powerful tool for enhancing communicative clarity and emotional resonance. This study investigates the role of spoken word within choreographic practice, using the author's original work, *1st APPEAL*, as a case study. A central challenge in this process lies in selecting the most appropriate linguistic elements to convey the intended message. To address this, a systematic method was developed, focusing on the identification of key "nouns" and "verbs" to structure spoken interventions (see Figure 1). For example, in the phrase *"They are going to Italy,"* the segments *"They are going"* (verb phrase) and *"to Italy"* (noun phrase) were chosen for repetition, emphasizing both action and destination. This approach acknowledges the limitations of bodily expression, particularly in conveying abstract or specific concepts such as geographic locations—an issue that aligns with Allies' concern regarding the potential for meaning to be "lost in translation" in purely physical performance. Within this context, spoken word functions not only as a narrative aid for the audience but also as a cognitive anchor for performers, ensuring that the choreographed movement retains its intended semantic depth. Assigning spoken elements to dancers also revealed an intriguing interplay: movements were often interpreted as either "nouns" or "verbs," depending on the associated verbal cue.

Although the integration of spoken word into contemporary dance has gained increased scholarly and artistic interest, there remains a paucity of research exploring its application within specific cultural frameworks, particularly in Southeast Asia and Malaysia. While several choreographers have employed spoken word to enhance narrative expression, the nuanced challenges associated with word selection, audience interpretation, and cultural resonance warrant further investigation. The preliminary method of utilizing grammatical categories—namely nouns and verbs—as structuring devices shows potential, yet it requires additional theoretical refinement and empirical validation. Furthermore, the influence of spoken word on audience engagement, comprehension,

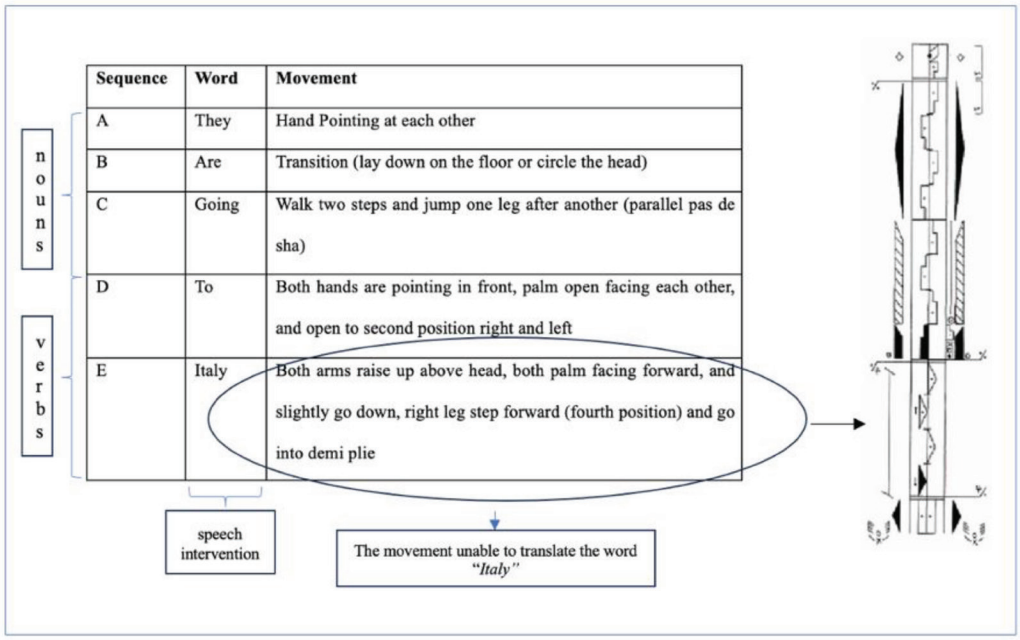


Figure 1: Words separation and movements sample

and emotional response remains underexplored. Although anecdotal and artistic evidence suggests that spoken word may intensify emotional connection and clarify complex themes, systematic analysis of its impact is still lacking.

To address these research gaps, this study proposes the following guiding questions:

1. How can spoken word be effectively integrated into contemporary dance choreography to communicate complex narratives and emotions within specific cultural contexts?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of incorporating spoken word into dance performances, and what strategies can choreographers employ to navigate these challenges?
3. In what ways does spoken word influence audience engagement and understanding, and what are the implications for choreographic practice and performer interpretation?

Through this inquiry, the research seeks to expand the growing discourse on multimodal storytelling in dance and to offer practical insights for choreographers and performers working at the intersection of movement and language.

2. Methodological Approach

This study employs an **auto-ethnomethodological research approach**, offering a reflexive and detailed examination of the researcher's own creative process as a choreographer, specifically in relation to the development and performance of *1st APPEAL*. Auto-ethnomethodology enables a nuanced exploration of practice-based inquiry, foregrounding the researcher's subjective experiences, biases, and assumptions as integral components of the research process. This methodological choice is particularly appropriate given the study's emphasis on introspective analysis and artistic decision-making within the choreographic context.

The methodological section outlines the overall research design, including participant selection, data collection strategies, and analytical procedures. Special attention is paid to the role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry, emphasizing the importance of **reflexivity** and positionality. Strategies such as **member checking**, **peer debriefing**, and the use of **thick description** were employed to enhance the **trustworthiness**, **validity**, and **credibility** of the findings.

To further support the rigor of the study, expert feedback was solicited from a seasoned practitioner in the field of dance and choreography. This expert provided critical evaluation of the choreographic tools and methods used in *1st APPEAL*, thereby contributing to the evaluative depth of the research.

The methodological framework integrates **qualitative**, **exploratory**, **cognitive**, **post-textual**, **contextual**, and **empirical approaches**, each informing different aspects of the investigation. The auto-ethnomethodological approach is conceptually divided into two main components: (1) a **cognitive approach**, which focuses on the creative process during the making of *1st APPEAL* and functions as the exploratory design for

primary data collection; and (2) a **post-textual analysis**, which interprets the embodied knowledge derived from choreographic practice and translates it into textual form.

The cognitive dimension of the study is grounded in Flower and Hayes's (1981) **Cognitive Process Model of Composition**, which identifies three core components of writing: the writer's long-term memory (knowledge of topic, audience, and context), the task environment (including rhetorical problems and the developing text), and the writing process (planning, translating, and revising). This model offers a **non-linear, hierarchical** framework for understanding the dynamic and recursive nature of creative composition, which is equally applicable to choreographic creation.

By employing this integrated framework, the study aims to systematically address the central research problem and achieve its primary objective. The **exploratory process** is embedded within the auto-ethnographic framework, facilitating real-time analysis of artistic practice. The **post-textual component** enriches the auto-ethnomethodological inquiry by offering interpretive insights and methodological robustness. These two approaches collectively support the study's four core outcomes: identifying the research problem, conducting background, empirical, and contextual investigations, and, ultimately, refining the research focus through iterative reflection grounded in practice.

3. Identifying the Words Using "Nouns" and "Verbs"

To start the process in making choreography 1st APPEAL. Identifying the words "nouns" and "verbs" is very important because it is parts of the important material to be put inside the choreography. The words separation, using "nouns" and "verbs" will act as a tool to be used by the choreographer and dancers which later, it will be decided by the choreographer to be used as spoken, or movements. In the early process, the "nouns" and "verbs" also will be named as *key indicators, and* those choices of words can be played around like a puzzle to ensure the dancers itself able to embody those words together with movements.

Most of us have been taught that a "noun" is a word that refers to a person, place, or thing. While this is true, it is helpful to think of things as a broad category; a *thing* does not have to be something that you can hold in your hand (a mountain, a place, and a feeling can all be *things*), for examples:

- *They going to know*. (*They* is a noun and refers to a person or a thing)
- *I want to go to Italy*. (*Italy* is a noun and a place)
- *They not going to know*. (*Know* is a noun and a thing represents feelings)

Nouns can also refer to an animal a quality, an idea, or an action as in "She is not going to know". Nouns can name someone or something generally (*dog, seashore, friend*) or specifically (they refer as they, we, who, whom and so forth). Although most "nouns" consist of a single word, some do not: *school bus, Italian dressing* are all nouns. Nouns can be singular "*kepercayaan kepada Tuhan"*[1] with the word "*Tuhan"* (God) referring to one (depending on religion and beliefs) or plural ('two *gods*'), although some nouns take the same form regardless ('one *god*,' 'two gods'). Nouns can also refer to concepts (*information*) that cannot be counted and singular entities "*kedaulatan undang-undang*" (rules of law) that cannot be pluralized. Sentences can have one noun "*They* going to know." or more than one "*They* going to know and *God* forgive *you*." but some sentences don't have any for example "*objection*!" which can be considered as a transition or taken over by movement.

Verbs are easier to identify because they are words that indicate action or a state of being, words like: write, run, tell, have, be, look, feel. Verbs are the only part of speech that gets conjugated, that is, that changes tense in order to indicate a particular time frame. For example "they not *going to* know" going to can refer to a doer which is the possibility to do something or have a tendency to make something. The subject of a sentence acts (s) indicated by the main verb; that is, the subject is the doer of the action: "*kesopanan* dan *kesusilaan"* (courtesy and morality) which means both "*kesopanan, kesusilaan"* is an action that must do or must have where the word "*and*" can be a link or transition which later can referred to movements or even can be used to be spoken. Both "nouns' and "verbs" as tools to choose the word to be spoken or not to be spoken will be the main implementation throughout the process. The choreographer used these tools to identify the word before starting the choreographic making. This process can happen before the process or even during the process, however, discourse needs to be conducted to ensure the dancers are able to understand before they portray it in the choreography.

This study adopts a cognitive approach to choreography, particularly in the creation of *1st APPEAL*, by employing a linguistic framework that distinguishes between "nouns" and "verbs." This categorization facilitates the identification and selection of keywords to be either spoken or embodied through movement.

[1]*Kepercayaan* kepada *Tuhan* is referring to believe in god, which is taken from the Malaysia National Pillars (Rukun Negara)

Nouns—representing people, places, objects, ideas, or concepts—and verbs—denoting actions or states of being—serve as fundamental elements in constructing a coherent and expressive narrative. Through this analytical process, choreographers are able to make deliberate choices about which words to emphasize verbally and which to convey kinesthetically, thereby enhancing the clarity and communicative power of the performance.

The effectiveness of this method lies in its ability to deepen the dancers' interpretive understanding of the choreographic intent. By isolating and categorizing key terms, dancers gain insight into the narrative structure and thematic emphasis, enabling them to embody these words with both physical precision and emotional resonance. Critical to this process is the ongoing dialogue between choreographer and performers, ensuring that the intended meanings are comprehensively understood and accurately conveyed. During the choreographic development of *1st APPEAL*, the choreographer systematically analyzed sentence structures to extract salient nouns and verbs for spoken delivery or movement expression. This entailed careful consideration of contextual relevance to optimize the impact and intelligibility of the performance. Ultimately, this approach supports the creation of a compelling and cohesive choreographic narrative that communicates effectively with the audience.

4. Choreographic Approach in Choosing Important Words to be Spoken

The Intervention of spoken work will make the spoken words and movements balance and possibility to prove that the function of movements is not "gone," as Lepecki mentioned, but rather helps to transmit heavy issues, concepts, and ideas inside the choreography. According to Cambridge Dictionary: Translations & Thesaurus (2023), A specific person or authority does not necessarily indicate the importance of "nouns" and "verbs" in spoken words. Rather, it is a generally accepted principle among linguists, writers, and educators that strong and precise "nouns" and "verbs" are essential for effective communication either in spoken or body language. This principle is based on the idea that 'nouns" and "verbs" carry the most important information in a sentence. This first exploration will answer the problem of comprehension towards the intervention of spoken words, where the function of the intervention is to help the dancers when movements cannot transmit a situation (O'Sullivan, 2007, p.12). The challenge in using "nouns" and "verbs" as a tool in making contemporary choreography is that language can obscure movement. In other words, if the spoken word is too prominent, it will interfere with the dance itself and make it difficult for the dancers to deliver the entire performance. It is, therefore, important that choreographers make important choices through "nouns" and "verbs" deliberately, taking into account the specific needs of the dancers involved in the work.

The process of choosing what word is important has to be done together with the choreographer and dancers. In this process, the choreographer must understand, that there is no "I", it will always be "We". The goal is to see whether the dancers can embody the cognition through the spoken words, and movements and how the choreographer can identify the dancer's own words that they speak, and blend well with the movement given. From 1, each word is important and this is because each word will always connect each other with "nouns" and "verbs". Now the question is how to identify the choice of the word is important and how this word can make the dancers easily understand and able to portray the work well.

When the spoken word is used with movement in modern choreography, it creates opportunities and challenges. So that these differences stay in the way, choreographers need to find a middle ground between the two art forms that let them complement each other and say the same thing, (De Keersmaeker, 2019). The importance of "nouns" and "verbs" in this process provides the ideology of 'not all words will be spoken' and 'not all movements will be abandoned'. Besides, the process of choosing the right word using" nouns" and "verbs" in a way helps the dancers to embody the 1st APPEAL work cohesively.

The current study has applied an exploratory research concept and the process has been divided into three different phases based on the Auto auto-ethnomethodological approach. This phase is based on the studio exploration while making 1st APPEAL choreography. **Phase one** is to create movements in reflection of the spoken word. Each movement represents one word as a direct translation; each word and movement will be interrelated as a direct translation at this stage. The choreographer has given the movement earlier to the dancers by sequences and this sequence represents the words given. Based on Figure 1, the choreographer has investigated and divided the word into "nouns" and "verbs". The choreographer needs to know each word has a connection with the movement. This is what the choreographer refers to as "preparation". The word will be pronounced repetitively to create an image inside the dancer's brain, this is because the choreographer needs to know that the dancers can embody the psychology before they can simulate the word through the body. The repetitive work to be spoken will be carried to phase two.

Throughout the process, even though the movements are already set for the dancers, it is difficult for the dancers to understand and question, whether the movements themselves can portray the word *Italy*. This means it is going to be hard for the dancers to be able to deliver through the body. This is when the intervention of spoken word appears to ensure the dancers can signify the act in those particular sections. Those words much needed to be spoken after several explorations and considering the pros and cons of the spoken word intervention needed. As in Figure 1, the sequences A, B, and C remain as "nouns" and for phase one, the choreographer has used movement as a "noun". Through this first process, it is more flexible, the choice depends on how far the dancers can portray and make the choreographer believe that the dancers have embodied those "nouns" as a movement. However, the output and effectiveness need to be re-evaluated at phase two. Every single word will be separated in alphabetical order which is A, B, C, D, E, and so forth. This is to make sure easier for the choreographer to foresee clearly while playing with the word.

Every decision-making about whether the choice of the word is valid depends on the long-term process. Repeating the same material over and over again helps to make the dancers able to embody that particular section. Through this first phase process, what the choreographer can see is, that the word "*are"* is quite difficult to portray through movements because the word are cannot stand alone. It has to have support to complete the entire word that the dancers need to deliver. For instance, if the dancers only use *Italy* to speak, it might give an idea maybe it is about something happening in *Italy* or what is happening in *Italy.* So the choreographer has tried to include the words "*are"* for dancers to speak, however, they must come together with the movements. the choreographer tries to play around with the word to be spoken and try to balance it so that it will not abandon the function of the movements or what (O'Sullivan, 2007) mentioned it will make the entire section lost in translation. For the piece to be delivered well, the dancers must have a strong understanding of what, how, and why they say those words or what the intention of the movements appears.

Aforesaid mentioned, the process has shown the flexibility of placing and using the word at the right place and at the right time. However, both dancers and choreographers need to understand the function of "nouns" and "verbs". Those tools, basically have been created to make sure the choreographer has the idea of "epiphany" (Gonzales, 2011), in which they have the tool to play around rather than have nothing. The arrangement of what needs to be spoken based on the word depends on how the choreographer plays with the word or "Word Play". This idea of "Word Play" is not only effective in ensuring the effectiveness of the word to be spoken. In 1st APPEAL, the choreographer has split it into three sections, where each section portrays a different 'story'. When the choreographer mentions about different 'story' does not mean the piece itself has a storyline. As mentioned earlier, 1st APPEAL was created based on the eclectic story of political and societal issues in Malaysia. The heaviness of the work itself needed this intervention to ensure the dancers were able to carry the work and deliver it successfully based on the choreographer's needs.

5. Development Process: Co-Ordination Word, and Movement

In phase one, another exploration that the choreographer applied is, combining both "nouns" and "verbs" to be spoken. The actual word is *They are going to Italy* but the choreographer assigns the dancers not to mention the word *Italy.* They need to say the entire word but change the word *Italy* to something synonym or closer to *Italy.* At this stage, the choreographer did not say it was wrong or right yet. This is because the choreographer trying to figure out whether the dancers are able to trigger the embodied psychology. The movement will remain surround the word and what the choreographer said (on standby). As can be seen in Figure 1, the word *know* has been highlighted and the choreographer and dancers explore what can do with the word *know*. and what if change it to *knowing*, what is the difference between *know a*nd *knowing?* Based on the exploration and discourse between dancers and choreographers the word know can refer to "I know someone" which indicates personal familiarity or acquaintance with the individual in question, suggesting a direct relationship or interaction. On the other hand, *"I know of someone"* implies awareness of the person's existence or reputation, but not necessarily a personal connection or direct interaction. It suggests a more distant or superficial knowledge of the individual. the idea behind this only the words *know* and *knowing* can be played around as a reference to, "*I know someone from Italy"*.

The intention behind it probably has changed however, if we look deeper into the meaning it will somehow have a connection. The fragmented of this word which is *know* and *knowing*, has been played around but, the main intention and word is *They are going to Italy.* As the choreographer mentioned to the dancers, yes the word can play around however, it needs to go back to the actual sentence. This is because the sentence carries the actual story on a particular section in 1st APPEAL. The idea

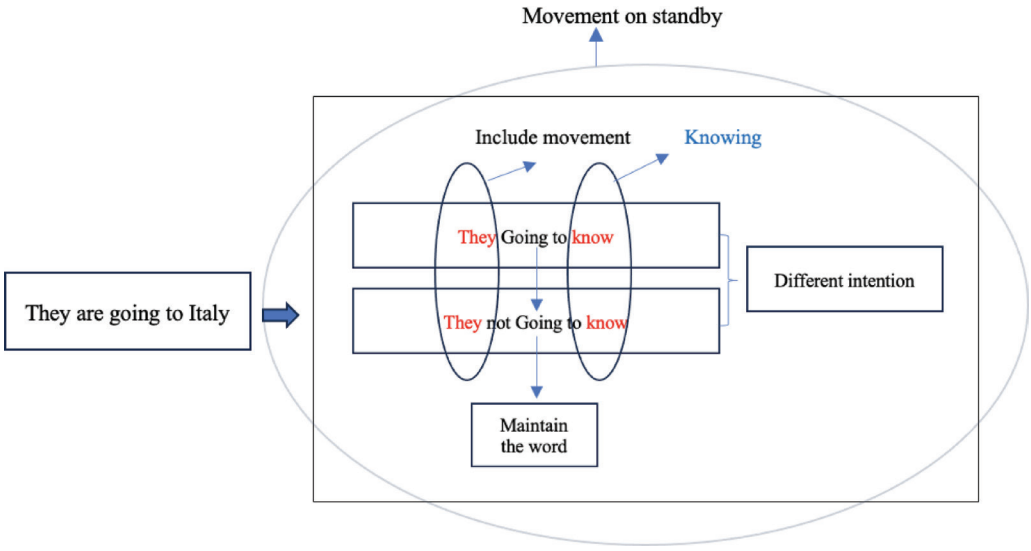


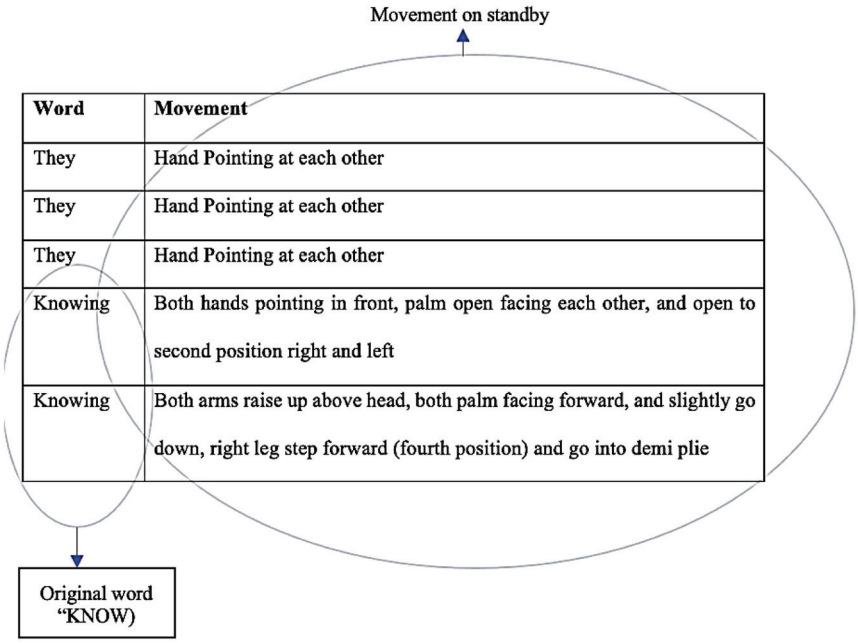
Figure 2: Emphasizing Noun and Verb.

of playing with the word or "Word Play" had a similarity with Edvardsen in Black and No Title where the actual word that she wants to portray or speak is *this is my table*, but she has decided to only mention *table* (repetitively). The entire section when combined, has become different which is it is not what the choreographer wants it. Because of the word *"they are going to Italy"*, *"they going to know"* and *"they not going to know"* differently. However, after several explorations, it's related because it has a story to portray.

In this current process, only one word which is "*they"* has no meaning. It cannot be put in "nouns" or "verbs", however, emphasizing the word *they* many times will trigger the beginning of the next word or what is going to happen next. With that, the embodied simulation will appear because the brain has created the flow of what is going to happen which makes the movement can interframe at any time. The reason why the only word "*they"* is accompanied by movements, is that the word "*they"* is important to emphasize. It is almost like a command and telling to do something, together with feeling and emotion, and the word "*going"* will maintain what it is. The word "going" is not being abandoned, but it can be used to speak when it is needed if the choreographer sees the dancers unable to portray the intentionality of the intervention. In this section, the choreographer has decided to make all the words as important to speak. The dancers have embodied the understanding of what is "nouns" and what is "verbs". It is much easier for them to transmit it and play around throughout the process.

In Phase Two, the choreographer chose the important word to be spoken based on either "nouns" or verbs" in word sentences which means the dancers need to speak one word repetitively. In this phase, the word will only be used partially throughout the process. Only specific words will represent a starter or introduction to the situation. The chosen word will repeatedly be used many times to create the visual for the dancer's brain and body. This process ensures that what dancers say will leave the image and by memorizing those words will transmit clear natural movements to which the dancer will apply the embodied psychology for example:

The word knowing is a choice after selection through the "verbs," which means the "verbs" emphasize the action of knowing something. There is a question from the dancers, which is why knowing can become a "verb"? This is because the word knowing has another sentence kept in the dancer's brain. They know what the next word after the word knowing, it is just they don't pronounce it verbally. The choice of the word itself needs to have a negotiation or mutual agreement as to what will happen and what is the intention behind the word to be used between the choreographer and dancers. As mentioned by Garner, (1994), it is the manner in which the choreographer, and the performers, enter into negotiations/economies/tactical interactivity/ transactions that gives 'identity' to the dance event. The continuous sentence from word somehow has created a signify itself in the dancer's brain. This is from the perspective of embodied psychology which the word already exists in the brain. Once a fringe movement or what they think will remain as one of the signify, and later the embodied psychology now enjoys a fair amount of prominence (Chemero, 2009, pp. 181-195). Aforesaid mentioned, the words "they" and "knowing" can be repeated as often as possible to create an image that the dancers will believe they know something, and they are



Word	Movement
They	Hand Pointing at each other
They	Hand Pointing at each other
They	Hand Pointing at each other
Knowing	Both hands pointing in front, palm open facing each other, and open to second position right and left
Knowing	Both arms raise up above head, both palm facing forward, and slightly go down, right leg step forward (fourth position) and go into demi plie

Figure 3: Words and movement relation.

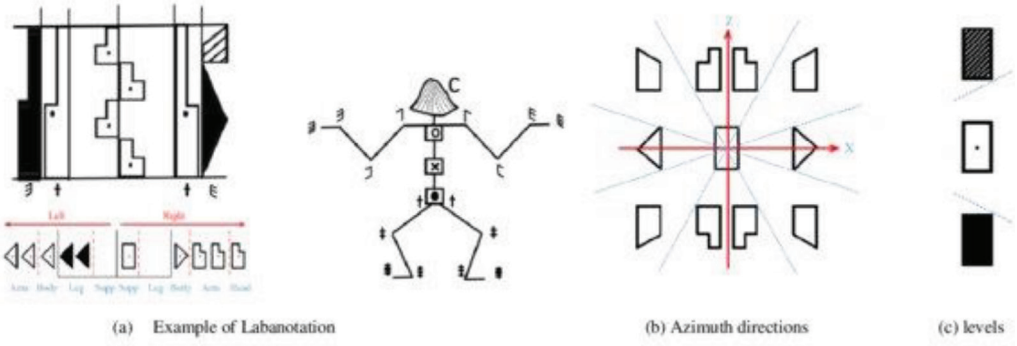


Figure 4: Labanotation movement sample.

starting to embody the word that they have. The missing word will be done by the movements such as "are", and going and referred to as a "transition" which they are:

- lay down on the floor or circle the head
- Walk two steps and jump one leg after another (parallel pas de sha)

It is also very important for the dancers to know the missing words. In this context, the words "are" sound simple, however, in 1st APPEAL, the words "are" have been used as a transition to the next words. The choreographer believes without this transition, the phrase itself will become incomplete. This will cause the dancer unable to complete or embody the whole section, particularly the sentence given in Figure 3. However, it is a matter of try and error whether the existence of those 'unimportant' words will affect the dancer's embodiment of the entire section. Nevertheless, the word "are" referring to figure 5, the process has been done through movements instead of speech. With that, the word "are" has become a "verb". Through this process, choice-making is very important whether or not to use the word as movements or speech. This must be put as a discourse with the dancers to ensure the dancers build a connection with the word choice because only the person who doing it will understand the feeling of it. It is easy when the dancers speak the word "are" and based on Figure 5, to portray the word "are" is so many, again it is a choice of how the dancers portray the word "are" in their perspective. It can be a long movement phrase, yet it can be a short phrase, for example, stand still and both arms hold the chest. It again, depends on how and what the choreographer wants and the dancer's comfort. In 1st APPEAL, the words refer to what Figure 4 explained. Even though the word "are" disappears (not to speak), but yet throughout the process the dancers repeat the words many times and it triggers

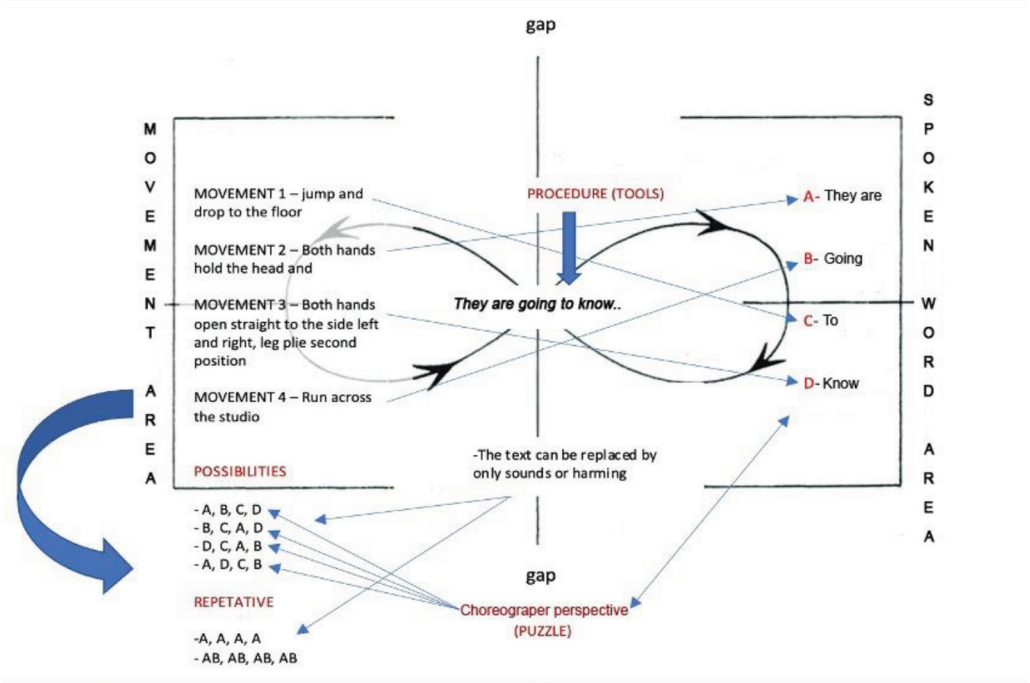


Figure 5: Playing with word and movement

(adopted from the rehearsal process by Richard Schechners)

psychological cognition which remembering and blending well in the brain. The relationship to suggest that the body serves the mind (cognition), such that the external world leads our body to respond in a way that will inform and guide the mental representations that constitute thought For example, Clark's (1998; 1999; 2008) view is more moderate in terms of considering the role of internal representations in cognition and yet still suggests that the interaction of the body and the external world can explain much of what has typically been considered the work of the brain.

This is what Edvardsen has used also in No Title (2011), which will make the disappearance of the word look like it exists because it has created a rhythm in the brain through the sound from the spoken word. However, once the dancer already embodied the cognition, the choreographer can decide whether the movement can become a "verb" or "noun" or the spoken words can become a "noun" or "verb". This experimental process will measure how much the dancers are able to embody that information in the body till they can manipulate the spoken word, and movement based on "noun" and 'Verb" ideology. As referred to in Figure 3, The movement is always on standby which as mentioned it has been created earlier. As mentioned, the choreographer moves to priority because dance itself is about movement (Gonzales, 2009). It has become more flexible and always ready to intervene.

The process of choosing the right words to be spoken using "nouns" and "verbs" is complex in the first place in creating 1st APPEAL. Every word must have its meaning and the purpose to use those particular words. However, in this section, the movement itself doesn't need to be meaningful, but rather more towards the connection between the mind and body. This is because as mentioned earlier, the movement is always there, but it is a matter of what word will trigger the brain to remember the word till it becomes part of their muscle memory. This muscle memory is important because it is related towards connection on embodiment cognition in general. In order to make sure the words itself strong enough to make the brain remember, the choreographer has separated the words using alphabet A, B, C, D, and so forth. This alphabet will make the brain itself remember what alphabet represents the words or sentences. In this process, it will make more easier for the dancers to remember the words to be spoken. In reference to Figure 5, the choreographer has assigned the movement to the words "they are" which the word itself is not necessary to be spoken, but it is more like a reference, or a symbol to ensure the dancers know the movement that referring to the words.

However, the choreographer can or needs to have a discourse with the dancers to ensure that the words to be spoken or the movements to be used, are balanced and not overpowering each other. This is important in order to

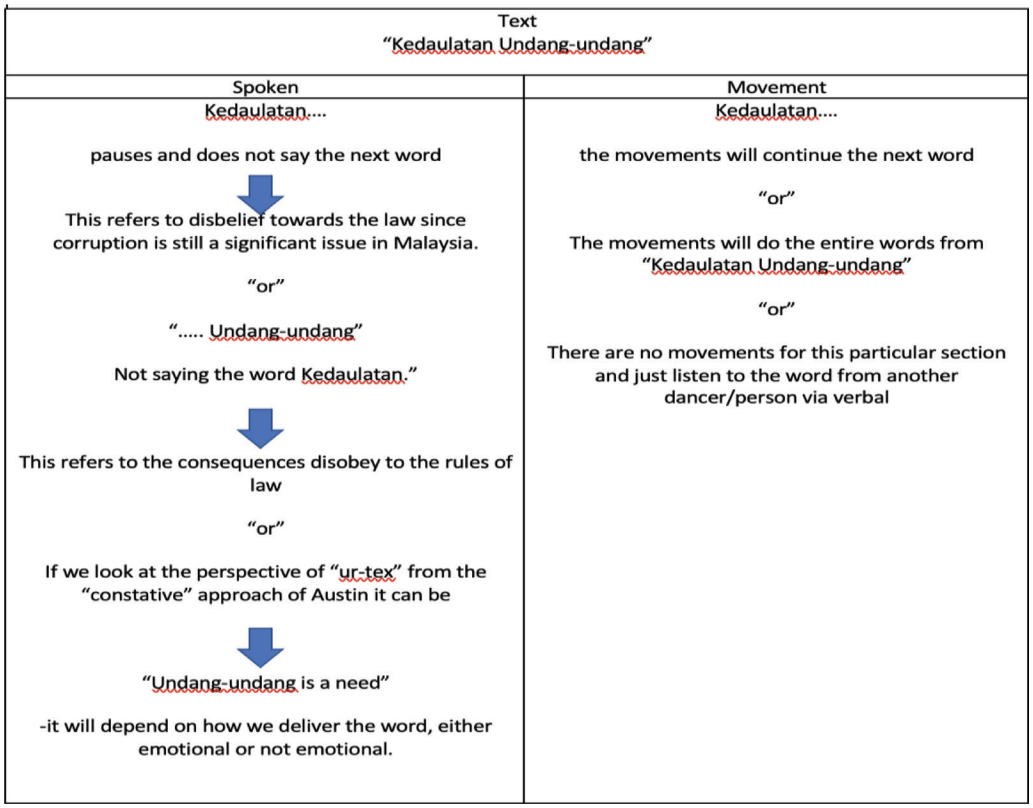


Figure 6: Text separation and movements function.

identify the function of the spoken word not to "exhaust" the movement, as mentioned by Lepeski, (2011). It has to come with mutual agreement because, at the end of the day the choreographer needs to understand, that only the dancer's mind and body are able to carry the choreographer's intention. The choices of the word to be spoken and movement can be seen in Figure 5 which in 1st APPEAL, the choreographer decided to do all the movements and speak all the words.

6. Development Process: Using the Ideology of "Playing with the Word" (Word Play)

In 1st APPEAL, the choreographer is not only focused on the word itself. It is about why the word needs to be spoken and involved in the first place. This is because the work in 1st APPEAL is very heavy with political and societal issues. The eclectic political situation that happened in Malaysia has caused the choreographer to come out and refer to the text in Rukun Negara. This is because the text itself has abundant material that is connected to the current situation, for example, the ideology of MADANI[2], Unity Government, and so forth which conclude the entire situation that happened in Malaysia. This whole process and choice-making need to be transmitted to the dancers clearly. The transmission is also very important because each story or choice will affect the effectiveness of the dancer's ability to embody the whole piece or even section. After all, at the end of the day, the function of the choreographer will disappear or what Barthes, (1977) mentioned, "Death of the Author" once the piece is presented. The word "kedaulatan undang-undang" in 1st APPEAL holds a very significant ideology behind it. The purpose of choreographer uses this word which refers to the "Rukun Negara" because it is related to the situation and conceptual idea behind the work. Each phrase or line in "Rukun Negara" holds its storyline. It is very easy to speak the entire phrase and it is much easier for the dancers to understand. However, this research focuses on the intervention of the spoken word itself which helps the dancers to understand and embody the word instead of verbally speaking the word. It is imperative to identify the chosen text and the word to be implemented in the piece and to be spoken; for example, based on the process conducted, the choice of text needs to be aligned with the understanding of the deconstruction of the "nouns" and "verbs" ideology because, based on Deridda, "the choice of the text/word is essential for choreographers to identify the intention before delivering it either using spoken or movement " see Figure 6 below:

[2]Malaysia Madani (English: Civilised Malaysia) a policy framework and government slogan introduced by the administration of the 10th Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. The concept focuses on good governance, sustainable development and racial harmony.Malaysia Madani serves as the replacement for Keluarga Malaysia, of the administration of the 9th Prime Minister, Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

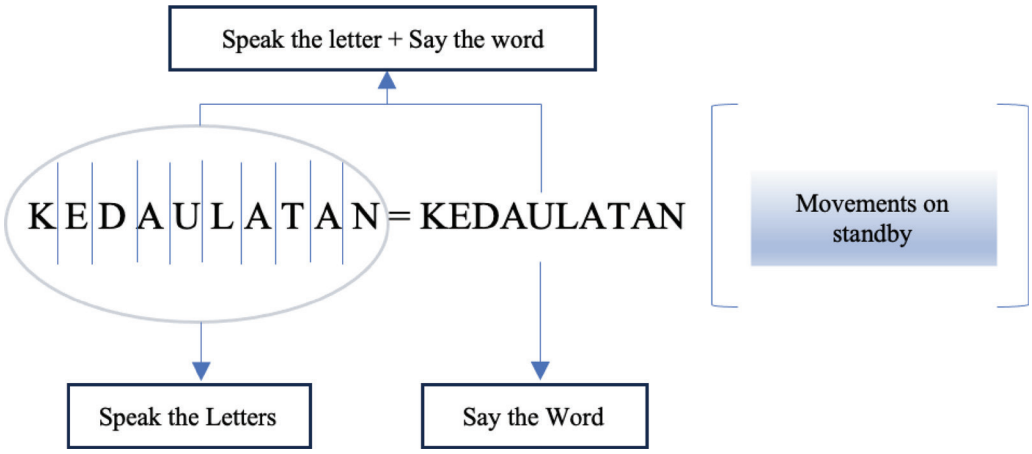


Figure 7: Consonant separation from the text.

The whole situation depends on the relevance of the current situation that can be related to the choice of text before it can be spoken by the dancers. This is important especially for the dancers to get a taste of its culture, which refers to the current and political ideas and concepts that the choreographer trying to use. For example, the choice of text from *kedaulatan undang-undang dan…*, they will say these words clearly as a group and add the words "*19th July 2007*" as solo even though the choice of the date is not as a primary but interplay between these words remain as a space for the dancers to continue the next word using their body language to finish the story from the sentences. This situation required the intervention of both "nouns" and "verbs" to be spoken and also to do the movement. both spoken word and movement will pass to each other and take turns to act. After that, another text appears "*itu adalah permulaan…"* In this method, the choreographer deconstructs the text from the original text by using "nouns" and "verbs" based on Phase Two. However, To achieve the exploration, the dancers themselves need to understand where and what is the story or intention of this phrase. After the dancers embody the story and the concept which again refers to the culture that the choreographer uses, it will intervene more clearly for the dancers to use.

In the process of making 1st APPEAL as mentioned in the introduction the chosen word to be spoken needs to be constructed based on the puzzle. They need to be related to each other as a phrase even when it comes to the movements. the continuity from each word needs to have a flow to see the validation of the situation or what is happening. Indeed, the spoken word did not overcome the movements entirely, however, because the text itself is very issue, sometimes the word needs to be spoken entirely together with movements. At this stage, the "noun" and "verbs" methods have been applied. The word "*kedaulatan undang-undang"* in 1st APPEAL does not necessarily need to be pronounced or spoken in a full word, it can be delivered only the first-word "*kedaulatan"* and the remaining can be spelled (speak) or the action through movements. for example:

Besides the methods described above, the repetitive text also is one of the methods to be implemented in this work. In The Pledge 2.0, the movement is articulated through the composition of the text. This is done, for example, by the manner in which "*kedaulatan"* in "*kedaulatankedaulatan, kedaulatan, kedaulatan, kedaulatan,"* raises slightly upwards and how the dancer's pronunciation of "*objection, objection, objection, objection…*" while the dancers will repetitively drop the body on the floor many times and smile. The word objection appears because of the intention of the word "*kedaulatan"* where some people believe in the "*kedaulatan undang-undang"* (rules of law) and some people do not. Same as in this piece where not all dancers say the word objection because it depends on whether the dancers believe in the "*undang-undang"* or not. In this second phase, the choreographer hasn't interfered 100% yet. The word "*objection"* itself came through the process of improvisation and it came from one of the dancers when they felt they disagreed with the "*undang-undang"* in Malaysia.

Through this phase, the dancer's choice of words must base on the word given as in Figure 3 however, if the dancers feel the word does not relate to the current situation of emotional feeling towards what has happened in their life, it means the dancers unsuccessful to embody the word itself even though the word came from the dancers. In every single process when the dancers speak the word, the choreographer will ask why and what is the relation with the existing word. However, every word that comes out from the dancers, has to align with the ideology of what is "nouns" and "verbs" in that phrase. They have a choice to choose what and which word they want to pronounce. In the observation, the choreographer has asked the dancers several times, 'You must have a

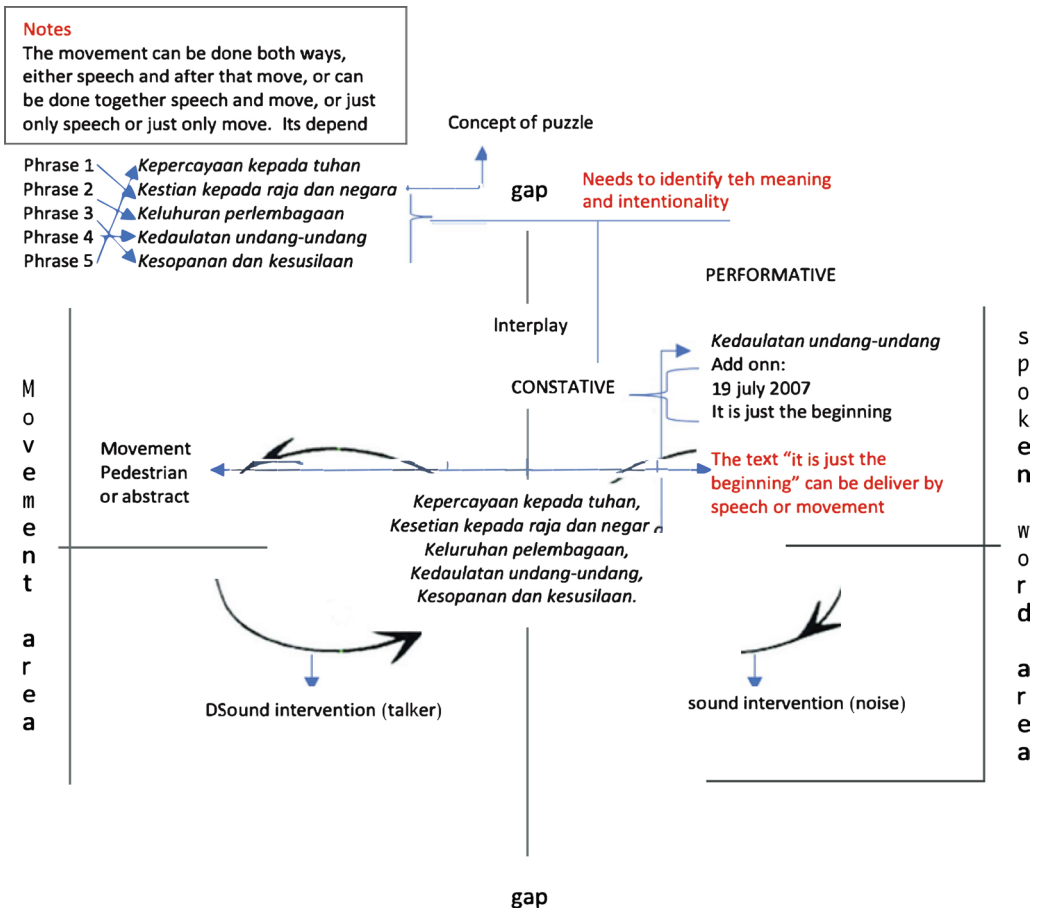


Figure 8: Rehearsal process and combining words and movements

(adopted from the rehearsal process by Richard Schechners)

text or phrase that you refer to' because, without the full sentences, the word itself becomes invalid because of unable to see where is the "nouns" and "verbs".

As previously discussed, dancers must be able to embody and internalize the contextual meanings conveyed through the words provided by the choreographer. This embodiment enables dancers to move and articulate those words through physical experience. While choreographers may select words rooted in nouns and verbs, this lexical categorization alone does not guarantee that dancers will fully comprehend or physically express their intended meanings. Consequently, the dancer's body may struggle to carry the narrative or fulfill the intended purpose of the choreographic intervention.

In real life, physical experience often relies more on observable and measurable elements than on internal sensation. For instance, heavier objects are typically perceived as more significant than lighter ones (e.g., full bottles of milk versus empty ones), and such embodied associations influence cognitive processes related to value and meaning (Barsalou, 2008b). The choreographer provides the linguistic tools—namely, the selected nouns and verbs—but the dancer's interpretation may diverge from that of the choreographer. This potential dissonance underscores the importance of shared experience; dancers must strive to experience the words as the choreographer envisions them.

The repetition of key phrases serves to emphasize their role as signifiers within the situation, reinforcing the dancer's communicative intention. While the choreographer may grant dancers a degree of interpretive freedom, this freedom must be underpinned by mutual understanding. A central question emerges: why should the choreographer allow such freedom, especially when, according to Besio (2009), external interpretations can be disregarded in the process of auto-ethnomethodology? In this context, however, the choreographer intentionally opens space for collaborative interpretation, as dancers' insights are deemed valuable for data generation and creative exploration.

Moreover, repeated variations of phrases function as linguistic counterparts to repeated movement sequences within the body. The rhythmic structure of these phrases elicits a kinetic response, facilitating embodiment of the utterance. According to Howard

Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1991), methods evolve through maturity and accumulated experience. Accordingly, each group must investigate activities that connect meaningfully with the given text, ensuring that the interpretation remains grounded in the studied phenomena. All spoken phrases must align precisely with the contextual conditions necessary for meaningful speech acts. Again, repetition plays a critical role in this phase, as each element is inherently interconnected and should not be viewed as an isolated unit or linear process.

7. The Combination of Spoken Word, and Movement

In the **final phase** of this exploration, the choreographer integrated all previous phases to demonstrate the effectiveness of spoken word intervention as a choreographic tool. This culmination showcased the diverse applications of spoken word on a larger scale, within a twenty-minute choreographic piece. Through this integration, the choreographer quantified the frequency of spoken words and movements, revealing the spoken word's role as a "helper" to movement. Simultaneously, the spoken word facilitated dancers' embodiment of cognition, rendering the entire piece more cohesive. The strategic use of "nouns" and "verbs" justified the intentionality and meaning of spoken words and movement, leveraging J.L. Austin's speech act concept. Here, "nouns" corresponded to performative acts, while "verbs" represented constative acts. This framework ensured that chosen words were judiciously selected to facilitate dancers' embodiment of cognition.

The success of these innovative tools in contemporary choreography hinges on the dancers' embodiment of cognition, while the choreographer employs an embodied cognition perspective to evaluate the balance of interventions. The integration of spoken word with movement in 1st APPEAL necessitates a multifaceted understanding of the spoken words' and sounds' significance. The rehearsal process Figure 1 serves as a platform to merge these elements, requiring a comprehensive grasp of each word's meaning, intentionality, and significance. For instance, phrases like *"kedaulatanundang-undang"* and *"kesopanan dan kesusilaan"* possess distinct meanings that dancers must comprehend and convey.

To facilitate a profound performance, dancers must first embody each word, contextualize its origin, and connect with its personal significance. As a choreographer, it is essential to provide dancers with a rich understanding of the story behind each chosen word, transcending mere movement and spoken words (Gonzales, 2019, p. 117-118). A choreographer's role is to ensure that all elements are meticulously arranged and connected to convey a clear narrative and message. In this process, the choreographer must remain open-minded, acknowledging that the outcome may differ from initial expectations, unless the choreographer themselves dictates every movement and step. Each task assigned to the dancers requires careful interpretation, allowing for both the dancers' and choreographers' perspectives to emerge. By equipping dancers with essential knowledge, they can embody each task effectively, fostering a cohesive and impactful performance.

1st APPEAL also has a similarity In Becoming King (Gonzales, 2018), the use of the text itself is not a new creation, it is more like a deconstructive text from "Mak Yong" for example, "mako iyo la Kau raja Antara ke sore, mako sinitempat Aku naktunjukkekuasaan Aku puloknyo"(I am the sole king, and I wish to demonstrate my power to everyone at this moment)this phrase usually has beenusing as "UcapTetap"or compulsory speech for Pak Yong[3] to show their ability, power, andcommands to certain events or situation. It is referred to a leader who campaigns to ensure heor she can win the people's hearts. Gonzales uses this particular phrase to deliver the speech toensure it matches the concept of "election".

What distinguishes 1st APPEAL is the unpredictable use of spoken words, which can occur before, during, or after movement, with the primary goal of delivering performative or constative acts. Conveying text through body language poses a significant challenge, as it invites the audience to engage critically and complete the narrative puzzle. Dancers are encouraged to interpret the text in their own way, without being bound by a single "correct" meaning. This approach empowers dancers to transmit information confidently, as they have the autonomy to shape their own understanding of the text. As J.L. Austin (1962) noted in "Performative Action," performative sentences can be distinguished from assertions, highlighting the complex relationship between language and action (p. 6). In 1st APPEAL, the choreographer provides a permanent movement sequence, serving as a reference point for improvement. The strategic use of spoken words enhances the narrative, describing situations and circumstances that unfold. This approach is grounded in Austin's (1962) "speech act" theory, which categorizes linguistic acts into constative and performative divisions. According to Derrida (2015), constative acts convey meaning, explaining or showing

[3]Pak Yong is the principal role (lead male character) in Malay Theatre Traditional, from one of the states in Malaysia, (Kelantan). However, the Mak Yong form also have been played in several countries in southeast Asia such as Thailand, Siam, Indonesia, and so on.

something, while acknowledging the potential for misinterpretation. The success of this approach depends on the choreographer's intention, underscoring the importance of clear artistic vision.

The meaning behind the lines in the choice of word may differ according to needs and individuals. Roland Barthes' approach in writing entitled "Death of the Author" explains that every word written or created has various meanings depending on the needs, situation, individuals as well as communities. According to what Barthes said, the essential meaning of a work depends on the impressions of the reader, rather than the "passions" or "taste" of a writer, (Barthes, 1967). In the 1st APPEAL, each line has a different essence from the choreographer's original ideology in current issues or any situation that happened surrounding, including, the issue of corruption, freedom of speech, equal rights, and so on. It is also can be as simple as the word "let's start", a simple word can be described with a thousand meanings. For example, the group studied the word "*perlembagaanharusdipatuhi kerana…*", they will mention these words clearly as a group and add the words for example "*19th July 2007", that was when the incident happened*". The main reason the choreographeruses this phrase is because of the existing fact that that moment has become an unprecedented tragedy that involved former prime minister of Malaysia Najib Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor toward corruption issues, however, it can be interpreted differently by the audience depending on their breadth of knowledge towards the current issues. Through this exploration referring to Figure 8, the spoken word "*19th July 2007*" appeared. This is because the word it has been considered as extrinsic. This means, that the spoken words help the dancers to memorise the connection of the "*perlembagaanharusdipatuhi kerana…"*. The dancers can juggle between these two words until the brain can decide which spoken word is better for the body. Once the mind is used to these two particular spoken words, the embodied psychology will take over and later it will transmit to the embodied simulation.

The narrative arc of this work is intentionally varied, with sections that shift focus exclusively to movement. At these junctures, the intervention of spoken word becomes secondary or even disappears, allowing movement to take precedence. The "noun" and "verb" elements, previously prominent, now assume a subordinate role as movement dictates the trajectory. However, when spoken word is reintroduced, the choreographer must exercise careful consideration. Dancers are not permitted to recite entire phrases; instead, they must select specific words from the "nouns" and "verbs" that resonate with the constative and performative sentences. The tone and intonation of these spoken words should evoke a distinct emotional response from each dancer. This approach facilitates a nuanced creative process, where each word is thoughtfully paired with a specific movement. Nevertheless, it also presents challenges, as the chosen words play a subtle yet pivotal role in conveying the intended narrative and emotional resonance.

The incorporation of the text from *"Rukun Negara"* (National Pillar of Malaysia) in 1st APPEAL serves as a guiding framework for the choreographer, ensuring that the performance remains true to its initial concept. The text provides a foundation for the choreographer's ideas, sparking the creation of additional words and themes. In 1st APPEAL, the choreographer draws inspiration from the five parts of the *"Rukun Negara"* text, using each part to convey a distinct perspective on the meaning behind the words. This approach aligns with the constative concept, which involves explaining or describing things (Austin). As Austin notes, "Every word that exists needs to have a meaning to ensure that the message conveyed is effective" (Austin). This effectiveness is achieved through action, which is rooted in the interplay between constative and performative understanding. As Derrida (2010) observes, "We cannot put limits between performative and constative because everything can be blended." In 1st APPEAL, the choreographer interprets each line of the *"Rukun Negara"* text as an (untold story) related to current issues in Malaysia. This interpretation is facilitated by the intersection of constative and performative elements, enabling the choreographer and dancers to embody the spoken words and sounds with conviction. Notably, the choreographer does not use the *"Rukun Negara"* text as a rigid framework, but rather as a reference point that gives rise to additional words and themes. External elements, such as dates and places, are incorporated to support the dancers' understanding and to help them cohesively relate the story, much like assembling a puzzle.

Each of these stories is taken from events that are considered incompatible with the arguments made by the leaders. In Malaysia and even around the world, there are differences among certain class groups of people whereas in Malaysia we are divided into T20 (upper class), M40 (middle class), and B40 (lower class) groups. Usually, the B40 group tends to be unheard of when expressing their opinions which may give the leadership a boost. 1st APPEAL tells a story of political instability and injustice in dealing with the murder of a Mongolian citizen, *AltantuyaShaaribu* who was killed in October 2007, (Azam, S. M. F., & Razzaq, A. 2014) and the case of the death of *Muhammad Adib Mohd Kassim* who did not have a proper defence after his death in December 2017, and the injustice of judiciary system (Wong, C. H., & Hassan, H.2020). If we look closely, there are so many

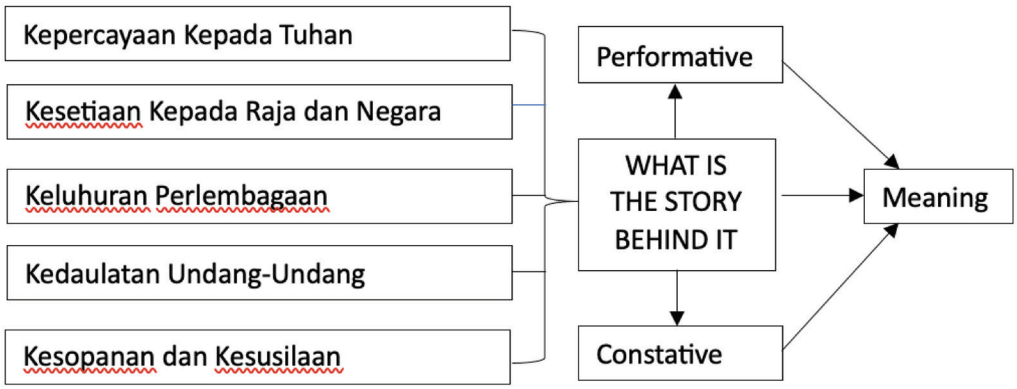


Figure 9. Words and Meaning Relation.

cases that can become a subject focus in creating this piece. However, the choreographer has selected these three entities as the main reference material.

Furthermore, these three cases are classified as high-profile cases in court but haven't been resolved till today. The reference of the words in *"Rukun Negara"* again as a guideline to narrow down till the meaning of word choices came out from the choreographic tools mentioned earlier. Figure 9 above shows that the Performative words and Constative will appear as the main approach to digging for the actual meaning in every word choice came from the choreographer. Each line of the verse carries the implied meaning of each of the dancer's actions and behaviours of reflecting on it.

Each line of the verse carries an implied meaning that informs the dancers' actions and behaviors. For instance, the phrase *"Kepercayaan kepada Tuhan"* (Faith in God) prompts the dancers to perform movements that reflect on the contradiction between this principle and the act of killing, which is a grave offense in many religions. This reference alludes to the murder of *AltantuyaShaaribu*, whose perpetrator was believed to be a Muslim, making the act a profound sin. Through this text, the creator incorporates additional information, such as the date and place of the murder. The inclusion of *"19 July 2007"* is not merely a transitional device, but rather a deliberate reference to the date of the incident. In this context, the choreographer employs the word as a performative utterance, while the receiver (dancer) initially interprets it as a constative statement. However, as the dancers grasp the meaning of each word, they can transition from merely receiving the words to owning them, thereby becoming performative agents. During the performance, the dancers explicitly utter the phrase *"kepercayaan kepada tuhan,"* transforming the sentence into a "noun" and rendering it the central focus. As explained in Chapter Three, this approach relegates the movements to secondary importance, akin to "verbs." Nevertheless, the dancers' understanding of the meaning and intention behind the words remains paramount.

The dancers' belief in God transforms the word into a performative utterance, solidifying its meaning. This embodiment becomes "felicitous" (valid) as the meaning connects with the dancers' thoughts, enabling them to effortlessly manipulate subsequent words. This process is evident in the dancers' spontaneous use of phrases like *"your god," "My god,"* and *"our God."* These external words evolve into performative "nouns," conveying a shared intention. Although the words differ, their intention remains similar, with slightly distinct meanings. The dancers' authorization of these words validates their use. However, to ensure consistency, the dancers and choreographer must discuss and agree on the words and their meanings. This agreement is crucial, as it aligns the choreographer's and dancers' thoughts, facilitating a unified portrayal of the intended meaning. This process relates to the rules and procedures of speech acts, which comprise both performative and constative elements. Constative speech acts involve words that can be true or false, whereas performative speech acts reference actions. In essence, constative speech acts state "if," while performative speech acts state "*does*." The interplay between these two elements is essential for the choreographer and dancers to convey a unified intention. By adopting a cognitive approach, dancers move beyond passively receiving verbal instructions to actively internalizing and embodying them, thus becoming performative agents in the creative process. The classification of words into "nouns" and "verbs" facilitates a deeper understanding of linguistic intention and semantic content, which is essential for meaningful embodiment. As dancers comprehend the narrative structure, they gain the capacity to manipulate subsequent language and movement in ways that render the performance both "felicitous" (i.e., contextually appropriate and effective) and impactful.

Central to this process is the dynamic interplay between constative and performative speech acts. Constative utterances provide an interpretive framework and cognitive grounding, while performative utterances

prompt action and allow dancers to enact the narrative through physical and vocal expression. When choreographers and dancers engage in collaborative dialogue to define and agree upon the meaning of specific words and phrases, a shared semantic framework emerges, ensuring interpretive consistency and cohesion.

This approach enables choreographers to access and activate the dancers' embodied cognition, facilitating the translation of narrative into kinesthetic and verbal expression. As dancers integrate spoken language and sonic elements with intentionality and conviction, they coalesce narrative meaning and movement, thereby enhancing the communicative power of the performance. Ultimately, this cognitive-linguistic strategy enriches the choreographic process, allowing for the construction of nuanced, coherent, and resonant performances that seamlessly unite speech and embodiment.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the editors and reviewers of Horizon JHSSR Journal which provided us an opportunity to publish in their scholarly journal.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

8. Limitations to the Study

The integration of spoken word in contemporary dance choreography has been shown to enhance the emotional impact and depth of a performance (Fortuna, 2016). However, despite the numerous benefits of this approach, there are several limitations that must be considered. One of the primary limitations of this research is its narrow focus on contemporary dance choreography. While the integration of spoken word may be beneficial in this context, it may not be applicable to other dance styles or genres. Further research is needed to explore the potential benefits and limitations of spoken word in other dance forms.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of empirical data. While theoretical analysis and conceptual frameworks provide a solid foundation for understanding the integration of spoken word in dance, empirical data collected through experiments, surveys, or interviews would provide valuable insights into the practical applications and effects of this approach. This research primarily examines the transmission of choreographers' ideas or thoughts to dancers' bodies, grounded in embodied cognition theory. However, alternative perspectives, particularly from audience members, may offer valuable insights. Investigating audience perception and interpretation of spoken word in dance would provide a more comprehensive understanding of this approach. Moreover, this research focuses on the benefits of spoken word for choreographers, overlooking the potential impact on audience perception and interpretation.

Examining how audiences respond to and interpret spoken word in dance performances would or might provide a different understanding of this approach. Choreographers may need to initially prioritize the dancer's perspective when applying this method, potentially setting aside audience considerations until the desired outcome has been achieved with the dancers body. This could be a necessary step in the creative process, with audience perspective becoming a focus in subsequent stages. Furthermore, this study's focus on contemporary dance may limit its applicability to other genres. While choreographers from other genres may experiment with spoken word, the outcomes may vary, and the effectiveness of this technique may depend on the specific genre or style. Future research should explore the potential applications and limitations of spoken word in diverse dance genres.

This research highlights the strategic use of nouns and verbs in spoken word, which may have limited applicability to choreographers working in languages with distinct grammatical structures or linguistic features. Linguistic researchers may offer alternative perspectives on the use of nouns and verbs; however, this study primarily aims to provide choreographers with a practical tool for selecting essential words that facilitate embodied cognition in dancers. Further research is necessary to explore the potential applications and limitations of spoken word in diverse linguistic contexts. A cross-disciplinary collaboration between dance and linguistics could provide valuable insights, fostering a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between language, movement, and cognition.

9. CONCLUSION

The intersection of dance and spoken word has given rise to a unique and powerful form of expression. By incorporating spoken word into choreography, young emerging choreographers can reap numerous benefits, enhancing their artistic voices and contributing to the evolution of contemporary dance. The primary advantages of integrating spoken word into choreography is its ability to add depth and nuance to a performance. Spoken word can convey complex emotions, narratives, and themes, providing audiences with a richer understanding of the choreographer's intent. For young emerging

choreographers, this can be particularly beneficial, as it allows them to communicate their ideas and perspectives more effectively. By combining movement with spoken word, choreographers can create a more immersive experience, engaging audiences on multiple levels.

This research has demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating spoken word into contemporary dance choreography, particularly through the strategic use of nouns and verbs. By employing this approach, choreographers can create a new paradigm for conveying complex narratives and themes, while ensuring that the deliberation between choreographer and dancer remains clear. The incorporation of spoken word is not intended to supplant the importance of movement, but rather to complement and enhance it. This research offers a new reference point for choreographers, encouraging them to explore alternative approaches to storytelling and communication. By embracing the potential of spoken word in choreography, artists can expand the expressive capabilities of dance, fostering a more nuanced and multifaceted language of movement. This research pioneers a novel approach to contemporary dance choreography by integrating spoken word through the strategic use of nouns and verbs.

This innovative methodology offers a new paradigm for conveying complex narratives and themes, while ensuring that the deliberation between choreographer and dancer remains clear. The incorporation of spoken word is not intended to supplant the importance of movement, but rather to complement and enhance it. This groundbreaking research contributes to the evolution of dance language, expanding its expressive capabilities and offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of movement and spoken word. By introducing this new approach, this study provides a valuable reference point for choreographers, encouraging them to explore alternative approaches to storytelling and communication.

The integration of spoken word into choreography offers numerous benefits for young emerging choreographers. By adding depth, nuance, and complexity to their work, choreographers can create immersive, thought-provoking performances that engage audiences and spark meaningful conversations. To further develop this field, future research could investigate the impact of spoken word on audience engagement and understanding, explore its applications in other dance forms, or develop new methodologies for integrating spoken word into choreography. Additionally, examining the role of spoken word in facilitating collaboration and communication between choreographers and dancers, or analyzing its use in conveying complex social and cultural issues, could provide valuable insights for the dance community. By pursuing these research directions, scholars and practitioners can continue to push the boundaries of contemporary dance, exploring new possibilities for artistic expression and deepening our understanding of the intersection of movement and spoken word.

Work reference:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-yH7UFLIDc&t=143s

References

Allies, K. (2015). Dance and spoken word: Making polos.

Austin, J. L. (1975). How to do things with words (2nd ed.). Harvard University Press.

Banes, S. (1987). Terpsichore in sneakers: Post-modern dance. Wesleyan University Press.

Banes, S. (1993). Democracy's body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964. Duke University Press.

Barron, A. (2003). Acquisition in interlanguage pragmatics: Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context. J. Benjamins Pub. Co.

Barthes, R. (1967). The death of the author. Image-Music-Text, 142-148.

Blom, L. A., & Chaplin, L. T. (1989). The intimate act of choreography. Dance Books.

Boughen, S. (2014, June 16). Explainer: What is contemporary dance? The Conversation.

Butler, J. (1997). Excitable speech: A politics of the performative. Routledge.

Candy, L. (2006). Practice-based research: A guide. CCi Print-on-Demand.

Candy, L., & Edmonds, E. (2002). Explorations in art and technology. Springer.

Candy, L., & Edmonds, E. (2018). Practice-based research: A guide.

Chemero, A. (2001). An outline of a theory of affordances. Ecological Psychology, 15(2), 181-195.

Chemero, A. (2009). Radical embodied cognitive science. MIT Press.

Clark, A. (1998). Being there: Putting brain, body, and world together again. MIT Press.

Clark, A. (1999). An embodied cognitive science? Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 3(9), 345-351.

Clark, A. (2008). Supersizing the mind: Embodiment, action, and cognitive extension. Oxford University Press.

Davis, K., Christodoulou, J., Seider, S., & Gardner, H. (2011). The theory of multiple intelligences. In R. J. Sternberg & B. Kaufman (Eds.), The Cambridge handbook of intelligence (pp. 485-503). Cambridge University Press.

De Keersmaeker, A. (2019). Rosas' repertoire. In Conversations with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker (pp. 123-140). Mercatorfonds.

Ellfeldt, L. (1998). A primer for choreographers. Waveland Press.

Edvardsen, M. (2011). Black.

Edvardsen, M. (2014). No title.

Fiske, J. (1990). Human and social identity.

Fortuna, L. (2016). Spoken word as inspiration for improvised dance. Journal of Dance Education, 16(4), 149-154.

Gardner, H. (1991). The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach. Basic Books.

Gonzales, J. (2019). Koreografikontemporari Malaysia. Strategis Information & Research Development Centre.

Goodridge, J., & Goulish, M. (2022, February 5). Movement through language: A reflection on the use of spoken text in dance performances. Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques.

James Chin. (1997). Politics of federal intervention in Malaysia, with reference to Kelantan, Sarawak and Sabah. Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 35(2), 96-120.

Jeong Chun Hai @ Ibrahim. (2007). Fundamental of development administration. Scholar Press.

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Fairul Zahid is a multidisciplinary dance artist, educator, and scholar, currently serving as a Lecturer in Dance at the School of Dance and Theatre, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. He holds a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Dance (Choreography and Performance) from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and a BA (Hons) in Performance (Ballet and Contemporary) as well as a Diploma in Dance from the National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage (ASWARA), Malaysia.

With a professional career spanning over two decades, Fairul has performed and choreographed for acclaimed companies such as ASK Dance Company, Christina Noel & The Creature (New York), LaneCoArts (NYC), and participated in productions including *The Nutcracker* by New York City Ballet. He has also served as Artistic Director of the Asia Duo Dance Company.

As an educator, Fairul has taught at several leading institutions in Malaysia, including the National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage (ASWARA) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Internationally, he has been invited as a guest lecturer and choreographer at institutions such as Minzu University and Capital Normal University (Beijing), the University of the Philippines, and Temple University (Philadelphia, USA).

Fairul's choreographic and performance work spans contemporary, ballet, traditional Malay, and Chinese dance forms, earning him recognition both locally and internationally. His contributions to dance scholarship include several publications exploring the nexus between practice and research, with a particular focus on practice-based inquiry in choreography and performance. He is currently pursuing a PhD at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia, where his research centers on practice-based methodologies in dance.

Fairul is the current President of the World Dance Alliance (Singapore chapter), actively advancing the discourse and practice of dance across regional and global platforms.

Mr. Muhammad Fairul Azreen
LASALLE College of the Arts
School of Dance and Theatre
Singapore
Email: fairul.zahid@lasalle.edu.sg

Mohd Kipli Bin Abdul Rahman is a Professor of Theatre at the Department of Performing Arts, College of Creative Arts Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. He is both a dedicated academic and an active theatre practitioner, contributing as a director, choreographer, actor, dancer, body performer, facilitator, and professional theatre jury member.

Prof. Rahman serves as the principal investigator of the *Malay Archipelago Glokal Wisdom (MAGIS)* Research Initiative Group at UiTM, where his scholarly focus lies in interdisciplinary performing arts. His work integrates research, writing, and editorial contributions to advance knowledge in the fields of theatre and performance studies.

In addition to his academic pursuits, he leads community-based cultural programs, particularly with children, with the aim of fostering awareness of cultural heritage and identity. These initiatives also extend to

adults and individuals with disabilities, particularly in rural communities, to promote and preserve local wisdom and traditional practices.

His reflective writings explore societal perspectives on the cultural arts and contribute to the fields of social ethnography and ethno-performance studies. His current research focuses on traditional performing arts in the Malay Archipelago, approached through an interdisciplinary lens.

Professor Dr. Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman
College of Creative Arts
University Technology MARA (UiTM)
Malaysia
Email: mohdkipli@uitm.edu.my

Ahmad Kamal Basyah Sallehuddin is a distinguished scholar and academic leader in the field of creative arts. He currently serves as the Head of School for Liberal Arts Studies at the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia.

His academic and professional pursuits are deeply rooted in a commitment to advancing research and education in Malaysian popular culture, theatre history, contemporary American literature, and performance theory. Dr. Sallehuddin earned his PhD in Drama Theory, which has provided a strong foundation for his contributions as a researcher, educator, and advocate for the creative arts.

Dr. Ahmad Kamal Basyah Sallehuddin
Head of Liberal Arts Studies
College of Creative Arts
University Technology MARA (UiTM)
Shah Alam, Malaysia
Email: akamalbasyah@uitm.edu.my

Syahrul Fithri Musa is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Performing Arts, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. His research focuses on alternative theatre, modern and Malaysian theatre, acting methodologies, and directing practices. In addition to his academic work, he is an accomplished theatre practitioner, actively engaged as a director, actor, and playwright.

His critical essays and creative writings have been featured in leading cultural and literary platforms, including *Dewan Sastera*, *Seni Malaya*, *Eksentrika*, and *Malaysiakini*. In 2005, he represented Malaysia at the Future-Oriented Cooperation Project in Seoul, underscoring his contribution to the regional performing arts landscape.

Dr. Syahrul Fithri Musa
Head
Creative Media and College of Creative Arts
University Technology MARA (UiTM)
Shah Alam *Technology Hub* (CMTHub)
Malaysia
Email: sfitri315@uitm.edu.my

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 60 – 74 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Echoes of Identity: Language Among Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands

Mai Hồ Xuân*

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Van Hien University, 665-667-669, Điện Biên Phủ Street, Ward 1; District 3, Hồ Chí Minh City, Viet Nam

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 12-Oct-24
Revised: 06-May-25
Accepted: 12-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Mai Hồ Xuân
E-mail: xuanmainam@yahoo.com

Citation: Mai Hồ Xuân (2025). Echoes of Identity: Language Among Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 60–74. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1289.p60

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study investigates how ethnic minority communities in the Central Highlands of Vietnam use their mother tongues alongside Vietnamese, and explores the reasons behind their language choices. It also examines differences in language proficiency between generations. **Methods:** Data were collected from 882 participants between 2014 and 2016, including 252 ethnic adults and 630 students (280 high school and 350 secondary school pupils) representing seven ethnic groups: Ede, Jarai, Churu, K'ho, Bahnar, Mạ, and Mnong. That means, every year I survey 294 people, specifically: 42 people/1 ethnic; 36 adults/1 ethnic, 12 adults/1 year; 40 high school students/1 ethnic and 36 secondary school students/1 ethnic. This number is large enough to represent. The study employed comparative and contrastive methods to analyze language use patterns across age groups. **Results:** Findings reveal significant variation in the use of mother tongues and Vietnamese between older and younger generations. Older participants predominantly use their ethnic languages, while younger generations show increased use of Vietnamese. The data indicate a generational shift in language preference and proficiency. **Discussion:** The results highlight the ongoing risk of language loss among ethnic minorities due to the dominance of Vietnamese, especially among youth. This shift threatens the preservation of ethnic languages and cultural identity. The study underscores the need for targeted government policies to support and protect these minority languages. Conclusions: Ethnic minority languages in Vietnam's Central Highlands face challenges from generational language shifts favoring Vietnamese. Immediate and specific governmental actions are necessary to safeguard these languages and maintain cultural diversity..

Keywords: Keywords: ethnic; language ability; mother language; Vietnamese language ability..

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's Central Highlands, also known as the Highland region in central Vietnam, is characterized by a rich and unique history. The area is home to over forty distinct ethnic minority groups, including the Bahnar, Ede, Raglai, K'ho, Care, Mnong, Churu, Ma, Xedang, Hre, Katu, Khomu, Ta Oi, Xinhmun, Gie-Triêng and Rơnăm. These ethnic groups are classified into two major language families prevalent in Southeast Asia: Austroasiatic and Austronesian (or Melayopolynesian). Additionally, a third group belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, which includes languages such as Hani, Phu La, La Hu, Lo Lo, Cong and Sila. These groups primarily migrated from the mountains of Northwest Vietnam starting in the 1980s and 1990s. The region's linguistic diversity is accompanied by complex sociolinguistic dynamics, particularly the

increasing influence of Vietnamese, the national language (Phuc, 1992; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

This study aims to: (a) present a comprehensive picture of language use among ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands; (b) analyze intergenerational differences in the use of mother tongues and Vietnamese; and (c) identify risks to the vitality of ethnic languages and recommend policy measures for their protection.

1. Linguistic Landscape of the Central Highlands

1.1 Linguistic Diversity

The Central Highlands of Vietnam, often referred to simply as the Highlands, possess a unique and complex historical and cultural background. This region is home to over forty ethnic minority groups, including Bahnar, Ede, Raglai, K'ho, Care, Mnong, Churu, Mạ, Xedang, Hre, Katu, Khomu, Ta Oi, Xinhmun, Gie-Triêng, and Rơnăm, among others (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Phuc, 1992). These ethnic groups speak languages that primarily belong to two major language families prevalent in Southeast Asia: Austroasiatic and Austronesian (also known as Malayo-Polynesian). A third linguistic group present in the region belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family (sometimes referred to as the Tibeto-Burman family by linguists), which includes languages such as Hani, Phu La, La Hu, Lo Lo, Cong, and Sila (Institute of Linguistics, 1984). Most speakers of these Sino-Tibetan languages migrated from the mountainous Northwest of Vietnam during the 1980s and 1990s, indicating that their presence in the Central Highlands is relatively recent and that linguistic contact and interference processes are still in early stages.

It is noteworthy that three languages-Mạ, K'ho, and Churu-belong to two different language families but are geographically co-located in Lam Dong Province in the Eastern Highlands (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). This proximity provides a favorable context for comparative and contrastive linguistic analysis. Some linguistic theories propose that several languages in the region share common origins or roots; for example, Mạ and K'ho, as well as Cham (the ethnonym for the Cham people) with Raglai, Ede, and Jrai (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

Several of these languages exhibit lexical similarities, particularly in vocabulary overlap, with estimates ranging from 2.5% to 4% shared vocabulary among languages in this area. This lexical closeness has generated debates regarding their origins. For instance, ethnic groups such as Bahnar, Cham, and Chru; Chru and Raglai; or Raglai and K'ho sometimes consider one another as branches of the same language family, though opinions differ. Vietnamese linguists generally attribute these similarities to language contact phenomena rather than genetic relationships. Consequently, it is challenging to definitively identify which languages are original, which have borrowed from others, and the directionality of such borrowings. I concur with this perspective and reject any claims that one language is a dialect or branch of another; rather, these similarities result from language interference due to close geographic and social proximity among ethnic groups.

Other hypotheses suggest relationships between Cham, Raglai, and Churu, as well as between Raglai and K'ho. When considering only semantic fields, word structure, or phonetic patterns, these hypotheses appear plausible. However, these theories lack robust scientific evidence and are therefore unconvincing.

I question these hypotheses for several reasons. First, lexical similarity in meaning or structure does not necessarily imply a genetic relationship between languages. For example, Vietnamese contains many borrowed words from Chinese, yet Vietnamese is classified within the Austroasiatic family, while Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. Second, phonetic similarities alone are insufficient to establish linguistic relatedness, as similar phonetic shells can be found across unrelated languages worldwide.

1.2 The Phenomenon of Lexical Borrowing

As briefly mentioned above, lexical borrowing among languages in the Central Highlands is a widespread phenomenon, particularly the borrowing of Vietnamese words by ethnic minority languages. This phenomenon is especially prevalent among younger generations. In many ethnic groups, over two-thirds of the vocabulary used by young people consists of borrowed Vietnamese words. When expressing ideas for which their mother tongues lack sufficient terms, speakers often resort to Vietnamese vocabulary, even when equivalent terms exist in their native languages. This practice has led to a bilingual situation within communities.

Previous surveys indicate that the lexicon of ethnic minority languages in the Central Highlands decreases by approximately 1% to 1.5% every ten years, demonstrating a gradual loss of native vocabulary. This trend suggests that minority communities are increasingly unable to fully master their mother tongues and are unintentionally creating bilingual societies. More alarmingly, this process accelerates the disappearance of ethnic languages beyond the natural rate of language attrition.

A characteristic feature of lexical borrowing in these communities is the retention of the original Vietnamese word form, but with pronunciation adapted to the

phonetic system of the mother tongue. For example, an Ede speaker might say "Hôm nay trời nắng dữ dỗi" (literally "Today the sun is fiercely shining") instead of using a native expression, or a Bahnar speaker might say "Con tôi hok giói" instead of the native equivalents for "học" (to study) and "giỏi" (excellent). This phenomenon is an example of negative phonetic transfer, which affects pronunciation but does not extend to grammatical structures.

Interestingly, such phonetic transfer does not occur when ethnic minorities communicate with each other in their respective languages, possibly because community members acquire these languages from early childhood, allowing for more natural phonetic integration. Linguists studying the vocabulary of ethnic languages such as Raglai have noted difficulty in determining the origin of many words, but they can clearly identify Vietnamese borrowings within the lexicon.

Generally, during the borrowing process, ethnic groups in the Central Highlands modify the phonetic shell of Vietnamese words, either raising or lowering the tone or accent, rarely preserving the original Vietnamese pronunciation intact. This reflects the imposition of native phonetic patterns onto borrowed Vietnamese vocabulary without reciprocal influence.

1.3 Threats to Languages in the Central Highlands

Languages with large speaker populations, such as Ede, Jrai, Cham, and Bahnar, face relatively slow and less immediate risks of language loss. However, languages with small populations-sometimes numbering only a few dozen or hundreds of speakers-such as Gie Trieng, Churu, and Raglai, face urgent threats of extinction.

The primary risks include systematic vocabulary loss and phonetic changes, but the most critical concern is the inability of younger generations to speak their mother tongues. The causes of these risks can be broadly categorized into three factors: the impact of language education, pressure from the dominant state language, and cultural characteristics of the communities.

1.3.1 Impact of Language Education and State Language Pressure

Language education plays a decisive role in the development and preservation of ethnic minority languages. In Vietnam, children attending school must become proficient in Vietnamese. Consequently, bilingualism becomes necessary, but Vietnamese is used more frequently and, in more contexts, than the mother tongue. This results in the mother tongue being relegated to a secondary status. As a result, younger generations often have better proficiency in Vietnamese than in their native languages, accelerating language shift and loss.

The dominance of Vietnamese as the state language further exacerbates this trend. All ethnic minorities must use Vietnamese for interethnic communication and access to education and knowledge. This reduces opportunities and time for young people, especially those working in public sectors, to use their mother tongues, causing a gradual narrowing of the functional domains of ethnic languages.

1.3.2 Cultural Factors

Cultural traits such as reticence, reluctance to communicate openly even within communities, and a tendency toward quietness limit the development of languages in the Central Highlands. Languages that exist only within community boundaries face significant challenges in expanding and developing.

1.3.3 Written Language and Script Preservation

Regarding written language, many ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands, including Ede, Cham, Bahnar, Raglai, K'ho, and Mạ, historically had their own scripts. Currently, however, only the Cham script remains in active use, primarily preserved in religious texts such as the Bible. Recently, the Cham script has been incorporated into school textbooks for ethnic Cham children, offering hope for its preservation.

Scripts of other ethnic minorities have been lost completely. Despite government efforts to revive these scripts, success has been limited. Thus, the Cham script remains the sole surviving traditional writing system in the Central Highlands.

Overall, both spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands face numerous risks and challenges.

1.4 Word Borrowing Phenomenon

As discussed earlier, the phenomenon of lexical borrowing among languages in the Central Highlands is widespread. This section focuses specifically on the borrowing of Vietnamese words by ethnic minority languages, examining the extent, scope, forms, and functional use of such borrowings. The incorporation of Vietnamese vocabulary into the languages of ethnic minorities is pervasive and increasingly prominent among younger generations. In several ethnic groups, over two-thirds of the vocabulary used by youth consists of borrowed Vietnamese words.

In everyday communication, when speakers find their mother tongue insufficient to express certain ideas, they resort to borrowing from Vietnamese. Notably, even when equivalent words exist in their native languages, speakers often prefer the Vietnamese terms, thereby fostering a bilingual environment within

their communities. This trend is reflected in previous surveys, which indicate a loss of approximately 1% to 1.5% of the ethnic vocabulary every decade. This decline suggests that minority communities in the Central Highlands are gradually losing proficiency in their mother tongues, inadvertently creating bilingual societies. More concerning is that the younger generation accelerates the attrition of their native languages at a rate exceeding natural language change.

The characteristics of lexical borrowing among these ethnic minorities typically involve adopting the original Vietnamese word forms but pronouncing them according to the phonological rules of their mother tongues. For example, an Ede speaker might say "Hôm nay trời nắng dữ dỗi" instead of an equivalent native expression meaning "It is fiercely sunny today." Similarly, a Bahnar speaker might say "Con tôi hok giói," borrowing the Vietnamese words "học" (to study) and "giỏi" (very good) but adapting their pronunciation. This phenomenon exemplifies negative phonetic transfer. It is important to note that this negative transfer affects phonetics but does not extend to grammatical structures. Interestingly, this phenomenon does not occur when speakers use other ethnic minority languages, likely because community interaction from early childhood fosters native phonetic competence in those languages.

This explains why linguists studying the vocabulary of certain ethnic groups, such as the Raglai, often find many words of unclear origin alongside clearly identifiable Vietnamese borrowings. Generally, during the borrowing process, ethnic groups in the Central Highlands modify the phonetic features of Vietnamese words-either raising or lowering the tone-rarely preserving the original Vietnamese pronunciation. This reflects the imposition of native phonological patterns onto Vietnamese loanwords, without reciprocal influence.

1.5 Threats to Languages in the Central Highlands

Languages with large speaker populations, such as Ede, Jarai, Cham, and Bahnar, face relatively slow and less immediate risks of language loss. However, languages spoken by small populations-sometimes only a few dozen or hundreds of speakers-such as Gie Trieng, Churu, and Raglai, are under urgent threat of extinction.

The principal risks include systematic vocabulary loss and phonetic changes. More critically, younger generations are increasingly unable to speak their mother tongues. Several factors contribute to these risks, which are discussed below.

1.5.1 Spoken Language

Three main factors contribute to the decline of ethnic minority languages in the Central Highlands: the impact of language education, pressure from the dominant state language, and cultural characteristics within communities.

Language education significantly influences language development nationally and among ethnic minorities. In Vietnam, children are required to acquire proficiency in Vietnamese through formal schooling. Consequently, bilingualism emerges, but the conditions favor frequent and dominant use of Vietnamese over mother tongues. This results in the gradual marginalization of ethnic languages, as younger generations become more proficient in Vietnamese than in their native languages. When these children replace their parents' generation, the mother tongue has already suffered substantial loss.

The dominance of Vietnamese as the state language further pressures ethnic minority languages. Vietnamese is essential for interethnic communication and access to knowledge, especially for young people working in public sectors. This reduces opportunities and contexts for using mother tongues, which consequently narrow in scope and functional domains.

Cultural factors within ethnic communities also limit language development. Traits such as reticence, reluctance to communicate openly-even within the community-and a preference for quietness restrict language use. As a result, ethnic languages are primarily maintained only within community boundaries, limiting their vitality and expansion. Languages confined to internal community use face significant challenges to sustainable development.

1.5.2 Written Language

Regarding written language, all ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands-such as Ede, Cham, Bahnar, Raglai, K'ho, and Mạ-historically possessed their own scripts. Currently, however, only the Cham script remains actively used. It survives mainly in religious texts, such as the Bible, and has recently been incorporated into educational materials for Cham children, offering promising prospects for preservation.

In contrast, the scripts of other ethnic groups have been lost entirely. Despite government efforts over many years to revive these writing systems, success has been limited. Thus, the Cham script stands as the sole surviving indigenous writing system in the Central Highlands.

1.5.3 Conclusion

In summary, ethnic minority languages in Vietnam's Central Highlands face significant challenges both in spoken and written forms. The widespread borrowing of Vietnamese vocabulary, generational language shifts, limited functional domains, and the loss of indigenous scripts collectively threaten the survival of these

languages. Without targeted and sustained efforts to promote bilingual education, script revitalization, and community engagement, many of these languages risk rapid decline and potential extinction.

1.6. Characteristics of the Research Subjects

1.6.1 The First Group: K'ho, Bahnar, Mạ, and Mnong

According to various sources, including the 2019 Vietnam Population and Housing Census (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2019), the Bahnar population is approximately 227,716 individuals. They primarily reside in the provinces of Gia Lai (151,000), Kontum (60,000), Binh Dinh (18,175), Phu Yen (4,145), and Daklak (500). Since Binh Dinh and Phu Yen are coastal provinces, they are excluded from the scope of this study. The primary language spoken by this group is Bahnar, which includes several dialects such as Bahnar Jolang (considered the mainstream dialect, mainly spoken in An Khe and Kontum), Bahnar Golar, Bahnar Tolo, Bahnar Alakong, and Bahnar Krem (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Phuc, 1985; Banker,1960). Notably, Bahnar was the first ethnic group in the Central Highlands to have a Latin-based writing system developed by the French colonial administration (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). Most Bahnar individuals are multilingual, often speaking additional local languages.

The K'ho ethnic group numbers approximately 166,112 persons (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993), with the majority concentrated in Lam Dong province (145,665 persons, representing 87.7% of the K'ho population in Vietnam). The K'ho consist of various subgroups, including K'ho Sre, K'ho Chil, K'ho Nộp, K'ho Lạch, K'ho String, and K'ho Cơ Don. Smaller K'ho populations are found in Binh Thuan, Khanh Hoa, Ninh Thuan, Dong Nai provinces, and Ho Chi Minh City, though these are relatively minor in number (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). The K'ho language is the primary language of this group and historically had a written form developed first by the French and later adapted by American linguists (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

The Mạ ethnic group comprises approximately 41,500 individuals, predominantly residing in Lam Dong province (about 40,000 persons, over 72% of the Mạ population in Vietnam), with smaller populations in Dak Nong (6,456) and Dong Nai (2,436). Minor Mạ communities also exist in Binh Phuoc and Ho Chi Minh City but in very limited numbers (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). The Mạ language is their mother tongue; however, several studies suggest that Mạ may be a dialect of K'ho (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Phuc, 1992).

The Mnong population is estimated at 102,000 persons, primarily distributed across Daklak (41,000), Dak Nong (40,000), Lam Dong (9,099), Binh Phuoc (8,599), and Quang Nam (13,685), with smaller communities scattered elsewhere (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). The Mnong language consists of several dialects, including Mnong Central (Mnong Đibri, Mnong Bunâr, Mnong Budang), Mnong East (Mnong Gar, Mnong Kuanh, Mnong Rolom), and Mnong South (Mnong Budip, Mnong Busre) (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

1.6.2 The Second Group: Ede, Jrai, and Churu

The Ede ethnic group numbers approximately 420,000 individuals, making it the second-largest indigenous population in the Central Highlands. While Ede communities exist internationally-in countries such as Cambodia, Thailand, the United States, Canada, France, Finland, and Sweden-the majority reside in Vietnam, particularly in Daklak province (approximately 300,000 persons, 90.1% of the Ede population in Vietnam), as well as in Phu Yen (20,905), Dak Nong (5,271), and Khanh Hoa (3,396) (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

The Ede have several subgroups with distinct geographic distributions: Ede Kpă primarily inhabit Buon Ma Thuot city and districts such as Krong Ana, Krong Pak, and Cư Mgar; Ede Adham reside in Krong Buk, Cư Mgar, Buon Ho town, Krong Nang, and parts of Ea H'leo province; Ede Mdhur are concentrated in Mdrak district (Dak Lak) and along the Hinh River in Phu Yen province; Ede Bih, the most ancient subgroup, retains unique linguistic features; and Ede Krung mainly live in Ea H'leo and Krong Buk districts of Dak Lak (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). Despite phonetic differences, these dialects share the core Ede language (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

The Jrai (also spelled Jarai or Giarai) are an indigenous group numbering approximately 450,000 individuals, predominantly residing in Gia Lai province (about 380,000 persons, 90.5% of the Jrai population in Vietnam), with smaller populations in Kontum (20,606) and northern Dak Lak (16,129) (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). The Jrai language includes several dialects such as Jrai Chor, Jrai Mothur, Jrai Hodrung (Hobao), Jrai Tobuan, and Jrai Saudi (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). Some linguistic theories propose that Jrai is related to the Cham language family, though this remains contested (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

Churu, also known as Cado, Kodu, or P'nong-Care, is a smaller ethnic group of approximately 20,000 individuals, mainly concentrated in Lam Dong province (18,631 persons, 96.5% of the Churu population in Vietnam), with minor populations in Ninh Thuan (521) and Ho Chi Minh City (58) (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). Churu is their primary language; many older Churu individuals are also proficient in Bahnar and Raglai languages, which belong to the first group (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Phuc, D.V.; 1985). Linguistic studies suggest a historical relationship between Churu and Cham languages (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

1.7 Language Contact, Interference, and Generational Language Proficiency in the Central Highlands

An intriguing sociolinguistic phenomenon in the Central Highlands is the mutual intelligibility and language contact among ethnic groups. For example, within the first group, K'ho speakers can communicate with Bahnar speakers using the Bahnar language with relative ease, and vice versa. Similarly, Mạ and Mnong speakers often converse in the Mnong language, with reciprocal comprehension. These interactions typically occur in daily contexts such as discussing weather, agriculture, livestock, and education. Notably, economic topics such as price fluctuations are rarely discussed in these interethnic conversations, which may reflect cultural communication norms among Central Highland ethnic minorities (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Đuong, 1990; Thư,1985).

This phenomenon results from extensive language contact and interference, leading to the creation of hybrid vocabularies, especially among younger generations who frequently use borrowed terms from neighboring languages. Older generations, having less exposure to other languages, experience more difficulty in cross-ethnic communication, which contributes to generational differences in language use and social awareness (Institute of Linguistics, 1984).

In contrast, the second group (Ede, Jrai, and Churu) exhibits limited language interference despite geographic overlap. Few individuals from these groups speak other ethnic languages fluently, but younger members generally have strong proficiency in Vietnamese. Interestingly, older Churu individuals often speak Bahnar and Raglai languages, suggesting historical multilingualism (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993). The question arises as to why first-group ethnicities demonstrate greater interethnic language use than the second group, a topic warranting further investigation.

Among younger generations across all ethnic groups, there is a clear trend toward greater use of Vietnamese at the expense of mother tongue proficiency. Many young people lack sufficient vocabulary in their native languages to express themselves fully, leading them to incorporate Vietnamese words in daily communication. This bilingualism facilitates access to education and socio-economic development but raises concerns about the gradual erosion of ethnic languages (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

The generational divide is marked: individuals over 45 years old typically have limited Vietnamese proficiency but maintain strong command of their mother tongues and neighbouring ethnic languages. Conversely, those under 25 years old are fluent in Vietnamese but often have limited ability to use their native languages or communicate with other ethnic groups in their mother tongues. This linguistic gap results in communication challenges between generations and within communities (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

Language contact among older adults is generally restricted to practical, everyday topics such as farming activities and weather. Their communication tends to be brief, consisting mainly of questions and answers with simple sentence structures, reflecting cultural norms of concise expression. In contrast, younger individuals engage in more elaborate conversations, discussing careers, relationships, sports, and political or economic issues, reflecting broader social exposure and education. This divergence underscores the shifting linguistic landscape and cultural priorities within ethnic communities (Tue, 1992; Cận, 1984a).

2. METHODS

2.1. Scope of Survey and Research

This section outlines the scope of the survey and research conducted for this study, detailing the rationale behind the selection of ethnic groups and participant demographics.

2.2. Ethnic Group Selection

As noted in Section 1.1, the Central Highlands region is characterized by three primary language families: Austroasiatic, Austronesian, and Sino-Tibetan. However, this study focused exclusively on the Austroasiatic and Austronesian language families. The Sino-Tibetan family was excluded for two principal reasons: first, these languages have been present in the region for only a few decades. Second, and more critically, the population

of each ethnic group within the Sino-Tibetan family, particularly within the surveyed age groups, is limited to a few dozen to a few hundred individuals. This small sample size would render the survey results statistically unreliable.

Therefore, this study surveyed the language proficiency of seven ethnic minority groups native to the region: Ede, Jarai, Churu, K'ho, Bahnar, Mạ, and Mnong. These groups were selected based on the following criteria: (a) larger population sizes compared to other local ethnic groups; (b) representation of the two major Southeast Asian language families (Austroasiatic and Austronesian), providing a comprehensive representation of the Highland linguistic landscape; and (c) long-term presence, stable livelihoods, concentrated settlements, and broad geographical distribution within the Central Highlands (Institute of Linguistics, 1984; Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993).

The Tibeto-Burman language family was not included because it met only one of the aforementioned criteria (linguistic representation), whereas the selected groups met multiple criteria, ensuring a more robust and representative sample.

2.3. Participant Demographics

The survey focused on four distinct groups to capture a range of language proficiency levels and usage patterns across generations:

- **Group 1:** Secondary and high school pupils, chosen for their comprehensive education and standardized Vietnamese language skills. This group served as a benchmark for assessing Vietnamese proficiency relative to other demographics.
- **Group 2:** Individuals aged 18–35, selected for their academic attainment, competence in their mother tongue, and active engagement with the broader community.
- **Group 3:** Individuals aged 36–45, representing a demographic less frequently exposed to routine Vietnamese usage, thereby providing a perspective on the stability of mother tongue proficiency.
- **Group 4:** Individuals over 45, among whom more than 95% primarily use their mother tongue within their community, making them ideal for assessing baseline mother tongue proficiency.

For Groups 2, 3, and 4, the survey focused specifically on farmers not affiliated with any social organization. Within each age group, four individuals (two males and two females) were selected from each ethnic group and geographical area, resulting in 36 participants per ethnic group across three areas (urban/market and two rural locations). The total sample size for these groups was 252 individuals (252 survey forms).

Pupil selection did not prioritize gender balance due to demographic disparities across ethnic groups. Surveys were conducted in two locations (schools): one rural and one urban boarding school (each province in the Highland region has one boarding school).

- **High School Pupils:**
  - Rural school: 5 pupils/ethnic group/grade x 3 grades = 15 pupils x 7 ethnic groups = 105 pupils (+35 Kinh pupils for comparison).
  - Boarding school: 5 pupils/ethnic group/grade x 3 grades = 15 pupils x 7 ethnic groups = 105 pupils (+35 Kinh pupils for comparison).
  - Total: 210 pupils + 70 Kinh pupils (for comparison) = 280 pupils.

- **Secondary School Pupils:**
  - Rural school: 5 pupils/ethnic group/grade x 4 grades = 20 pupils x 7 ethnic groups = 140 pupils.
  - Boarding school: 5 pupils/ethnic group/grade x 4 grades = 20 pupils x 7 ethnic groups = 140 pupils.
  - Total: 280 pupils + 70 Kinh pupils (for comparison) = 350 pupils.

Pupils were selected randomly. The survey assessed writing skills through sentence construction and essay composition tasks. Specific survey questions and prompts are detailed in the results table **(Table 3a. and Table 3.b)**.

2.4. Temporal Scope

This study presents findings from surveys conducted between 2014 and 2016. Data collection from pupils occurred exclusively during the second semester of the 2014, 2015, and 2016 academic years. This period was chosen to coincide with semester examinations, ensuring that pupils had recently reviewed and consolidated their knowledge of subjects, including Vietnamese, thus providing an accurate assessment of their Vietnamese language proficiency.

2.5. Spatial Scope

The spatial scope of this study encompassed five provinces in the Central Highlands: Kontum, Gia Lai, Đăk Lăk, Đăk Nông, and Lâm Đồng.

- **Pupils:** Surveys were conducted at two types of schools: a boarding school and a regular school.
- **Adult Participants:** Surveys were conducted in both urban and rural areas characterized by significant ethnic minority populations. Specifically:

- Kontum Province: Bahnar ethnic group, including Kontum city and Đăk Hà district.
- Gia Lai Province: Jrai ethnic group, including Pleiku city and Chư Sê district.
- Đăk Lăk Province: Êđê ethnic group, including Buôn Mê Thuột city and Krongbuk district.
- Đăk Nông Province: Mnông ethnic group, including Đăk Min town and Đăk Glong district.
- Lâm Đồng Province: Mạ, Churu, and K'ho ethnic groups, including Đà Lạt city and Đơn Dương district.

2.6. Research Purpose and Questions

2.7 Background and Rationale

This study examines the linguistic reality of ethnic minorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands, where communities must navigate between their mother tongues and Vietnamese, the official state language. The proficiency levels in Vietnamese significantly impact these communities' educational outcomes, social integration, and access to public services. Simultaneously, the maintenance of ethnic languages faces challenges across generations, raising concerns about cultural preservation and identity.

2.8 Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Assess the current status of Vietnamese language proficiency among ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands
2. Identify factors influencing language acquisition and maintenance patterns
3. Examine intergenerational differences in both Vietnamese and mother tongue usage
4. Analyze the educational implications of language proficiency gaps
5. Develop recommendations for language policy and educational interventions

2.9 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. .What are the current patterns of Vietnamese language proficiency among ethnic minority communities in the Central Highlands?
2. What factors contribute to disparities in Vietnamese language acquisition among different ethnic groups?
3. How do proficiency levels in Vietnamese and mother tongues differ across generations within the same ethnic communities?
4. What are the educational implications of these language proficiency patterns?
5. What strategies might effectively support both Vietnamese language acquisition and mother tongue preservation?

3. Significance

The findings from this research will contribute significantly to educational policy development, particularly in designing culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogical approaches for ethnic minority students. Additionally, the results will inform social development initiatives and language preservation efforts in the Central Highlands region, supporting both integration and cultural identity maintenance.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. General Approach

This study adopts a multi-disciplinary and multi-approach methodology, integrating perspectives from language and culture, language and sociology, language and geography, language and psychology, language and religion, language and belief systems, as well as language and educational psychology. Rather than addressing these relationships in isolation, the study examines how they intersect with key linguistic phenomena, such as lexical borrowing.

Several research questions guided this inquiry: Why do ethnic minority speakers borrow words from Vietnamese when equivalent terms exist in their mother tongues? How does ethnic minority culture influence language use? Why do ethnic minority individuals tend to express themselves succinctly, often using short sentences and limited verbal communication? Why are older ethnic minority members proficient in neighbouring minority languages but reluctant to adopt Vietnamese? Conversely, why do younger generations demonstrate greater proficiency in Vietnamese than in their mother tongues, frequently incorporating Vietnamese vocabulary even when their native languages remain in use? These questions collectively form the foundation of the research methodology employed in this article.

4.2. Specialized Methods

4.2.1. Linguistic Assessment Framework

A central methodological challenge was determining appropriate standards for measuring and evaluating individual and community language proficiency. Globally recognized frameworks were reviewed to assess their applicability and reliability for this study.

Primarily, this research relied on the "Language Ability Framework with Six Proficiency Levels for Vietnam," issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (2019), and the Common European Framework of Reference

for Languages (CEFR). However, both frameworks have limitations in this context.

First, the CEFR is designed to assess foreign learners of European languages and does not evaluate Vietnamese language proficiency. Second, CEFR targets learners who study a foreign language as an additional language, whereas the participants in this study are ethnic minorities required to learn Vietnamese as the national language. Third, CEFR assessments typically require certification by local authorities, which is not applicable in this context.

Despite these limitations, CEFR was referenced for its assessment methods-particularly its focus on four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), proficiency levels, linguistic components (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar), and assessment formats (written tests, oral interviews).

Similarly, the Vietnamese "Language Ability Framework with Six Proficiency Levels" was consulted as a simulated adaptation of CEFR. Although this framework is officially recognized in Vietnam, it is primarily designed for assessing Vietnamese as a foreign language, not for evaluating the Vietnamese proficiency of ethnic minority learners whose native language differs. Therefore, this framework was used only as a partial reference.

4.2.2. Linguistic Methods

The study employed descriptive linguistic methods alongside comparative and contrastive analyses. Descriptive methods were applied primarily to survey data from pupils, focusing on semantic analysis and textual examination. The comparative-contrastive method was the principal approach, used to contrast language proficiency and usage patterns among ethnic minority pupils in the Central Highlands with educational program requirements, as well as to compare Vietnamese language proficiency between ethnic minority and Kinh pupils, and to analyze differences between mother tongues and Vietnamese.

I think a general approach can answer the reason why the ethnic groups in the Central Highlands borrowing language, especially Vietnamese. However, this method cannot answer everything, explain everything. Meanwhile, the specialized approach can only solve linguistic, i.e. internal, so it cannot satisfy the problems raised.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The research employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Primary data collection involved several complementary methods:

First, I collected comprehensive data through systematic observation, structured interviews, photographic documentation, and analysis of academic performance records of ethnic minority students at boarding schools. The research design incorporated both strategic and in-depth qualitative interviews. Language proficiency was assessed by analyzing language errors among ethnic minority pupils compared to their Kinh classmates in the same grade, establishing a comparative baseline. Similar comparative assessments were conducted to evaluate mother tongue proficiency.

For the remaining three participant groups, data collection proceeded through structured questionnaires supplemented by strategic and qualitative interviews. A comparative analysis of Vietnamese language ability versus mother tongue proficiency was conducted to quantify and assess linguistic competence gaps.

The research framework was informed by established language ability assessment models and official government documentation regarding Vietnamese language education and universal language policies for ethnic minorities. Provincial Department of Education and Training reports provided additional contextual data for comparative analysis of Vietnamese language teaching and learning outcomes among ethnic minority pupils.

Following data collection, all information was systematically classified and processed using SPSS software for statistical analysis. This facilitated quantitative analysis and descriptive statistics, providing precise numerical data to support subsequent analytical processes.

How to do on SPSS: SPSS software is designed to include variables (from 0% to 100%). Based on the answer results (yes-no; good-fair-average-under average) of each subject (age, ethnic, education, gender); when these numbers coincide with the number of people surveyed (882 people), the results are considered valid.

6.2. Sampling and Ethical Considerations

Participant selection for all four research groups followed purposive sampling techniques as outlined in section 3.1. Individual questioning was conducted by trained research associates using smartphone audio recording for accuracy. For literate participants, questionnaires were administered with appropriate guidance for completion. For non-literate participants, research associates provided comprehensive preliminary instructions, clearly articulating the research purpose and intended use of survey data.

Ethical protocols were strictly observed; after being informed of the research objectives, participants who declined participation were respectfully excluded,

and additional participants were recruited to maintain the target sample size (252 survey forms, as specified in section 3.2). All collected data underwent rigorous verification and validation procedures before analysis to ensure accuracy and reliability of conclusions.

The questionnaire instrument incorporated both qualitative and quantitative items to capture the full spectrum of language use patterns and proficiency levels.

3. RESULTS

The comparative indicates that there are differences on language ability between generations, gender, age, condition for live, especially education level and impact of living environment. From this, the government must find the ways to protect ethnic languages but must improve Vietnamese language at those communities.

3. Survey Questions and Results

3.1 Qualitative Questions

3.1.1 Interviews with Farmers (Groups of 2, 3, and 4)

Five qualitative questions were posed in random interviews to 15 farmers from the three groups mentioned above, focusing on their attitudes toward their mother tongue:

1. **What is your reaction to the decline of your children's proficiency in their mother tongue compared to their Vietnamese?**
   - Sad: 13 respondents (86.7%)
   - Indifferent: 2 respondents (13.3%)
   - No opinion: 0 respondents (0%)
2. **How do you perceive your children's frequent use of Vietnamese in sentences while their mother tongue is still spoken?**
   - Sad: 2 respondents (13.3%)
   - Indifferent: 7 respondents (46.7%)
   - No opinion: 8 respondents (53.3%)
3. **Do you believe that the current state of your children's mother tongue use could lead to the loss or extinction of your ethnic language in the future?**
   - Possibly: 3 respondents (20%)
   - No concern: 9 respondents (60%)
   - No opinion: 3 respondents (20%)
4. **In your opinion, how can the mother tongue be preserved?**
   - By teaching children their mother tongue: 5 respondents (33.3%)
   - No opinion: 10 respondents (66.7%)
5. **Within your family, do you encourage or require your children to speak the ethnic language?**
   - Yes: 8 respondents (53.3%)
   - Occasionally: 5 respondents (33.3%)
   - Never: 2 respondents (13.3%)

3.1.2 Interviews with Pupils

Five qualitative questions were asked in random interviews with 15 secondary and high school pupils regarding their attitudes toward their mother tongue:

1. **Which language do you prefer to speak: Vietnamese or your mother tongue?**
   - Mother tongue: 6 respondents (40%)
   - Vietnamese: 8 respondents (53.3%)
   - No opinion: 1 respondent (6.6%)
2. **Which language do you speak better: your mother tongue or Vietnamese?**
   - Mother tongue: 7 respondents (46.7%)
   - Vietnamese: 8 respondents (53.3%)
   - Both equally: 0 respondents (0%)
3. **Which language is easier to learn: Vietnamese or English?**
   - Vietnamese: 15 respondents (100%)
   - English: 0 respondents (0%)
   - No opinion: 0 respondents (0%)
4. **If given a choice, would you prefer to learn English or your mother tongue?**
   - Mother tongue: 4 respondents (26.7%)
   - English: 2 respondents (13.3%)
   - Both: 3 respondents (20%)
   - No opinion: 6 respondents (40%)
5. **At home, do you speak your mother tongue more often than Vietnamese?**
   - Mother tongue: 5 respondents (33.3%)
   - Vietnamese: 5 respondents (33.3%)
   - Both equally: 5 respondents (33.3%)

3.2 Quantitative Questions

Survey Question 1: *Which language do you speak better: your mother tongue or Vietnamese (Kinh)?*

The table below presents the number of pupils at boarding schools and individuals living in urban areas who reported greater proficiency in Vietnamese (Kinh) compared to their mother tongue.

This section provides a detailed overview of participants' language preferences, attitudes, and self-assessed proficiencies, highlighting generational and contextual differences in language use.

4. DISCUSSION

Comment 1:

- People (including pupils and others) living in urban areas use Vietnamese more proficiently.

Table 1a. Proficiency in Vietnamese (Kinh) of boarding school compared to their mother tongue.

Object	Gender	Ethnic													
		Êđê		Churu		Jrai		Bahnar		Mnông		Mạ		K'ho	
		No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Secondary school		13	65%	11	55%	13	65%	11	55%	14	70%	10	50%	12	60%
High school		20	100%	15	75%	17	85%	20	100/%	20	100%	13	75%	16	80%
Group 2 (18-35 years old)	Male	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%
	Female	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%
Group 3 (36-45 years old)	Male	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Female	0	0/%	0	0/%	0	0/%	2	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Group 4 (over 45 years old)	Male	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%
	Female	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 1b: Number of pupils in groups 2, 3, and 4 in rural areas who answered 'Better in Vietnamese (Kinh).

Object	Gender	Ethnic													
		Êđê		Churu		Jrai		Bahnar		Mnông		Mạ		K'ho	
		No.	***%***	***No.***	***%***	***No.***	***%***	***No.***	***%***	***No.***	***%***	***No.***	***%***	***No.***	***%***
Secondary school		10	50%	7	35%	6	30%	10	50%	8	40%	6	30%	7	35%
High school		11	55%	11	55%	16	80%	13	65%	6	30%	18	90%	10	50%
Group 2 (18-35 years old)	Male	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%		0%	0	0%
	Female	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Group 3 (36-45 years old)	Male	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Female	1	50/%	0	0/%	0	0/%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Group 4 (over 45 years old)	Male	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Female	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Source: *Author, 2025*

Table 2a. The number of pupils often use their mother tongue.

Object	Ethnic													
	Êđê		Churu		Jrai		Bahnar		Mnông		Mạ		K'ho	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Secondary school	12	60%	13	65%	13	65%	10	50%	12	60%	13	65%	11	55%
High school	15	75%	20	100%	16	80%	14	70%	20	100%	18	90%	16	80%

Source: Author, 2025

- Group 1 is more cohesive than the other three groups, and although they are at a higher grade level, their use of their mother tongue is limited.
- Group 2 uses their mother tongue less frequently than Groups 3 and 4.
- Group 4 demonstrates very limited proficiency in Vietnamese. However, as will be shown in the results of Survey 5b, this group also does not use their mother tongue effectively.

Survey 2 (for pupils):

Survey Question 3: Why did you use the Vietnamese language to communicate with your ethnic friends when all of you were in the same room? The results are:

Comment 2:

Based on the results of Surveys 2 and 3, even in the most favorable conditions (i.e., when interacting only with members of their own ethnic group), ethnic minority pupils are not able to fully use their mother tongue due to a lack of sufficient vocabulary.

Survey Question 4:

The question asked was: *"Can you use Vietnamese letters to write the names of ethnic minority items found in your room?"*

The results are as follows:

Survey Question 5a

I analyzed errors from 280 Vietnamese language tests taken by secondary school pupils and 210 tests taken

Table 2b. The reason boarding school use the Vietnamese language.

Contents	Secondary school		High school	
Do not know how to express the ideas (/have no enough words)	280 pupils	100%	210 pupils	100%
Other reasons (do not like, fear of others know the content of communication …)	83 pupils	29,6%	202 pupils	96,1%

Source: *Author, 2025*

Table 3a. An ability on use Vietnamese letters to write the names of ethnic minority

Object	Yes		No	
Secondary school	11/280 pupils	3,9%	269 pupils	96,1%
High school	15/210 pupils	7,1%	195 pupils	92,9%

Source: *Author, 2025*

Table 3b. Compare the results

- **Secondary school:**

Types of errors	Ethnic (ethnic pupils' error/Kinh's)						
	Êđê /Kinh	Churu /Kinh	Jrai /Kinh	Bahnar /Kinh	Mnông /Kinh	Mạ /Kinh	K'ho /Kinh
Express	18/12	20/14	17/11	18/15	19/9	19/8	16/8
Grammar	14/9	15/7	11/7	14/9	14/8	11/11	9/8
spelling/pronounce	12/4	14/4	16/13	15/5	11/4	10/5	12/4
Use words	8/6	9/4	7/3	8/5	9/6	8/5	9/7

* High school

Types of error	Ethnic (ethnic pupils' error/Kinh's)						
	Êđê /Kinh	Churu /Kinh	Jrai /Kinh	Bahnar /Kinh	Mnông /Kinh	Mạ/Kinh	K'ho/Kinh
Express	7/2	9/2	5/4	5/5	4/4	6/0	8/1
Grammar	5/5	4/3	4/4	6/4	4/2	5/3	6/4
spelling/pronounce	2/	2/2	3/2	4/3	3/2	1/1	1/1
Use words	6/6	6/6	5/2	4/3	3/1	6/2	4/1

Source: *Author, 2025*

by high school pupils, comparing the results with those from equivalent tests administered to Kinh students. The findings are as follows:

Comment 3:

Based on the results from Surveys 1, 2, and 3, it would be logical to expect that all pupils from ethnic minority groups in the Highlands would have a fairly good command of Vietnamese. However, the findings revealed the opposite.

Moreover, their proficiency in their mother tongue was also found to be insufficient. (III)

Survey Question 5b:

5.b1. (Interviews with four farmers—one from each ethnic group in rural areas, regardless of gender)

Participants were asked: "Have you ever attended ceremonies or community activities in your village? Did you fully understand their meanings?"

The results are as follows:

Comment 4: Most ethnic minority individuals living in rural areas did not fully understand the content of community activities. This was largely because the topics discussed in these meetings were often practical, modern, and closely related to contemporary life. However, older participants often lacked the vocabulary necessary to fully comprehend or articulate these topics. (This can be compared with the results presented below.)

The following are the results from surveys conducted in urban areas.

Comment 5:

There was a notable difference between ethnic minority individuals living in urban versus rural areas in terms of their understanding of community activities. Overall, ethnic minorities residing in urban areas demonstrated a higher level of comprehension compared

Table 4a. Interviews result

Group 2 (18-35 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	2	2	1	1	1	0
A half	2	2	2	2	2	2
Under a half	0	0	1	1	1	2

Group 3 (36-45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	0	0	1	1	0	0
A half	3	3	2	2	2	2
Under a half	1	1	1	1	2	2

Group 4 (over 45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	0	0	0	0	0	0
A half	2	1	1	0	0	0
Under a half	2	3	3	4	4	4

Source: *Author, 2025*

Table 4b. Older participants knowledge the content of community activities

Group 2 (18-35 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	3	3	3	3
A half	0	0	1	1	1	1
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 3 (36-45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	4	4	3	3
A half	0	0	0	0	1	1
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 4 (over 45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	4	4	4	4
A half	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: *Author, 2025*

to those in rural settings (see comparison with the results above).

5.b2 (Interview with 4 farmers (1 ethnic minority group, rural area; gender not specified):

Survey Question: "Have you often attended Kinh ceremonies or activities? If so, did you understand the meaning of these ceremonies?"

Table 5: Watching television news and understand

Group 2 (18-35 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	3	3	3	2	2
A half	0	1	1	1	2	2
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 3 (36-45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	2	3	3	2	2	2
A half	2	1	1	2	2	2
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 4 (over 45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	2	1	2	2	2	2
A half	2	2	1	2	2	1
Under a half	0	1	1	0	0	1

Source: *Author, 2025*

Table 6: The results of the survey conducted in urban areas

Group 2 (18-35 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	4	4	4	4
A half	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 3 (36-45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	4	4	4	4
A half	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group 4 (over 45 years old)

Degree of Understanding	Êđê	Churu	Jrai	Bahnar	Mnông	Mạ
All	4	4	4	4	4	4
A half	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under a half	0	0	0	0	0	0

Sour ce: *Author, 2025*

Result: 100% of respondents answered "No," citing that they "did not understand anything."

5.b3. (Interview with 4 farmers (1 ethnic minority group, rural area; gender not specified):

Survey Question: "Have you ever watched television news programs in Vietnamese? If yes, did you understand the content?"

Result:

The data presented below summarizes findings from surveys conducted in rural areas.

The following presents the results of the survey conducted in urban areas.

Comment 6:

- Survey 5b indicated that individuals aged 18 to over 45, both male and female, from seven ethnic minority groups in the Highlands demonstrated very limited proficiency in both Vietnamese and their respective mother tongues. This suggests that they are unable to effectively use language as a tool for community development or to access and utilize general or scientific knowledge (see IV).
- Based on observations (I), (II), (III), and (IV), I offer the following comments:
  - The majority of ethnic minority individuals in the Highlands exhibited limited proficiency in both Vietnamese and their native languages.
  - There is a significant disparity in language ability between different age groups, especially between group 4 (individuals over 45 years old) and group 1 (pupils).
  - The transmission of knowledge and experience between generations within these ethnic communities is severely hindered, contributing to the erosion of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.
  - A notable difference in language proficiency was observed between individuals living in rural areas and those in urban areas.

5. CONCLUSION

This study reveals several critical findings regarding the language abilities and intergenerational language dynamics among ethnic minorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

First, the overall language proficiency of most ethnic minority groups, especially among the younger generation, is notably limited. Young people in these communities generally exhibit weak command of both their mother tongues and Vietnamese, which constrains their linguistic competence (Cận, 1984a; Institute of Linguistics, 1984).

Second, there exists a significant generational gap in linguistic ability between the youth and their parents. This disparity often results in communication difficulties within families and communities, potentially leading to social conflicts and weakening cultural cohesion (Tue, 1992; Thư, 1985).

Third, although pupils tend to have the highest proficiency in Vietnamese compared to other groups, their competence remains at an average level. Consequently, their ability to use Vietnamese effectively as a medium for acquiring knowledge and engaging in communication is limited. This limitation poses particular challenges in academic contexts, where insufficient language mastery hinders the absorption of scientific and technical information (Liễu, 2014; Ngọc, 1992).

Finally, the Vietnamese government is urged to implement policies aimed at protecting and revitalizing ethnic minority languages. Without timely and effective intervention, many minority languages in the Central Highlands face the risk of extinction within the coming decades (Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, 1993; Phúc, 1985a).

The impact of this article is very specific: the government is forced to have appropriate policies aimed at practical reform: changing a method of teaching and learning language and changing a programes for ethnic minority pupils, changing teachers' methods and their attitudes, etc.

In the future, I will continue researching the languages of ethnic minorities in this area. First, I will study the extent of Vietnamese and English influence on these minority languages, particularly among the younger generation. Second, I will examine the relationship between the Êđê language (spoken in the highlands) and one of the Austronesian languages.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

Banker, B. F. (1960). A comparison of Bahnar and Vietnamese. Saigon: Summer Institute of Linguistics. (Unpublished manuscript)

Cận, L. (1984a). A Vietnamese common second language—the mother tongue of ethnic pupils. *Information Science Education*, (6); (1984b). On the method of teaching and learning Vietnamese, Educational Research, (2).

Cận, L. (1987). Some suggestions on the teaching and learning Bilingual (the common language and the enthnic language) which areas in elementary schooling ethnic minority, *Information Science Education*, (13).

Đường, H.T. (1990). On the choice of the dialect to serve as the basic script for a Mnong, *Journal of Social Sciences*, (6).

Institute of Linguistics (1984). Language of ethnic minorities in Vietnam and policy languages. Social Sciences Publishing House.

Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City (1993). Education language and cultural development of the southern ethnic minorities. Social Sciences Publishing House.

Irwin G.-H. & Irwin, H. Wallcharts (1972): K'ho reading primer, Ministry of Education.

Liễu, C. X. (2014). Vietnamese word reading skills of pupils in grade 1 ethnic K'ho, Doctorate thesis in Psychology.

Ngọc, B. (1992). Some methods in eradicating illiteracy. *Information Science Education*.

Phúc, D. V. (1985). Tendency toward monosyllabization in Ede. *Language Magazine*.

Phúc, D. V. (1992). A few problems of synchronic phonology of Chamic language, *Southeast Asian Studies*, (2).

Thư, Đ. L. (1985). On the problem of dialectal variants in Mnong. *Language Magazine*.

Tuệ, H. (1992). On the problem of bilingualism. *Language Magazine.*

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Hồ Xuân Mai was born in Cambodia in 1967. He earned his B.A. from the University of Ho Chi Minh in 1991, his M.A. from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University (Ho Chi Minh City) in 1999, and his Ph.D. from the Southern Institute of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, in 2007.

He began his teaching career in secondary education in Đồng Tháp, Vietnam, in 1991. Since 2007, he has been affiliated with the Graduate Department of Linguistics at the Southern Institute of Social Sciences. As of 2025, he is serving as a Professor of Linguistics at Văn Hiến University. His primary research interests include linguistics and the interrelationship between language and culture. He is also a member of the Institute of Linguistics, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Dr. Hồ Xuân Mai
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Van Hien University of Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
Email: xuanmainam@yahoo.com

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 75 – 85 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Between Code and Culture: Is Translanguaging a Disruption or a Bridge in ESL?

Caesar Dealwis[1], Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi[2]*, Aiman Zulaikha Mohd Fadzli[3] and Abdul Azim Mahda[4]

[1,2,3&4]*Academy of Language Studies, MARA University of Technology, Sarawak, Malaysia*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 30-Sep-24
REVISED: 05-May-25
ACCEPTED: 13-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi
E-mail: sheelafaizura@uitm.edu.my

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Caesar Dealwis
E-mail: cjerdealwis@uitm.edu.my

Author 3: Aiman Zulaikha Mohd Fadzli
E-mail: Aiman Zulaikha Mohd Fadzli

Author 4: Abdul Azim Mahda
E-mail: azimmahda@uitm.edu.my

Citation: Caesar Dealwis, Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi, Aiman Zulaikha Mohd Fadzli and Abdul Azim Mahda (2025). Between Code and Culture: Is Translanguaging a Disruption or a Bridge in ESL? Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 75–85. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1301.p75

ABSTRACT

The use of translanguaging or also known as the strategic shifting between two or more languages has sparked ongoing debate in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. While some educators discourage its use in favour of full language immersion, others recognise its potential in supporting students with low English proficiency. This study investigates students' perceptions of translanguaging and explores the benefits ESL teachers associate with its implementation in the language learning process. Fifty secondary school students and two teachers from two schools in the Serian Division of Sarawak participated in the study. English was promoted as the primary medium of instruction with limited encouragement for translanguaging. A mixed-method approach was used for data collection. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with the two ESL teachers to capture their perspectives on the roles and values of translanguaging in classroom practice. Findings indicate that translanguaging practices positively influenced students' ESL development. Teachers reported using translanguaging to explain grammar rules, enhance comprehension of classroom activities, and motivate student participation, especially among learners with lower proficiency levels. The study underscores the pragmatic benefits of translanguaging as a scaffolding tool in multilingual ESL classrooms. It suggests that translanguaging can facilitate deeper understanding and learner engagement when applied judiciously rather than hindering learning. It serves as an effective pedagogical strategy for supporting low-proficiency ESL students. Recognising its value may help educators create more inclusive and linguistically responsive learning environments. Future research should examine the long-term impact of translanguaging on learners' overall language proficiency and academic performance across different educational contexts.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Perceptions, Students, Teachers, ESL Classrooms, English Only Policy, Low English Proficiency, Sarawak Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language teachers' training in Malaysia has always advocated that teachers use only English in ESL classrooms. However, the teacher training approach did not acknowledge the role of literacies and the learners' attitudes shaped by their mother tongue and environment (Hazita, 2005). Besides Malay, English, Chinese, and Iban, more than 30 other dialects are the mother tongues of the 37 ethnic groups in Sarawak. In the outskirts of towns and cities in Sarawak, English is hardly spoken except during English lessons. Many low-English-proficiency students treat English as a foreign language.

Under the Malaysian Education system, English is taught as a compulsory subject from Primary One to Form Five for eleven years. English is often used to communicate in urban areas where both parents are English-educated

professionals, unlike in rural areas where the home language is often the parents' mother tongues. Malaysia has accorded English as a second language status as stated in Article 152 and given it due attention (Nor Hashimah et al., 2008). Teachers' creativity would help students with low English proficiency to become more interested in learning English and avoid boredom in ESL classes. However, there are reported cases of non-option English language teachers who negatively affect the English language performance in schools because they failed to retain interest in learning English among low English proficiency students (Dealwis et al., 2023). It was also mirrored in the results of the students' school-based assessment (Fauzi et al., 2016).

The English-only policy in the English language classrooms has not prevented teachers from using Malay and the student's mother tongues to help them understand the English language better (Dealwis et al., 2021). The feedback from low English proficiency students on how they want to learn English can provide a better understanding of their English language learning needs (Dealwis et al., 2001). According to Dornyei (2020), strong motivations by the teachers can be disrupted by lack of language proficiency among students to enable them to participate in the lesson actively. The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) launched the English Language Education Roadmap for Malaysia 2015 until 2025 which marks a strategic direction in second language education. The roadmap becomes a helpful guide for English language curriculum developers and teachers to ascertain that all Malaysian students can achieve proficiency levels aligned with international standards benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference or CEFR (Don, 2015).

The use of translanguaging (TL) in Sarawak classrooms has yet to be thoroughly explored. This research examines how TL provides linguistic support for LEP students in the ESL classroom at two secondary schools in Sarawak. This study adopts the definition provided by Garcia and Wei (2014) which states that bilinguals operate their entire linguistic repertoire to make meaning. One is the official community language, such as Bidayuh, whereas the second is the lesson's official language. In this study, the official language for instruction is *Bahasa Melayu* and the lesson's language is English. The research questions of this study are to investigate the students' perceptions, the benefits of TL for students, and the reasons teachers use TL.

The research questions for this study are formulated as shown below:

1. What are the LEP students' perceptions of TL in the ESL classroom?
2. What are the LEP students' attitudes towards TL?
3. What are the benefits of TL for LEP students in the ESL classroom?

Definition of TL

TL differs from code-switching since TL is a conscious strategy for developing language repertoire (Garcia & Lin, 2016). The term code-switching is similar to TL in that both terms refer to the switching between languages. Garcia et al. (2006) defined TL as using several languages in a classroom while Lin & Martin (2005) explained it as using two languages. One is the official community language, whereas the second is the lesson's official language. Garcia and Wei (2014) also refer to TL as the cognitive activities of students which enable them to make meaning by using their language repertoire (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Therefore, "TL refers to new language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people" (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 21). Ali (2021) denoted that TL is an effective pedagogical tool teachers use in multilingual classroom settings in Pakistan to help their students learn English.

Differences between TL and Code-switching

Garcia (2006) introduced the concept of TL which was initially related to code-switching. However, the two concepts were later differentiated in theory and practice. Code-switching is considered the result of interference from a person's first language and is often viewed as detrimental to the teaching and learning of a second language (Alhawary, 2018). Despite this, it has been recognised as a helpful strategy in language teaching.

On the other hand, code-switching refers to the switching between languages in various situational contexts (Nagy, 2017). In classroom settings, code-switching has been seen as problematic, causing embarrassment, guilt, and a perceived waste of bilingual resources as the languages are seen to contaminate each other (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In contrast, TL is viewed as adding flexibility to pedagogical approaches in the classroom by making conveying, understanding, and communicating ideas easier.

The theoretical underpinning of TL is a sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978). The Vygotskian-based sociocultural theory of learning focuses on the heteronomous individual whose development relies on various social structures in which the individual lives (Lourenco, 2012). Sociocultural theory believes learning is a dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes anchored in social interaction and the co-construction of knowledge (Lantolf et al., 2018). TL generates several affordances and chances for learning during students' collaborative social interactions by fusing sociocultural theory and TL practices (Rajendram, 2021).

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, teachers and learners' diverse language backgrounds can be utilised as resources for teaching and learning (Ngubane et al., 2020). This idea aligns with TL pedagogy, where teachers incorporate learners' linguistic abilities in the classroom to promote equal learning opportunities (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

Benefits and Challenges

The studies on TL in various educational contexts highlight both common benefits and challenges while also revealing context-specific nuances. Too (2023), Nur Sakina et al. (2022), and Nur Mazliyana et al. (2023) examined the use of TL in Malaysian ESL classroom. They, emphasised its role as a scaffolding tool in teaching and learning. While teachers in these studies utilised TL across explanatory, managerial, and interpersonal strategies, they still faced constraints due to the monolingual policies prevalent in Malaysia's education system. This mirrors the challenges highlighted in Seals' (2021) study in New Zealand which also identified the empowering effects of TL particularly for heritage and new speakers. However, Seals focused more on how TL helps integrate diverse linguistic backgrounds in a broader socio-cultural context.

Santoso's (2020) study in Jakarta, Indonesia, similarly found that TL facilitated classroom management, comprehension, and communication. His focus was on the functional and behavioural aspects of TL in higher education. Compared to the studies in Malaysia and New Zealand, Santoso's findings emphasised more immediate classroom dynamics such as controlling student behaviour and improving direct communication. Overall, all studies agree on the effectiveness of TL as a pedagogical tool but the degree to which it is adopted and the areas it influences such as policy constraints, student empowerment, or classroom behaviour vary across different educational contexts.

2. METHODS

Participant bias did not exist in the selection process because all the respondents were from two classes in two secondary schools. Fifty Form 2 students studying a second language took part in a survey using a questionnaire. In addition, two English teachers who taught these students were interviewed. The research involved selecting all the students that the two English teachers recommended to gain a comprehensive understanding of TL (Neuman, 2014). The consent to conduct the study was given by both the students and the principals in the respective schools. The students had low English language proficiency in the lower classes of two government secondary schools in the Serian Division, Sarawak, East Malaysia. This paper aimed to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and benefits of TL on the performance of low English proficiency learners in improving their English language proficiency. The secondary focus was to examine why ESL teachers

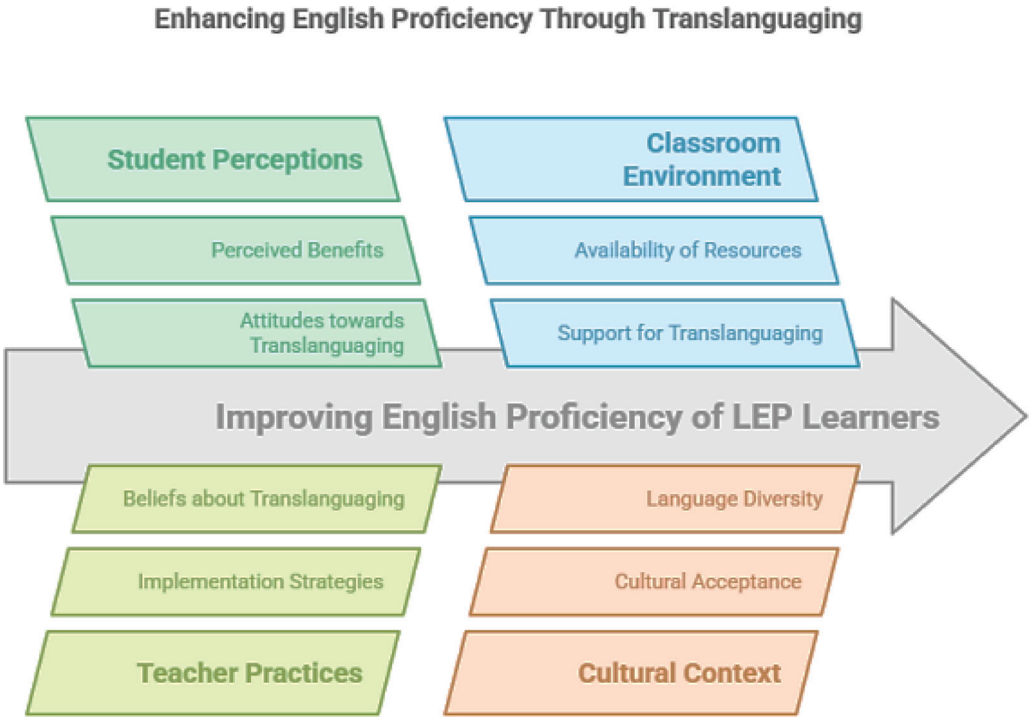


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

recognized the significance of TL practices in the language learning process of their low-English-proficiency students.

The main participants in this study were LEP students in the schools. The students completed a questionnaire administered by the teachers and researchers. Subsequently, the teachers were individually interviewed. To illustrate, they were asked to explain why they allowed students to use TL in their teaching methods. The data obtained from the students were then shared with their respective teachers for their comments and allowing for a comparison of perspectives using the same method (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019).

3. RESULTS

This section provides the findings from the questionnaires the students completed to gauge their perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the benefits of TL in the ESL classroom.

*3.1 Students' Perceptions Towards **TL***

As illustrated in Table 1, a substantial majority of the respondents (90%) affirmed that their comprehension of English improved when their teacher allowed the use of Malay or their mother tongues in the ESL classrooms. In contrast, only 10% of the respondents occasionally expressed this view. Furthermore, 85% of the participants indicated that their confidence in using English increased when their teacher permitted them to respond in their native language, which, in turn, heightened their motivation to engage more actively in English language learning. However, 15% of the students expressed occasional alignment with this perspective.

Table 1: Students' perceptions towards TL

Statements	Yes	No	Sometimes
When the teacher allows me to use Malay/mother tongue, I can understand English better.	*90%*	*0%*	*10%*
I am confident when my English teacher allows me to respond using Malay/mother tongue.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*
Using English mixed with my mother tongue can help me to learn English better.	*80%*	*0%*	*20%*
I am motivated to learn English when my teacher understands what I say in Malay/my mother tongue.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*
Using English mixed with Malay/my language can help me think critically.	*70%*	*0%*	*30%*

Source: *Authors, 2024*

Similarly, 80% of the respondents believed that integrating English with their mother tongues positively contributed to their overall language acquisition process as opposed to the remaining 20% who occasionally recognised this benefit. Additionally, 70% of the students perceived that the practice of TL between English and their mother tongues fostered the development of their critical thinking skills while 30% acknowledged this belief occasionally.

These findings underscore a predominantly positive attitude among students toward TL. They firmly believed that the practice facilitated their understanding of English and contributed to increased confidence, enhanced motivation, and promoted higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking. This overall sentiment reflects the potential of TL to serve as a valuable pedagogical tool in ESL classrooms particularly for learners with lower proficiency levels.

3.2 Students' Attitudes Towards TL

In Table 2, all respondents (100%) unanimously agreed that having peers who spoke Malay or their mother tongues made TL in the classroom more manageable and more accessible. It demonstrates a shared belief that a familiar linguistic environment promotes smoother language communication. Additionally, 90% of the student respondents reported discomfort when trying to speak only in English which suggest that enforcing monolingualism can create a sense of artificiality and unease. In contrast, only 10% occasionally felt this way. Furthermore, 85% of the students expressed embarrassment when making errors in English and would resort to using their mother tongues or Malay when struggling for words. It proves TL as a strategy to

Table 2: Students' attitudes towards TL.

Statements	Yes	No	Sometimes
Other students in class know Malay/mother tongue.	*100%*	*0%*	*0%*
We speak Malay/mother tongue, so it feels awkward to "pretend" by speaking English only in class.	*90%*	*0%*	*10%*
It is embarrassing to say something wrong, and sometimes I don't know the words, so I use Malay/mother tongue.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*
The English language does not always have the right word for what I want to say.	*70%*	*0%*	*30%*
I have the right to answer using Malay/mother tongue.	*75%*	*0%*	*25%*

Source: *Authors, 2024*

reduce language anxiety. Only 15% of the respondents occasionally shared this mindset.

The survey found that 75% of respondents felt comfortable answering their teacher in Malay or their mother tongues if they could not respond in English while 25% did so occasionally. Additionally, 70% of students reported that they did not always find the precise words or meanings they needed in English, leading them to rely on their native language. On the other hand, 30% of respondents only occasionally felt this way.

The overall positive attitude towards TL among the students was due to the perceived benefits of the practice. Switching between languages reduced the pressure to adhere to strict English-only rules and allowed for a more authentic learning experience. It also enables students to express themselves more fully and comfortably.

*3.3 Benefits of TL for **Students***

Table 3 illustrates all respondents (100%) reported an enhanced understanding of English lessons when their teacher included other languages in the instruction. The result indicates a widespread recognition of the benefits of TL in improving comprehension. Moreover, 90% of the student respondents noted a substantial improvement in their grasp of English vocabulary and grammar through integrating other languages while only 10% occasionally observed the same advantage.

Moreover, 85% of the participants reported that their comprehension of subject- verb agreement and their English-speaking skills improved when TL was used in the classrooms. In contrast, 15% of the respondents only occasionally experienced this improvement. The respondents overwhelmingly endorsed TL by crediting their language acquisition progress to this inclusive approach.

Table 3: Benefits of TL for students.

Statements	Yes	No	Sometimes
I speak English better when I mix it with other languages.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*
I understand the English lesson better when the teacher mixes with other languages.	*100%*	*0%*	*10%*
I understand the English vocabulary better when the teacher mixes with other languages.	*90%*	*0%*	*10%*
I understand English grammar better when the teacher mixes with other languages.	*70%*	*0%*	*30%*
I understand the subject-verb agreement better when the teacher mixes with other languages.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*

Source: *Authors, 2024*

*3.3 Student's Improvements in Self-**Expression***

Table 4 depicts all respondents indicated they benefited from greater engagement in English class when their teacher allowed them to respond in multiple languages. The flexible approach to language use promoted active participation. Additionally, 95% of the respondents reported that their ability to draw upon their knowledge of other languages, alongside English, enabled them to express their thoughts more freely and complete their tasks successfully, contributing to a heightened sense of satisfaction in learning English. Only 5% of the participants reported occasionally experiencing this advantage.

Moreover, 90% of the respondents acknowledged that incorporating other languages with English enhanced their capacity for self-expression. By contrast, just 10% of the students occasionally shared this sentiment. Similarly, 85% of the students reported that utilising both English and their mother tongues helped them to complete their academic work and highlighted the challenges of learning solely through English. In comparison, 15% of the respondents sometimes experienced this benefit.

Overall, respondents perceived significant advantages from TL particularly in terms of enhanced self-expression and engagement in the classroom. The flexibility to articulate thoughts using a combination of English, Malay, and their native languages provided

Table 4: Improvements in self-expression.

Statements	Yes	No	Sometimes
I can use my knowledge of other languages mixed with English to describe freely what I can do.	*90%*	*0%*	*10%*
I can use my knowledge of other languages mixed with English to freely describe what I think.	*95%*	*0%*	*5%*
I can use my knowledge of other languages mixed with English to show that I can understand the difficulty of learning only using English.	*85%*	*0%*	*15%*
I can use my knowledge of other languages mixed with English to complete my work.	*95%*	*0%*	*5%*
Teacher's acceptance of my answer in mixed languages make me want to be active in English class.	*100%*	*0%*	*0%*

Source: *Authors, 2024*

students with valuable opportunities to express themselves more fully during English lessons, enriching their learning experience.

4. DISCUSSION

TL practices have shown to be advantageous for learners with low English proficiency by significantly improving their comprehension and communication skills while learning English. The teachers expressed comparable views on the importance of TL practices in their student's language learning journey. The two teachers participating in this study employed TL to teach their students English as a second language. During the semi-structured interview, the teachers indicated that the LEP learners engaged more during the TL lessons. Their approaches to TL in ESL classrooms focused on clarifying grammar rules, vocabulary items, and reading texts to facilitate student comprehension and promote English language acquisition. The aim is to align the findings with the research questions to gauge the low English proficiency students' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of the benefits of TL in the ESL classrooms. The findings are detailed under three main thematic subheadings, as shown below.

a) To explain linguistic structures

The teachers wanted to make it easier for students with low English proficiency to understand the grammatical functions and vocabulary of the English language so they could write and speak more using English. According to Teacher 1, *"I have to explain the grammar during English language teaching. The TL approach helps me easily explain the English vocabulary items and grammar structures to low English proficiency students."* Both teachers were often frustrated when they were told that they had to teach using English only when the weaker students mostly did not understand what they were saying in the ESL classroom. They were fully aware that the English language has a system of grammar rules that low English proficiency students could not understand unless explained using the language most accessible for the students to understand, i.e., *Malay*.

Teacher 1 added, *"Teaching students with low English proficiency grammar rules requires me to have greater empathy and patience toward these students. I always try to place myself in the student's position. After all, English teaching aims to enable these students to use the English language correctly."* The TL approach required the ESL teachers to understand the Malay grammar rules and the student's mother tongue (Bidayuh) within the classroom. In the present study, all the students spoke fluent Malay, the language of school instruction. The Malay students spoke the Sarawak Malay dialect, and the Bidayuh students spoke the *Bukar-Sadong Bidayuh* dialect at home, respectively. Both the ESL teachers were *Bidayuh* and could also speak *Malay*.

According to Teacher 2, *"Some untrained English language teachers asked their students to memorise the grammar rules. This is difficult for weaker and less proficient students. Soon, the students give up. By using the TL approach, I can make my students feel that they can also participate actively in learning English."* Both ESL teachers agreed that teaching reading was also challenging for them especially when the students had low English proficiency. However, teaching reading using the TL approach was an alternative to engage such students in their language-learning process. Teacher 2 added, *"How can I speak in English and expect my students to respond in English when they do not understand what I read? First, they must know enough English to be able to respond. For them to respond using English can be a daunting task. But, allowing a TL approach does help my students to understand the reading text."* The low-English proficiency students were encouraged to acquire a basic understanding of English.

It highlights how teachers use TL to explain linguistic structures, particularly grammar and vocabulary, to low-proficiency English students. Both teachers emphasised the need to use Malay, the students' familiar language, to clarify English grammar rules and vocabulary, as the students struggle to grasp these concepts solely in English. They pointed out that the TL approach facilitates a more precise explanation of grammar structures, reducing student confusion and enabling them to better comprehend and apply these rules in their writing and speaking. It contrasts with the conventional English-only method which frustrates teachers and students particularly when weaker students need help understanding. Considering the students' linguistic backgrounds, the teachers' empathetic approach further supports the idea that TL can aid in scaffolding language learning. These findings follow Garcia (2014) who stresses the significance of an effective pedagogical practice in a variety of educational contexts for language instruction.

b) To enhance learners' understanding of the English language

The TL approach effectively improves students' English language skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It has provided a strong foundation for successful language learning among students with low English proficiency. By utilising their mother tongues and the language used as the school instruction medium, students with low proficiency could better comprehend the content through TL practices. This understanding

is crucial for ESL teachers to achieve their teaching objectives in English lessons.

Teacher 1 emphasised the importance of TL in English lessons to help LEP learners maintain their interest in learning the language and improve their proficiency. TL helps students engage in the learning process and carries a humanistic concept by showing empathy towards weaker students. This approach is crucial especially when English is difficult compared to the Bidayuh dialect and Malay. Teachers can boost students' interest in learning a challenging language by incorporating TL. As a result, ESL teachers need to recognise the value of TL and incorporate it into language learning in the classroom.

Teacher 1 responded further, *"As you can see from the students' responses, there is a significant number of participants in this study who not only preferred* TL *but also found that* TL *is more engaging than hearing their teachers speaking alone using English. It allows students with low English proficiency to guess their way correctly during an English lesson."* The TL approach will not be able to be conducted properly if both students and teachers contribute no solid effort. Foremost, the teachers must also have good knowledge of the student's linguistic repertoire. In this study, the teachers have good knowledge of *Malay*, the school medium of instruction, and the Bidayuh dialect, as both teachers are also *Bukar-Sadong Bidayuh*. The students can participate and achieve better when the teacher allows the TL approach. TL approach principle of teaching English to low English proficiency learners is to support and assist them in learning English by adapting to the other familiar languages.

Teacher 2 emphasised that allowing TL such as code-switching in English classes can help low English proficiency students better understand the material. Despite the silence on TL in the Malaysian English Only policy, many ESL teachers have been using it to assist low English proficiency students. Teacher 2 also stated that encouraging students to use their prior knowledge can create a more welcoming and less intimidating environment for low-English-proficiency students. Students who spoke *Bidayuh* and Sarawak *Malay* dialects as their mother tongue had to learn formal *Bahasa Melayu* or *Malay* as the language of instruction, which made learning English daunting for them. TL helped maximise the teaching and learning of the language for these students.

The TL approach is analysed as a highly effective strategy for enhancing students' understanding of English particularly for low-proficiency students. By allowing students to use their mother tongues, such as *Malay* or *Bidayuh*, alongside English, teachers can bridge the gap between their prior linguistic knowledge and the new language they are learning. The approach facilitates comprehension by making complex English language structures and content more accessible. Thus, TL enhances comprehension by leveraging students' linguistic repertoires as valuable tools in the learning process. These findings are in accordance with Garcia and Wei (2014) who defined TL as improving learners' ability to comprehend, use, and produce the English language effectively.

c) To encourage the learning of English language

The TL practices were spontaneous and valuable as a pedagogical tool that encouraged learning, especially for low English proficiency students. Teacher 1 said, *"Although learners engage more in the Malay language in the English class, they are trying to understand and use English as much as possible. As a teacher, I also observed that* TL *encourages weaker students. This* TL *allows my students to bring their communication practices in their daily lives into the classroom. In my school, most students speak Sarawak Malay dialect and Bidayuh."*

Nevertheless, the ESL teachers needed clear guidelines and resources to implement TL. Instead, they felt guilty for not adhering to the English-only policy prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, the teachers concerned agreed that TL was an excellent learning approach for the low-proficiency students in their English classes. Teacher 1 said, *"My school is a tapestry of multilingualism so I will not discourage my students from utilising the languages they are more comfortable with. I notice that my support has helped them learn English. The language they are most comfortable with and most competent to express will make them feel encouraged and at ease to learn more."*

Due to the English-only policy, both teachers were initially not keen to use the TL approach as it could affect the perceptions of the headmaster towards their ability and proficiency in the English language. In order to achieve the objectives of the lesson, the low English proficiency students wanted to be allowed to use a language that they were comfortable with in learning. Teacher 2 said, *"However, not all Bidayuh students are proficient in Sarawak Malay dialect either because it is not their home language. Even the Malays speak the Sarawak Malay dialect at home, and the standard Malay is not used as the medium of instruction. The students do not feel unmotivated to learn English."*

Bidayuh and Sarawak Malay were the dialects the students spoke at home and during their social interactions in and outside of school. In the classroom, the students struggled to concentrate on learning the English language and were not motivated to learn grammar and

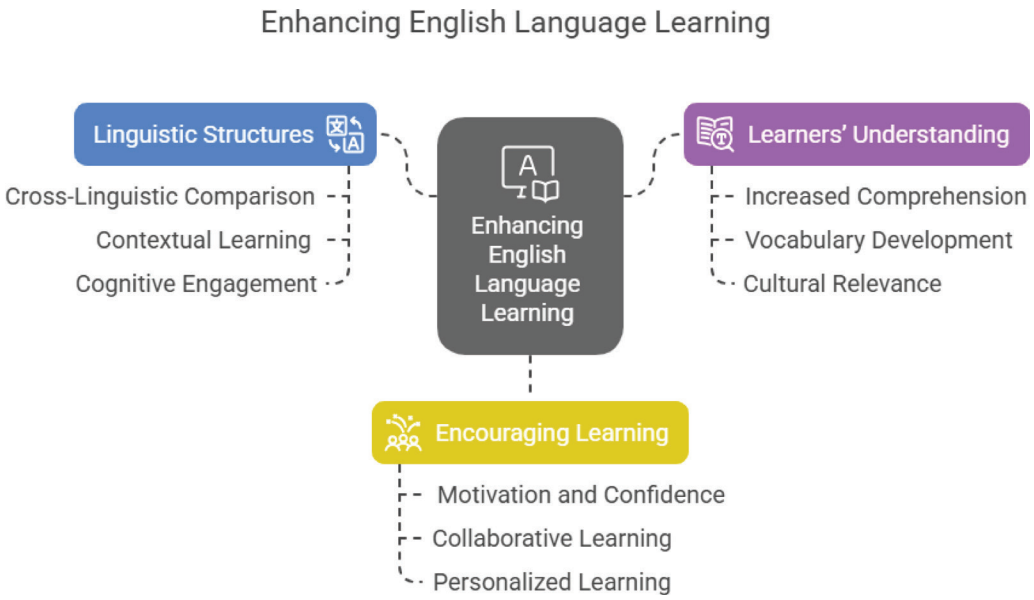


Figure 2: Summary of TL benefits.

language skills seriously. Such learners lost concentration and ignored the ESL teachers' content. Therefore, the ESL teachers allowed the TL approach to motivate the low English proficiency learners and stirred interest in learning English.

Teacher 2 said, *"For me, the biggest hurdle for ESL teachers in the classroom is ensuring the learners are keen to learn English. Should or shouldn't I, as the English teacher, come down to the level of students' proficiency in English to motivate their interest in learning the difficult language? No doubt* TL *is one good way to encourage students as it creates new learning patterns in learning English. The ultimate goal is for the students to always be motivated and concentrate on ESL learning."* According to the teachers, the low English proficiency learners thought English was dull and involved uninteresting activities. Both ESL teachers knew that the tasks the low English proficiency students were engaged in in traditional classrooms were dull. They also agreed that the traditional language teaching styles were too rigid when the LEP students could not speak other languages to understand the English lessons better. In real-life situations, the LEP students always did not speak English. Therefore, the English-only approach lesson plan in the traditional English lesson caused many low-English proficiency students to lose interest and feel less motivated to learn English.

The analysis of the information emphasises TL as a vital tool for encouraging the learning of English, particularly for low English proficiency (LEP) students. Using students' familiar languages provides them with comfort and confidence which allow them to engage more actively in the classroom. The teacher observed that TL motivates weaker students by integrating their daily communication practices into the learning environment and helping them bridge the gap between their native languages and English. This approach fosters a more inclusive and less intimidating atmosphere where students feel encouraged to learn rather than discouraged by the challenges of an English-only policy.

5. CONCLUSION

TL is an effective pedagogical tool in enhancing the learning experience and language acquisition of low English proficiency (LEP) students in Sarawak's ESL classrooms. By integrating students' mother tongues and familiar dialects, such as Malay and Bidayuh, into English instruction, teachers could make complex linguistic structures more accessible, foster deeper comprehension, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. TL improved students' understanding of English grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension and boosted their confidence, motivation, and critical thinking skills.

The findings reflect the significant roles TL play in overcoming the limitations of the English-only policy which often alienates low-proficiency students and creates a barrier to effective learning. Both teachers and students acknowledged that using familiar languages facilitated a smoother transition to English proficiency and provided a much-needed sense of comfort and engagement in the classroom. It fosters a dynamic and empathetic learning environment where students feel encouraged to participate and take ownership of their language learning journey.

The findings of the study align with national ESL goals in the implementation of the Common European Framework (CEFR) whereby it encourages communicative and student-centred approaches. This study has shown that English language learning could become more engaging and interactive by utilising the languages that are widely used in the students' linguistic environment.

In conclusion, TL is a valuable strategy for ESL teachers especially in multilingual settings like Sarawak, where linguistic diversity is the norm. By embracing students' linguistic repertoires, teachers can enhance language acquisition and create more inclusive, motivating, and compelling learning experiences for low English proficiency students. Thus, TL should be considered an essential component of ESL teaching in multilingual classrooms particularly for learners struggling with English proficiency. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of TL on students' English language proficiency and academic performance across different educational settings and grade levels.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

There are no conflicting interests in the writing and publication of this paper, and during the execution of this study.

Acknowledgements

The authors wished to thank all 50 students and two teachers from the two participating schools for cooperating to make education possible. The authors would also like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

No funding provided during the execution of this study.

REFERENCES

Alhawary, M. T. (2018). *Routledge handbook of Arabic second language acquisition*. Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315674261

Ali, A. (2021). Understanding the role of translanguaging in L2 acquisition: Applying Cummins' CUP model. *Journal of Cultural and Lingua, 2*(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.37301/culingua.v2i1.10

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching. *The Modern Language Journal, 94*(1), 103–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x

Dealwis, C., & David, M. K. (2001, May 29–31). Change in footing: A Bidayuh teacher's experience in an ESL classroom in Gumbang District, Bau [Conference presentation]. MELTA 2001, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Dealwis, C., Aiza, J., & Affidah, M. (2021, July 24). Translanguaging in a rural secondary school in Sarawak: An ESL lesson [Conference presentation]. Seminar Pendidikan Alaf Baru, Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Dealwis, C., Aiza, J., & Affidah, M. (2023, November 17–19). Translanguaging as a case of strategic essentialism to shuttle orientations specific to learners [Conference paper]. I-ROLE 2023 Proceedings.

Don, M. Z. (2015). English language proficiency, graduate employability, and the role of CEFR. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature, 21*(4). https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2018-2403-13

Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Innovations and challenges in language learning motivation*. Routledge.

Fauzi, S.F.N.F. (2016). The implementation of school-based assessment in ESL classrooms: The case of secondary schools in Bintulu, Sarawak. (Masters' Thesis), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). Language, bilingualism, and education. In *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism, and education*. Palgrave Pivot. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02324-3_9-1

García, O., & Lin, A. (2016). Translanguaging and bilingual education. In O. García, A. Lin, & S. May (Eds.), *Bilingual education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1_9

Hazita, A. (2005, November 21–23). Knowledge-based economy as institutional learning discourse in Malaysia: Change in the language of instruction policy and representations of readiness among the role players in tertiary education [Conference presentation]. International Conference on Worlds in Discourse: Representations of Realities, SoLLs. INTEC 2005.

Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Swain, M. (Eds.). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of sociocultural theory and second language development.* Routledge.

Lin, A. M. Y., & Martin, P. W. (Eds.). (2005). *Decolonization, globalization: Language-in-education policy and practice*. Multilingual Matters.

Lourenço, O. (2012). Piaget and Vygotsky: Many resemblances, and a crucial difference. *New Ideas in Psychology, 30*(3).

Ministry of Education. (2004). *The development of education: National report of Malaysia*. Presented at the International Conference on Education, Geneva, September 8–11.

Nagy, N. (2017). Cross-cultural approaches: Comparing heritage languages in Toronto. *Penn Working Papers in Linguistics, 23*(2). http://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol23/iss2/12

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Ngubane, N., Ntombela, B. X., & Govender, S. (2020). Translanguaging pedagogy in selected English first additional language writing classrooms. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, 38*(2). https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2020.1771190

Nor Hashimah Jalaluddin, Norsimah Mat Awal, & Kesumawati Abu Bakar. (2008). The mastery of English language among lower secondary school students in Malaysia: A linguistic analysis. *European Journal of Social Sciences, 7*(2).

Nur Mazliyana Zainuddin, & Nik Nuryasarah Nik Mohd Zaki. (2023). Comparison of translanguaging practices and ideologies in secondary and tertiary ESL settings in Malaysia: Teachers' perspective. *Higher Education and Oriental Studies.* https://www.heos.asia/ojs/index.php/heos/index

Nur Sakina Yusri, Nor Hazirah A. Huzaimi, & Nur Ainil Sulaiman. (2022). Translanguaging in Malaysian ESL classroom: Teachers' perceptions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 12*(9). http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i9/14542

Rajendram, S. (2021). Translanguaging as an agentive pedagogy for multilingual learners: Affordances and constraints. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 18*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2021.1898619

Santoso, W. (2020). Translanguaging through the lens of sociocultural approach: Students' attitudes and practices. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 9*(1). https://doi.org/10.31571/bahasa.v9i1.1707

Seals, C. A. (2021). Benefits of translanguaging pedagogy and practice. *Scottish Languages Review, 36*.

Too, W. K. (2023). 'People are already doing it': Malaysian English language teachers' perceptions on translanguaging. *Asian Englishes, 25*(2), 192–205. https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2023.2214769

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Zulkefly, F., & Razali, A. B. (2019). Malaysian rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language. International Journal of Instruction, 12(1), 1141 – 1156. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1201367.pdf

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Sheela Faizura Nik Fauzi is an English lecturer specialising in TESL, applied linguistics and educational leadership. Her experience in research and teaching contributes to the educational field through publications and innovative approaches to educational practices.

Sheela Faizura binti Nik Fauzi
Academy of Language Studies
MARA University of Technology
Sarawak Branch, Samarahan 1 campus
Meranek road, 94350 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak, Malaysia.
E-mail: sheelafaizura@uitm.edu.my

Associate Professor Dr Caesar Dealwis is with the Academy of Language Studies at MARA University of Technology, Sarawak Branch. He has contributed widely to the field of Sociolinguistics, particularly in areas of language choice, maintenance and shift of minority groups in Sarawak. Among his book publications include *A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Some Ethnic Minorities in Sarawak*, *Language Choices of the Bidayuh Undergraduates* and currently writing on *ELT Issues in Sarawak.*

Dr Caesar Dealwis is a member of the Foundation of Endangered Languages, Modern Languages Association Malaysia, Association of Professionals Serving in Education, Sarawak (PROFESS), and *Majlis Profesor Negara Malaysia* among others.

Associate Professor Dr Caesar Dealwis
Academy of Language Studies
MARA University of Technology
Sarawak Branch, Samarahan 1 campus
Meranek road, 94350 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak. Malaysia
E-mail: caesardealwis@gmail.com

Aiman Zulaikha is an educator specialising in English as a Second Language (ESL), with a focus on innovative teaching methodologies and their impact on language acquisition. With extensive teaching experience and contributions to mini research projects, she is committed to advancing the field of ESL through her work.

Aiman Zulaikha Binti Mohd Fadzli
Academy of Language Studies
MARA University of Technology
Sarawak Branch, Samarahan 1 campus
Meranek road, 94350 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak. Malaysia
E-mail: zulaikhamfadzli@uitm.edu.my

Abdul Azim Mahda is an English academic specialising in linguistics, particularly on the language use on social media and online discourse analysis. He is also experienced in language teaching and research, and looking forward to contribute in the field of linguistics through his expertise and publications.

Abdul Azim Mahda
Academy of Language Studies
MARA University of Technology
Sarawak Branch, Samarahan 1 campus
Meranek road, 94350 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak. Malaysia
E-mail: azimmahda@uitm.edu.my

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 86 – 95 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Navigating Urban Livelihoods: The Role of Social Networks in the Lives of Young Workers in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh[1] and Võ Thanh Tuyền[2*]

[1,2]*University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 14-Apr-25
Revised: 19-May-25
Accepted: 24-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Võ Thanh Tuyền
E-mail: vothanhtuyen@hcmussh.edu.vn

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh
E-mail: nltanh@hcmussh.edu.vn

Citation: Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh and Võ Thanh Tuyền (2025). Navigating Urban Livelihoods: The Role of Social Networks in the Lives of Young Workers in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 86–95. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1304.p86

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Young workers (YWs) play a critical role in the socio-economic development of Ho Chi Minh City amid rapid urbanization and industrialization. However, they face multiple challenges in work, living conditions, and social adaptation. This study investigates the role of social networks—particularly the distinction between strong and weak ties—in supporting YWs' community integration, coping with workplace difficulties, and maintaining emotional well-being. **Methods:** This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. A structured questionnaire was administered to 390 YWs working in direct production sectors in industrial zones across Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted to capture nuanced experiences. The study draws on Granovetter's theory of the strength of weak ties as its theoretical framework. **Results:** Findings reveal that while strong ties (e.g., with close friends) provide emotional support and psychological security, weak ties (e.g., with coworkers, neighbors, supervisors) serve as important conduits for accessing information, solving work-related problems, and expanding opportunities. Social engagement is moderate, with frequent digital interaction but relatively limited participation in community and developmental activities. Weak ties are particularly prominent in the workplace and residential settings, contributing significantly to YWs' adaptation and resilience. **Discussion:** The study confirms the complementary functions of strong and weak ties in migrant adaptation. Weak ties—despite their lower emotional intensity—facilitate broader social connectivity and are essential for navigating fragmented urban environments. However, limitations in leisure time use and underinvestment in self-development activities reflect structural constraints that hinder the potential of social networks. **Conclusion:** This research reinforces the theoretical significance of weak ties and provides practical insights for improving the social inclusion of YWs. It recommends that policymakers, unions, and employers foster environments that support informal social interaction, skill development, and inclusive participation. Future studies should explore longitudinal shifts in migrant workers' networks and include broader labor groups beyond direct production sectors.

Keywords: Young workers; social networks; weak ties; strong ties; urban integration; industrial labor; Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid urbanization of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) has triggered a significant influx of young rural migrants seeking employment opportunities in industrial zones and export processing areas. These young workers play a pivotal role in the city's socio-economic development by contributing to its manufacturing and service sectors. However, despite their essential labor, this group continues to face multiple challenges related to precarious housing conditions, unstable incomes, and limited social security (Nguyen & Tran, 2020; Pham, 2019). The transitional nature of their urban integration, coupled with long working hours and limited institutional support, places them at risk of social exclusion and emotional distress.

While a number of studies have explored the working conditions and livelihoods of migrant workers, limited attention has been paid to the role of social networks in shaping their adaptive capacity, well-being, and social integration in urban environments. This study addresses this gap by investigating how young workers utilize both strong and weak social ties to navigate the complexities of urban life in HCMC.

Drawing on Social Network Theory and Granovetter's (1973) seminal concept of the "strength of weak ties," this research examines how different forms of social relationships assist migrant workers in resolving work-related challenges, adjusting to urban life, and maintaining emotional well-being during their limited leisure time. Specifically, the study is guided by two key research questions:

1. What are the types and characteristics of social networks currently accessible to young workers in HCMC?
2. How do these networks influence their ability to integrate into local communities, cope with workplace difficulties, and sustain their psychological and social well-being?

By combining a quantitative survey of 390 young workers with in-depth interviews and secondary data analysis, this paper contributes to both the theoretical and empirical understanding of social capital in the context of rural-to-urban migration. It also offers practical policy recommendations for enhancing the quality of life and promoting the social inclusion of young migrant labor in the context of industrialization and urban transformation in Vietnam.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods design to examine how social networks support young workers in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in navigating urban life. The research combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, allowing for both statistical analysis and in-depth understanding.

The quantitative component was based on a structured questionnaire administered to 390 young workers aged 16–30, employed in direct production roles in industrial zones across HCMC. The survey explored the structure and function of their social networks, including relationships with coworkers, neighbors, and friends, as well as their access to social support and participation in community and leisure activities.

To complement the survey findings, 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants. These interviews focused on the emotional, informational, and instrumental support provided by both strong and weak ties, and how these relationships influence workplace adaptation and social integration.

In addition to primary data, relevant secondary sources—such as academic research and policy documents—were analyzed to contextualize the findings. The survey data were processed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and insights.

The study adhered to ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity was preserved. This research was supported by the Youth Science and Technology Incubation Program (Contract No. 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VƯ), under the management of the Ho Chi Minh City Communist Youth Union and the Department of Science and Technology.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PRACTICAL CONTEXT

3.1. Conceptualizing Social Networks

Social networks are a foundational concept in contemporary sociology and social sciences, capturing the ways individuals and groups are interconnected through social ties. A network is typically conceptualized as a structure comprising nodes (individuals or social units) and ties (relationships), which collectively shape the flow of information, resources, and support within and across communities (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

Social network analysis enables scholars to examine the influence of network structures on individual behaviors and social outcomes. McPherson et al. (2001) highlighted three key features of social networks: hierarchy (the layered structure of ties), transitivity (the degree to which connections form bridges), and homophily (the tendency for similar individuals to cluster). Unlike bounded "groups," networks are dynamic and often lack rigid boundaries. Borgatti and colleagues categorized networks into three forms: (1) core networks—tightly

connected within-group ties; (2) bridging networks—links that connect across different groups; and (3) independent networks—initially separate networks that evolve into interconnected structures over time.

3.2. The Strength of Weak Ties

Granovetter's (1973) theory of the "strength of weak ties" revolutionized the understanding of informal social networks. He posited that weak ties—characterized by infrequent interaction, lower emotional intensity, and limited mutual exchange—are more effective than strong ties in transmitting new information and opportunities, particularly in contexts such as job searches.

Granovetter distinguished between *strong ties* (close friends and family) and *weak ties* (acquaintances, coworkers, neighbors) based on five dimensions: duration of interaction, emotional intensity, trust, reciprocal exchange, and content diversity. These distinctions are summarized in Table 1:

While weak ties may appear less significant, Granovetter demonstrated that their looser structure allows individuals to access resources beyond their immediate circle, bridging otherwise disconnected social clusters. In his empirical study involving 266 job seekers in Boston, he found that 69% of successful job placements were facilitated by weak ties, as opposed to only 31% through strong ties. This evidence underscores that weak ties serve as crucial connectors, facilitating broader information flow and enhancing opportunities for mobility.

3.3. Analytical Framework for Migrant Workers' Networks

The application of social network theory to migration studies reveals how migrants utilize relational strategies to adapt to unfamiliar urban environments. Siu and Unger (2020), in a comparative study of migrant workers in Guangdong (China) and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), noted that Vietnamese migrant workers tend to settle permanently and sustain community cohesion, while Chinese workers often remain in cyclical and fragmented migration systems. These differences reflect varying institutional frameworks, especially regarding household registration and local integration policies.

Myerson et al. (2010) and McKay & McKenzie (2020) highlighted how migrant women, in particular, face social isolation, limited access to support networks, and long-term emotional strain in urban settings. These studies underscore the dual pressures of economic necessity and constrained social embeddedness.

In Vietnam, Thoi (2013) documented how young rural migrants rely initially on family or hometown networks to stabilize their urban lives. However, their limited engagement with formal institutions—such as unions or local associations—along with long working hours, restricts their access to broader social capital. These workers often form informal support groups but remain marginal to official social infrastructure.

Based on this literature, this study examines three critical dimensions of social network utilization among young workers in Ho Chi Minh City's production sector:

1. integration into local communities,
2. navigating workplace challenges, and
3. emotional and social support during leisure time.

These dimensions are analyzed through the dual lens of strong and weak ties, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of how social networks mediate urban adaptation processes among youth migrants.In addition to the analytical goal of examining the role of social networks in the adaptation of young workers, the distinction between strong and weak ties also provides a roadmap for designing interventions in both workplace and community contexts. For example, promoting casual peer exchanges (e.g. lunchtime chats, mutual aid groups) can enhance the formation of weak ties among workers. Similarly, neighborhood clubs or informal gatherings can expand workers' access to local resources and social support.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Characteristics of Young Workers in the Direct Production Sector in Ho Chi Minh City

4.1.1. Definition of Young Workers in the Direct Production Sector

The term *young workers in the direct production sector* reflects a context-specific classification rooted

Table 1. Distinguishing Strong and Weak Social Ties.

Characteristic	Weak Ties	Strong Ties
Duration	Short-term contact	Long-term interaction
Emotional intensity	Low	High
Trust	Low	High
Reciprocity	Low mutual exchange	High mutual exchange
Content diversity	Diverse and novel information	Repetitive and less varied content

Source: *Granovetter (1973)*

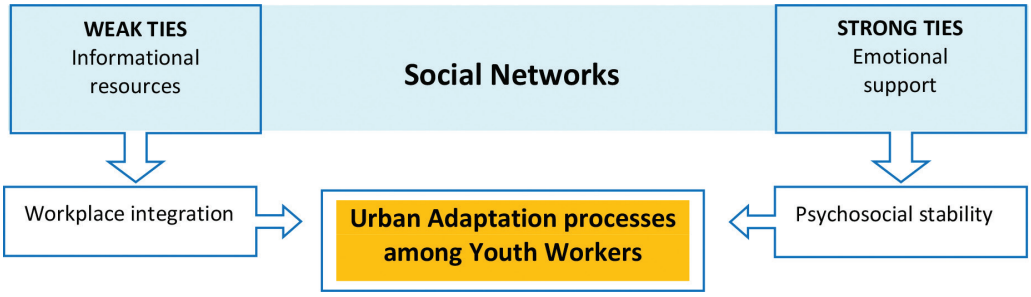


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Social Networks in Urban Adaptation among Youth Workers.

Source: *Authors (2025).*

in Vietnam's legal and socio-economic framework. According to the Youth Law of Vietnam (2020), "youth" refers to individuals aged 16 to 30. The concept of "workers," as articulated by President Hồ Chí Minh in his foundational political writings, refers to laborers who do not own means of production and are compelled to sell their labor, regardless of occupation.

In this study, the target population includes youth who are directly involved in production, business, or service delivery in industrial zones and export processing zones in Ho Chi Minh City. This definition excludes managerial or support staff and instead focuses on those performing hands-on tasks such as assembly, quality control, and customer service. These individuals typically operate within manufacturing lines or service functions in large-scale, labor-intensive environments.

4.1.2. Demographic and Socioeconomic Features

Young workers in this sector are in a critical stage of physical and psychological development. Typically aged 16 to 30, they possess relatively good physical health suited to the demands of high-intensity and endurance-based labor. According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, this life stage involves identity exploration, the pursuit of life goals, and the formation of intimate relationships.

Socioeconomically, these workers are characterized by their dependence on wage labor, lacking ownership of productive assets. Their roles in industrial or service-based enterprises require adherence to strict procedural norms, labor discipline, and productivity standards. Although they often aspire to upward mobility—seeking better living conditions and professional advancement—many face persistent challenges due to labor market fluctuations, rising urban living costs, and limited access to social services. These challenges complicate their efforts to integrate into urban life and achieve long-term stability.

4.1.3. Sample Description

The study draws on survey data from a research project funded under contract number 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VƯ. A total of 390 respondents were surveyed, of whom 63.1% were women. Educational backgrounds varied, with 40.3% having completed vocational training, college, or university-level education. Most participants originated from the Mekong Delta (49.5%), followed by the North Central, South Central Coast, and Central Highlands regions (26.2%). This demographic distribution reflects the continuing trend of rural-to-urban migration for employment opportunities.

The data also suggest a transition from strong, place-based social ties—such as family and close friends in their hometowns—to more context-specific networks in urban settings. Upon migration, these young workers often rely on newly formed weak ties, including neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances in their residential and workplace environments.

Based on this demographic and conceptual foundation, the study proceeds to analyze the relationship between social networks and three key dimensions of migrant workers' urban experiences:

1. community integration,
2. coping with work-related difficulties, and
3. the role of social networks during leisure time.

These dimensions are discussed in the following sections.

4.2. Social Networks and Community Integration

The process of urban adaptation among young workers (YWs) is shaped by a complex interplay of work, housing, and social environments. In this context, social networks—particularly those formed at places of residence and through peer interactions—play a crucial role in facilitating community integration. Drawing on Granovetter's (1973) distinction between strong and weak ties, this section examines how both types of relationships contribute to the sense of belonging and social connectivity in everyday life.

Table 2 below presents descriptive statistics on YWs' social participation within their residential communities.

The results presented in Table 2 reveal a nuanced picture of community-based social engagement among

young workers (YWs) in Ho Chi Minh City. Although the frequency of neighborly interactions is not particularly high, the reported mean scores suggest a moderate level of integration within residential settings. Specifically, the items "I know many of my neighbors" and "I receive help from neighbors when needed" both yielded a mean of 3.37, while "I often interact with neighbors" scored 3.19. These values were found to be statistically significant above the neutral midpoint of 3 ($p < .001$), indicating the presence of functionally supportive yet emotionally limited relationships—what Granovetter (1973) would classify as weak ties. Such ties offer practical and psychosocial value despite lacking deep emotional intimacy.

These findings are further substantiated by qualitative data. One female respondent (30 years old) shared: "Where I'm renting now, the landlord is really kind. They actually support the workers. The rent hasn't gone up, and they even helped us apply for subsidized electricity and water rates to make it easier for us workers. Other places I stayed before were much more expensive" (Female, 30 years old). This account highlights the informal safety nets embedded within everyday living arrangements and suggests that even non-kin relationships—such as those with landlords—can evolve into supportive weak ties that mitigate economic vulnerabilities.

Notably, the item "I make new friends and socialize with unfamiliar people" received a mean of 3.02, which did not significantly differ from the neutral point ($p = .736$). This result points to a relative reluctance or limitation in forming new relationships beyond immediate contacts. Several factors may account for this: time poverty, long working hours, or perceived risk associated with engaging new social actors in urban settings.

In synthesizing these findings, we observe a clear alignment with both Research Question 1—regarding the types and features of social networks accessible to YWs—and Research Question 2—examining how such networks support urban integration. The prevalence of weak residential ties plays a vital role in stabilizing the daily lives of young migrants. While not emotionally intense, these ties bridge access to critical resources (e.g., local information, informal assistance), foster a sense of inclusion, and serve as conduits for navigating unfamiliar urban environments. In doing so, they exemplify the theoretical utility of weak ties in fragmented, low-trust urban contexts, as originally posited by Granovetter and extended by subsequent migration and social capital literature.

In contrast, **Table 3** focuses on peer networks, highlighting the emotional dimension of strong ties.

The results presented in Table 3 highlight the critical role of strong social ties—particularly friendships—in shaping the emotional well-being of young workers (YWs). High mean scores for items such as "I feel happy and comfortable when participating in group activities with friends" ($M = 3.62$, $p < .001$), "I keep in regular contact with friends" ($M = 3.46$, $p < .001$), and "I trust my friends" ($M = 3.38$, $p < .001$) indicate the prevalence of emotionally supportive and psychologically meaningful relationships. These strong ties provide continuity, identity affirmation, and a buffer against stress—key elements for psychological resilience amid the precarities of urban labor life.

This pattern is further corroborated by qualitative data. One male respondent (29 years old) emphasized the harmonious and reciprocal nature of his social circle: *"Well, I always try to maintain good relationships with*

Table 2. Level of Community-based Activities at Place of Residence.

Indicator	N	Mean	SD
I know many of my neighbors	389	3.37	1.019
I receive help from neighbors when needed	389	3.37	1.031
I often interact with neighbors (e.g., chatting, dining, playing together)	389	3.19	1.034
I make new friends and socialize with unfamiliar people	388	3.02	1.055

Source: *Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU*

Table 3. Level of Social Activities with Friends

Indicator	N	Mean	SD
I feel happy and comfortable when participating in group activities with friends	389	3.62	.958
I keep in regular contact with friends	390	3.46	.942
I trust my friends	390	3.38	.972
I meet my friends regularly	390	3.35	.968
I feel comfortable sharing personal issues with friends	390	3.23	1.062
I participate in group activities with friends	390	3.21	1.085

Source: *Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU*

friends around me. There's always harmony, constant communication, and a sense of connection—whether as coworkers or friends. There hasn't been any conflict; it's mostly social but meaningful. My circle of friends mostly consists of colleagues." (Male, 29 years old). His narrative reflects not only a sense of emotional closeness but also the conscious maintenance of friendship ties that overlap with work-based networks, thereby blending strong affective connections with shared occupational contexts.

However, the results also show some limitations in social expressiveness. Mean scores for "I feel comfortable sharing personal issues with friends" (M = 3.23, $p < .001$) and "I participate in group activities with friends" (M = 3.21, $p < .001$) were relatively lower, suggesting a degree of emotional restraint or social fatigue. These limitations may stem from time constraints, privacy concerns, or a lack of safe, supportive environments for deeper disclosure and collective engagement—factors that have been noted in existing research on migrant workers' emotional coping mechanisms (Myerson et al., 2010).

Taken together, the findings address both Research Questions 1 and 2. They demonstrate that while strong ties are accessible and actively maintained among YWs, their expressive potential remains contextually bounded. Nevertheless, such ties play an indispensable role in fostering emotional security, promoting social belonging, and supporting the psychosocial adaptation of migrant youth in an increasingly fragmented urban environment. In complementarity with weak ties, these emotionally rich connections anchor YWs in stable social identities and strengthen their capacity to navigate urban life with resilience.

4.3. Social Networks and Coping with Work-related Challenges

Workplace social networks represent a vital domain of informal support for YWs. Within the labor-intensive production sector, collaboration, trust, and mutual aid among colleagues become crucial in managing workloads and navigating job-related difficulties. Drawing again on Granovetter's typology, this section investigates how "weak ties" in the form of collegial relationships function as adaptive resources in industrial settings.

Table 4 illustrates YWs' perceptions of cohesion in the workplace.

Table 4 highlights the critical function of workplace-based weak ties in supporting young workers' (YWs') adaptation to industrial environments. The high mean scores for statements such as "My colleagues and I always support each other at work" (M = 3.95, $p < .001$) and "My colleagues and I trust each other in work-related matters" (M = 3.88, $p < .001$) reflect a strong culture of professional collaboration and mutual support. These patterns suggest that while emotional closeness may be limited, coworkers form dependable networks that facilitate practical problem-solving and reduce the sense of isolation in high-pressure, task-oriented work settings.

Rather than fulfilling affective needs, these relationships function as instrumental weak ties—consistent with Granovetter's (1973) theoretical framework—which enhance daily task performance, knowledge sharing, and informal mentoring. The recurring presence of trust and cooperation indicates a cohesive social structure within the workplace, contributing not only to job efficiency but also to workers' perceived sense of integration and competence within the organizational context.

These findings address Research Question 1 by confirming that the workplace serves as a key domain where weak ties are formed and sustained, especially among coworkers operating in similar roles. They also address Research Question 2 by showing that such ties are essential for coping with occupational challenges, enabling YWs to access informal support, maintain morale, and achieve a sense of belonging in the industrial environment. In this way, weak workplace ties serve as stabilizing forces, offering continuity and predictability amid the broader precarity of urban migrant labor life.

Table 5 expands on these findings by detailing concrete behaviors indicative of workplace bonding.

These results reinforce the centrality of peer support in the workplace. While material and emotional support from coworkers is moderate, behavioral markers such as frequent help (M = 3.86, $p < .001$) and after-hours socialization (M = 3.76, $p < .001$) suggest that workplace ties go beyond task-based collaboration. Furthermore, trust from supervisors (M = 3.71, $p < .001$) illustrates the potential role of hierarchical relationships as structurally weak ties that nevertheless yield developmental benefits.

Table 4. Perceived Cohesion Among Coworkers.

Indicator	N	Mean	SD
My colleagues and I always support each other at work	390	3.95	.797
My colleagues and I are bonded	390	3.88	.818
My colleagues and I trust each other in work-related matters	390	3.88	.849

Source: *Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU*

Table 5. Workplace-based Social Support and Interaction.

Indicator	N	Mean	SD
I am regularly helped by colleagues when facing difficulties	390	3.86	.795
I socialize with colleagues outside working hours	390	3.76	.948
I feel listened to and understood by my colleagues	390	3.74	.819
I am trusted with responsibilities by my supervisors	390	3.71	.890
My colleagues support me emotionally	390	3.55	.927
My colleagues support me materially	390	3.34	1.046
I socialize with colleagues during work hours	390	3.30	1.154

Source: *Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU*

Table 6. Frequency of Participation in Leisure and Recreational Activities Outside Working Hours.

Activity	N	Mean	SD
Browsing the internet, social media	390	3.70	0.924
Resting	390	3.56	0.849
Returning to hometown	390	2.88	0.918
Going out	390	2.80	1.010
Religious activities	390	2.46	1.015
Playing sports	390	2.31	1.191
Traveling	390	2.25	0.871
Studying, reading books	390	2.12	1.128

Source: Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU

A respondent elaborated on this dynamic in a qualitative interview:

"Life is difficult for everyone now. The company I'm working for is doing its best to maintain jobs. Many other places are laying off workers. We help each other out—we're all in the same situation."*(Male, 30 years old)*

While interaction during work hours is more limited (M = 3.30, p< .001), likely due to production constraints and formal regulations, the emphasis on after-hours engagement reflects workers' efforts to sustain social connectedness beyond the workplace structure. These relationships, although not deeply emotional, play an essential role in daily coping, task performance, and morale.

In sum, YWs' social networks in the workplace—primarily composed of weak ties—provide significant functional value. As industrial modernization accelerates, policies and company practices should focus on maintaining and enhancing these relational structures through structured peer programs, informal gathering spaces, and cross-shift collaborations.

4.4.Social Network Utilization During Leisure Time

Leisure time plays a significant role in shaping the social experience and psychological well-being of young workers (YWs), yet this dimension remains underexplored in labor research. Data presented in Table 6 reveal that the most common leisure activities among respondents include browsing the internet and social media (M = 3.70; p< .005) and resting (M = 3.56; p< .005). These high-frequency activities are largely solitary or digitally mediated, offering immediate relaxation with minimal social investment. While these forms of leisure provide convenience, they also reflect a tendency toward social withdrawal and limited physical interaction. This is partly attributable to the demanding nature of industrial work, which often leaves workers with little energy or flexibility to engage in communal or enriching activities.

Qualitative narratives support these findings. One 27-year-old female respondent commented: "Most workers here just go to work and then go straight home. It's a cycle—wake up, work, come home, sleep. Very few families even have children with them here." This account highlights the repetitive, isolating nature of daily routines, leaving little room for building or maintaining meaningful social relationships. Another worker noted that the scarcity of leisure options often leads to emotional stagnation and lack of romantic or long-term companionship development.

Less frequent activities, such as returning to one's hometown (M = 2.88,p< .005), going out (M = 2.80,p< .005), or engaging in physical or religious activities, were associated with lower scores. These forms of social participation often require more time, resources, or flexibility—barriers that many workers cannot overcome. Intellectual pursuits such as studying and reading received the lowest engagement score (M = 2.12,p< .005), suggesting underinvestment in long-term personal development.

This pattern is further confirmed in Table 7, which measures the average time spent per week on various leisure activities. Again, resting (M = 4.12,p<.005) and internet use (M = 3.67,p<.005) dominated, while self-improvement and group-based activities remained low. Notably, the high standard deviation in activities such as returning home (SD = 3.053) and social media use (SD = 1.936) indicates divergent usage patterns depending on individual circumstances and access.

Table 7. Average Weekly Time Spent on Leisure and Recreational Activities Outside Working Hours.

Activity	N	Mean	SD
Resting	390	4.12	1.106
Browsing the internet, social media	390	3.67	1.936
Returning to hometown	390	3.55	3.053
Going out	390	3.01	1.220
Traveling	390	2.52	1.541
Religious activities	390	2.27	1.128
Playing sports	390	2.27	1.186
Studying, reading books	390	2.11	1.182

Source: *Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU*

Another respondent (female, 29 years old) reflected on the prioritization of overtime labor over skill development:*"Workers rarely study. Maybe two or three out of ten have the ambition to move into management. Most just try to work as much overtime as possible. After a few years, they go back to their hometown with some savings".* A supervisor added: *"There are free vocational training programs, but few attend. Companies also hesitate because they fear trained workers might leave or demand higher wages."*

Despite the constraints on participation, Table 8 demonstrates that YWs clearly recognize the **value of leisure activities**, particularly in terms of strengthening social connections (M = 3.85,*p*> .005), personal development (M = 3.81,*p*> .005), and enhancing feelings of respect (M = 3.78,*p*> .005). These functions correspond closely with the benefits of weak ties, especially in providing access to new information, emotional reinforcement, and perceived social inclusion. Nevertheless, the structural barriers that limit actual engagement present a significant disconnect between recognition and action.

Taken together, the data suggest a critical contradiction: while YWs value the interpersonal and developmental benefits of leisure, their lived realities constrain them to solitary, low-effort activities. If left unaddressed, this pattern may contribute to a progressive erosion of social capital and a narrowing of weak ties—reducing workers' access to new information, social mobility, and emotional resilience. Ultimately, such trends could result in the marginalization of a vital labor force and stagnation in broader urban development.

To address these concerns, targeted interventions are needed. Stakeholders—including employers, unions, and local authorities—should prioritize investment in inclusive, low-cost, and easily accessible leisure programs. Initiatives such as on-site sports clubs, reading corners, cultural excursions, and peer-learning groups can help foster informal social networks, broaden knowledge

Table 8. Perceived Benefits of Leisure Activities

Perceived Benefit	N	Mean	SD
Enhancing connection with others	390	3.85	0.847
Personal development	390	3.81	0.844
Feeling respected	390	3.78	0.798
Stress relief	390	3.74	0.807
Increased life satisfaction	390	3.67	0.766
Restoring labor capacity	390	3.67	0.836

Source: Author's survey, Project 22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VU

horizons, and strengthen workers' physical and mental well-being. In this way, leisure becomes not just a matter of recovery, but a platform for **sustained social inclusion and long-term worker empowerment**.

4.5. Recommendations

4.5.1. Leveraging Existing Weak Ties

The survey findings reveal that YWs frequently engage with coworkers both during and outside of working hours, suggesting the presence of substantial weak-tie networks. These ties—though not emotionally intense—form a practical support system that can be strategically nurtured. Employers and organizations should actively facilitate peer interaction by organizing team-building activities, such as sports, cultural events, or interest-based clubs. Creating shared social spaces—canteens, rest areas, and informal gatherings—can also encourage daily conversations, informal mentorship, and trust-building among workers.

In addition, fostering local community integration is essential. Workers should be encouraged to participate in neighborhood-level activities, such as community meetings, cultural festivals, or volunteer programs. These engagements can help workers establish supportive ties with neighbors and local residents, enhancing their sense of belonging and access to information, resources, and mutual assistance in daily life.

4.5.2. Expanding Social Networks Through Community Involvement

Beyond leveraging existing relationships, YWs should be supported in expanding their social networks through formal affiliations and public engagement. Involvement with mass organizations such as youth unions, workers' associations, or neighborhood clubs can broaden their exposure to diverse social circles. Participating in volunteer programs or group events centered on shared interests provides a platform for forging meaningful connections while simultaneously contributing to community development.

In the digital era, social media can also be a valuable tool for sustaining and broadening networks.

Online platforms facilitate the exchange of information, emotional support, and professional advice, particularly for workers with limited time or mobility to engage in in-person activities.

4.5.3. Enhancing Communication and Relationship-building Skills

The effectiveness of social networks is not only determined by access but also by interpersonal skills. Training programs on communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution should be integrated into workplace development efforts. These soft skills can empower workers to initiate and sustain connections across different contexts. Providing practical opportunities for workers to apply these skills—through group discussions, role-playing, or social events—can further reinforce their relational confidence and capacity.

Equally important is the creation of a safe and inclusive environment—both at work and in residential areas—where workers feel comfortable expressing themselves, sharing experiences, and forming connections.

4.5.4. Respecting Cultural and Personal Diversity

A sustainable social network must be grounded in respect for individual differences in culture, preferences, and personality. Activities designed to foster interaction must consider these dimensions to ensure relevance and inclusivity. Workers should be given the autonomy to choose their level and type of participation, avoiding forced engagement that might deter openness. This approach will allow for the emergence of genuine and enduring relationships, built on mutual understanding and shared values.

4.5.5. Monitoring and Adaptive Evaluation

Social network development is a dynamic and ongoing process. Regular assessment and feedback mechanisms are crucial to ensuring the relevance and impact of interventions. Employers, local authorities, and civil society actors should collect worker feedback on social programs and monitor changes in social connectivity over time. Periodic evaluations can guide the adjustment of activities to better align with worker needs and contextual changes, ensuring that interventions remain effective and inclusive.

By systematically investing in social connectivity—through both formal and informal channels—stakeholders can empower young workers not only to survive, but to thrive within urban-industrial environments. Stronger social networks will enhance resilience, promote emotional well-being, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the labor force.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the multifaceted role of social networks in the lives of young workers (YWs) in Ho Chi Minh City, particularly in three key areas: community integration, coping with workplace challenges, and maintaining emotional well-being during leisure time. The findings underscore the importance of both weak ties (e.g., with neighbors, coworkers, and supervisors) and strong ties (e.g., with close friends) in supporting urban adaptation.

While strong ties provide emotional bonding and psychological comfort, it is the weak ties—often overlooked—that offer access to diverse information, opportunities, and indirect forms of social support. These findings empirically reinforce Granovetter's theory on the "strength of weak ties," particularly in the context of internal rural-to-urban migration in developing urban-industrial environments.

Beyond theoretical validation, the study also offers practical insights into how social networks are formed, activated, and maintained within the structural constraints of industrial work and urban living. The proposed recommendations—ranging from enhancing informal interaction spaces to improving communication skills and fostering inclusive participation—serve as guidelines for policymakers, trade unions, and employers seeking to improve the living and working conditions of migrant workers. By strengthening social connectivity, stakeholders can help build a more resilient, engaged, and sustainable young workforce.

Future research should broaden the scope to include migrant workers outside the direct production sector and explore longitudinal changes in their social networks. A deeper understanding of how social ties evolve over time would offer a more comprehensive foundation for designing inclusive urban integration policies and long-term development strategies for migrant populations.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The study was supported by the Science and Technology Incubation Program for Youth (STIY), managed by the Youth Promotion Science and Technology Center of the Ho Chi Minh City Communist Youth Union and the Department of Science and Technology of Ho Chi Minh City, under contract number "22/2024/HĐ-KHCNT-VƯ".

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

REFERENCES

Borgatti, S. P., & Halgin, D. S. (2011). On network theory. *Organization Science*, *22*(5), 1168–1181. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0641

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties.*American journal of sociology*, *78*(6), 1360-1380.https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776392

Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological theory*, 201-233.https://doi.org/10.2307/202051

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *27*, 415–444. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415

Myerson, R., Hou, Y., Tang, H., Cheng, Y., Wang, Y., & Ye, Z. (2010). Home and away: Chinese migrant workers between two worlds. *The Sociological Review*, *58*(1), 26–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2010.01875.x

Siu, K., & Unger, J. (2020). Work and family life among migrant factory workers in China and Vietnam. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *50*(3), 341–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1705885

Thôi, P. T. (2013). Đời sống xã hội của thanh niên nhập cư lao động phổ thông tại các cơ sở sản xuất nhỏ ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. *Tạp chí Khoa học Trường Đại học Mở*, *8*(1), 45–54. https://journalofscience.ou.edu.vn/index.php/soci-vi/article/view/1168

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh, born in Vietnam in 1997, is a young, dynamic, and enthusiastic scholar in the field of Sociology and Psychology. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City and is continuing her studies as a master's student in Psychology.

Her primary research interests relate to learning and working processes in young people.

Through her work, Nguyen Luu Tam Anh is committed to improving knowledge and proposing practical solutions to promote learning and labor performance as well as improve the quality of life of young people.

Ms. Nguyễn Lưu Tâm Anh
Faculty of Sociology
University of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Email: nltanh@hcmussh.edu.vn

Võ Thanh Tuyền, born in Vietnam in 1991, holds a Master's degree in Urban Studies (2016) and a PhD in Ethnology (2023), both from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City. She currently serves as the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Urban Studies at the same institution. Additionally, she is also a graduate student in Economic Management at HCMC University of Technology and Education.

Her research interests focus on public space, urban communities, and urban socio-economics. An active scholar, she has published over twelve articles in academic journals and presented her work at international conferences, contributing valuable insights to the field of urban studies.

Dr. Võ Thanh Tuyền
Faculty of Urban Studies
University of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
E-mail: vothanhtuyen@hcmussh.edu.vn
2431414@student.hcmute.edu.vn

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 96 – 105 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Bearing the Weight: Motherhood and the Echoes of Trauma in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*

M Amala Freeda[1]* and I Felicita Mary Praba[2]

[1]*Research Scholar Department of English, Loyola College, Chennai, India*
[2]*Research Supervisor, Department of English, Loyola College, Chennai, India*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 29-Apr-25
REVISED: 23-May-25
ACCEPTED: 28-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
M Amala Freeda
E-mail: amalafreeda@gmail.com

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: I Felicita Mary Praba
E-mail: felicitamary@loyolacollege.edu

Citation: M Amala Freeda and I Felicita Mary Praba (2025). Bearing the Weight: Motherhood and the Echoes of Trauma in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 96–105. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1306.p96

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This paper explores the representation of motherhood and trauma in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012), with particular attention to the impact of gendered violence on familial relationships and individual identity within Native American communities. It situates the novel within broader conversations on trauma, motherhood, and Indigenous literature. **Methods:** Utilizing Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and narrative analysis, the study conducts a close reading of key scenes in the novel, focusing on the aftermath of Geraldine Coutts's assault and its ripple effects on her role as a mother and on the cohesion of the Coutts family. **Results:** The analysis reveals that Erdrich disrupts conventional representations of motherhood by embedding personal trauma within systemic patterns of legal failure and cultural marginalization. The maternal figure is shown to be both silenced and symbolically central to communal endurance. The novel portrays healing as a collective, culturally rooted process rather than an individualized journey. **Discussion:** These findings demonstrate how *The Round House* critiques institutional injustice while affirming the resilience of Native communities through intergenerational solidarity and shared narrative. By foregrounding the intersections of personal suffering and historical violence, the novel reframes trauma as a site of both rupture and cultural continuity. **Conclusion:** This study contributes to trauma and literary studies by showing how Indigenous narratives like Erdrich's reposition motherhood and healing within communal and cultural frameworks, challenging dominant Western paradigms of individual recovery and maternal identity.

Keywords: Motherhood, Gendered Violence, Trauma, Native American.

1. INTRODUCTION

Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012) offers a profound exploration of the intersections between gendered violence, familial relationships, and cultural identity within Native American communities. The novel set in 1980s on a reservation in North Dakota, mainly focuses on thirteen-year-old Joe Coutts as he grapples with the brutal assault of his mother, Geraldine. Through Joe's perspective, Erdrich portrays the cascading effects of sexual violence, not only on individual survivors but also on the fragile fabric of family life. In doing so, the novel foregrounds the multiple layers of trauma experienced by Native American women and the legal and cultural systems that continue to fail them.

The Novel is the depiction of motherhood under the weight of trauma. Geraldine's physical and emotional withdrawal following her assault disrupts the nurturing role traditionally associated with maternal figures. Rather than presenting motherhood as a site of unconditional strength, Erdrich portrays it as deeply

vulnerable to the ruptures of violence. Geraldine's struggle to maintain emotional connection with her son reflects broader historical patterns of disruption within Native communities, where colonial violence, systemic racism, and legal neglect have historically targeted women's bodies and roles. This study examines how Erdrich challenges idealized depictions of motherhood by portraying it through the lens of trauma, silence, and fragmentation.

Drawing on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, this paper approaches *The Round House* through the lens of narrative disruption and emotional paralysis. Caruth posits that trauma defies simple representation, instead manifesting through gaps, silences, and compulsive repetitions in storytelling. Applying this framework illuminates how Erdrich structures her novel around fractured communication, emphasizing the difficulty of articulating and processing traumatic experiences. Geraldine's silence, Joe's obsessive search for answers, and the family's collective withdrawal all serve as narrative embodiments of unresolved trauma. In this way, Erdrich not only portrays the psychological aftershocks of violence but also critiques the legal and societal structures that perpetuate cycles of harm within Native American communities.

Beyond personal suffering, Erdrich's novel addresses the systemic failures that render justice elusive for Indigenous women. The complex jurisdictional challenges faced by Native communities, where tribal, state, and federal authorities overlap and often conflict, are vividly illustrated through Geraldine's case. Erdrich exposes the ways in which legal inadequacies compound personal trauma, highlighting the broader political dimensions of gendered violence. This emphasis aligns with scholarship on Native American feminism, which stresses the inseparability of personal and political experiences in understanding Indigenous women's lives.

This paper therefore aims to analyze how *The Round House* positions motherhood within the intersecting frameworks of personal trauma and systemic injustice. Through close textual analysis and engagement with trauma theory, it investigates how Erdrich redefines motherhood as a site marked by vulnerability, resistance, and cultural continuity. In doing so, the novel contributes to a richer understanding of how trauma reshapes not only individuals but also communal structures and identities. This research is based on the following hypothesis: Geraldine Coutts's portrayal as a traumatized mother challenges traditional Western ideals of maternal strength by illustrating the psychological and relational disruptions caused by gendered violence. Meanwhile analysing the narrative structure of the novel's characteristics of trauma literature as defined by Cathy Caruth. The research also reflects the central concerns of the article with the following research questions.

1. How does Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* portray the psychological and narrative effects of trauma, particularly through the character of Geraldine Coutts?
2. In what ways does the novel challenge conventional representations of motherhood by situating it within the context of personal and historical trauma?
3. How does the novel represent healing and resilience as communal processes rooted in Indigenous cultural practices rather than individualized psychological recovery?
4. How does Joe Coutts's emotional development reflect the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the complexities of masculinity under conditions of systemic injustice?

Ultimately, by centring Native women's experiences of violence and survival, Erdrich crafts a narrative that demands a re-evaluation of justice, healing, and resilience. This study seeks to demonstrate that *The Round House* is not merely a story of personal tragedy but a critical intervention into ongoing conversations about historical trauma, survival, and the endurance of Indigenous familial bonds in the face of relentless adversity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Native American literature has increasingly emphasized the intersection of gender, trauma, and cultural identity, highlighting how Indigenous authors confront colonial histories and ongoing systemic violence. Early foundational work, such as Paula Gunn Allen's The Sacred Hoop (1986), established the critical importance of Indigenous women's experiences, particularly the ways colonialism disrupted traditional matriarchal structures and communal relationships. Allen argues that the erasure of women's central roles within Native societies profoundly reshaped familial dynamics, a disruption reflected in contemporary Native narratives. Her insights provide an essential backdrop for understanding Louise Erdrich's portrayal of fractured motherhood in *The Round House*.

Contemporary scholars have expanded upon Allen's foundation by exploring how trauma shapes Native American storytelling. Nancy J. Peterson's Against Amnesia (2001) examines how Native American authors employ narrative strategies to resist historical erasure and testify to collective suffering. Peterson underscores the importance of memory and narrative recovery in

healing from intergenerational trauma. Erdrich's novel, with its fragmented storytelling and emphasis on silences, resonates with Peterson's view that narrative gaps and ruptures are deliberate acts of resistance, signalling unhealed wounds and persistent injustices.

Scholars such as Sarah Deer have contributed crucial insights into the material realities faced by Native women. In The Beginning and End of Rape (2015), Deer exposes the jurisdictional labyrinth that often denies Indigenous women legal protection from sexual violence. Deer's work highlights the specific legal frameworks that leave survivors like Geraldine Coutts vulnerable and largely without recourse. By situating Geraldine's experience within this broader legal context, Erdrich underscores the political as well as personal nature of trauma.

Further, scholars like Lisa Tatonetti, in The Erotics of Sovereignty (2014), argue that contemporary Native literature reclaims bodily autonomy and challenges colonial narratives of victimhood. Tatonetti's framework of sovereignty as both political and personal informs a reading of *The Round House* wherein Geraldine's eventual tentative re-engagement with life signals not mere survival but an act of cultural resistance and reclamation.

Finally, Indigenous feminist scholars such as Kim Anderson (A Recognition of Being, 2011) and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's concept of historical trauma (1998) illuminate how collective and inherited traumas shape maternal identities. Their work stresses that Indigenous women's maternal roles are both sites of profound vulnerability and resilience, shaped by centuries of colonial disruption. This duality is evident in Erdrich's portrayal of Geraldine as simultaneously broken by violence and enduring through her continued existence within her family and community.

In sum, existing research on Native American literature, trauma theory, and Indigenous feminism provides a rich framework for analyzing *The Round House*. However, this paper seeks to extend current conversations by focusing specifically on how Erdrich redefines motherhood within a trauma-saturated context, portraying it not simply as nurturing but as a complex, fractured, and resilient force shaped by personal and systemic violence.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Trauma Theory and Narrative Disruption

Understanding the impact of gendered violence on motherhood in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* requires a theoretical framework that addresses both the psychological dimensions of trauma and the socio-political realities of Indigenous women's lives. This study draws primarily on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Indigenous feminist scholarship, particularly the works of Kim Anderson and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, to illuminate how trauma disrupts personal identities, familial relationships, and cultural continuities.

Cathy Caruth's seminal work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), asserts that trauma is not fully grasped at the moment of its occurrence but returns belatedly in disruptive, fragmented forms. According to Caruth, trauma is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (p. 4), and thus reemerges through compulsive repetition, narrative gaps, emotional paralysis, and fractured temporality. In literary narratives, trauma often manifests not through coherent storytelling but through silence, fragmentation, and deferred articulation. Applying Caruth's insights to *The Round House* enables a reading of Geraldine's emotional withdrawal and Joe's obsessive pursuit of justice as symptomatic of unassimilated trauma. The novel's structure itself, marked by disrupted chronology and silence surrounding the traumatic event, mirrors the inexpressibility that Caruth identifies as central to traumatic experience.

However, trauma in *The Round House* is not solely a psychological phenomenon; it is deeply embedded within systemic structures of oppression. To fully grasp the novel's portrayal of motherhood under trauma, it is necessary to incorporate Indigenous feminist theories that foreground the collective and historical dimensions of violence against Native women. Kim Anderson's *A Recognition of Being* (2011) emphasizes that Indigenous womanhood and motherhood are constructed through both personal experiences and historical traumas stemming from colonization, displacement, and cultural disruption. Anderson argues that Indigenous mothers have historically served as bearers of cultural survival even as they have been targeted by colonial violence seeking to destabilize Native communities.

Similarly, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's concept of historical trauma (1998) frames the experiences of Indigenous peoples as cumulative, intergenerational wounds resulting from colonization, genocide, and systemic marginalization. Brave Heart contends that trauma is transmitted across generations, affecting not only those who directly experience violence but also their descendants. Within this framework, Geraldine's trauma is not an isolated event but part of a larger continuum of historical violence inflicted upon Native women. Her emotional paralysis and strained maternal relationship are thus both personal reactions and manifestations of collective suffering.

By integrating Caruth's trauma theory with Indigenous feminist perspectives, this study recognizes

trauma as both an internal, psychic disruption and an external, socio-historical force. This dual focus allows for a more nuanced analysis of *The Round House*, where motherhood is portrayed not simply as disrupted by individual suffering but as a site burdened by centuries of systemic violence. It also highlights the resilience inherent in Indigenous motherhood, as survival and cultural continuity persist even amid profound trauma.

Ultimately, this theoretical framework enables a reading of Erdrich's novel that accounts for the complexities of personal grief, historical injustice, and communal endurance, situating the characters' experiences within broader patterns of Indigenous resistance and survivance.

3.2 Motherhood and Trauma in Native American Literature

Motherhood in Native American literature is a multifaceted theme that draws on cultural, historical, and spiritual dimensions unique to Indigenous peoples. This literature often reflects the complex portrayals of motherhood that interweave personal experiences with broader societal and communal narratives. Native American motherhood embodies the intricacies of cultural identity. Authors like Louise Erdrich and Joy Harjo explore the relationship between mothers and their children as a means of passing down traditions and cultural knowledge. Many narratives highlight the struggles of Indigenous mothers in a context marked by displacement and trauma. For example, in Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, the experiences of mothers are colored by the legacy of historical injustices faced by their communities.

The challenges faced by these mothers often catalyze broader discussions on identity and survival. In works by authors such as N. Scott Momaday, motherhood transcends the physical realm, reflecting deeper connections to nature and the cosmos. The maternal figure symbolizes nourishment and healing, not only for individual families but also for the community as a whole. The exploration of motherhood in Native American literature is essential for understanding the broader narratives of identity, resilience, and cultural continuity.

"Trauma theory, which emerged as an area of cultural investigation in the early 1990s, has become established due to its huge impact on literary theory" (Sevillano, 137). Integrating Motherhood and trauma is another crucial aspect explored within Native American literature. It reveals the dual struggles and resilience of Indigenous women in the face of historical and contemporary challenges. This theme is critical for understanding how maternal roles are shaped by traumatic experiences and how these experiences influence the identities and futures of families and communities.

Dr. Kim Anderson in his *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* work, sheds light on the evolving dynamics of motherhood, emphasizing how contemporary Indigenous mothers navigate historical trauma while fostering strong identities (Anderson, 2011). The concept of historical trauma, introduced by researchers such as Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, elucidates how cumulative psychological scars affect generations of Indigenous people. The study shows that mothers are often at the forefront of coping with these traumas, seeking to instil resilience and cultural awareness in their sons amid adversity (Brave Heart, 1998).

3.3 Motherhood and Trauma in *The Round House*

Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012) is a poignant exploration of the historical and legal challenges faced by the Ojibwe community, particularly in relation to issues of jurisdiction, sovereignty, and justice. Set on a North Dakota reservation in the late 1980s, the novel centers on the sexual assault of an Ojibwe woman, Geraldine Coutts, and the resulting legal ambiguity that obstructs justice. This narrative reflects the real-world limitations placed on tribal courts by federal law, notably the Major Crimes Act of 1885, the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, and the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978), which ruled that tribal courts do not have jurisdiction over non-Native individuals. These policies have historically undermined tribal sovereignty and left Native victims, particularly women, vulnerable to violence with limited legal recourse (Deer, 2015). Through the character of Joe, Geraldine's adolescent son, Erdrich illustrates the personal and communal consequences of these systemic injustices, emphasizing the emotional burden carried by Indigenous youth growing up amidst unresolved historical trauma. Simultaneously, the novel foregrounds the resilience of Ojibwe cultural practices, including storytelling, kinship, and spirituality, which persist despite ongoing colonial pressures. Erdrich integrates elements of Ojibwe cosmology and community life to underscore the enduring strength of Native identity and resistance (Rainwater, 1999). In this way, *The Round House* serves as both a coming-of-age narrative and a profound commentary on the intersection of historical oppression, legal disenfranchisement, and cultural survival within Indigenous communities.

Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* intricately portrays motherhood as a site profoundly reshaped by trauma, demonstrating how sexual violence fractures familial bonds and redefines maternal roles within Native American communities. Through the character

of Geraldine Coutts, Erdrich explores the complexities of mothering in the aftermath of violence, revealing how trauma silences, isolates, and destabilizes traditional understandings of maternal care.

Following Geraldine's assault, her emotional withdrawal signals a profound disruption in her identity as a mother. Prior to the assault, Geraldine is depicted as a nurturing and a stabilizing figure in Joe's life, her daily routines providing structure and emotional security. However, after the traumatic event, her maternal presence becomes increasingly absent. Joe's observation, "She opened her eyes. Her eyes were black pits. She did not answer" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 140) captures not only Geraldine's psychological disintegration but also the emotional void that replaces nurturing care. Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, helps to identify Geraldine's silence can be read as a manifestation of unassimilated trauma, which resists straightforward articulation and instead emerges through withdrawal and fragmented interactions.

Motherhood, traditionally framed within cultural narratives as a source of resilience and unconditional support, becomes in *The Round House* a fragile and ruptured space. Geraldine's inability to engage with Joe following her trauma reflects the emotional paralysis described by Caruth, where survivors become trapped between the moment of trauma and the impossibility of fully narrating or integrating the event into their lives. Geraldine's command to Joe, "You will leave me to think the way I want to think here" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 141) exemplifies the emotional barricades erected by trauma, highlighting how her maternal identity is no longer easily accessible either to herself or to her son.

Joe's response to his mother's withdrawal further illuminates the impact of trauma on familial relationships. His yearning for a return to the pre-trauma past, "With all my being, I wanted to go back to before all this had happened" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 118) reflects not only personal grief but also a broader cultural longing for stability disrupted by historical and contemporary violence. Joe's experience resonates with Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart's concept of historical trauma, wherein individual suffering is entangled with collective, intergenerational wounds. Geraldine's trauma, therefore, is not isolated; it is a continuation of systemic violence that targets Indigenous women and undermines the familial structures central to cultural survival.

Moreover, Erdrich's portrayal complicates notions of resilience by showing that healing is neither immediate nor guaranteed. Geraldine's tentative steps toward reclaiming her maternal role such as her remark, "I should start cooking again" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 55) suggest that resilience, in this context, involves small, incremental acts rather than dramatic recoveries. These moments of hesitant reconnection align with Indigenous feminist perspectives, which emphasize survival and cultural continuity amid persistent historical traumas.

Through Geraldine's fractured motherhood, Erdrich critiques both the personal devastation wrought by gendered violence and the systemic legal failures that leave Native women vulnerable. By situating maternal disruption within a broader framework of communal and historical trauma, *The Round House* reveals that motherhood under trauma is not a retreat into victimhood but a complex negotiation of pain, survival, and resilience.

3.4 Joe's Emotional Development and the Burden of Trauma

While Geraldine Coutts's trauma in *The Round House* visibly fractures the maternal role, the novel equally reveals how gendered violence profoundly reshapes her son Joe's emotional and moral development. In the absence of maternal nurturing and amid the legal system's failure to deliver justice, Joe undergoes a forced emotional maturation that is deeply entangled with grief, rage, and distorted notions of masculinity. Erdrich thus presents a complex portrait of boyhood traumatized by violence, illuminating how trauma can shape not only immediate relationships but also the internal construction of identity.

Joe's initial response to his mother's assault is characterized by helplessness and a yearning to restore a lost sense of security. His desperate wish to reverse time "I wanted to move back through time and stop her from returning to her office that Sunday" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 118) reflects the temporal dislocation Cathy Caruth identifies as central to trauma: the survivor becomes trapped in an unresolvable tension between past and present, meanwhile the impact is reflected on the family. Joe's longing is not merely personal nostalgia but symptomatic of an emotional rupture that leaves him unable to process the present fully.

As Geraldine withdraws emotionally, Joe's psychological isolation deepens. Deprived of maternal comfort, he increasingly seeks alternative sources of support, such as his grandfather Mooshum and his close group of friends. These relationships, however, offer only partial solace. The void left by his mother's emotional absence drives Joe to search obsessively for answers and ultimately to pursue a form of justice that replicates the violence he seeks to overcome. His covert investigations, described as "surreptitious reading" and careful observation (Erdrich, 2012, p. 69), mirror Caruth's notion that trauma often reemerges through compulsive and repetitive actions.

Joe's trajectory toward violence reflects not only his personal coping mechanisms but also broader cultural constructions of masculinity within a trauma-saturated environment. As legal avenues for justice collapse due to jurisdictional complexities, Joe internalizes the belief that direct, extra legal action is necessary to protect his mother and restore family honor. His ultimate decision to kill Linden Lark, the man responsible for Geraldine's assault marks a pivotal moment where trauma, vengeance, and distorted masculinity converge. Joe's reflection, "I was building lie upon lie and it all came naturally to me as honesty once had" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 393), captures the moral erosion trauma can engender when systemic injustice leaves young men without lawful paths to healing or protection.

This transformation is not depicted as heroic but as deeply tragic. Joe's act of violence alienates him from his father, a tribal judge committed to the rule of law, and disrupts any possibility of emotional closure. Yet, Erdrich suggests that this outcome is not merely a personal failure but a systemic one. By placing Joe's transformation against the backdrop of historical and legal neglect toward Native communities, the novel critiques the conditions that compel young Indigenous men to embody destructive forms of agency.

Furthermore, Joe's burden of trauma reflects intergenerational patterns of survival and loss familiar within Native American cultural contexts. As Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart theorizes, the emotional scars of colonial violence are transmitted across generations, shaping not only how individuals experience suffering but also how they interpret and perform resilience. Joe's actions, while morally compromised, emerge from a desperate attempt to protect familial bonds, an act of survival conditioned by a long history of betrayal by external legal structures.

In portraying Joe's emotional development as both a response to personal loss and a symptom of collective historical trauma, Erdrich deepens the novel's critique of systemic violence. Joe's shattered innocence and distorted masculinity reveal that trauma's reach extends beyond individual victims, embedding itself within familial and communal identities and complicating traditional narratives of growth, justice, and healing.

3.5 Healing and Resilience

Louise Erdrich's (2012) *The Round House* also offers a profound exploration of healing and resilience in the aftermath of violence. Set on an Ojibwe reservation, the novel illustrates how familial bonds, friendships, and cultural traditions act as vital forces of survival. Healing, for Erdrich's characters, is neither straightforward nor complete; rather, it is fraught, partial, and communal. This aligns closely with Cathy Caruth's (1996) theories on trauma, which emphasize that healing involves narrating and reliving pain rather than simply overcoming it. Through its portrayal of familial solidarity, personal courage, and the stubborn persistence of life, *The Round House* presents a layered narrative of survival rooted in love and communal care.

Caruth (1996) argues that trauma is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" at the time it occurs (p. 4). Healing, she posits, is not about erasing trauma but finding ways to live beside it, often by re-narrating painful experiences. This concept is crucial for understanding Joe Coutts' family after Geraldine's assault. Rather than quickly returning to normalcy, Joe and his father endure a period of silent devastation. Joe reflects, "Women don't realize how much store men set on the regularity of their habits. We absorb their comings and goings into our bodies, their rhythms into our bones" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 5). The visceral disruption of everyday life highlights how trauma physically and spiritually unsettles its survivors.

The novel underscores the importance of collective healing. Joe's father's response to Geraldine's disappearance is immediate and active: "Let's go find her," he says (Erdrich, 2012, p. 6). The certainty in his language finds her, not looking for her reflects a refusal to succumb to despair. Friends, too, provide vital support. Joe's closest friend, Cappy, gifts him a "thunderbird egg" stone, which Joe touches whenever he feels vulnerable: "Every time I got a pitying or curious look from another kid or a teacher that day, I touched the stone Gappy gave me" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 25). These rituals reflect Caruth's (1996) assertion that survivors anchor themselves through objects and narratives that offer symbolic safety.

Healing, however, is neither immediate nor complete. Geraldine's physical wounds are treatable; her emotional isolation is more difficult to address. Joe observes, "She mounted the stairs… ascending to a place of utter loneliness from which she might never be retrieved" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 16). Erdrich captures the reality that survivors may retreat into spaces of sorrow that outsiders cannot access. Caruth (1996) similarly notes that trauma reconfigures survivors' relationships with time and memory, creating barriers between past and present selves.

Nonetheless, Erdrich presents small rituals and communal moments as essential to resilience. After a particularly dismal evening, Joe's family finds humor in a terrible meal: "Although the stew with its gagging undertone of rotted onion was so infernal that it cheered us up" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 43). This grotesque humor affirms the necessity of laughter and absurdity even in the face of devastation. Healing, as the novel shows, does

not meant forgetting or dismissing pain but learning to live with it.

Joe's maturation is shaped by an insistence on bearing witness and taking action. He tells his father, "We'll get him," a vow that is not simply about vengeance but about reclaiming agency (Erdrich, 2012, p. 18). Caruth (1996) emphasizes that survivors often attempt to find coherence and agency through action and narration. Joe's quest for justice, while imperfect and fraught, represents an effort to create meaning from tragedy.

Family and community support structures are also essential. When Joe visits Aunt Clemence, even their small, shared acts of defiance agreeing to "actively hate" an unpleasant painting become moments of solidarity (Erdrich, 2012, p. 23). Acts of emotional communion, even when seemingly trivial, help survivors re-knit the fabric of daily life torn apart by violence. Justice, too, is complicated in the novel. Joe's father insists that multiple jurisdictions take Geraldine's statement because it is unclear whether the crime falls under tribal, federal, or state law: "Each police officer went into the room with a notebook and a pen, and came out again in about fifteen minutes, expressionless" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 19). Healing, Erdrich suggests, requires not only personal support but structural and systemic justice—something not easily achieved.

Ultimately, Joe's survival, and that of his family, is not a return to a pre-trauma innocence but a movement forward, carrying the weight of experience. His father's words capture the novel's fundamental truth: "Very little is needed to make a happy life" (Erdrich, 2012, p. 92). Resilience, according to Erdrich and Caruth, involves not erasing the past but embracing life in its damaged, sacred fullness.

Through a nuanced portrayal of trauma and survival, *The Round House* affirms that healing is collective, messy, and ongoing. Louise Erdrich's powerful novel, enriched by Cathy Caruth's trauma framework, shows that resilience is not about forgetting, but about remembering together with tenderness, rage, humor, and fierce love.

4. METHODS

Utilizing Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and narrative analysis, this study undertakes a detailed examination of pivotal scenes in the novel, with a particular focus on the aftermath of Geraldine Coutts's assault. Caruth's trauma theory emphasizes the belatedness and incomprehensibility of traumatic experience, its resistance to full representation and its ongoing, recursive impact on survivors. Through this lens, Geraldine's trauma is not simply a singular past event but an ongoing presence that fractures time, language, and familial roles. The novel's narrative structure reflects this disorientation, revealing how trauma lingers in silences, evasions, and fragmented recollections.

Geraldine's silence and emotional withdrawal post-assault reshape her identity as a mother, altering the way she engages with her son, Joe, and husband, Bazil. Her inability to articulate her experience creates a rupture in familial communication and trust. The narrative portrays her internal disintegration through symbolic distancing, highlighting how trauma isolates the survivor even from those closest to them. Geraldine's shifting behavior becomes a mirror for the broader disintegration of family cohesion, as each member internalizes their own version of her pain.

Through close reading of key scenes particularly those involving Geraldine's retreat from daily life, Joe's anxious surveillance, and Bazil's restrained patience—the study explores how trauma spreads beyond the individual, becoming a collective wound. Caruth's theory allows for a reading in which the trauma is not owned by a single character but is dispersed throughout the narrative, surfacing in the tensions, absences, and emotional ruptures that redefine the Coutts family. This approach underscores the ways in which trauma, left unspoken, can destabilize not just personal identity but also relational and communal structures, demanding new forms of narrative and emotional engagement to begin healing.

5. RESULTS

The analysis reveals that Louise Erdrich disrupts conventional, often idealized representations of motherhood by embedding Geraldine's personal trauma within larger systemic patterns of legal failure, historical injustice, and cultural marginalization. In doing so, Erdrich challenges the notion of the mother as an always-nurturing, emotionally available figure. Instead, the maternal subject is portrayed as both silenced by her trauma and yet symbolically central to the survival and endurance of her Indigenous community. Geraldine's silence and withdrawal are not signs of weakness, but rather evidence of the profound psychological impact of both individual and collective trauma, exacerbated by a legal system that fails to deliver justice. At the same time, the novel redefines healing—not as a solitary, internalized process, but as one that is inherently communal and culturally embedded. It is through rituals, shared storytelling, and intergenerational resilience that the characters begin to restore fractured familial and communal bonds.

6. DISCUSSION

The exploration of motherhood and trauma in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* reveals the profound interconnectedness between personal suffering,

familial destabilization, and systemic injustice within Native American communities. By analyzing both Geraldine Coutts's emotional withdrawal and Joe's moral disintegration, it becomes clear that gendered violence does not simply wound individuals it radiates outward, fracturing familial bonds, reshaping identity, and perpetuating cycles of historical trauma.

Erdrich's portrayal of Geraldine challenges idealized conceptions of motherhood as innately resilient or self-sacrificing. Instead, motherhood is depicted as a fragile and complex role, vulnerable to disruption by both personal violence and broader historical forces. Geraldine's silence and detachment are not failures of character but manifestations of trauma's insidious effects, resonating with Cathy Caruth's assertion that trauma resists direct assimilation and emerges through fragmented narratives and emotional paralysis. In this way, *The Round House* contests dominant cultural narratives that frame maternal resilience as inevitable, highlighting instead the psychological toll that systemic violence extracts from Indigenous women.

At the same time, the novel interrogates constructions of masculinity shaped under the pressures of trauma and legal failure. Joe's progression from innocence to vengeful violence exemplifies how young Indigenous men, deprived of systemic support and community healing structures, may internalize distorted notions of strength and justice. His moral collapse, while tragic, is presented not as an individual failing but as a symptom of structural neglect. Erdrich's depiction aligns with Indigenous feminist and historical trauma scholarship, such as that of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Kim Anderson, emphasizing that trauma within Native communities must be understood as cumulative and collective, rather than isolated or episodic.

Moreover, *The Round House* challenges Western individualistic models of trauma recovery, which often emphasize personal resilience or psychological healing in isolation. Instead, Erdrich foregrounds the importance of communal rituals, storytelling, humor, and everyday acts of survival as vital components of healing. Small moments of shared laughter, food preparation, and emotional solidarity between Joe, Bazil, and the larger community suggest that resilience emerges not through overcoming trauma in a linear fashion but through enduring it together, imperfectly yet persistently. This emphasis on collective endurance resonates with Indigenous cultural frameworks of survivance a concept articulated by Gerald Vizenor which celebrates active survival, resistance, and the continuation of cultural identity despite ongoing adversity.

Erdrich also critiques the legal structures that fail to protect Native women, exposing how jurisdictional loopholes leave Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable to violence. The systemic failure to deliver justice to Geraldine reflects a broader historical pattern of colonial neglect and violence, underscoring that trauma within Native American contexts cannot be disentangled from political and legal disenfranchisement. By situating personal trauma within these systemic realities, Erdrich's narrative refuses to individualize or pathologize suffering; rather, it insists on a collective and historical understanding of both injury and resilience.

Thus, the novel compels a rethinking of motherhood, masculinity, justice, and healing in Native American literature. Motherhood is portrayed not merely as nurturing but as a site of both vulnerability and quiet resistance. Masculinity is revealed to be precarious, shaped as much by grief and powerlessness as by strength. Healing is communal, partial, and ongoing, and justice, in the absence of legal redress, becomes a deeply fraught endeavor.

Through this layered portrayal, *The Round House* offers a profound commentary on the endurance of Indigenous familial and cultural bonds in the face of relentless trauma. By bringing these dynamics to light, Erdrich contributes a critical narrative that both mourns historical and contemporary injustices and celebrates the stubborn persistence of life, identity, and community amid them.

7. Limitations of the Study

While this study offers a focused analysis of motherhood and trauma in *The Round House*, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the scope of the research is confined to a close reading of a single novel, which, while rich in complexity, may not fully capture the broader diversity of Indigenous experiences of motherhood and trauma across different tribal contexts or literary traditions. Future comparative studies incorporating multiple Native American authors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these themes.

Second, this analysis primarily engages with trauma theory and Indigenous feminist frameworks, which, while highly relevant, represent only a portion of the critical lenses available. Approaches such as decolonial theory, intersectionality, or masculinity studies could further deepen insights into the novel's treatment of gender, power, and resistance.

Finally, the study focuses mainly on textual analysis and does not incorporate empirical perspectives from Indigenous communities themselves. While literary analysis provides crucial theoretical insights, future interdisciplinary research combining literary criticism with ethnographic or oral history methods could offer a

more grounded and community-centered perspective on trauma, healing, and survivance in Indigenous contexts. Recognizing these limitations invites further inquiry and strengthens the ongoing dialogue surrounding trauma, gendered violence, and cultural resilience in Native American literature.

8. CONCLUSION

Louise Erdrich's *The Round House* offers a profound exploration of the enduring impact of gendered violence on Indigenous familial structures, particularly through the disrupted experiences of motherhood and the burdened development of masculinity. Through the portrayal of Geraldine Coutts's emotional withdrawal and Joe Coutts's premature and morally complex maturation, Erdrich illuminates the ways trauma permeates not only individuals but entire family systems, reshaping relationships, identities, and cultural continuities.

Relying on Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Indigenous feminist frameworks, this study demonstrates that trauma in *The Round House* is not confined to isolated moments of violence but reverberates through time, affecting multiple generations. Motherhood, often idealized in dominant cultural narratives, is shown as a fragile and fractured space, burdened by both personal grief and historical trauma. Similarly, masculinity is revealed to be a precarious construction, shaped under conditions of systemic neglect and legal disenfranchisement.

Erdrich's novel critiques not only the personal devastation caused by violence but also the broader legal and political structures that perpetuate Indigenous vulnerability. By portraying healing as a collective, partial, and ongoing process rooted in communal practices rather than individual recovery, *The Round House* offers a counter-narrative to Western conceptions of trauma and resilience. It affirms that survivance the active persistence of Indigenous identity and culture endures even amidst profound suffering.

While this study has offered a focused examination of *The Round House*, future research could expand by incorporating comparative studies across multiple Indigenous authors or integrating interdisciplinary approaches that blend literary analysis with community-based research. Such expansions would further enrich our understanding of how narratives of trauma, motherhood, and survivance operate across diverse Native American contexts.

Ultimately, this study highlights that Erdrich's portrayal of motherhood and trauma demands a rethinking of resilience, justice, and familial bonds within both literary and cultural discourses. *The Round House* stands as a vital testament to the enduring strength and complexity of Indigenous communities navigating historical and contemporary violence.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during the publication period.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and / or publication of this article. This article is the sole work of the authors and has not been presented or published elsewhere.

References

Erdrich, L. (2012) *The Round House.* Harper.

Alexie, S. (2013). *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven: Stories*. Open Road Media.

Anderson, K. (2016). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Canadian Scholars' Press.

Brave Heart, M. Y. H. (1998). The return to the sacred path: Healing the historical trauma and historical unresolved grief response among the Lakota through a psychoeducational group intervention. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, *68*(3), 287-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377319809517532

Carden, M. P. (2018). "The Unkillable Mother": Sovereignty and Survivance in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House. Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *30*(1), 94-116. https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.30.1.0094

Caruth, C. (Ed.). (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. JHU Press.

Caruth, C. (1996). Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/book.63149

Deer, S. (2015). *The beginning and end of rape: Confronting sexual violence in Native America*. U of Minnesota Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816696314.001.0001

Milspaw, Y. J. (1990). The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. https://doi.org/10.2307/541875

Momaday, N. S., &Guidall, G. (1968). *House made of dawn* (p. 146). New York: Harper & Row.

Peterson, N. J. (2001). *Against amnesia: Contemporary women writers and the crises of historical memory*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Rainwater, C. (1999). *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformations of Native American Fiction*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Roldán Sevillano, L. (2016). *From Revenge to Justice: Perpetrator Trauma in Louise Erdrich's" The Round House"* (No. ART-2016-101409).

Skenandore, L., & Bladow, K. (2018). Stories of pain, stories of healing: Confronting the violence against women in Louise Erdrich's *The Round House. The McNair Scholars Journal*.

Tatonetti, L. (2014). The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination by Mark Rifkin. *The American Indian Quarterly*, *38*(1), 119-122. https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2014.0010

Tharp, J. (2014). Erdrich's Crusade: Sexual Violence in *The Round House*. *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *26*(3), 25-40. https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.26.3.0025

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

M. Amala Freeda is a second-year doctoral researcher in the Department of English at Loyola College, Chennai, India. She holds a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in English Literature from Holy Cross College, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, and an M.Phil. in English Language Teaching.

Her current research focuses on Indigenous Studies, with a particular interest in the culture, lifestyle, and historical narratives of the Ojibwe people.

Ms. M. Amala Freeda
Research Scholar
Department of English
Loyola College
Chennai, Tamil Nadu
India
Email: amalafreeda@gmail.com

Dr. I. Felicita Mary Praba is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Loyola College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. She is a recognized research supervisor for doctoral scholars affiliated with the University of Madras. Dr. Praba has actively organized academic conferences and has served as the Convenor for both national and international seminars. She has edited academic volumes and journal issues, and has published numerous research articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. In addition, she has presented papers at various national and international conferences.

Her research interests include Diasporic Writings, Postcolonial Literature, Refugee Narratives, Subaltern Studies, and American Literature.

Dr. I. Felicita Mary Praba
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Loyola College
Chennai, India
Email: felicitamary@loyolacollege.edu

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 106 – 111 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

OPINION
Open Access

Being-for-Others: *Marxiology Beyond Darwin and Freud*

Brij Mohan[a]

Professor and Dean Emeritus, School of Social Work, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 12-Feb-25
REVISED: 02-May-25
ACCEPTED: 07-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Brij Mohan
E-mail: swmoha@lsu.edu

Citation: Brij Mohan (2025). Being-for-Others: Marxiology Beyond Darwin and Freud. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 106–111. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1283.p106

ABSTRACT

Human struggle for survival—dominance and subjugation—is an evolutionary journey which began before History. This brief article is premised on the assumption that Homo Sapiens remain an incomplete species. We live through a perilous phase fraught with uncertainty and plausible extinction. Being-for-Others may thwart evolutionary conclusions.

Keywords: Human Society, Evolutionary Domination, Civilized Chaos, and Marxiology.

> "History is neither predestined mechanistic movement, nor does it move in a circle like the water-wheel, which fills in and drains out at the hands of the ever-toiling historical Ass—called the Man" (Dange, 1961: 14).

"Spirit is to be observed in the theatre of world history, where it has its most concrete reality," wrote G.W.F. Hegel (1988: 19). "The idea that people should be able to choose their own communities—instead of being stuck where they are born—is distinctly American innovation. [I]t may be America's most profound contribution to the world," writes Yoni Applebaum in *The Atlantic* (March 2025)[1]. Thanks to President J. F. Kennedy[2]. As analyzed below, Applebaum's essay merits serious reexamination.

The state of civilization in the 21st Century is not a utopian epoch. Man[3] has achieved pinnacle of advancement. This also includes astonishing tools and innovations perfected for mass murders and self-destruction. A mask of mythologies of conquests, enemies, and allies has unmasked our creatureliness. This whole paradigm is best demonstrated by US Vice President's recent rebuke of the Europeans in Munich[4].

[a]Brij Mohan's recent books include Return of the Leviathan: Being for Others (Barnes & Noble 2025), and Rediscover of Society (Nova, 2022). E: SWmoha@lsu.edu (225 226 8060).

[1]Cf. 'How Progressives Froze the American Dream," in *The Atlantic* (March 2025 Issue; February 19, 2025); digitally retrieved February 16, 2025).
[2]I emigrated to the United States of America on March 1, 1975.
[3]Used as a generic label for people without any gender-bias.
[4] 224,878 views Feb 14, 2025 #jdvance#xijinping#vladimirputin
US Vice President JD Vance delivered a historic speech at the Munich Security Conference in Germany on February 14. In a big surprise, Vance strongly criticized European leaders for their approach to free speech. He also said the greatest threat facing the continent was not from Russia and China, but "from within." INTERNATIONAL NEWS #jdvance#xijinping

Ever since *Homo Erectus* and *Neanderthals* became bipedal creatures, their hands and fingers began to create things that evolved into this civilization. Mark Willis Thomas, and his wife Rujeko Hockley, --"an art power couple"—puts it succinctly to achieve racial equality: "The road to progress is always under construction" (*Time,* February 24, 2025: 59). Our 'new normal,' is now defined by the contours of insecurity. Alisa Quart has a point: "In this moment of rupture and uncertainty, this sort of solidarity ["communitas"] can be an unexpected salve. With that recognition, we must each develop a clearer understanding of how those in power deliberately exploit our individual and societal uncertainty—and what we can do about it" (Quart, 2025: 29).

The American dream has vanished from the people's imagination as the road to progress looks like a bombarded zone. Power's unrelenting forces have brought back nineteenth century's social Darwinism to its new dawn. Can reexamination of Marxiology help? Civil society's predicament is not akin to a crossroads. It's cultural evolution that unveils a prehistoric drama of human proclivities in a perpetually turmoiled transition.

Riane Eisler (1988) posits 'dominator' and 'partnership' models that unravels the crisis of Western civilization. Can the two societal models co-exist? The question has been answered by the Twentieth Century's world wars, proliferation of nuclear bombs, and continued avarice for control and conquest. From Gaza to Ukraine, Greenland to 'Gulf of America,' the specter of lust, acquisition, and pugnacity continues to design social and political organizations across the nations. The 'economic' angle has a paramountcy in this global re-evolution. Trade and tariffs, nationalism, capitalism, statism, and the looming fragments of a *Third World War* are ominous signs of a lost paradise.

The caption of this paper has roots in Continental Philosophy. From Descartes to Heidegger to Sartre, *Being* has been suffixed with "-in-itself," *"-with-itself,"* and "*-for-others"* with different meanings. *Being-for-others* is more Sartrean than Heideggerian.

We live in an advanced stage of evolution. Science, technology, Gandi, Godse, Einstein, Trump, and Noam Chomsky are all aspects of human ingenuity--our dreams and delusions embedded in the veneer of our civilization. Our fantasies and self-righteousness sometimes yield dubious manifestations of success. They all fail us--we humans. Man is a self-alienated animal.

A damaged, unhinged nation is lost in search of its destiny. Napoleonic surge of neo-imperial-narcissism, surreally, is a Shakespearean tragedy. *Return of the Leviathan* manifests a new, rather dubious social reality. The Golden Age as envisioned by populist demagogues, is a perilous delusion. An oblique thrust of this riveting book brings civilizational dysfunctionality to the fore, which calls for a new Social Contract. "Being for Others" is a veritable challenge. The persistence of Poverty of Culture (PoC) breeds violence and greed without institutional coherence. The duality of paradoxical post-Enlightenment is a false consciousness of progress (Mohan, 2025). The *Anxious Generation,* Jonathan Haidt (2024) contends,has been imperiled by the onslaught of tech-oligarchs.

The plague of teenage anxiety, fear, and a sense of nothingness should be a wake-up call. Our culture wars, artificial intelligence, and myth-making proclivity distort the reality of three fundamental bedrocks of civility: *Truth, Values,* and *Justice.* In modern history no other democracy has shown its fragility than the American system. Why this seismic political change?

We have been made to believe that Harvard, MIT, Yale, et al. have produced geniuses who will save the world. Henry Kissinger received a Nobel Prize for ending the Vietnam War. Kennedy, Johnson, and their successors created the Great Society that liberal democrats claim credit for. The world changed after 1945, and its ambiguous ascendance is false. Noam Chomsky is perhaps the most renowned and hard-hitting critic of American foreign policy. He believes it's the intellectuals' responsibility to unravel the truth. In *The Myth of American Idealism,* Chomsky, and his co-author Nathan Robinson, debunk the belief that America is a global superpower as well as a "benevolent hegemon" (2024). Americans are naive in believing that their country is "committed to promoting democracy and human rights" (Bessner, February 2, 2025: 61). The myth of (American) Justice is starkly different: Daniel Bessner, reviewing *The Myth of American Idealism,* recounts the ignominious catalog of U.S. foreign policy which is a horrifying account of inhumanity:

> "[O]ur 1947 intervention in Greece to suppress a popular communist uprising; our subversion of Italy's 1948 election; our repression of democratic and left-wing groups in postwar Japan and South Korea; our participation in the 1953 overthrow of Iran's Mohammed Mossdegh, the 1954 overthrow of Guatemala's Jacob Arbenz, and the 1961 assassination of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Patrice Lumumba; our many failed attempts to murder or overthrow Cuba's

#vladimirputin#us#usvicepresident#germany#europeanleaders#eu#freespeech#threat#munich#munishsecurityconference (Retrieved February 15, 2025)

> Fidel Castro; our participation in the annihilation of Indonesian communists and fellow travelers; our destruction of North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; our involvement in the 1973 overthrow of Chile's Salvador Allende; our provision of aid to Guatemala as its government prosecuted a genocide; and so on, down to the present day." (Bessner, 2025: 61).

The above chronology does not include the assassination of Che Guevara; the destruction of Afghanistan and Iraq; the genocide in Gaza; and not yet-known covert operations that *Night Agents* conduct with impunity in the name of national security. The Regime Change strategy has not decreased threats to America. Nine-Eleven is an unforgettable consequential disaster. So was the heinous slaughter of peacefully assembled Jews on October 7, 2023. The American-Israeli alliance is guilty of expansion istethnic cleaning. Our 47th POTUS and his real-estate tycoon–son-in-law, Kosher–view this graveyard of Gaza as areal estate project. This is capitalist-cannibalism–simple and obscene. Opposition to rapacious Zionism is not anti-Semitic. Anything that goes wrong is now blamed on DEI[5].

The rampant unreason that abounds in popular culture explodes the American myth of reason. 'A deadly apathy,' David Shulman comments: "Israel has embraced cruelty and atrocity as a normative mode of waging war" (*NYRB*, January 16, 2025: 21). Mayhem and destruction of more than 60 thousand Palestinians is a war-crime that emboldens the credo of neo-imperialism.

The rumors of hegemonies' demise are exaggerated. Fady Roudah is brilliant as a doctor and poet. His pain and despair as a Palestinian intellectual are best summed up in his aphoristic words: "A free heart within a caged chest is free." Hebert Marcuse had voiced this ontology as: "Man is free even at the hands of his executioner."

"Culture demands continuous sublimation; it thereby weakens Eros, the builder of culture," wrote Herbert Marcuse (1955: 82). Human alienation is a foundational basis of democratic capitalism. Martin Wolf underscores *The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* (2024). When the truth is eclipsed by the motifs and heresies of popular culture, people lose confidence in their leaders and government. The schism benumbs sensibility and cynicism thwarts rationality. "Around the world, violent racist demagogues keep winning elections, and although they all seem very happy with the idea of private property, they are openly hostile to the rule of law, political liberalism, individual freedom, and other ostensible preconditions and cultural accompaniments of market economies," sums up Trevor Jackson in the *New York Review of Book*s (January 2025: 32).

What I find inexplicable is the massive public dissonance about the force of evil that permeates society and culture. I recently wrote a Letter to *The Nation* about the rise of Trumpian triumphalism despite his worrisome pathology of leadership (February 18, 2025: 18). Realizing that it was Trump's supporters --'white trash' to Silicon Valley elites--who got him anointed as the King, I do not blame him for his colossal failures as the leader of a free world cannot be overstated. A King can do no wrong. It's a truism from the monarchical past. One must, however, rethink the people who voted for him. Their unabashed loyalty to a convicted felon is more worrisome than a flurry of Executive Orders that POTUS likes to signoff. People's acquiescence to predatory institutions shows masked apathy, amnesia, and helplessness which may imperil the pillars of a civil society. We can resolve the current 'constitutional crisis,' but the contagion of democratic paralysis and anti-democratic avarice threatens humanity. White Supremacy is an unabashed motif of the new administration. In *The Unseen Truth*, Sarah Lewis examines how an erroneous 18th-century story about the "Caucasian race" led to a century of prejudice and misapprehension (*The Nation*, Feb. 10, 25; web).

'The Mark of Imperialism,' Anatol Lieven contends, has shattered the myth of Liberal Internationalism. In fact, nationalist-imperialism imperils the plausible spirit of global cooperation. "Western progressives—American and European alike—need to break decisively with the neoconservatives and the liberal internationalism they've long promoted," observes Lieven. Dwight D. Eisenhower's poignant words cannot be overstated:

> "The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of the scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of the life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron" (Quoted by Lieven, 2025: 7).

[5]What we design is neither universally acceptable nor always healthy. The U.S. Capital, for example, has the world's "most controlled airspace" (*BBC News*, January 30, 2025). An American Eagle just collided with a military Black Hawk helicopter in the icy Potomac River killing everyone aboard. President Trump lost no time to blame DEI initiatives for the disaster. Can such an accident happen with an ominous threat to the whole world? There will be one to play scapegoat for the numbing realities we confront. While the nation mourns, POTUS and his allies blame DEI as the cause of this disaster. *The Airlines' Dangerous Descent* was brought to the attention of all passengers by William McGee (2012).

The so-called color-blind, merit-based New Deep State is confounded by omnipresent dark side of AI. It's not possible that AI will regulate all human affairs. If we can't manage our lives, someone else will do for us. Tech billionaires are not egalitarian saints. Our civilization is at a crossroads: Either global wellbeing or collective *Death Wish.* A mountaineer once fell on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. He built a school for girls. Later he went back to build 55 such schools. *Three Cups of Tea* is an inspiring story. Ironically, Taliban have overtaken this primordially deconstructed place where tribalism prevails. Dialectics is an endless process. *If winter comes, Spring can't be far behind.*

As a didactic-ontological exercise, I often used to ask my students: *Do something selflessly nice for a person who has been dehumanized without letting her/him know. Enjoy the silence of what you have accomplished: transformation.* An unselfish attack on inhumanity is the ethos of honest action. *Being for Others* is a powerful tool for social transformation. Sigmund Freud, 1962 concluded:

> "Unhappiness is much less difficult to experience. We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally, from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other" (1962: 24).

"Our relations to others" cannot be smoothly cohesive due to the complexity of forces that constitute social life. Since the *Others* can be hell, we can't easily escape this alienation. We compromise and make friends. This approach, however, is unacceptable to the wild Ego. We must conquer the threats to eliminate what we are most afraid of. Self-preservation is key to both survival and conquest. Put simply, human proclivities--insecurity, perceived or real, resentment, and dominance--make what becomes of us.

Our civilization is built on repressed "suppression of instincts." The instinctual syndrome, 'unhappiness and work,' Marcuse writes, "recurs throughout Freud's writings and his interpretation of the Prometheus myth is centered on the connection between curbing of sexual passion and civilized work. Originating in renunciation and developing under progressive renunciation, civilization tends toward self-destruction" (Marcuse, 1956: 81-83).

John J. MacArthur, president and publisher of *Harper's* Magazine, opines: "Trump isn't a narcissist--he's a solipsist. The president delights in being attacked since it keeps the focus on him. The press should handle him like parents with an ornery child" (February 8, 2025; quoted from *The Guardian*). Robert J. Lifton, an investigative psychiatrist who diagnosed Trump as a 'solipsist,' unraveled an interesting profile:

> "Trump's absence of external connection is self-evident: his treatment of the "other" -- from his own family to his tenants, his political rivals, the victims of the Los Angeles fires or the displaced people of Gaza--displays not only a lack of empathy but also an emotional blindness. How else could he tease out loud about dating his own daughter, Ivanka? How else could he so cruelly insult former president Biden in his inaugural address, with Biden seated just a short distance away?"

John MacArthur's tantalizing insight into this political obscenity explains the morbidity of sordid banal behavior. Unguarded benevolence sometimes backfires. Once I appointed an apparent foreign scholar on par with my status and salary. In less than a year, his racist gamesmanship pushed me to the edge of an abyss. I had lost everything that I had earned. My "Otherness" had been confirmed. I became a victim of my own hubris: a pariahin my own house! Life became Kafkaesque. It took me more than three decades to forgive him. I am too human to forget, however. Predators are both narcissists and solipsists. The dangerous combination is not as rare as it seems. Thanks to Donald Trump for creating the specter of fear, insecurity, and exclusion. What far-right seeks to upend is Deep State, a power-center, secrete and beyond law. The irony is 'The Disrupter-in-Chief' (*Time,* February 19, 2025:28) has brought his own 'Deep State' on the edge of constitutional abyss. "Corporations do the military's laundry, cook its food, swab its latrines." but most Americans still do not understand that their celebrated high tech, postindustrial military establishment cannot so much as fire a rocket without assistance from private military firms." (2024: 31) Oligarchs have no real connection with people.

I lived in India until 1975 before I moved to the United State of America. The journey from a developing nation to the world's most advanced democracy was both exciting and challenging. I know first-hand howmyths and realities shape life's expectations and illusions in the *Democracies of Unfreedom* (Mohan, 1996). 'The White Nationalist in Chief's Return to Power' (*The Nation*, March

2025) in the US is akin to the rise of fundamentalist nationalism in my native land. My feelings that the Jordan of hope has been crossed has been painfully delusional.

Being-for-Others[6] is not an easily traveled road. It's full of thorns and hurdles. Those who chose this path are frontiersmen of the unknown future. Humanity must be saved from this civilization. Revolution devours its children. In *A Brief History of Equality,* Thomas Piketty concludes:

> "The slave revolt in Saint-Dominique in 1791 paved the way for the end of slavery and colonialism, but the battle for racial equality is still being fought. The same is true of inequalities in status in general: in 1789 the French Revolution took an essential step by abolishing the nobility privileges, but it did not do away with multiple privileges of money—far from it" (2021: 95).

It's simple: the rich and the poor are so positively corelated. If they get richer, we get poorer. Invincibility of the "privileges of money" sustained a system anchored in primordial inequality. About six thousand years ago, Vedic scholars saintly enshrined this iron law in a deathless cycle of perpetual poverty through the hymns of *dharma* and *karma.* "The village community with its caste system is the basis of the structure of Indian feudalism," wrote S. A. Dange (1961: xii)[7]. *Upanishad* and *Vedas* have sustained *Caste* as a temple of institutional inequality. As I have assayed before, American 'racism' is an extension of Indian 'casteism.' This framework, until Marx exploded the myths, evolved through ages under the artifacts of feudalism, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. Socialism itself couldn't withstand the tremors of evolutionary transformations.

In a poignant critique of *Capital* (North and Reitter, 2024), one finds *Das Capital*—a book that changed the world—at the center of Capitalism, its rise and fall. Alyssa Battistoni sums up: "*Capital* is many things at once: It reads like an economics textbook in places, a work of history in others, and a satire still elsewhere; it contains math and poetry in equal measure" (2025: 61). Marxiology is the Rosetta Stone to comprehend—and transform—a narcissistic-pugnacious culture, broken society, and divided world.

[6]"... the condensed wisdom of this book is the inspiration of a lifetime, from one of the greatest and most honest minds of our time, and for all free and hungry minds out there!" Professor Christian Aspetar's gracious observation-- ethos of my book released by Barnes and Noble in 2025—is much appreciated.

[7]Village community "did not exist in the period of primitive communism where there was no *Varna* or *Caste*." Cf. Dange, S. A. (1961: xvii). "Primitive accumulation" of the archaic past, Marx argued, gave birth to Capitalism (Cf. Alyssa Battistoni, 2025: 66).

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this piece.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

References

Battistoni, A. 2025. Math and Poetry: The Making and Remaking of Capital. *The Nation,* March: 60-67.

Bessner, Daniel. Empire's Critic. *The Nation,* February 2, 2025: 60-62.

Chomsky, Neom & Nathan J. Robinson. 2024. *The Myth of American Idealism: How U.S. Foreign Policy Endangers the World.* New York: Penguin.

Dange, S.A. 1961. *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery.* New Delhi: People's Publishing House.

Eisler, Riane. 1988. *The* Chalis *and the Blade: Our History, Our Future.* New York: HarperOne.

Freud, Sigmund. 1962. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Trans. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton.

Haidt, Jonathan. 2024. *Anxious Generation.* New York: Penguin Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1988. *Introduction to The Philosophy of History.* Trans. L. Rauch. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Co.

Hoffman, Nicholas von. 2024. 'A Monopoly of Violence.' *The New Yorker,* March, 348, 2086: 31.

Lieven, Anatol. 2025. 'The Mark of Imperialis.' *Harper's,* March: 4-7.

Marcuse, Hebert. [1955]1966. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud.* Boston: Beacon Press.

McGee, William J. 2012. *Attention All Passengers: The AirLines' Dangerous Descent--And How to Reclaim Our Skies.* New York: Harper.

Mohan, Brij. 2025. *Return of the Leviathan*: *Being-for-Others.* Barnes & Noble.

Mohan, Brij. 1996. *Democracies of Unfreedom: India and the United States.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

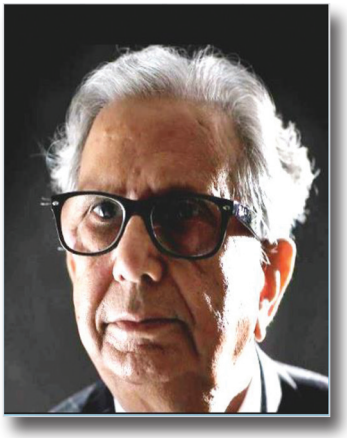
North, P. and Reitter, P. 2024. *Capital: Critique of Political Economy,* Vol. I. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Piketty, Thomas. 2021. *A Brief History of Equality.* Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press.

Quart, Alissa. 2025. 'Insecurity is the new inequality.' *Time,* February 24: 28-29.

Wolf, Martin. 2024. *The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism.* New York: Penguin Press.

Biographical Statement of Author(s)



Brij Mohan, Dean Emeritus at the School of Social Work, Louisiana State University, USA, is an internationally renowned Scholar with expertise in social philosophy, social welfare, public policy and international social development.

He is the author of 26 books and over 400 articles, papers, and reviews. His most recent books include *Development, Poverty of Culture and Social Policy* (Palgrave, 2011), *Climate, Economy and Justic* (Palgrave, 2015), *The Future of Social Work* (Sage, 2018) and *Social Policy on the Cusp* (Nova, 2020). Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith honored him with a Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) and the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India awarded him the *Life-Time Achievement Award*.

Currently, he is working on *Echoes from Kafka's Cave* (to be leased by Barnes and Noble early next year).

Brij Mohan, Professor
Dean Emeritus
Louisiana State University
LSU School of Social Work
Baton Rouge, LA 70808. USA
E-mail: brijmohan128@gmail.com
www.Brijmohan.org

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 112 – 119 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

CONCEPT
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Revolutionizing Arabic Language Learning: Innovative Teaching Strategies for Non-Native Speakers

Ayad Neissi*

Department of Arabic language and Literature, Farhangian University, P.O. Box 14665-889, Tehran, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received: 14-Feb-25
Revised: 04-May-25
Accepted: 08-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Ayad Neissi, Ph.D.
E-mail: ayadneissi@cfu.ac.ir

Citation: Ayad Neissi (2025). Revolutionizing Arabic Language Learning: Innovative Teaching Strategies for Non-Native Speakers. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 112–119. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1287.p112

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Arabic, an official language of the United Nations and the primary means of communication for over 400 million people worldwide, presents unique challenges when taught as a second language. These include its intricate grammar, diglossia, and limited culturally relevant resources. This study aims to address these challenges by exploring innovative teaching methodologies. **Methods:** The research examines four primary approaches: integrating technology, adopting task-based learning, applying communicative teaching methods, and encouraging cultural immersion. The study also evaluates the effectiveness of balancing Modern Standard Arabic with regional dialects to enhance real-world communication skills. **Results:** Findings indicate that these innovative methods foster practical language use and cultural competence. Technology integration and task-based learning proved effective in engaging learners, while communicative approaches and cultural immersion enhanced their ability to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Balancing Modern Standard Arabic with dialects significantly improved learners' fluency and adaptability. **Discussion:** The study highlights the strengths and limitations of these methods and emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to refine Arabic teaching practices. Practical recommendations for educators are provided to make Arabic education more engaging, accessible, and relevant in a globalized world.Conclusion: This research contributes to advancing Arabic education by addressing pedagogical challenges and proposing innovative methodologies. It advocates for further exploration and application of these approaches to meet the evolving demands of second-language learners in an interconnected world..

Keywords: Arabic Language Pedagogy, Innovative Teaching Strategies, Technology Integration in Language Learning, Task-Based Language Learning, Cultural Immersion in Arabic Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic, one of the six official languages of the United Nations, holds a vital position as a global language due to its rich historical, cultural, and religious significance (Allen, 2019). Spoken by over 400 million people worldwide, Arabic serves as the medium of communication in regions of geopolitical importance and as the language of the Qur'an, which grants it a unique role in the spiritual and scholarly traditions of the Muslim world (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Despite its prominence, teaching and learning Arabic as a second language pose considerable challenges, making the development of innovative instructional strategies essential to meet the growing global demand for Arabic proficiency (Auliya, 2025).

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers entails various linguistic and pedagogical challenges. Arabic's complex grammatical structure, including its rich system of verb conjugations and noun declensions, often

overwhelms learners. Additionally, the phenomenon of diglossia—the coexistence of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and diverse regional dialects—creates confusion for students unsure of which variant to prioritize in their studies (Richards et al, 2001). Educators also grapple with the scarcity of accessible, engaging, and culturally relevant teaching materials that accommodate diverse learning styles (Godwin-Jones, 2019). These barriers often deter learners and diminish their confidence in mastering the language.

The purpose of this article is to address these challenges by exploring innovative and effective teaching methods for Arabic as a second language. It examines strategies that leverage modern technology, interactive learning techniques, and culturally immersive approaches to enhance students' linguistic proficiency and engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2019). By integrating insights from second language acquisition research and drawing from the practical experiences of educators, this article aims to provide actionable solutions to enrich Arabic language instruction.

The structure of this article is organized into several key sections. First, it delves into the unique challenges of teaching Arabic, offering a detailed analysis of linguistic and pedagogical obstacles. Following this, the article introduces innovative teaching methods, including the use of digital tools, gamification, and task-based language learning, supported by evidence from contemporary studies (Allen, 2019; Godwin-Jones, 2019). The discussion also highlights the importance of cultural immersion and integrating authentic resources to bridge the gap between language and cultural context. Finally, the article concludes by emphasizing the need for ongoing collaboration among educators, researchers, and policymakers to adapt and refine Arabic teaching methodologies for diverse learning environments.

Through this exploration, the article seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on Arabic language instruction and provide practical guidance to educators committed to fostering effective and meaningful learning experiences. By addressing the specific needs of both learners and instructors, this article aspires to make Arabic language education more accessible and impactful in an increasingly interconnected world.

This article also offers an original contribution by contextualizing globally recognized second-language teaching strategies specifically for Arabic, taking into account its diglossic nature, complex morphology, and cultural variability. It proposes a framework that combines Modern Standard Arabic with dialectal exposure and cultural immersion in a way that is pedagogically coherent and tailored to Arabic's unique structure. Unlike general language teaching models, the strategies presented here are calibrated for the linguistic, cultural, and practical demands of Arabic learners, making this a distinct contribution to the field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching of Arabic as a second language has traditionally relied on conventional methods such as rote memorization and the grammar-translation approach. Rote memorization, characterized by repetitive drilling of vocabulary and grammar rules, has long been a prevalent method in Arabic language instruction. This method often emphasizes memorization of conjugation patterns and extensive repetition of vocabulary lists without a strong connection to practical application or communicative contexts (Allen, 2019). Similarly, the grammar-translation approach, which focuses on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and translating texts between Arabic and the learners' native language, has dominated Arabic instruction in formal settings. While these methods provide foundational knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, they often fail to foster proficiency in speaking and listening, key aspects of language acquisition (Richards et al, 2001).

Despite their widespread use, these traditional approaches have significant limitations. Rote memorization, for instance, does not engage learners in meaningful interactions or real-life language use, making it difficult for students to retain information or develop conversational skills (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Additionally, the grammar-translation method tends to isolate grammar from its functional use, limiting students' ability to apply linguistic rules in practical scenarios. These methods also lack cultural integration, failing to address the vital role of cultural context in language learning. The absence of active, learner-centered strategies often leads to a lack of motivation and engagement among students, which hinders long-term success in acquiring Arabic as a second language (Richards et al, 2001).

In contrast, innovative teaching techniques utilized in other languages provide valuable insights that can enhance Arabic instruction. Approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language learning (TBL) prioritize interaction and the use of language in authentic contexts. CLT, for example, encourages learners to use the target language for real-world communication, emphasizing fluency over accuracy in the early stages of learning (Ellis, 2012). Similarly, TBL focuses on completing specific tasks—such as problem-solving or collaborative projects—that require the practical use of language skills. These techniques, which have proven effective in teaching languages like English

and Spanish, can address the shortcomings of traditional Arabic instruction by promoting active engagement and contextual learning (Albirini, 2016).

Technology-driven approaches have also revolutionized language learning and offer significant potential for Arabic. Tools such as language-learning apps, gamified platforms, and virtual reality environments provide interactive and immersive experiences that are often missing in traditional classrooms (Warschauer et al, 1998). These tools can bridge the gap between MSA and regional dialects, a challenge unique to Arabic due to diglossia. For example, digital platforms can expose learners to both written and spoken forms of Arabic, offering exercises in pronunciation, conversation, and comprehension. Furthermore, incorporating authentic multimedia resources, such as Arabic films, news broadcasts, and music, can deepen cultural understanding while enhancing language proficiency (Nunan, 2004).

By integrating these innovative methods, Arabic language instruction can evolve to better meet the needs of diverse learners. These techniques, while originally developed for other languages, align with the complexities and nuances of Arabic. As this review demonstrates, there is immense potential to combine modern approaches with traditional elements to create a holistic, engaging, and effective learning experience.

3. METHODS

3.1 Note on Methodology

This article is conceptual in nature and does not involve primary empirical data collection. The analysis and recommendations presented are based on an extensive review of current literature, established pedagogical theories, and instructional practices observed in the field of Arabic language teaching. The methods discussed herein are derived from secondary sources and interpreted through a conceptual lens to propose innovative approaches for teaching Arabic as a second language.

3.2 Use of Digital Platforms in Beginner Arabic Instruction

The integration of technology into Arabic teaching has revolutionized language instruction, making learning more accessible, engaging, and effective. Applications like Duolingo and Rosetta Stone provide structured, gamified lessons for beginners, allowing learners to practice vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation at a self-directed pace(Allen, 2019). These platforms provide immediate feedback and track progress, fostering motivation and retention. Online platforms and virtual classrooms, such as Zoom and Google Classroom, have further expanded the possibilities for Arabic instruction by facilitating real-time interaction between learners and instructors regardless of geographical barriers (Auliya, 2025).

Gamification has emerged as a powerful tool in technology-driven language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2019). By incorporating game elements such as points, levels, and leaderboards, gamified platforms increase engagement and motivation. In Arabic instruction, platforms like Duolingo and Kahoot! offer gamified quizzes and competitions on vocabulary and verb conjugation, helping beginners reinforce grammar through repetition in a fun format. For example, teachers can create competitive in-class Arabic vocabulary games using Quizizz or assign leveled challenges on Memrise, which adapts based on learner performance.

3.3 Enhancing Oral Proficiency through Communicative Techniques

The communicative approach emphasizes practical usage of the language by prioritizing real-life conversational Arabic over rote grammar drills. This method involves role-playing, dialogues, and immersive speaking exercises that simulate real-world interactions, such as ordering food, introducing oneself, or navigating a new city (Richards et al, 2001). By focusing on fluency and the ability to communicate effectively in everyday scenarios, learners develop confidence and a functional understanding of Arabic.

Shifting the focus from grammar-centric instruction to practical application has been shown to improve learner outcomes. Instructors encourage students to experiment with the language without fear of making mistakes, fostering a positive learning environment. This approach has been successful in teaching other world languages and has significant potential for Arabic, where learners often struggle to bridge the gap between grammar rules and practical usage (Ellis, 2012).

3.4 Cultural Immersion and Experiential Learning in Arabic

Language and culture are deeply interconnected, and cultural immersion is a crucial component of effective Arabic instruction. Incorporating cultural experiences such as Arabic music, films, cuisine, and festivals helps learners contextualize the language while deepening their cultural understanding (Albirini, 2016). For example, watching Arabic films exposes students to colloquial phrases and regional accents, enhancing listening skills and cultural competence.

Virtual reality (VR) technology has opened new avenues for cultural immersion by simulating Arabic-speaking environments (Warschauer et al., 1998). For example, learners can use Mondly VR to practice dialogues in a virtual Arab marketplace, or engage in

360° video tours of historical sites like Petra or the Great Mosque of Cordoba, enhancing both listening skills and cultural knowledge.

3.5 Task-Based Language Learning for Real-World Arabic Use

TBL involves designing real-world tasks that require learners to use Arabic in meaningful ways. Examples include writing emails, making travel bookings, or ordering food in a restaurant. By focusing on goal-oriented exercises, TBL enables learners to develop practical skills that are directly applicable to everyday life (Nunan, 2004).

The contextual nature of TBL ensures that learners acquire vocabulary and grammar in a natural and relevant way, enhancing retention and comprehension. Moreover, TBL promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving, as students often work in groups to complete tasks. This method is particularly effective for intermediate and advanced learners who are looking to refine their functional proficiency in Arabic.

3.6 Hybrid Models: Blending Traditional and Digital Arabic Instruction

Blended learning combines traditional classroom instruction with online and self-paced learning to create a flexible and effective teaching model. This approach allows learners to benefit from face-to-face interaction with instructors while also accessing online resources such as videos, exercises, and quizzes for additional practice (Graham, 2006).

Hybrid teaching models are particularly beneficial for Arabic learners, as they address the limitations of both traditional and online instruction. For example, classroom sessions can focus on speaking and listening skills, while online components provide grammar explanations, vocabulary drills, and self-assessment tools. This integrated approach accommodates diverse learning styles and paces, making Arabic instruction more inclusive and effective.

3.7 Incorporating Arabic Literature to Foster Cultural and Linguistic Depth

Exposing learners to authentic Arabic literature, including simplified texts, poetry, and stories, enriches their language learning experience. For beginners, simplified versions of classic works or folk tales provide an accessible introduction to the richness of Arabic literature (Wahba et al, 2014). Intermediate and advanced learners can explore original texts, which offer insights into the cultural, historical, and social context of the Arab world.

Reading authentic materials enhances vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and cultural awareness. Additionally, literary works often include idiomatic expressions and rhetorical styles, helping students grasp the nuances of Arabic. Incorporating literature into the curriculum fosters a deeper appreciation for the language and its cultural heritage.

3.8 Integrating Dialects with Modern Standard Arabic for Communicative Competence

The debate over teaching colloquial Arabic dialects versus MSA remains a significant issue in Arabic language instruction. MSA, the formal written form of Arabic, is essential for reading, writing, and formal communication. However, colloquial dialects are more relevant for everyday interactions, as they are the spoken languages of the Arab world (Ryding, 2014).

Innovative teaching methods aim to balance the two by integrating both MSA and dialects into lessons. For example, instructors can teach MSA as the foundation while incorporating dialect-specific phrases for conversational practice. Technology plays a vital role in this approach, as digital platforms can expose learners to both forms through videos, interactive dialogues, and regional media content. This balanced approach equips learners with the skills to navigate formal and informal settings effectively (Wahba, 2017).

3.9 Challenges and Limitations of Innovative Methods

While innovative methods for teaching Arabic as a second language have demonstrated considerable potential, they are not without challenges and limitations. One significant issue is accessibility to technology. Many learners, especially in under-resourced regions, may lack access to the necessary technological infrastructure, such as reliable internet connections, devices, or software (Warschauer et al, 1998). Additionally, the cost of advanced tools like virtual reality systems or premium language-learning applications can be prohibitive for both institutions and individual learners.

Teacher training is another critical barrier. Many educators, particularly those accustomed to traditional methods, may lack the technical expertise or pedagogical knowledge required to implement these approaches effectively (Graham, 2006). For example, integrating gamification or using task-based learning strategies necessitates not only familiarity with technology but also a shift in teaching philosophy toward student-centered learning. Without adequate professional development programs, teachers may struggle to adopt and sustain these innovative methods.

Cultural sensitivity poses another challenge, particularly when integrating Arabic culture into the

Table 1: Summary of Innovative Teaching Strategies and Their Expected Outcomes.

Teaching Strategy	Key Features	Expected Pedagogical Outcomes
Technology Integration	Use of apps, gamification, virtual classrooms	Increased learner engagement, self-paced practice, improved retention
Communicative Approach	Role-playing, real-life dialogues	Enhanced fluency, reduced fear of mistakes, practical language use
Cultural Immersion	Arabic films, music, cuisine, festivals, VR cultural experiences	Deepened cultural understanding, contextualized language learning
TBL	Goal-oriented tasks (e.g., emails, travel scenarios)	Improved functional language skills, collaboration, real-world use
Blended Learning	Combination of online and in-person learning	Flexibility, accessibility, catering to diverse learner needs
Use of Arabic Literature	Simplified and authentic texts, poetry, stories	Vocabulary enrichment, reading comprehension, cultural literacy
Dialect and MSA Integration	Balanced use of Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial dialects	Enhanced adaptability, communicative competence across contexts

curriculum. While cultural immersion enhances learning, there is a risk of oversimplifying or misrepresenting complex cultural elements, potentially reinforcing stereotypes. Instructors need to be mindful of presenting diverse and nuanced perspectives of Arab culture (Albirini, 2016). Furthermore, the steep learning curve associated with Arabic itself remains a challenge. The language's diglossic nature and complex grammar can overwhelm learners, particularly if innovative methods do not adequately address these intrinsic difficulties (Kessler et al, 2017).

These challenges highlight the need for systematic teacher development programs and infrastructure support to ensure the successful implementation of innovative methods. Training programs should focus on equipping teachers with the skills and confidence to integrate technology and contemporary pedagogical strategies into their classrooms. Additionally, further research and collaboration are required to create cost-effective, accessible solutions tailored to diverse learning environments.

3.10 Practical Recommendations for Educators

To effectively adopt innovative methods in Arabic language teaching, educators can follow several practical strategies. First, teachers should begin by exploring and utilizing readily available tools and platforms. For example, apps like Duolingo or Mondly offer interactive exercises, while platforms like Edmodo or Google Classroom provide flexible virtual learning environments for Arabic instruction (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Educators can also take advantage of free or low-cost resources such as YouTube channels, podcasts, and open-access Arabic learning websites to enhance their lessons.

Incorporating cultural immersion activities can also significantly enrich the learning experience. Teachers can integrate multimedia resources such as Arabic films, music, and news clips into their curriculum, encouraging learners to engage with authentic language materials. Organizing cultural events, such as Arabic cuisine days or traditional music performances, can further immerse students in the language and its cultural context (Albirini, 2016).

Tailoring teaching methods to the needs and levels of individual learners is essential for maximizing effectiveness. For beginners, it may be helpful to use simplified texts and gamified vocabulary exercises to build foundational skills. Advanced learners, on the other hand, can benefit from task-based projects, such as creating presentations or composing emails in Arabic. Teachers should assess students' progress regularly and adjust their approaches to address specific challenges, such as grammar difficulties or conversational fluency (Nunan, 2004).

Finally, educators should prioritize their professional growth by participating in workshops, online training courses, and conferences focused on teaching Arabic as a second language. Networking with other educators and sharing best practices can also provide valuable insights and foster collaborative innovation (Brown, 2014). By staying informed about the latest pedagogical trends and technological advancements, teachers can continue to refine their methods and create dynamic, engaging learning environments.

4. DISCUSSION

This study critically examined the efficacy of innovative methods in Arabic language teaching for non-native speakers, not merely in terms of their conceptual novelty but also their practicality, scalability, and pedagogical coherence. Unlike traditional methods that emphasize rote learning and grammatical memorization,

the methods presented—task-based learning, communicative approaches, digital tools, and cultural immersion—represent a paradigmatic shift toward learner-centered, interactive instruction aligned with second language acquisition (SLA) research (Ellis, 2012; Nunan, 2004). These approaches support the view that meaningful interaction and context-rich input are central to language development, particularly for a complex and diglossic language like Arabic.

Pedagogically, each method brings unique benefits. TBL, for instance, promotes real-world communication and functional language use, helping learners apply grammar and vocabulary in authentic contexts. CLT fosters fluency through low-stakes interaction, and cultural immersion deepens not only comprehension but learner motivation. These approaches challenge the grammar-translation tradition still dominant in Arabic instruction and encourage more holistic engagement with the language (Richards et al, 2001; Albirini, 2016).

However, pedagogical innovation must be met with institutional and infrastructural readiness. A major implementation barrier is the lack of teacher training. Many instructors, particularly in the Arab world, have been educated under traditional paradigms and may lack familiarity with technology or student-centered pedagogies. Professional development, mentorship, and curriculum redesigns are needed to facilitate this transition (Kessler et al, 2017). Without adequate support, innovative methods may be superficially adopted without pedagogical depth or sustained use.

Another key challenge is technological disparity. While tools such as Duolingo, Mondly VR, or Kahoot can enhance learning, their effectiveness is limited by unequal access to stable internet, devices, or platforms—especially in underfunded schools or refugee contexts (Warschauer et al, 1998). Moreover, many ed-tech tools were not developed with Arabic's specific linguistic features in mind, such as diglossia, root-pattern morphology, and orthographic complexity. As a result, learners may find these platforms helpful for surface-level skills but inadequate for deeper linguistic competence.

Regional factors further complicate the implementation of these strategies. In the Gulf region, educational systems are often centralized, formal, and religiously grounded. MSA is typically emphasized in curricula due to its role in religious texts and formal discourse. Learners may have limited exposure to spoken dialects in academic settings, and cultural immersion is often restricted to institutional contexts. Therefore, introducing dialectal variation or informal interaction may be met with institutional resistance or cultural sensitivity concerns.

Conversely, in the Levantine region, where Arabic diglossia is more fluid in daily life, learners often switch between MSA and dialect organically. Educational practices may be more receptive to integrating spoken Arabic into classrooms, and exposure to films, songs, and colloquial dialogues is common. As such, strategies that blend dialectal input with MSA—such as role-plays using Levantine Arabic for conversation and MSA for formal tasks—may align more naturally with learners' experiences and societal language practices (Ryding, 2014).

These distinctions suggest that innovative approaches must be regionally contextualized. A "one-size-fits-all" curriculum risks ignoring the linguistic realities and cultural dynamics of specific learner populations. For instance, Gulf learners might benefit from scaffolded exposure to dialects alongside Qur'anic Arabic, while Levantine learners may respond better to immersive, informal dialogue exercises. Educators and curriculum designers must account for these socio-cultural variables in developing effective programs.

Culturally immersive strategies also carry both promise and pitfalls. While they offer learners meaningful context and deepen cultural understanding, there is a danger of perpetuating stereotypes or simplifying the diversity of Arab cultures. A robust cultural curriculum must go beyond cuisine, clothing, or festivals to include nuanced discussion of history, regional diversity, and contemporary Arab societies. Instructors should be trained to facilitate culturally sensitive and inclusive materials that challenge essentialist narratives (Albirini, 2016).

Additionally, learner variables—such as age, motivation, literacy level, and educational background—affect the success of these methods. Adult learners may find technology-based self-learning empowering, while younger students might respond better to gamified platforms. Refugees or migrant learners, on the other hand, may face trauma-related or socio-economic barriers that limit access or engagement. Inclusive design must accommodate these differences through differentiated instruction and accessible learning pathways (Brown, 2014).

Despite these challenges, several strategies can increase the effectiveness and equity of implementation. First, blended learning offers a practical compromise—leveraging online platforms while retaining face-to-face interaction. Second, regional collaboration across the Arab world could support shared training programs and resource development that reflect the diversity of dialects and cultural practices. Third, creating open-access Arabic language corpora and digital resources tailored to dialect

and MSA integration would help bridge the authenticity gap in digital tools.

The inclusion of Arabic literature in teaching also adds depth to the learner experience. Simplified texts or excerpts from contemporary authors can introduce learners to idiomatic expressions, cultural metaphors, and social discourse, enriching both vocabulary and cultural fluency. Particularly in advanced stages, literature serves not only as a linguistic resource but as a cultural dialogue that encourages critical thinking and empathy (Wahba et al., 2014).

While this study affirms the potential of innovative strategies to transform Arabic language instruction, their impact depends on thoughtful, context-aware implementation. Teacher capacity building, equitable access to resources, and regional curricular adaptation are essential. Future directions should include empirical evaluations of these methods in different Arabic-speaking regions, especially in under-researched contexts like sub-Saharan Africa and refugee education. Only through a comprehensive and adaptive approach can Arabic education respond to the linguistic diversity and educational aspirations of its global learners.

4.1 Future Directions for Research

While this study highlights significant advancements in Arabic language instruction, several areas warrant further exploration. First, there is a pressing need to examine the long-term impact of technology on Arabic learning, particularly how sustained use of digital tools affects language proficiency and retention over time. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the role of gamification, virtual reality, and adaptive learning platforms in achieving fluency.

Additionally, the effectiveness of task-based approaches in teaching Arabic remains under-researched. Future investigations could focus on how these methods cater to learners of varying proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds, as well as their applicability to teaching both MSA and regional dialects. Measuring outcomes in terms of communicative competence and cultural understanding would be particularly beneficial.

Interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists, educators, and technologists is crucial to advancing research and innovation in this field. Linguists can provide a deeper understanding of Arabic's structural complexities, while educators contribute pedagogical insights, and technologists develop tailored tools to enhance learning. Such partnerships could lead to breakthroughs in curriculum design, assessment methods, and resource accessibility.

By addressing these research gaps, the field can develop more effective, inclusive, and sustainable strategies for teaching Arabic, ultimately benefiting learners worldwide.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the transformative potential of innovative methods in teaching Arabic as a second language, particularly through the integration of technology, communicative approaches, cultural immersion, and task-based learning. These strategies directly address persistent challenges in Arabic pedagogy—such as diglossia, learner disengagement, and overreliance on grammar-translation methods—by promoting functional language use and contextualized learning. The findings underscore the importance of aligning teaching practices with modern second-language acquisition theory while recognizing the regional and cultural complexities unique to Arabic instruction. Pedagogical innovation must be supported by robust teacher training, equitable access to resources, and curricular flexibility tailored to learners' sociolinguistic environments, such as those in the Gulf versus Levantine regions. Moving forward, interdisciplinary collaboration between educators, linguists, and technologists is essential to refine and adapt these strategies across diverse educational contexts. As Arabic language education enters a new era, adopting evidence-based, inclusive, and context-aware practices will be crucial in empowering learners and ensuring that Arabic instruction remains relevant, effective, and culturally resonant in an interconnected world.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

Allen, R. (2019). Arabic as One Language: Integrating Dialect in the Arabic Language Curriculum ed. by Mahmoud Al-Batal. Al-ʿArabiyya: *Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic*, 52, 159-162. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/747372.

Auliya, A., Aljanah, D. S., Sagala, R., Hijriyah, U., & Ghazi, F. (2025). The Digital Revolution in Arabic Language Learning: An Analysis of Trends, Results, and the Future of Language Education in the Digital Age. *RADEN INTAN: Proceedings*

on Family and Humanity, 2(Allen, 2019), 194-203. http://dx.doi.org/10.47352/3032-503x.69

Godwin-Jones, R. (2019). Riding the digital wilds: Learner autonomy and informal language learning. https://doi.org/10125/44667

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching. Cambridge university press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305

Ellis, R. (2012). Language teaching research and language pedagogy. *John Wiley & Sons*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118271643

Albirini, A. (2016). Modern Arabic sociolinguistics: Diglossia, variation, codeswitching, attitudes and identity. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315683737

Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (1998). Computers and language learning: An overview. *Language teaching*, 31(Auliya, 2025), 57-71. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800012970

Nunan, D. (2004). Task-Based Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336

Graham, C. R. (2006).Blended Learning Systems: Definition, Current Trends, and Future Directions. In Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (Eds.), The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs. Pfeiffer.

Wahba, K., Taha, Z. A., & England, L. (2014). Handbook for Arabic language teaching professionals in the 21st century. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676111

Ryding, K. C. (2014). Arabic: A linguistic introduction. Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139151016

Wahba, K. M. (2017). Materials development in Arabic language learning and teaching: Realities, needs, and future directions. In Handbook for Arabic Language Teaching Professionals in the 21st Century, Volume II (pp. 232-252). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.53543/jeps.vol9iss4pp701-717

Brown, H. D. (2014). Principles of language learning and teaching: A course in second language acquisition. Pearson. https://gustavorubinoernesto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/H-Douglas-Brown-Principles-of-Language-Learning-and-Teaching.pdf

Kessler, G., & Hubbard, P. (2017). Language teacher education and technology. The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning, 278-292. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118914069.ch19

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Dr. Ayad Neissi was born in Iran in 1993. He received his Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language and Literature from Lorestan University in 2015. He then earned his Master's degree in Arabic Language and Literature from Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz in 2017. In 2021, Dr. Neissi obtained his Ph.D. in Arabic Language and Literature from the Persian Gulf University in Bushehr, where he was recognized as the best Ph.D. graduate.

Since 2023, Dr. Neissi has been serving as a faculty member at Farhangian University, holding the academic rank of Assistant Professor. He is also an esteemed member of the Primary Disciplinary Council at Farhangian University in Khuzestan Province, located at the Pardis Rasoul Akram. Additionally, he holds the position of Media Network Manager at the same institution.

Dr. Neissi's research interests include comparative literature, resistance literature, and Arabic language education

Dr. Ayad Neissi
Assistant Professor
Department of Arabic language and Literature
Farhangian University
Tehran, Iran
E-mail: ayadneissi@cfu.ac.ir
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6509-2247

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 120 – 130 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

CONCEPT
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Targeting Challenges to Manage the Fear of Public Speaking

Dwayne Bynum*

Medgar Evers College, 1650 Bedford Ave.,Brooklyn, NY 11225, U.S.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 15-Feb-25
Revised: 24-May-25
Accepted: 28-May-25
Published: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Dwayne Bynum
E-mail: dbynum@mec.cuny.edu

Citation: Dwayne Bynum (2025). Targeting Challenges to Manage the Fear of Public Speaking. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 120–130. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1284.p120

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The fear of public speaking remains a pervasive issue for many individuals, particularly within the American context. This article explores how linguistic and cultural dynamics—specifically American dialectal intolerance—contribute to heightened speaker anxiety and reinforce social boundaries around "standard" and "substandard" forms of speech. **Methods**: This study employs a qualitative analysis of rhetorical and sociolinguistic literature, alongside observational insights, to examine the psychological and cultural factors that influence public speaking anxiety in American society. The role of dialect perception and audience-centered communication is critically assessed. **Results**: Findings suggest that fear of public speaking is exacerbated when individuals internalize negative attitudes toward non-standard dialects or feel pressure to conform to a perceived linguistic norm. However, shifting the speaker's focus from self-consciousness to audience engagement significantly reduces anxiety and enhances delivery effectiveness. **Discussion**: The study highlights the need to challenge dialectal prejudice and promote a more inclusive understanding of linguistic diversity in public discourse. Cultivating an audience-oriented mindset can empower speakers to communicate more confidently, regardless of their linguistic background. **Conclusion**: Managing the fear of public speaking is not only possible but sustainable when speakers transcend self-interest and prioritize meaningful audience connection. Addressing dialectal intolerance is essential to fostering equitable and empowering communication environments.

Keywords: audience centered, confidence, dialectal prejudice, fear, managing, public speaking, self-centeredness, Standard American English.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research shows that speaker anxiety is a significant concern among professionals in both private and public environments (Francis & Miller, 2008). Lack of tactfulness, self-assurance, and calmness, as well as and anxiety-related perceptions, prevent numerous individuals from delivering effective presentations (Kemnitz, 2005). Evidence shows that the fear of public speaking ranks among the most common human fears (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). Before speaking, individuals may experience speaker anxiety symptoms, such as loss of appetite, headaches, vomiting, wobbly knees, forgetfulness, trembling voice, inability to form sentences, and inadequate volume, among other traits associated with oral communication deficiencies (Brandrick et al., 2020; Fu, 2007). Individuals fear public speaking for diverse reasons, including dialectal insecurity. Dialectal prejudice contributes to public speaking anxiety among Americans whose speech patterns are classified as "substandard." Such fear associated with speaking publicly increases self-doubt and inadequacies related to social, academic, and emotional instability. The scope of dialectal insecurity

and its nexus to speaker anxiety remains underexplored within communications studies. This study seeks to answer the following research question: How have past events, cultural behavior, and the linguistic systemization of the American language preserved dialectal prejudice, contributing to speaker apprehension among Americans who speak "substandard English?" A speaker's frailties can negatively affect the communication process (Munz & Colvin, 2018). This paper addresses the need for speakers to manage their fear of public speaking by availing support that fosters a managed approach to speaking confidently despite challenges related to dialectal prejudices.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs a qualitative conceptual literature approach, drawing from linguistic themes through texts, historical accounts, and social narratives. It explores how dialectal prejudices cause individuals to fear public speaking due to insecurities within the American context. The inability to meet the linguistic criteria due to dialectal variance causes them to be classified as unintelligent. However, authentic public speaking training courses can help speakers manage their fear of public speaking. Existing literature supports the belief that equipping individuals to speak effectively in public empowers them to accomplish their goals (Hindo & Gonzalez-Prendes, 2011). Persons enabled to publicly express their ideas benefit in their vocation and private lives (Larenas, 2011). A tactful speaker equips oneself to ensure an occupation, influence, discreetly impart information, and foster alliances (Tornabene, 2006). Despite the fear of speaking publicly, speaking more builds confidence (Palpandan et al., 2020).

2.1 Historical Roots of American Dialectal Prejudice: Approaching the Seventeenth Century

Before 1650, many English people immigrated from Britain to America, settling in New England colonies such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, and the Mid-Atlantic regions (Bailyn, 2011). Ironically, many British immigrants who geographically distanced themselves from their motherland strove to emulate British culture. This socio-mimicry included attempts to adopt the language of the British aristocracy. These settlers, steeped in British values, customs, and culture, did not escape discrimination. Leith (1947) points out that the trend in South-East England was to articulate the r-pronouncing, and those in American cities, such as New York, Jamestown, Charleston, and Boston, imitated this articulation. Anglophiles who favored British upper-class speech (the Queen's or King's English) viewed American English as offensive, barbarous, and lacking in refinement and correctness. Greet (1936) favored the Southern dialect while disparaging the New England dialect, referring to it as the language of untutored yokels (implying the language of Appalachian Hillmen). A Southern journalist echoed similar sentiments, describing the dialect of the natives in Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts as a "… nasal bark" (Tunnell, 2006, p. 817). Krapp (1925) referred to the Puritan's (of New England) resonant characteristic as a "nasal twang" (pp. 23-24). Southern American English was heavily influenced by British immigrants who arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607 (Nagle & Sanders, 2003). The influence of Anglomania prevented some individuals from relinquishing their sociolinguistic ties.

2.2 Historical Roots of American Dialectal Prejudice: During the Nineteenth Century

By the 1800s, the number of immigrants leaving England had not decreased. Gash (1979) notes that by the 1820s, approximately 27,000 immigrants, including about three thousand criminals, arrived in North America, Quebec, and New York each year between 1825 and 1841 (p. 13). Immigrants also came from Scotland, adding to Colonial America's mixture of divergent English dialects (Kurath, 1928). The 1800s marked a time when middle-class American industrialists accumulated significant wealth and sought to join genteel circles. To ensure this rite of passage, they began distinguishing themselves from the working class by adopting a cosmopolitan language. This distinction led to a predisposed systematization of speech known as the Doctrine of Correctness, initially devised for the rising middle class in England (Leonard, 1929). Americans discovered that acquiring literacy could free them from ignorance and help them acquire wealth, overcome injustice, and influence others. However, the Doctrine of Correctness appeared to propagate social and dialectal snobbery. Benjamin Franklin contributed to the Anglomania. He liberally borrowed distinct words and sounds from the British dialect and introduced them to the Philadelphians. One such utterance was the broad "a," which replaced the customary "a" sound, a change that native New Englander Noah Webster disdained (Mencken, 2010a, 1965b). Despite Philadelphia's receptivity to fashionable English, New Englanders became exasperated and disenchanted with British derision and non-acceptance. Pursuing independence from Britain, Webster struggled relentlessly to liberate Colonial America from the British mindset. He envisioned an America that could chart its destiny and dialect separate from England's. His convictions led him to compose a three-volume book comprising a speller, grammar, and reader titled The Grammatical Institute of English Language.

2.3 Contemporary American Dialectal Prejudice: Twenty to Twenty-First Century

The influence of dialectal prejudice followed Americans into the twentieth century. Those from northwestern and central Ohio believed they spoke high/standard English (Benson, 2003). Such perspectives increased the likelihood of individuals classifying others from Ohio as speakers of low or substandard English. Kinzler and DeJesus (2013) pointed out that Northern Americans regard Southern Americans as speakers of inferior English. Labeling any dialect as substandard is stigmatizing and implies negative judgments, including assumptions of low intelligence. McDavid (1965) asserts that speaking a nonstandard dialect does not reflect a lack of intelligence (p. 260).

Despite the American dialectal melee, General American English has been the dominant dialect spoken in the United States. Mayer (2012) points out that the major American dialects spoken in the United States are General American, Eastern, New England, and Southern. Around 155 million Americans speak General American, roughly 130 million speak Eastern, about 15 million speak New England, and close to 100 million speak the Southern dialect (pp. 7-8). Newscasters and television hosts speaking General American because it is associated with educated and upper-class society (Metzger, 2019). Companies hire employees who speak Standard English/ General American English to appeal to their target audience (Mai & Hoffman, 2011). The strong bias favoring American (GA)/Standard American English (SAE) makes it difficult for buyers to determine which region a seller originates from. Hence, employing GAE enables an individual to disguise or neutralize their marginalized dialect to conform to the dominant one.

3. DIALECTAL INSECURITY: RELEVANCE TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

Dialectal prejudice contributes to the fear of public speaking among some Americans, as linguicists criticize those who do not speak the endorsed American dialect. However, a distinction should be made between dialect and accent. A dialect is a version of a language characterized by a subgroup's use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Accents, however, pertain to the influence of one's native language over a secondary spoken language, often through intonation, pitch, and word structure. Despite their differences, these terms are often used interchangeably (Huang, 2007). A common misunderstanding is that only people from overseas have accents when in fact "Every speaker has an accent," including native-born Americans (Grover et al., 2022, p. 640).

Nevertheless, individuals who do not meet the current standard of linguistic approval often lack the confidence to speak in public. Even an ardent speaker can succumb to insecurity, experiencing anxiety, nervousness, and timidity. The thought of potential failure can overwhelm a speaker to the point of debilitating fear (Agina, 2015). The regrettable legacy of American dialectal prejudice influences individuals to perceive themselves negatively when speaking to an audience. When audience members hear a speaker, they may judge the person, ascribing unfavorable attributes to the individual (Kutlu et al., 2021; Imhof, 2010; Anderson et al., 2007). Consequently, they may conclude that the speaker typifies a particular group, leading to stereotyping. A speaker's regional dialect may signal to a biased listener that they are from an Appalachian region of America, suggesting "backwardness, violence, poverty, and hopelessness" (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2015, p.778). Similarly, a speaker who uses African American Vernacular English (AAVE)—for example, dropping the -ing or /r/ in certain words, such as "Caolina" instead of "Carolina," or substituting /d/ for /th/, as in "dem" for them—is also perceived as uneducated or violent (Kurinec & Weaver, 2021).

The fear of being judged, criticized, or rejected by others leads to a negative self-perception, triggering social anxiety. Subsequently, individuals with such experiences tend to circumvent social situations that create anxiety (Avramchuk et al., 2022). Discriminating listeners overlook the advantages of a speaker's bi-dialecticism or bi-dialectism. They fail to recognize that a speaker of two languages has mastered code-switching. Earlier researchers believed that children code-switched because it demonstrated confusion and that children were unaware, they were using two languages, but this conclusion was incorrect (Hughes et al., 2006). Such a conclusion can suggest that, from childhood to adulthood, children were intellectually incapable of manipulating two languages. The sensitivity and awareness of language that bilingual speakers possess should encourage listeners to be receptive to what they can learn instead of passing prejudgment. A listener who prejudges a speaker based on their distinct way of speaking "sees a people [as they see their language]" (Wheeler, 2019, p. 2). Linguistic discrimination or glottophobia creates an environment that hinders speakers from managing their anxiety, but speaker empowerment is achievable.

4. A SPEAKER'S NEED FOR GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCY

The grammatical ability to articulate ideas intelligibly using English is essential for communicating effectively. Speakers of the English language who familiarize themselves with grammar development cultivate appreciable language sensitivity. Nearly globalized, the English language has become the lingua franca (Ament, 2021; Kaiper, 2018;

Poggensee, 2016; Sung, 2016; Wei, 2016; Alfehaid, 2014). Hence, educators agree that English is the language students should master because it is how individuals judge their speech mastery (Oysara, 2021). In their formative years, youths learn how to formulate sophisticated sentences. The ability to manipulate morphemes to construct sentences in the past tense and use action words and superlatives is crucial. The development of these written and oral skills carries over into adulthood. A speaker's grammatical skill enables them to chronicle information and complement the arrangement of ideas in their manuscript (Reinking & Von der Osten, 2013).

4.1 Grammatical Competence: Confidence for Public Speaking

The rules and principles governing how to speak a language reinforce many written practices. Considering the present topic that addresses managing the fear of public speaking, the writer argues that grammar encompasses a language's overall arrangement and design, comprising syntax, morphology, phonology, and semantics. Grammar rules govern language implemented by both the encoder and decoder as a vehicle to extract meaning. The depth of a speaker's grammatical proficiency indicates their intelligence and establishes credibility (Handayani, 2013). For instance, listeners do not anticipate that an invited speaker will be ill-proficient in utilizing morphemes (Benmamoun et al., 2013). They do not expect to hear statements such as, *"The dog is biggest than the cat," "He walk home,"* or *"The dog hidden the bone."* These misapplied utterances alter the established meaning, introducing internal interference for the listener. Ordinarily, listeners assume a speaker is familiar with basic word forms. Correctly employing inflectional affixes enables effective communication (Seifart, 2015). Appropriate morpheme usage is core for the speaker because even the slightest alteration of its word form changes its meaning (Hogan, 2012). The progression of skill in morpheme usage allows the user to construct sentences employing plural words, possessive language, action, and past tense. Grammatical competency enhances speaker confidence, making it easier to address an audience (Rinke & Kupisch, 2013). Moreover, managing the fear of public speaking requires the speaker to be audience-centered.

5. MANAGING THE FEAR OF SPEAKING TOWARDS AUDIENCE-CENTEREDNESS

To become audience-centered, a speaker must take decisive measures to manage public speaking anxiety. Consider some reasons individuals fear speaking in front of audiences: "Lack of vocabulary, nervousness, inability to answer a question, …making mistakes, [fear of] people laughing at me; [I] don't like people looking at me [or] standing in front of a large audience" (Humaera & Pramustiara, 2022, p. 142; Ibrahim et al., 2022, p. 140; Grieve et al., 2021, p.1285). The writer has worked with individuals who were adamant about not speaking in front of an audience because English was not their first language. Some offered unrelated excuses, such as unkempt hair or broken nails. Objections motivated by fear of speaking publicly redirect the speaker's focus from audience-centeredness to self-centeredness. Self-absorption overtakes the meaningful moment of idea-sharing due to because of a speaker's fear. Self-centeredness places one's welfare above all others (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). De Tocqueville (1945) stated, "Selfishness is a passionate and exaggerated love of self, which leads [an individual] … to prefer [oneself] to everything in the world" (p.98). Speakers who focus on their speech anxiety become engrossed in their desires and needs, overlooking the opportunity to empathize emotionally with the wants and needs of their audience.

5.1 Individualism: An Influence on Speaker Anxiety

The writer argues that a self-centered perspective partially prevails in American society to some extent because the culture promotes individualism, a philosophy that prioritizes personal interest over the interests of others. Individualism is associated with "independent … self-interest … and personal attitudes" (Bazzi et al., 2020, p.1). Although other countries are experiencing a rise in individualism, America remains "the most individualistic country" and "the Hallmark of American culture" (Santos et al., 2025; p.8; Stivers, 2003, p. 56). A self-serving mindset makes speaking in front of people problematic because the speaker places their concerns ahead of others. Negative imaginary thoughts trouble the speaker before or during the performance. Low self-esteem may precipitate speaker anxiety due to experiences with racism or sexism (Vevea et al., 2009). Some speakers allow their adverse experiences to influence and define their self-worth. Standing before a group, the speaker may experience a sense of inadequacy, inability, and inferiority. Anxiety associated with a self-evaluative sense of rejection from one's audience can overwhelm the speaker. Subsequently, negative thoughts catalyze "internal noise," preventing the speaker from effectively communicating with their audience (Beebe & Beebe, 2024, p.3).

5.2 Philanthropy: A Selfless Act Towards Audience-Centeredness

An audience-centered speaker is empowered to manage speaker anxiety because they present themselves as a philanthropist. Often, philanthropy is associated

with economics through funding, grantmaking, or some monetary expression of gifting (Ealy, 2014; Patton et al., 2015). Defining philanthropy merely as a humanitarian act that prompts individuals to donate funds to help others is incomplete. Its popular meaning should not obscure its true essence. Philanthropy is the outpouring of one's concern or care for humanity (Walton, 2017). It embodies selflessness, sacrificial giving, and generosity without expectation of reciprocity. Thus, the speaker must be willing to look beyond their self-interest and serve the interests of the audience members. The speaker should strive to empathize with the audience's pleasure, sadness, pain, anger, confusion, and excitement. When the speaker selflessly shares information with the audience, they operate at a high level of empathy rather than a low one (Cialdini et al., 1987). A speaker should endeavor to adapt to their audience, attempting to feel or experience what the audience feels. This is achieved by implementing emotional intelligence, which is gaining prominence in diverse areas (Clancy, 2014).

Unquestionably, one cannot distinctly feel or experience another's emotion; that experience is unique to the individual. However, the speaker can empathize with the audience (Nanay, 2018). One can engage in such an emotional process due to shared emotional neural activation when observing others display emotion (Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Hence, a speaker can demonstrate philanthropic concern for the audience by expressing feelings for their listeners. This selfless act of sacrificial giving fosters a person to feel good about themselves (Anik et al., 2009). Audience-centeredness is rooted in a philanthropic concern arising from the speaker's selflessness, which motivates both the audience and the speaker. Although speakers must be listener-focused, they will require further development and specialized communicators to hold them accountable. Speaker training hubs provide such empowerment.

6. PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING COURSES

6.1 Instructor's In-Class Course Training

Research indicates that students who rated public speaking among their fears after taking a public speaking course no longer experienced intense fear of speaking in public (Dwyer, 2021; Marinho, 2017). Students experienced speaker empowerment upon completing the researcher's fundamental speech course. Each student was expected to present a demonstration, an expository, and a persuasive speech during the semester. The intent of the first two informative speeches differed—the former required students to use a chronological pattern, while the latter required a topical sequence. The final speech involved a persuasive template for influencing attitudes, beliefs, values, or behaviors. The class engaged in warm-up speaking drills, impromptu speaking, voice and diction exercises, grammar strengthening in written/oral tasks, and targeting oratorical competencies and weaknesses. The researcher emphasized intonation to make speakers sensitive to the appropriate time to express various emotions during delivery.

Concurrently, attention was given to body language to complement the speaker's voice. The instructor prompted students to exercise their imagination during performances to prevent distractions. They participated in warm-up exercises such as slow, deep breathing to increase oxygen flow into the bloodstream, vocal exercises to relax the vocal folds, and tongue twisters to improve awareness of word clarity. The instructor addressed students' objections regarding their fear of public speaking, informing them that their negative thoughts stemmed from self-centeredness. Some students offered counterclaims, attempting to justify their reasons for speaker apprehension. For example, audience members might think the speaker is boring, nervous, unkempt, or lacking sophistication. Nevertheless, the instructor countered each objection by explaining how their imaginary beliefs about their fear of public speaking exemplified self-absorption. Instead of focusing on themselves, they were instructed to concentrate on sharing information with their listeners for altruistic purposes. Focusing on the needs of others rather than on oneself connects the speaker with the feelings of others, thereby empowering them to empathize (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). Following this preparation, students performed with confidence and managed their fear. Genuine instructional public speaking training hubs are invaluable.

6.2 Coursera

Coursera offers Dynamic Public Speaking Specialization, an online asynchronous instruction program through the University of Washington. The courses are sequenced and designed for beginners and professionals. Participants may enroll in public speaking courses and take one or more of them in any order. Coursera advises enrollees to take Introduction to Public Speaking first. Instruction lasts from 4 to 6 months. Students receive firsthand training in coursework activities that address various areas, including informative, persuasive, and ceremonial speaking, as well as strategies for reducing public speaking anxiety. Learners study at their own pace and participate in coursework by watching instructional videos, completing readings, taking quizzes, and submitting assignments. The instructors offer learners graded feedback on all assignments. Potential learners are

offered a limited free trial. Upon completion of training, learners earn a certificate.

6.3 Auburn University

Auburn University offers the Public Speaking Expert Certificate Program with an Externship. This six-month, fee-based course employs an academic approach to instruction, beginning with an introduction to public speaking and progressing to the delivery of informative, persuasive, and ceremonial speeches. The course teaches students how to effectively use PowerPoint as an electronic medium to clarify and enliven each presentation. Upon passing the Microsoft Office Specialist exam, students who complete the course are eligible for national certification.

6.4 Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking

Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking is an 8-week online course offered through Harvard University, focusing on writing and public speaking. The instructor provides students with background on the development of rhetoric, clarifies misconceptions about rhetoric, and illustrates its prominent role in society. Students learn the crucial components of an argument, how to identify fallacies, and how to evaluate the validity of an argument by investigating its premises to determine its logical connection to its conclusion. Students who pay for the course receive feedback on graded assignments and examinations. Upon course completion, recipients receive a certificate; however, students who opt to take the course for free do not. Although no claims of reducing public speaking anxiety are made, such instructional content is likely to increase a learner's confidence if they struggle with the fear of public speaking.

6.5 Ovation

Ovation is a 15-week certificate program that offers learners a 7-day free trial. This interactive, virtual reality software is tailored for individuals struggling with the fear of public speaking. The software provides various speaking environments where learners can practice. It allows students to upload their speeches and select a specific audience type, including the audience's attire. Learners can practice at home using their laptops, and the interactive system provides evaluative feedback, such as notifications of vocalized pauses and alerts that indicate when the speaker is speaking too slowly, too quickly, in a monotone, or verbalizing run-ons. For more immersive practice, learners can use virtual reality goggles that place them in a three-dimensional setting, enhancing the experience.

6.6 Dale Carnegie

Dale Carnegie offers a twelve-week course in speech instruction, available online or in person. This instruction is geared towards helping individuals manage their public speaking anxiety. Trainees progress through the curriculum to achieve speaker competence. Carnegie coaches work with trainees to assist them in mastering public speaking, coping with stress, adapting to changing job environments, and enhancing their skills (Dale Carnegie, 2014).

6.7 Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International offers a public speaking course that trainees can attend in person or online, and the fees are low. The organization is committed to improving individuals' public speaking skills. Toastmasters International publishes its course of study in its Competent Communication booklet. The ten speaking courses are scaffolded sequentially, building on the previous course. Additionally, fifteen accelerated courses target communication, emphasizing multimedia presentations, soft skills, and storytelling. Members participate regularly in public speaking assemblies, where each member presents a speech before the club members. At the end of each speech, the Toastmaster provides critiques (Toastmasters International, 2014).

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Historical Perspectives

Dialectal prejudice was a British export to Colonial America. Since its introduction, Americans have continued to identify linguistic differences. These linguistic variances have served as a rubric by which Americans subjectively determine an individual's intelligence. Some individuals avoid public speaking because they fear others will conclude that their regional dialect or accent makes them less intelligent (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022).

7.2 Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Evidence of an individual's ability to code-switch between two or more languages reveals mastery, sensitivity to language, and intelligence. The implications suggest that Standard American English is the preeminent mode of communicating and that employing any other American regional dialect is substandard or considered "broken" English (Wheeler & Thomas, 2013). The inferences in this study reinforce that an individual's regional dialect or accent does not define their self-worth. Linguistic differences should not deter a speaker.

7.3 Psychological Perspectives

Marks et al. (2018) emphasize that somatic symptoms emerge when an individual must speak in

public, resulting from imaginary or unpleasant thoughts. Irrational fears foster stress and anxiety, triggering the body to sweat, tremble, and produce a rapid heart rate, dry mouth, and other physical symptoms. However, empowerment through mental reconditioning is the determining factor for managing such fear. Any individual willing and disciplined enough to avail themselves of available adjuncts, such as grammatical development, audience-centeredness, and public speaking training courses, can make public speaking more manageable.

8. CONCLUSION

Public speaking is one of humanity's most common and intense fears. Before speaking, nervousness overtakes many presenters, leading to temporary physical setbacks, from headaches to vomiting, loss of appetite, wobbly knees, and other somatic deterrents. The fear of speaking is driven by an individual's self-focused, imaginary, or real shortcomings that obstruct effective communication. A speaker's anxiety may be heightened by the perception that the audience judges their intelligence based on linguistic bias. This fear of being judged triggers speaker insecurity—the fear of being labeled negatively. Listeners often attach negative characteristics to speakers upon recognizing their ethnic association (Brandt & Reyna, 2011). Speakers who fail to communicate effectively using the endorsed regional dialect may inadvertently signal their belonging to a sub-society (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2015; Kurinec & Weaver, 2021). Regarding the history of American English, linguistic discrimination has influenced how the American community evaluates an individual's level of intelligence (Orelus, 2020). Such historically negative influences falsely represent a speaker's ability to communicate effectively.

Most people will, at some point, need to speak publicly (Rahman, 2014). Whether at a wedding, funeral, professional setting, or as a student enrolled in a course, individuals are often called to present information through demonstration, explanation, or persuasion (McConnell, 2009). Fallacious reasoning would dictate that one must instinctively speak well if one is knowledgeable. However, speaking well encompasses effective communication. Learning to do so involves not just understanding the theory but also learning through practice.

9. Implications

9.1 Educators

The popularized belief by Sir Francis Bacon that knowledge is power is taught in the halls of academia in a way that reinforces this assertion. However, Dale Carnegie (2023) challenged this notion, restating that the application of knowledge is power. Educators are responsible for motivating students to do more than communicate; they must communicate effectively. Learning the art of public speaking allows students to apply what they have learned in theory. Hence, educators can require their students to deliver assignments orally. What they have learned in theory will be shared with the class while the information is delivered orally and in non-verbal delivery. Both avenues serve as conduits to increase retention, deepen the understanding of a topic, promote learning, increase communication skills, and boost student confidence. During the speech preparation process, students must determine whether their goal is to demonstrate, explain, or persuade. They will then learn to research and phrase the topic for their specific audience, arrange ideas logically, support their ideas with reliable data, rehearse the presentation, and execute the speech.

9.2 Policymakers

Sometimes, policymakers may become engrossed in establishing procedures and rules that govern education, and due to underfunding, programs such as public speaking may be eliminated. Policymakers are individuals who use the tools of persuasion to explain complex issues to laypeople in straightforward terms. They also speak at workshops, discussions, and debates at the national, state, and district levels of government. Considering the numerous speaking engagements, more internships should be extended to students, allowing them to participate in mock presentations and progress to real ones.

9.3 Public Speaking Coaches

Public speaking coaches target specific markets to remain current with industry trends. They understand the need to appeal to emerging markets, such as immigrants looking to improve their English. With this information, training coaches compete to offer non-native English speakers an inexpensive and straightforward method using artificial intelligence at home to reduce or modify their accent, as exemplified by the Elsa Speak application, which promises results and fun during the learning process (Becker & Edalatishams, 2019).

10. Recommendations

If "…one cannot not communicate," then human communication is essential (Watzlawick et al., 2017, p. 275). Given its necessity, policies supporting this need should be initiated at the federal and state levels. The influence of the president's appointment of the Secretary of Education can shape policy, whereby laws influence curriculum. If policymakers integrate public speaking into the curriculum, educators and speech training hubs will likely follow suit for favorable reasons. It may not suffice merely to argue that public speaking improves one's

ability to think clearly, enabling one to analyze arguments, become a better active listener, and be more sensitive to reading body language. Lawmakers must be convinced that integrating public speaking into the curriculum is an investment. Such a course grooms individuals for political, community, or social civic engagement. Incorporating public speaking into the curriculum can optimize instructional resources, as instructors specializing in the field would not need to be hired for rudimentary courses. Existing instructional staff would be capable of teaching students at the basic levels if they took an online certificate instructional speech training course. The speech course would be time and cost-effective compared to enforcing mandatory in-person classes.

For this reason, public speaking should be interdisciplinary and integrated into various disciplines such as education, business, and political science. If public speaking courses are integrated into instructor training, teachers can demonstrate to their students, through application, the importance of artful dialogue.

If policymakers initiate such an action, educators will likely follow suit for favorable reasons. Schools will ensure they are legally compliant to receive funding from federal, state, or local municipalities. Legal compliance will influence the overall quality of public speaking instruction, benefiting learners from elementary school through college.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declares that there is no conflicting interest regarding this article.

Acknowledgments

The author extends his gratitude to the editors and reviewers of JHSSR for an opportunity to publish in their journal. Additionally, he thanks his team of reviewers, listeners, and encouragers who empowered him to bring the article to its materialization.

Funding

The author received no funding for this research.

References

Agina, I. V. (2015). *Public speaking: The psychology of overcoming stage fright: 8 proven tactics that will help you overcome stage fright*. Ikenna Victor Agina.

Alfehaid, A. F. (2014). The positive and negative effects of globalization on English language teaching and learning. *Arab World English Journal*, *5*(2), 103–109.

Ament, J. (2021). The role of internationalization and English as a lingua franca in English-medium instruction in higher education. *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association for Anglo-American Studies*, 219–231. http://doi.org/10.28914/Atlantis-2021-43.2.12

Anderson, A., Downs, S. D., Faucette, K., Griffin, J., King, T., & Woolstenhulme, S. (2007). How accents affect perception of intelligence, physical attractiveness, and trustworthiness of Middle-Eastern-, Latin-American-, British-, and Standard-American-English-accented speakers. *BYU Undergraduate Journal of Psychology*, *3*(1), 5–11.

Anik, L., Aknin, L. B., Norton, M. I., & Dunn, E. W. (2009). Feeling good about giving: The benefits (and costs) of self-interested charitable behavior. (Working Paper No. 10-012). *Harvard Business School Marketing Unit*.

Avramchuk, O., Plevachuk, O., & Suvalo, O. (2022). Social avoidance as a pathogenetic link between social anxiety disorder and posttraumatic experience. *Proceeding of the Shevchenko Scientific Society. Medical Sciences*, *66*(1), 98-113.

Bailyn, B. (2011). *The peopling of British North America: An introduction*. Vintage.

Bazzi, S., Fiszbein, M., & Gebresilasse, M. (2020). Frontier culture: The roots and persistence of "rugged individualism" in the United States. *Econometrica, 88*(6), 2329–2368.

Beebe, S. A., & Beebe, S. J. (2024). *Concise public speaking handbook* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Becker, K., & Edalatishams, I. (2019). ELSA speak accent reduction. *Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Proceedings, 10*(1).

Benmamoun, E., Montrul, S., & Polinsky, M. (2013). Heritage languages and their speakers: Opportunities and challenges for linguistics. *Theoretical Linguistics*, *39*(3–4), 129–181.

Benson, E. J. (2003). Folk linguistic perceptions and the mapping of dialect boundaries. *American Speech*, *78*(3), 307–330.

Brandrick, C., Hooper, N., Roche, B., Kanter, J., & Tyndall, I. (2021). A comparison of ultra-brief cognitive diffusion and positive affirmation interventions on the reduction of public speaking anxiety. *The Psychological Record*, *71*(1), 109–117.

Brandt, M. J., & Reyna, C. (2011). Stereotypes as attributions. In E. L. Simon (Ed.), *Psychology of stereotypes* (pp. 47–80). Nova Science Publishers.

Carnegie, D. (2023). *How to stop worrying & start living: Mastering the art of living stress-free: Timeless strategies for overcoming anxiety and finding happiness.* Good Press.

Carnegie, D. (2014). *Dale Carnegie training*. Dale Carnegie. https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en

Cialdini, R. B., Schaller, M., Houlihan, D., Arps, K., Fultz, J., & Beaman, A. L. (1987). Empathy-based helping: Is it selflessly or selfishly motivated? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*(4), 749–758.

Clancy, C. (2014). The importance of emotional intelligence. *Nursing Management, 21(8),* 15. https://doi.org/10.7748/nm.21.8.15.s21

Coppinger, L., & Sheridan, S. (2022). Accent anxiety: An exploration of non-native accent as a source of speaking anxiety among English as a foreign language (EFL) students. *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning*, *4*(2), e429322.

Dambrun, M., & Ricard, M. (2011). Self-centeredness and selflessness: A theory of self-based psychological functioning and its consequences for happiness. *Review of General Psychology*, *15*(2), 138–157.

Davidson, J. J. (2009). Speak or die! *Records Management Bulletin, 145*, 28. Retrieved from https://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=14&sid=6555dc2d-6925-47cb-a7f2fc0a3fd47a74%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGI2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=34263829&db=11s

De Tocqueville, A. (1945). Of the use which the Americans make of public associations in civil life. In E. Ostrom & T. K. Ahn (Eds.), *Foundations of social capital*. Edward Elgar Publishing

Díaz Larenas, C. (2011). Exploring knowledge of English-speaking strategies in 8th and 12th graders. *Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 13*(2), 85-98.

Dunstan, S. B., & Jaeger, A. J. (2015). Dialect and influences on the academic experiences of college students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *86*(5), 777–803.

Dwyer, K. K., & Davidson, M. (2021). Take a public speaking course and conquer fear. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, *8*(2), 255–269. http://dx.doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v8i2.456

Dwyer, K. K., & Davidson, M. M. (2012). Is public speaking really more feared than death? *Communication Research Reports, 29*(2), 99–107.

Ealy, L. T. (2014). [Review of the book *Why philanthropy matters: How the wealthy give, and what it means for our economic well-being*, by Z. J. Acs].

Francis, T.A., & Miller, M. J. (2008). Communication apprehension: Levels of first-generation college students at 2-year institutions. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 32,* 38–55.

Gash, N. (1979). *Aristocracy and people: Britain, 1815-1865* (Vol. 8). Harvard University Press.

Greet, W. C. (1936). Southern speech—which way? *Southern Journal of Communication*, *1*(2), 1–4.

Grieve, R., Woodley, J., Hunt, S. E., & McKay, A. (2021). Student fears of oral presentations and public speaking in higher education: A qualitative survey. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *45*(9), 1281–1293.

Grover, V., Namasivayam, A., & Mahendra, N. (2022). A viewpoint on accent services: Framing and terminology matter. *American Journal of speech-language pathology*, *31*(2), 639–648.

Handayani, W. (2013). Grammar usage in public speaking. *Journal Polingua: Scientific Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Education*, *2*(2), 81–85.

Hindo, C. S., & González-Prendes, A. A. (2011). One-session exposure treatment for social anxiety with specific fear of public speaking. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *21*(5), 528-538.

Hogan, G. (2012). *Building better grammar*. Cengage Learning.

Huang, R., Hansen, J. H., & Angkititrakul, P. (2007). Dialect/accent classification using unrestricted audio. *IEEE Transactions on Audio, Speech, and Language Processing*, *15*(2), 453–464.

Hughes, C. E., Shaunessy, E. S., Brice, A. R., Ratliff, M. A., & McHatton, P. A. (2006). Code-switching among bilingual and limited English proficient students: Possible indicators of giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *30*(1), 7–28.

Humaera, I., & Pramustiara, P. (2022). Students' anxiety when speaking in front of the class. (pp. 138–147). *KnE Social Sciences*.

Ibrahim, N., Anuar, N. A. K., Mokhtar, M. I., Zakaria, N., Jasman, N. H., & Rasdi, N. N. (2022). Exploring the fear of public speaking through social cognitive theory. http://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i1/11320

Imhof, M. (2010). Listening to voices and judging people. *The International Journal of Listening*, *24*(1), 19–33.

Kaiper, A. (2018). "If you don't have English, you're just as good as a dead person": A narrative of adult English language literacy in post-apartheid South Africa. *International Review of Education*, *64*(6), 737–757.

Kemnitz, J. J. (2005). *Communication apprehension in an online public speaking course*. University of South Dakota.

Kinzler, K. D., & DeJesus, J. M. (2013). Northern = smart and Southern = nice: The development of accent attitudes in the United States. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *66*(6), 1146–1158.

Krapp, G. P. (1925). *The English Language in America* (Vol. 2). Century Company, for the Modern Language Association of America. https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/

Kurath, H. (1928). Origin of the dialectal differences in spoken American English. *Modern Philology*, *25*(4), 385–395.

Kurinec, C. A., & Weaver III, C. A. (2021). "Sounding Black": Speech stereotypicality activates racial stereotypes and expectations about appearance. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.785283

Kutlu, E., Tiv, M., Wulff, S., & Titone, D. (2021). The impact of race on speech perception and judgments of accentedness in racially diverse and non-diverse groups. *Applied Linguistics*.

Leith, D. (1947). *A social history of English*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Leonard, S. A. (1962). *The doctrine of correctness in English usage, 1700–1800* (No. 25). Russell & Russell.

Mai, R., & Hoffmann, S. (2011). Four positive effects of a salesperson's regional dialect in service selling. *Journal of Service Research*, *14*(4), 460–474.

Marinho, A. C. F., de Medeiros, A. M., Gama, A. C. C., & Teixeira, L. C. (2017). Fear of public speaking: Perceptions of college students and correlates. *Journal of Voice*, *31*(1), 127-e7.

Marks, E. H., Franklin, A. R., & Zoellner, L. A. (2018). Can't get it out of my mind: A systematic review of predictors of intrusive memories of distressing events. *Psychological Bulletin, 144*(6), 584.

Mayer, L. (2012). *Fundamentals of voice and articulation* (14th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

McConnell, C. R. (2009). Effective oral presentations: Speaking before groups as part of your job. *The Health Care Manager, 28*(3), 264–272.

McDavid, R. I., Jr. (1965). American social dialects. *College English*, *26*(4), 254–260.

Mencken, H. L. (2010). *The American language: A preliminary inquiry into the development of English in the United States*. Cosimo. (Original work published in 1919).

Mencken, H. L. (1965). *The American language: An inquiry into the development of English in the United States* (4th ed.). Alfred Knopf Incorporated.

Metzger, L. (2019, May 14). *Newscasters from nowhere: Decoding the lack of linguistic variation in news broadcasting*. [PDF]. https://s3-eu-west-1.

amazonaws.com/s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod/9780367775209/D%20Leah27s%20Newcasters%20from%20Nowhere.pdf

Munz, S. M., & Colvin, J. (2018). Communication apprehension: Understanding communication skills and cultural identity in the basic communication course. *Basic Communication Course Annual*, *30*(1), 10.

Nagle, S. J., & Sanders, S. L. (Eds.). (2003). *English in the Southern United States*. Cambridge University Press.

Nanay, B. (2018). Catharsis and vicarious fear. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *26*(4), 1371–1380.

Orelus, P. W. (2020). Other people's English accents matter: Challenging the hegemony of Standard English accents. *Excellence in Education Journal*, *9*(1), 120–148.

Oysara, M. (2021). Enhancing students' linguistic competence through authentic texts in English. *Ilkogretim Online*, *20*(4).

Patton, M. Q., Foote, N., & Radner, J. (2015). A foundation's theory of philanthropy: What it is, what it provides, and how to implement it. *The Foundation Review*, *7*(4), 4.

Poggensee, A. (2016). The effects of globalization on English language learning: Perspectives from Senegal and the United States.

Rahman, Q. M. (2014, September 02). The art of presentation: Coping with speech anxiety. *The Financial Express*. http://www.financialexpressbd.com

Reinking, J. A. & Von der Osten, R. (2013). *Strategies for successful writing: Rhetoric, research guide, reader, and handbook* (10th ed.). Longman.

Rinke, E. & Kupisch, T. (2013). *The development of grammar: Language acquisition and diachronic change.* John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Santos, D. V., Afonso, O., & Vasconcelos, P. B. (2024). Individualism, innovation, and inequality: Exploring the nexus. *Economic Systems*, 101252.

Seifart, F. (2015). Direct and indirect affix borrowing. *Language*, *91*(3), 511–532.

Shopen, T., & Williams, J. M. (1980). *Standards and dialects in English.* Winthrop Publisher, Inc.

Stivers, R. (2003). Ethical individualism and moral collectivism in America. *Humanitas*, *16*(1), 56–73.

Sung, C. C. M. (2016). English as a lingua franca in the Asian context: Perspectives on identity in a multilingual world. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, *26*(2), 175–192.

Toastmasters International. (2014). *Toastmasters training*. https://www.toastmastersinternational.org

Tornabene, L. (2005). Enhancing interaction during public presentations. *American Journal of Health Education*, *36*(1), 58-60.

Tunnell, T. (2006). Creating "The Propaganda of History": Southern editors and the origins of "carpetbagger" and "scalawag." *The Journal of Southern History*, *72*(4), 789–822.

Vevea, N. N., Pearson, J. C., Child, J. T., & Semlak, J. L. (2009). The only thing to fear is... public speaking: Exploring predictors of communication in the public speaking classroom. *Journal of the Communication, Speech & Theatre Association of North Dakota*, *22*, 1–8.

Vignemont, F., & Singer, T. (2006). The empathic brain: How, when, and why? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 10*(10), 435–441.

Walton, A. (2017). What the lens of philanthropy might bring to the history of U.S. higher education. *The History Teacher*, *51*(1), 9–36.

Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., & Jackson, D. (2017). Some tentative axioms of communication. In *Communication Theory* (pp. 74–80). Routledge.

Wheeler, R., & Thomas, J. (2013). And "still" the children suffer: The dilemma of Standard English, social justice, and social access. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *33*(1/2), 363–396.

Wheeler, R. (2019). Attitude change is not enough: Changing teacher practices to disrupt dialect prejudice in the classroom. In M. A. Godley, J. A. Reaser, & A. J. Farrington (Eds.), *Teaching Language Variation in the Classroom* (pp. 109–119). Routledge.

Wei, M. (2016). Language ideology and identity seeking: Perceptions of college learners of English in China. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 15*(2), 100–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2015.1137477

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

Dwayne Bynum is Assistant Professor of Speech Communications at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York. He is also an ordained member of the clergy and an experienced public speaker. Dr. Bynum holds an A.A. in Liberal Arts, a B.A. and M.A. in Rhetoric and Public Address, an M.A.R. in Religious Education, an S.T.M. in Sacred Theology, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

His scholarly and pedagogical interests center on strategies for reducing speaker anxiety and enhancing the effectiveness of oral presentations. He is currently authoring a practical guide aimed at empowering novice speakers.

Dr. Dwayne Bynum
Medgar Evers College
1650 Bedford Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11225
U.S.
Email: dbynum@mec.cuny.edu

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 131 – 139 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

CONCEPT
Peer-reviewed | Open Access

Speaking Truth Through Myth: A Feminist Critique of Narrative Justice and Resistance in *Song of Draupadi*

Thendral S[1]* and Felicita Mary Praba I[2]

[1]*Research Scholar, Department of English, Loyola College, Chennai, India*
[2]*Research Supervisor, Department of English, Loyola College, Chennai, India*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 18-Mar-25
REVISED: 20-May-25
ACCEPTED: 26-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Thendral S
E-mail: thendralsuresh1999@gmail.com

Co-Author(s):
Author 2: Felicita Mary Praba
E-mail: felicitamary@loyolacollege.edu

Citation: Thendral S and Felicita Mary Praba I (2025). Speaking Truth Through Myth: A Feminist Critique of Narrative Justice and Resistance in Song of Draupadi. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 131–139. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1305.p131

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a global issue of grave concern, disproportionately affecting women and often silencing their voices. This violence is rooted in deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and cultural stereotypes that diminish the value of women. In response, feminist reinterpretations of mythology have emerged as powerful tools for challenging oppressive narratives and reclaiming agency for female figures. **Methods:** This study employs a qualitative literary analysis of Song of Draupadi by Ira Mukhoty, examining the text through the lens of narrative justice, the ethical restoration of silenced voices through storytelling—a framework that emphasizes the right to represent one's experiences, confront trauma, and seek recognition and redress. The analysis focuses on how mythological retellings can critique gender violence and promote empowerment. **Results:** The novel presents a vivid portrayal of the trauma and oppression faced by women, while also celebrating their resilience and acts of defiance. Draupadi, reimagined through a feminist lens, emerges as a symbol of resistance against the social structures that perpetuate violence. The narrative challenges traditional patriarchal interpretations and gives voice to the suppressed experiences of women. **Discussion:** Through the reclamation of mythological characters, feminist retellings like Song of Draupadi not only expose the realities of gender-based violence but also affirm women's strength and agency. These stories function as acts of narrative justice, allowing for the rearticulation of silenced experiences and contributing to broader discourses on gender equity and empowerment. **Conclusion:** Feminist mythological reinterpretations offer a critical cultural intervention against gender-based violence. By highlighting the novel's unique reimagining of Draupadi's voice, this paper plays a significant role in feminist myth criticism and expands the discourse narrative justice in Indian feminist literary retellings. By centring women's voices and their lived experiences, such narratives foster awareness, resistance, and transformation, advancing the pursuit of justice and equality.

Keywords: Draupadi, Feminist Retelling, Gender-Based Violence, Indian Mythology, Narrative Justice, Patriarchy, Resistance, Women's Empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender based violence (GBV) continues to be a problem and is deeply ingrained in societal beliefs and cultural stories that frequently silence the individuals affected by it. The World Health Organization (2021) reports that about one, out of every three women globally

has encountered sexual abuse at some point in their lives highlighting the magnitude of this breach of human rights. This form of violence is frequently connected to cultural elements that sustain gender disparities restricting women's independence and perpetuating their exclusion. In this situation reimagined mythological narratives incorporating feminist viewpoints play a crucial role in questioning and reshaping oppressive stories. Through reinterpreting narratives writers can offer insights into women's lives and emphasize their strength in overcoming challenges. Whatever form of the revisionist myth making may be perused, it contests the dominant narratives with an intention of "revaluing the experiences of the marginalized" and therefore giving space to the silenced and in turn reconfiguring their identity (Beena, 2019, p. 13).

Ira Mukhoty is a contemporary Indian author and historian who focuses on unearthing the stories of women often left out of mainstream historical and literary discussions. Her novel, *Song of Draupadi*, offers a bold feminist reinterpretation of the *Mahabharata*, seen through the eyes of women of *Mahabharata* such as Draupadi, Gandhari, Satyavati and others, one of the epic's most intricate and often overlooked misrepresented figures. This paper centers around the intriguing concept of narrative justice, which involves the ethical and political act of reclaiming the voices of marginalized or silenced mythological women characters through storytelling. This act serves to address and correct the historical or literary imbalances that exist. In this framework, resistance is portrayed as both an intellectual and emotional response, where women assert their autonomy by challenging the roles that patriarchal traditions have placed upon them. This study examines how Mukhoty's narrative enacts justice by emphasizing women characters resistance and reclaiming their voice as a means of empowerment.

1.1. Theoritical Framework And Methodology

This paper utilizes a blend of theoretical perspectives grounded in intersectional feminism, postcolonial theory, and myth criticism to delve into Ira Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi*. By weaving these frameworks together, the novel emerges as a literary quest for narrative justice and serves as a powerful instrument of feminist myth-making.

This paper adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach, informed by feminist and postcolonial literary criticism. Through close reading of *Song of Draupadi* by Ira Mukhoty, the study explores how narrative strategies and mythic subversions give voice to gendered resistance and reclaim silenced histories. The novel was chosen as a case study for its contemporary reinterpretation of the *Mahabharata* through a feminist lens, offering a fertile ground to examine how mythic retellings can enact what Rafe McGregor terms "narrative justice" by restoring dignity to marginalized figures like Draupadi, Satyavati, Gandhari and others.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Both scholars and writers have explored how these narratives bridge ancient and contemporary discourses, emphasizing the evolving portrayal of women's agency, defiance, and their resistance to oppression. At the turn of the 21st century, feminist retellings began to flourish, transforming mythological stories to highlight the resilience, strength, and agency of women who had been overlooked in traditional epics. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's*The Palace of Illusions* (2008) represented a notable change, as it presented the *Mahabharata* from Draupadi's perspective, portraying her not just as a key character in the epic's narrative but as a woman with her own desires, intellect, and agency. Divakaruni's storytelling reinterprets Draupadi as a confident woman who is acutely aware of her identity and her influence in shaping her fate. Following Divakaruni, Kavita Kane has emerged as a prominent voice in feminist mythological retellings, enriching the genre by focusing on female characters who are often overlooked. In her novel, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (2013), offers a deep exploration of Uruvi, Karna's wife, who navigates her role as an outsider while grappling with the ethical dilemmas presented in the epic. Kane's subsequent work, *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019), revisits Ahalya's story from the *Ramayana*, showcasing her path to reclaiming her dignity after enduring an unjust curse. Volga's book, *The Liberation of Sita* (2016), was a significant work that rethought Sita's path to self-discovery by introducing her to characters like Surpanakha and Ahalya. It delved into topics of pain and recovery.

Recent feminist interpretations of myth have opened fresh perspectives for examining how figures like Draupadi are reimagined. Scholars like Mohanty (2003), in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, highlight the need to challenge dominant narratives that often silence women's voices. This aligns with the way *Song of Draupadi* seeks to reclaim Draupadi's agency. Menon (2012), in *Seeing Like a Feminist*, emphasizes the dynamic nature of feminist resistance within the Indian context, a theme that resonates in Mukhoty's depiction of Draupadi's evolving identity. Rajan (1993), in *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*, critiques both symbolic and essentialist representations of women in literature—an issue Mukhoty addresses by portraying Draupadi not merely as a mythic figure but as a complex political and emotional being. While these retellings are empowering, some critics warn against romanticizing

myth without addressing the hierarchies often embedded within it—an ethical challenge this paper thoughtfully navigates.

More recently, Ira Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi* (2020) has carried on this approach, blending old stories with modern feminist ideas. Together, these books question traditional tales, portraying women not as helpless victims but as strong individuals shaping their own lives. They connect the past with current discussions on gender-based violence and women's rights. This discussion can be further studied based on Rafe McGregor's concept of narrative justice which he explored in his seminal work titled *Narrative Justice*, emphasizing key themes such as representation, agency, and empowerment in literary works. This study examines the notion of narrative justice in Ira Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi*, highlighting how this fresh take on a classical myth confronts traditional storytelling methods and amplifies the voices of those who have often been overlooked.

Through reclaiming and reinterpreting Draupadi, Kunti, Amba, Satyavati, Gandhari and other women's stories, Mukhoty not only gives them agency of narrative but also allows for an analysis of them through a critical perspective in relation to gender violence, resistance, and its resolution in classical mythology. It points out that not only does retellings raise consciousness, but also raises challenge to dominant patriarchal narratives, which offers a strong argument for the transformative capacity of feminist retellings. Thus, McGregor's concept of narrative justice is used as the backdrop for the analysis. Narrative justice posits that storytelling can bring about what is called a justice restoration in victims who have been lost in a powerful cultural account of being marginalized or misrepresented. It also used as tool of allowing silenced voices to be heard and challenges historical accounts that have perpetuated inequality or misrepresented in certain groups.

3. Rafe McGregor's Concept of Narrative Justice

This concept of narrative justice is particularly relevant to Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi*, as it underscores how storytelling can not only reframe but also empower the characters it portrays. Narrative representations, including mythological retellings, can impart ethical and political knowledge through their narrative structure, regardless of factual accuracy. The stories hold ethical value "in virtue of their narrativity," allowing readers to gain insights into moral issues that might transcend literal truth (McGregor, 2018, p. 42). This idea aligns well with feminist retellings of mythology, where re-imagined narratives invite readers to consider the ethical and political implications of traditional stories. The concept of narrative justice is introduced in section 19, in the book narrative justice linking narrative sensibility with "the reduction of criminal inhumanity" by presenting moral and ethical perspectives that encourage empathy and understanding (McGregor, 2018, p. 89). In feminist mythological retellings, this approach of narrative justice can be seen as a way of addressing historical gender injustices and reimagining mythological figures as advocates for justice. By evoking an ethical response in readers, these retellings support the study that narrative representations can contribute to both aesthetic education and a deeper moral consciousness.

In mythological retellings, narrative justice is achieved by reinterpreting traditional stories to confront and correct historical wrongs, particularly those affecting marginalized or oppressed individuals. Narrative justice, as a "contemporary rather than traditional thesis of aesthetic education," links aesthetics, ethics, and politics to influence societal values and reduce ideological biases that can fuel crime and injustice (McGregor, 2018, p. 106). Mythological retellings play a crucial role in this process by cultivating narrative sensibility allowing readers to empathize with characters who have traditionally been marginalized, like Draupadi or Sita, often reinterpreted as the characters of defiance, resilience, justice, and resistance.

4. Song of *Draupadi* by Ira Mukhoty

Ira Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi* offers a fresh perspective on the lives of the women from the *Mahabharata*—Satyavati, Kunti, Madri Gandhari, Draupadi, Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika. These women confront the strict patriarchal norms of their society, finding their voices and thereby pursuing justice, and standing up against injustice. The novel showcases their intelligence, determination, and their ability to seek justice and even take revenge when they are wronged. In a society where women are often pressured to conform to submissive roles, the characters in the novel consistently engage in arguments, plead their cases, and use reason to assert their voices. Their expressions are fuelled by a righteous anger, stemming from their fierce determination. The narrative showcases their struggle for agency and their pursuit of just causes, even in the face of oppressive patriarchal structures.

The novel delves into the mystical origins of Ganga, who bears children with King Shantanu, and examines how her divine absence influences the life of Devarata, who is later known as Bhishma. In this way, Ganga is depicted as a formidable presence, and her departure leaves a lasting impact on the lives of those she leaves behind. Satyavati, who comes from humble origin, ascends to power through her unwavering determination and ambition. She ensures

her marriage to Shantanu by insisting that her sons be the heirs to the throne. This demand, driven by her wish to never again be at the mercy of fate, showcases her resilience and strategic mindset. Her earlier meeting with the sage Parashar, where she sought strength and power, marks a significant turning point, transforming her into a formidable figure. Ultimately, Satyavati's decisions lead to Devarata's heart-wrenching vow of celibacy, a crucial moment in the *Mahabharata.*

The abduction of the Kashi princesses—Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika—by Devarata during their swayamvara is a stark display of patriarchal dominance. Devarata defends his actions by referencing his clan's long-standing honour and the perceived insult of being excluded from the swayamvara. Amba's profound affection for Salva and the violent disruption of her life marked the beginning of a series of tragic events. This is marked by the ill treatment of Amba which becomes the first act of injustice leading to unfortunate events in the epic. On the other hand, the novel also seems to emphasize the rage and vengeance that Amba harbours as an indication of the impending war, therefore, due to such reasons she becomes the focal point of the novel's feminine defiance and oppression. The next chapters focus on the Hastinapur's legacy, driven by Satyavati's determination to secure an heir. After the death of her son Vichitravirya, Satyavati takes a pragmatic step by invoking the practice of *Niyoga* to ensure the dynasty's survival. She calls upon her son Vyasa, a sage, to father children with her widowed daughters-in-law, Ambika and Ambalika, even though they initially experience shame and reluctance. Ambika, finding it hard to tolerate Vyasa's harsh nature, persuades her maid to step in for her. This decision leads to the births of three sons: Dhritarashtra (who is visually challenged), Pandu (who is pale yet strong), and Vidura (born of the maidservant, wise and intelligent but excluded from ruling due to his lower caste). The three boys grow up united as brothers in the palace of Hastinapur, enjoying a brief, golden childhood filled with happiness, friendship, and the simple joys of life.

The subsequent chapters explore a deeply moving re-imagination of Gandhari's arrival in Hastinapur. It portrays the emotional upheaval and betrayal she faces upon realizing that her marriage is to Dhritarashtra, who is visually challenged—a fact that was kept hidden from her family during the negotiations. This narrative intricately blends themes of agency, loyalty to family, and the politics surrounding marriage alliances in a patriarchal context. In the next chapters Mukhoty explores Kunti's life, originally named Pritha, was adopted by Kunti Bhoja and was renowned for her remarkable devotion and strong character. As a young girl, she caught the attention of the sage Durvasa, who bestowed upon her a powerful mantra that could summon any deity and bless her with a child. Driven by youthful curiosity, she decided to test the mantra and gave birth to a son, Karna, through Surya, the Sun god. However, due to societal pressures, she was forced to abandon him, a choice that would haunt her for the rest of her life. Kunti eventually married Pandu, king of Hastinapur. Pandu also took Madri, the princess of Madra, as his wife, which created a complication between the two queens. Although Kunti was the elder, her status was frequently tested by Madri's youthful charm. Due to a curse from a sage that foretold his death if he engaged in intimacy, Pandu chose to give up the throne and moved to the forest with Kunti and Madri.

In the forest, Pandu's desperation for heirs led him to convince Kunti to use a divine mantra to conceive children. His wife initially resisted the idea but finally yielded to the advice of her husband. Kunti gave birth to Yudhishthir, Bheem, and Arjun. Madri, who also desired children, similarly used the mantra and bore twins, Nakul and Sahadev. Kunti's relationship with her sister-in-law, Gandhari, was marked by mutual respect but underlying tension. Gandhari, the mother of the hundred Kauravas, saw Kunti's sons, the Pandavas, as rivals, which created a complicated relationship between the two families. Their fierce loyalty to their sons often put them at odds with each other. The death of Pandu was a tragic event, he fell victim to his curse after being unable to resist Madri. Stricken with guilt, Madri chose to end her life by self-immolation, leaving Kunti to raise all five Pandavas alone. Kunti's journey became a powerful story of resilience, sacrifice, and devotion as she navigated the personal losses and the political and familial struggles of her time. The following chapters highlights key events like the swayamvara of Draupadi, where Arjuna triumphantly wins her hand. The Pandavas subsequently builds their magnificent capital, Indraprastha, reflecting their increasing influence. When Duryodhana visits Indraprastha, he is consumed by jealousy at its splendour and faces humiliation in the ceremonial hall after accidentally stumbling into an illusionary waterbody. Draupadi's laughter at his blunder strikes a deep blow to his pride, leaving him seething over her boldness as a woman married to five men. Shakuni, always the manipulator, proposes a dice game to lure the Pandavas, setting the stage for their ruin. The notorious game unfolds, resulting in Yudhishthira losing everything, including Draupadi, to the Kauravas. This leads to Draupadi's public humiliation in Hastinapur, where she delivers a powerful curse against Duryodhana and Dushasana. The Pandavas' subsequent exile and Draupadi's unwavering determination pave the way for the impending Kurukshetra war, which serves as the epic's

climax. Mukhoty's retelling emphasizes the strength and dignity of the female characters in the face of injustice, highlighting their crucial role in shaping the narrative of the *Mahabharata*.

5. Reclaiming Justice Through Narrative Justice: Transformative Power of Narrative in Mukhoty's *Song of Draupadi*

5.1. Satyavati: Submissive Daughter to Powerful Matriarch

Satyavati from Submissive Daughter to Powerful Matriarch Mukhoty reinterprets her as a woman whose strategic thinking and practicality influence the events of the *Mahabharata*. Satyavati is depicted as a character who rises above her past vulnerabilities, using her intelligence and determination to carve out a future filled with power and agency. Her father's initial request to King Shantanu, "My daughter desires that any son born of her should be raja after you" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 62), serves as a crucial moment that underscores her resolve to overcome the limitations of her fate and ensure the security of her lineage, despite the patriarchal constraints of her era. Satyavati's character can be examined through the concept of narrative justice, as she confronts the injustices and constraints placed upon her by society. Her history, filled with weakness and vulnerability, fuels her quest for strength and control over her future. Her dialogue when she states, "if she is strong now, it is because once she was weak." (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 63), by having her encounter with Sadhu Parashar which results in birth of her first son Vyasa in mind highlights her evolution from a woman at the mercy of fate to one who seizes her destiny. Her request to the sage Parashar, "Bless me so that I find a strong and powerful husband. Bless me so that I'm the mother of rajas, never again subject to the random whim of fate" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 64), reveals her longing not just for personal empowerment but also for influence over her children's futures and, consequently, the political dynamics of Hastinapur.

Through Satyavati's story, Mukhoty delves into the idea of justice in a way that is both personal and political. Satyavati's choices, while at times morally questionable, is justified within the context of her struggle for power and security in a patriarchal society. By drawing on her past experiences of vulnerability as a catalyst for change, Satyavati's character represents the idea of narrative justice—she reshapes the story of her life by making strategic choices that give her and her descendants a greater claim to authority. In doing so, she redefines her own narrative, highlighting the power of women to shape their own destinies through calculated decisions in a world that often denies them agency.

The concept of narrative sensibility, as described in the theory, can "develop ethical understanding" (McGregor, 2018, p. 103) and this is evident in how Mukhoty's portrayal of Satyavati's choices encourages readers to view her actions through the ethical lens of her era. Satyavati's transformation, from a vulnerable woman requesting the sage to bless her, "never again subject to the random whim of fate" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 64) into a formidable strategist who secures her legacy. This transformation highlights how a character can embody both virtue and ethical compromise. The narrative justice in this case draws a link between exemplary narratives and ethical value, as Satyavati's pragmatic decisions reflect an ethical struggle for survival and agency in a system that would otherwise leave her powerless.

5.2. Amba's Rage: Symbol of Defiance and Resilience

Amba's plight, defiance, and quest for revenge in Song of Draupadi exemplify the concept of narrative justice in several ways. The abduction of Amba, her sisters, and her subsequent humiliation at the hands of Devavrata (Bheeshma) and Salva are pivotal events that set the stage for her moral and emotional unravelling. Her journey questions the conventional ideas of justice within the epic's patriarchal context, where women's voices and independence are frequently overlooked. Amba's traumatic experiences start with her swayamvara where she is forcefully taken away by Devavrata, who states that "my clan, ancient and prestigious, was not given the honour of an invitation to this swayamvara, so I owe Kashiraj no explanation and his daughters no chivalry. But know this I take these rajkumari's as brides by force" (Mukhoty, 2021, p.78) resulting in the trauma that will set off Amba's life. And thus begins her story, which turns into a spiral of violations and oppression, that completely ignores her agency. Her feeling of love for Salva and the shame when he rejects her, allows her lingering regret become wrathful vengeance. Such incidents as her abduction, Salva's rejection and Devavrata's dismissal of her request are the turning points that serve as "catalyst, a foreboding, of the cataclysmic events to come" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 81).

From the moment Amba is stripped of her agency, her narrative can be seen as one of victimization and of resilience. When Salva turns her away, Amba, a proud rajkumari of Kashi, falls into despair, yet she refuses to accept her fate. She continues to seek refuge with Devavrata, only to face further humiliation. His cold response "I have not besmirched my Kshatriya honour. I claimed you and your sisters as brides for my brother, not for myself" (Mukhoty, 2021, p.88) intensifies her feelings of dispossession. The harshness of her situation is

worsened by Devavrata's refusal to marry her or provide her with sanctuary, instead suggesting she "seek asylum in the forest" (Mukhoty, 2021, p.88). This act of rejection lays the emotional and psychological foundation for Amba's future actions.

Narrative justice sheds light on the cruelty faced by Amba at the hands of certain characters. It effectively clarifies the inhumanity by illustrating how Amba becomes engulfed in her feelings of rage and the thirst for revenge. As she travels from one place to another, her emotions shift from anger and yearning to an unwavering focus on retribution. She "cherishes and nurtures her thoughts of revenge, to the exception of all else" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 90). This change in Amba, from a shattered individual to one driven by vengeance, not only highlights the injustices inflicted upon her but also explores the underlying psychology of that cruelty. Narrative justice, in this context, highlights the ethical intricacies of the characters' choices and their repercussions. Devavrata's commitment to his vow of *brahmacharya* is portrayed not as a noble deed but as a rejection of Amba's humanity. His decision to neither marry her nor offer her sanctuary turns his "Kshatriya honour" into a moral failing. This narrative perspective enables readers to grasp that while Devavrata's actions may appear morally acceptable in societal terms, they raise ethical concerns due to the trauma they inflict on Amba. This complexity allows readers to connect with Amba's suffering, even as her subsequent actions lean towards revenge.

The development of narrative sensibility in Amba's story highlights how stories can express phenomenological ethical knowledge (McGregor, 2018, p. 103) essentially, the understanding of emotional and ethical states through the characters' experiences. Amba's struggle is not just a personal tragedy, it also serves as a broader commentary on the moral decay within the oppressive system surrounding her. As she pursues revenge, the narrative does not support her quest for vengeance but instead illustrates how her emotional pain skews her sense of justice. Her demand for Bheeshma's head "give me Bheeshma the Terrible's head in my lap and I will be free" (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 91) symbolizes the peak of her suffering and her conviction that justice can only be attained through violence, a tragic outcome of the systemic cruelty she endures.

The narrative sensibility that shapes Amba's story can also be seen as a means for ethical reflection. By showcasing her suffering and her response to injustice, the narrative compels the reader to face the ethical consequences of actions and the emotional costs of those decisions. Through Amba's journey, the reader is not only a witness to the vicious side of the narrative but is also challenged to grapple with its ethical implications. In this way, narrative justice serves as a means of linking the narrative's ethical value with the inhumanity portrayed, providing an explanation of the responsibility for this inhumanity while fostering a greater understanding of its psychological underpinnings. Ultimately, Amba's defiance, her transformation into a symbol of rage, and her pursuit of revenge underscore the destructive impact of unresolved injustice. The story neither excuses the characters who harmed her nor fully condemns her reaction. It compels readers to contemplate the intricacies of justice and the emotional chaos that can emerge when justice is denied. By cultivating narrative sensibility, readers can have a deeper understanding of the ethical and psychological dimensions of Amba's tragic plight, while recognizing the potential of narrative justice to reveal the consequences of inhumanity.

5.3. Gandhari: Blindfolding and protest

The text highlights Gauri's (Gandhari) betrayal as a significant injustice. Misled by the envoys of Hastinapur regarding Dhritarashtra's blindness, Gauri and her family find themselves caught in a political scheme devised by Bhishma and Satyavati. The line, "They just want me to be a slave, Lata. They want me to be Dhritarashtra's guide and servant. They were not looking for a woman for him to marry, just a pair of eyes. That is all I am to them and all I ever will be," (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 114) expresses her pain in being reduced to bare instrument that drift outside of her self-will and dignity. This reflects a systemic injustice rooted in patriarchy and political manipulation. The themes of narrative justice and defiance are illustrated through Gandhari's symbolic actions and expressions. In this context, narrative justice pertains to Gandhari's deliberate decision to assert control over her own life by confronting the societal expectations imposed upon her. Her choice to blindfold herself serves as an act of defiance, representing her rejection of being diminished to a mere object or "commodity" within her marriage.

By stating, " I will not be his eyes, or his guide, or whatever commodity they have decided I must be. They will not be able to hold my sight against me*," (*Mukhoty, 2021, p. 115) Gandhari asserts her autonomy, rejecting the idea that her abilities, particularly her vision, can be used as leverage or justification for subjugation which in turn aligning with the aspect of narrative justice, which posits that stories have the power to "instigate and sustain the reduction of and desistance from ideologically motivated harmful action" (McGregor, 2018, p.22). She turns the symbolic tables by using the blindfold as both a literal and metaphorical shield against exploitation, thereby creating her justice within the narrative. Gandhari's actions and expressions serve as a manifestation of her defiance against oppressive systems, allowing her to reclaim her

dignity and assert that her story is shaped by her own decisions rather than imposed by external forces. These statements emphasize her resilience and evolution, positioning her as an active agent in determining her destiny instead of a mere victim.

5.4. Draupadi's Defiance and Quest for Retribution

The incident of Draupadi's humiliation in the Kauravas court captures the depth of gendered violence and injustice inherent in patriarchal traditions. Following Yudhishthir's loss of Draupadi in a dice game, where he stakes his brothers and himself, Draupadi's outrage emphasizes her understanding of dharma, as she questions, "Did you lose yourself first, or me?" (Mukhoty, 2021, p.216) This inquiry unsettles the assembly, highlighting the moral contradictions within their adherence to tradition. Despite her reasoning, she is met with ridicule and dehumanization, labelled a "whore" by Karna, who justifies her humiliation due to her polyandrous marriage. Karna's harsh words, "She is a whore, I say, and she has no claims to modesty at all," (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 217) exemplify the deeply ingrained misogyny in the male-dominated court.

The cultivation of narrative sensibility allows readers to engage with such episodes at a deeper ethical level, emphasizing the phenomenological knowledge conveyed through Draupadi's story. Her defiance grows as she declares, "I am Draupadi, daughter of a raja and sister of a Yuvraj, wife to five warriors, and rani of Indraprastha." (Mukhoty, 2021, p. 218). This assertion of identity challenges the ethical boundaries of the assembly and invites reflection on the complicity of those who failed to act. Her fierce vow, "My hair, which has been sullied by this beast, shall remain as it is now, untied and unwashed, till the day I can wash it in his blood," (Mukhoty, 2021, p.218) transforms her humiliation into a narrative of resilience and agency. Mukhoty in her book titled *Heroines: Powerful Women from Indian Myth and History (*2017*)* says "She wrests from fate and from an intimidating array of men her right to be restored as the dharma queen. Her heroism is her fearlessness in demanding justice even though this means challenging the status quo and, more pertinently, challenging every male figure in her life; her husbands, her father-in-law and king, and her gurus" (p.12).

As highlighted by the concept of narrative justice, "If narrative justice provides a convincing explanation of inhumanity or a convincing series of explanations then it has the potential to reduce criminal inhumanity" (McGregor, 2018, p. 105). Mukhoty, through her reimagining of Draupadi and other women in the epic, reveals how their actions, though at times ethically complex, reflect the deep-seated societal and patriarchal pressures that force them into specific roles.

6. CONCLUSION

Literature fundamentally revolves around the exploration of ideas and their profound impact on human existence, shaping thoughts and guiding actions. The notion of narrative justice in literature emphasizes that storytelling not only mirrors societal values but also possesses the capacity to question and alter them. Narrative justice has the potential to enhance the responsiveness of readers while avoiding the encouragement of unethical reactions. By offering a detailed depiction of Satyavati, Gandhari, Amba and Draupadi, Mukhoty prompts readers to contemplate the intricate relationships among power, survival, and justice. The narrative justice concept refrains from demanding a clear-cut judgment instead showcasing the moral challenges encountered by the characters, thereby inviting readers to engage in a more profound examination of justice, the ramifications of personal choices, and the wider social frameworks that shape individual behaviour.

In *Song of Draupadi*, narrative justice functions as a means to comprehend the depths of injustice, violence and inhumanity while also serving as a catalyst for ethical contemplation. By highlighting the moral and psychological intricacies of characters Mukhoty's narrative illustrates how storytelling, through its composition and depiction of human conflicts, can foster an appreciation of justice and mitigate inhumanity by encouraging readers to confront the complex dimensions of human experience.

According to Alicia Ostriker in her work *The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and the Revisionist Mythmaking*(1982) "Whenever a writer employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by culture, the writer is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual writer but ultimately making cultural change possible" (p. 73). Thus, *Song of Draupadi* by Ira Mukhoty reinterprets the classic narrative of the *Mahabharata* by centering the attention on female characters, granting them agency, voice, and the power to determine their own fates. Viewed through the prism of narrative justice, the novel illustrates how concepts such as justice, defiance, and retribution can challenge oppressive power dynamics and pave the way for empowerment. By depicting the women's pursuit of justice and their resistance against gender-based violence, Mukhoty's narrative underscores the transformative ability of literature to not only

highlight societal injustices but also to act as a catalyst for envisioning and advocating for change. This act of storytelling serves as a vehicle for reinterpreting history and fostering a more equitable future.

7. Recommendations and Limitations of the Study

This study suggests diving deeper into the often-overlooked women characters in Indian mythology, using the frameworks of narrative justice and feminist literary criticism. Future research could broaden the scope to include other mythological retellings by contemporary authors like Kavita Kane or Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, examining how various writers reinterpret female voices and agency. Incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives such as trauma theory, postcolonial feminism, or cognitive poetics could also enhance our understanding of the emotional and ethical aspects of these narratives. It's important for educators and literary scholars to include these feminist retellings in their academic syllabi to encourage critical thinking about gender, power, and cultural memory.

A key limitation of this study is it concentrates solely on the novel Song of Draupadi, which might not encompass the full array of feminist reinterpretations within Indian mythology. Conducting a comparative analysis with traditional narratives or popular adaptations could offer a richer perspective, showcasing the transformative power of feminist retellings.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express their gratitude to the editors and editorial staff of JHSSR for their assistance during publication period.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article. This article is the sole work of the author and has not been presented or published elsewhere.

References

Amin, A. (2020, August 31). *Why We Need a Feminist Retelling of Hindu Mythology • The Ladies Compartment*. The Ladies Compartment. https://theladiescompartment.co/why-we-need-a-feminist-retelling-of-hindu-mythology/

Beena G. (2019). *VISION and RE-VISION: Revisiting Mythologies, Rethinking Women*. Notion Press.

https://scroll.in/article/828515/indian-mythology-is-a-new-medium-of-choice-for-feminist-narratives-and-its-working

McGregor, R. (2018). *Narrative justice*. Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd.

Menon, N. (2012). *Seeing like a feminist*. Zubaan.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.

Mukhoty, I. (2017). *Heroines: Powerful Indian Women of Myth & History*. Rupa Publications.

Mukhoty, I. (2021). *Song of Draupadi: A Novel*. Aleph Book Company.

Ostriker, A. (1982). The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *8*(1), 68–90. https://www.academia.edu/70039716/The_Thieves_of_Language_Women_Poets_and_Revisionist_Mythmaking

Rajan, R. S. (1993). *Real and imagined women: Gender, culture and postcolonialism*. Routledge.

Singh, V. (2017). Reclaiming Female Identity: Feminist Retellings of the Hindu Epics. In *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*. https://www.the-criterion.com/V8/n2/IN46.pdf

Urmi Chanda-Vaz. (2017, February 5). *Indian mythology is a new medium of choice for feminist narratives (and it's working)*. Scroll.in; Scroll.in. https://scroll.in/article/828515/indian-mythology-is-a-new-medium-of-choice-for-feminist-narratives-and-its-working

Biographical Statement of Author(s)

S. Thendral is a doctoral candidate in English Literature at Loyola College, Chennai, India. She holds a Master's degree in English from the same institution. Her current research examines feminist retellings of mythology in Indian literature, with a particular focus on the representation and agency of female figures in epic narratives. Her broader academic interests encompass gender justice, narrative theory, and the reconfiguration of women's roles in canonical texts.

Her engagement with the subject of this article is informed by a sustained critical interest in literature as a medium for justice, collective memory, and the reimagining of historical narratives.

Ms. S. Thendral
Department of English
Loyola College
Chennai, India
E-mail: thendralsuresh1999@gmail.com

Dr. I. Felicita Mary Praba is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Loyola College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. She is a recognized research supervisor for doctoral scholars affiliated with the University of Madras. Dr. Praba has actively organized academic conferences and has served as the Convenor for both national and international seminars. She has edited academic volumes and journal issues, and has published numerous research articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. In addition, she has presented papers at various national and international conferences.

Her research interests include Diasporic Writings, Postcolonial Literature, Refugee Narratives, Subaltern Studies, and American Literature.

Dr. I. Felicita Mary Praba
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Loyola College
Chennai, India
Email: felicitamary@loyolacollege.edu

Horizon J. Hum. & Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1): 140 – 143 (2025)

Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research
www.horizon-JHSSR.com

A Critical Review of NANAK AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

BOOK REVIEW
Open Access

Edition by Devinder Singh Chahal

Reviewed by: Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal: harbansl@gmail.com

Published by ***Institute for Understanding Sikhism*** | *First edition: 2023*
Sold by Singh Brothers, Amritsar, India | *Singhbro1@yahoo.com*
I.S.B.N.: 978-0-9734291-7-6.
(Hardcover) pp.416; Price per copy: US $20, UK£15, CAN$ 25, Rs.795

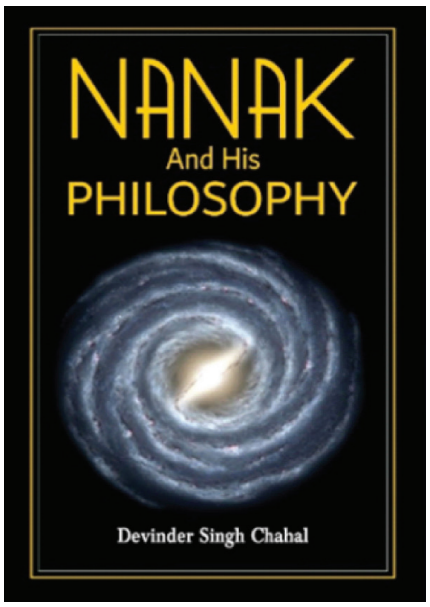
ARTICLE INFO

Article history
RECEIVED: 16-Jan-25
REVISED: 15-May-25
ACCEPTED: 19-May-25
PUBLISHED: 30-Jun-25

*Corresponding Author
Horizon JHSSR
E-mail: CEE.Horizon@gmail.com

Citation: Devinder Singh Chahal (2025). Nanak and His Philosophy. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res. 7 (1), 140–143. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id1303.p140

Review Published by B.P. Services



NANAK AND HIS PHILOSOPHY: This Hardcover edition by Devinder Singh Chahal, published by Institute for Understanding Sikhism, pp.416.

review

Introduction

Nanak is known to many scholars and writers as a mystic, reformer, revolutionary, and the founder of Sikhism. However, Dr Devinder Singh Chahal discovered that Nanak, at the age of 9, refused to wear *Janeo* (sacred thread) and did not accept the Hindu religion, even though he did not find any religion at all. On the other hand, Nanak founded "Sikhi" (enlightening philosophy), and "Sikhism" was established later, especially by Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjun, as discussed in Chapter 12. For Dr Chahal, Nanak is a Guru, Satguru, and Natural philosopher in Chapters 2 and 4.

If someone wants to know the real Nanak and his philosophy, the answer lies in Chahal's "*Nanak and His Philosophy,*" which boldly attempts to recontextualize Guru Nanak's philosophy, Sikhi (enlightening philosophy), within a framework that emphasizes educational logic, scientific reasoning, and a universal scholarly approach.

Chahal, a retired professor and microbiology researcher, approaches his task with academic thoroughness, which is evident throughout the book's 416 pages. The book offers valuable insights and presents a fresh perspective on Guru Nanak's philosophy, raising specific questions and concerns that warrant careful consideration.

Divided into 21 logical chapters

Chahal divides the book into 21 logical Chapters, which makes it easier to comprehend the presented material intellectually.

In the first four chapters, Chahal presents Nanak as ***the new Nanak and Natural Philosopher*** ever presented by any writer.

Chahal discovered that Nanak was at the top of the list of Natural Philosophers (chapter 4). After defining *Nanakian Methodology* and *Nanakian Philosophy* in Chapters 5 and 6, he discloses in Chapter 7 that Nanak has not claimed that *Bani was revealed to him by* ***G***od (the Eternal Entity-ੴ). This he conceptualized in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 discusses the ***attributes of God*** (the Eternal Entity-ੴ). Chahal first discusses the ***Hukm*** (the Laws of Nature/Universe) in Chapter 10. After that, he discussed in detail ***Cosmology in Science and Nanakian Philosophy.*** Chahal indicates that the cosmological study by Nanak is very similar to the scientific explanation of the cosmology of today in Chapter 11.

Chahal discussed in Chapter 12 that the **Sikh,** defined by Guru Nanak, was quite different from what is being defined today by the Sikh religious authorities. Although many Sikh scientists and theologians, and Sikh literature indicate that Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism (the Sikh religion), in fact, he founded **Sikhi** (enlightening philosophy) instead. However, **Sikhism** (Sikh Religion) was developed step by step by Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, and Guru Arjun, and culminated by Guru Gobind Singh.

Chapter 13 discusses that other Gurus have used ***Nanakian philosophy***. Chapter 14 discusses that, in general, many Sikh scientists and theologians consider the Bani of Bhagat Kabir to be similar to that of Guru Nanak. So much so that some writers have claimed that Bhagat Kabir was the Guru of Nanak. On the contrary, Chahal discovered that the ***Bani of Guru Nanak is much superior to that of Bhagat Kabir***.

Chapter 15 discusses that **Naam *Japna* and Naam *Simarna*** are considered very important by religious mentors; however, in the Sikhi of Guru Nanak, it is of no value. Instead, one must contemplate the Bani and adopt the message in one's life.

In Chapter 16, Nanak discusses the four Yugas, ***Satya, Treta, Dvapar, and Kali Yuga of Hinduism in his Bani.*** Then he compared the number of years of these Yugas in the Vedic Periods with the periods of the ***evolution of humans,*** but there was no comparison at all. For example, when Rama and Krishna appeared in the *Treta* Yuga (2,165,124 years ago) and Dvapar Yuga (869,124 years ago), respectively, there were no humans (*Homo sapiens*), which appeared about 200,000 years ago.

In Chapter 17, Chahal reports that many Sikh theologians accept several Mantra systems so much that they have declared the Commencing Verse (ਅਰੰਭਿਕ ਵਾਕ in Punjabi) also as the Mool Mantra. However, Guru Nanak's Bani rejects the Mantra System developed by the Sikh scholars.

In Chapter 18, ***Ardas (prayer)*** to God for the grant of wishes is very common in the psyche of the Sikhs. Many phrases from the Sikh Gurus support the idea that the wishes of every person are accepted through Ardas to God. However, Guru Nanak has given many examples through his Bani that God cannot grant their wishes since every action and reaction in Nature/Universe is carried out by the *Hukm* (the Laws of Nature/Universe) of God. Moreover, some clinical studies about the well-being of sick persons by Ardas did not improve their health. Similarly, Albert Einstein, a Physicist, wrote to a schoolchild that God cannot grant any prayer because He works according to the Laws of Nature.

Chapter 19 discusses various ***food fads*** among the Sikhs, particularly about eating meat. The phrase of Guru Nanak, ***Fools struggle about eating of meat***, ***but they do not know if sin lies in eating plant or meat since plants are also living organisms*** is very commonly cited. Some plants eat insects by trapping them in specialized leaves. Biology and Guru Nanak divide animals according to their food requirements. Guru Nanak says God has created *chhatti* (36) *patharaths* (foods) for humans. ***Biologically, humans are omnivores because their teeth are such that*** they can tear meat and grind grains.

Chapter 20 discusses ***Life after Death***, whether a person after death is going to heaven or Hell. Although there are many phrases in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib about the Dharam Raj and his two angles, Chandar and Gupt, who keep the record of good and bad deeds, and finally, Dharam Raj, with consultation of God, decides if one goes to Heaven or Hell. Thus, people try various rituals to make a reservation in Heaven. On the other hand, Guru Nanak says it is not known where a person goes after death, despite multiple methods of disposal of the dead body.

Finally, Chahal discusses ***Some Basic Principles of Sikhi (Enlightening Philosophy) of Nanak*** in Chapter 21.

Strengths of the Book

- **Emphasis on Logic and Reason:** Chahal's primary strength lies in his commitment to presenting Guru Nanak's philosophy as a rational and logical system of thought and his teachings. Besides, he contends that Sikhism is not mysticism or esotericism. He focuses on Sikhi's philosophical, practical, and universally applicable aspects as qualified by Guru Nanak's Bani.

This approach makes the book attractive and accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not be familiar with Guru Nanak's Sikhi (enlightening philosophy).

- **Scientific Approach:** As a scientist, Chahal brings a unique perspective to studying Guru Nanak's philosophy. He parallels scientific principles and Guru Nanak's philosophy, highlighting the compatibility between spirituality and scientific understanding. This approach is particularly refreshing in an era where science and religion are often seen as mutually exclusive.

- **Comprehensive Coverage:** The book covers a wide range of topics related to Guru Nanak's life and teachings, including his concept of God, his views on social justice, his emphasis on ethical living, and his rejection of rituals and superstitions. Chahal also delves into the historical and social context in which Guru Nanak lived, providing a deeper understanding of the factors that shaped Guru Nanak's philosophy.

- **Clear and Concise Language:** Despite dealing with complex philosophical concepts, Chahal writes in a clear and concise style that is easy to understand. He avoids jargon and technical terms, making the book accessible to readers from all backgrounds.

- **Challenging Traditional Interpretations:** Chahal does not shy away from challenging traditional interpretations of Guru Nanak's Bani. He questions certain practices and beliefs that have become ingrained in Sikhism, encouraging readers to critically examine their understanding of the faith. This critical approach is essential for the growth and evolution of any religion.

Concerns and Criticisms

- **Oversimplification:** While Chahal's emphasis on logic and reason in interpreting the Bani of Guru Nanak is commendable, traditional theologians believe his analysis does not always capture the complexities and nuances of Sikhism.

- **Lack of Engagement with Existing Scholarship:** Some readers may feel Chahal's book does not adequately engage with the existing body of scholarship on Guru Nanak and Sikhism. This is because this book deals only with Nanak and his Philosophy, but not Sikhism (Religion).

- **Selective Use of Gurbani:** Some Sikh theologians consider that Chahal's interpretation of Guru Nanak's teachings is based on a selective use of Bani. This selective approach raises questions about the objectivity of his analysis. However, readers must remember that Chahal selected only the Bani of Guru Nanak, representing his Sikhi (enlightening philosophy) on his discussed topic.

- **Potential for Misinterpretation:** Chahal's attempt to present Guru Nanak's philosophy logically and scientifically may be considered a misinterpretation of the Sikh faith by traditional Sikh theologians. This is because the traditional interpretation has been going on since 1883, the time of Nirmalas' first interpretation of the Sikh Scriptures, which was done under the influence of Vedic and Vedantic philosophies.

- **Limited Appeal to Traditional Sikhs:** Chahal's critical approach to certain Sikh practices and beliefs may not be well-received by traditional Sikhs. His questioning of established norms and rituals could be seen as a challenge to the authority of religious leaders and institutions. **That is why a book like *Nanak and His Philosophy* is needed to tell the truth that Sikhi (enlightening philosophy) is quite different from Sikhism (religion).**

Overall Assessment

Despite these concerns, **"*Nanak and His Philosophy*"** is a valuable contribution to the study of Guru Nanak's Sikhi (enlightening philosophy). Chahal's book offers a fresh perspective on Guru Nanak's teachings, emphasizing their logical and scientific basis. It is a thought-provoking work that challenges readers to critically examine their understanding. However, readers should know that this book deals only with **Guru Nanak's Sikhi (enlightening philosophy), but not the** Sikhism (religion) developed after him. It is vital to engage with other scholarly works on the Sikhi of Guru Nanak and Sikhism to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Sikh faith.

Recommendations

Future editions of the book should include a more thorough engagement between the existing body of scholarship on **Sikhism** and Guru Nanak's **Sikhi (enlightening philosophy).** Although it will be a big project, this would strengthen the book's academic credibility and give readers a more balanced perspective.

Conclusion

"*Nanak and His Philosophy*" is a bold and thought-provoking book that challenges readers to update their understanding of Guru Nanak and his philosophy. It is a valuable contribution to the field and a must-read for

anyone interested in exploring the depths of Guru Nanak's philosophy. By approaching Guru Nanak's teachings with an open mind and a critical spirit, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the universal relevance of Guru Nanak's message. The reviewer believes that once readily available and read, it will stimulate further research and writing on Guru Nanak's teachings and his unparalleled efforts.

Author's Biography

BOOK AUTHOR: Dr. Devinder S. Chahal

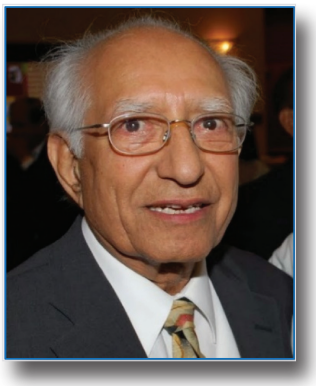
Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal was born in 1932 and received BSc and MSc degrees from the Punjab University, Chandigarh. He worked for his PhD program at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill, USA. He was a Professor and Head of the Department of Microbiology at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India, Fulbright Fellowship in 1974 at the Department of Food Science and Chemical Engineering, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA and then visiting scientist in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

In 1982 he moved to the Institut Armand-Frappier, Université du Québec, Laval, Québec, and retired as a Professor of Industrial Microbiology in 1996. His work is on using cellulosic waste materials to produce food, feed, and fuel. He is the inventor of "Solid state Fermentation" to produce cellulases, which has been quoted by many scientists (332 + 84) worldwide.

Since 1999, he has been the Founder and the President of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism and the Editor-in-Chief of Understanding Sikhism: The Research Journal, a Member of the Advisory Committee of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Study Centre at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, since 2011, and a member of World Sikh Council, UK. He has been one of the 100 Top Most Influential Sikhs of the World from 2012 to 2016 as a writer. He was honored by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar, India, in 2004 and the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), New Delhi, on Khalsa Fateh Divas on March 8-9, 2014.

—**Professor Dr. Devinder Singh Chahal,** 4418 Rue Martin-Plouffe, Laval, Québec, Canada H7W 5L9, **e:** sikhism@iuscanada.com | **WhatsApp:** +(1) 514-710-4418

About the Reviewer



BHAI DR. HARBANS LAL: Neuroscience; Science, Religion, Media, and Literature, Inter-religious engagement Hindu, Islamic and Judeo-Christian etc.

Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal, Professor-and-chair emeritus of Pharmacology and Neuroscience at the University of North Texas Health Science Center, USA, has served as Editor-in-Chief of Drug Development Research and been honored as Distinguished Neuroscientist by the Society of Neuroscience. His education includes, besides other degrees, a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from University of Chicago, USA.

He has devoted his life to serving and promoting Sikhi causes. His latest book, with Dr. Roshan Attrey as coauthor, is *Guru Nanak's Religious Pluralism and Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (2019).

His numerous recognitions include the honorary title" Bhai Sahib" conferred by the All-India Sikh Students Federation and by *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak* Committee. Guru Nanak Dev University has recognized him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature; Anandpur Foundation has honored him with "*Nishaan-e-Khalsa*."

Presently, Dr. Lal serves on the editorial boards of many Sikh journals, and is writing a blog "Seeking Wisdom." He lives in Arlington, Texas, with his wife Amrita Lal.

—**Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal**, 6415 Amicable Drive, Arlington, TX 76016, USA; **e:** harbansl@gmail.com **Blog:** https://seekingwisdomblog.wordpress.com/

Acknowledgement of

REFEREES FOR THE HORIZON
JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH
(JHSSR)

December 2024 – July 2025

The Editorial Board of the Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research wish to gracefully thank the following for acting as referees for manuscripts submitted to JHSSR between December 2024 and July 2025.

Reviewer	Affiliation
Aaron Owen (Dr.)	**Iola Thompson (Professor Emerita)**
Shenzhen College Of International Education, China	Medgar Evers College, USA
Anna Ren Birnholz (Professor)	**Javad Mohammadi (Professor)**
Northeastern University, USA	Jundishapur University, Iran
Buddhini Amarathunga (Dr.)	**Jeneifer C. Nueva (Professor)**
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka	University Of South-eastern Philippines, Philippines
Chandrani Biswas (Dr.)	**Juju Masunah Profesor (Dr.)**
St.Xavier's College, India	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia
Charles Joseph (Professor)	**Karminder Singh Dhillon (Professor)**
Teresian College, India	The Sikh Bulletin, USA
David Jeyaraj Franklin (Professor)	**Lamei Liu (Dr.)**
The Gandhigram Rural Institute, India	Shenzhen College Of International Education, China
Dilip Barad (Professor)	**Mastura Muhammad (Dr.)**
M.K.Bhavnagar University, India	University Technology Mara (UITM), Malaysia
Faraha Nawaz (Professor)	**Maya Khemlani David (Professor)**
University of Rajshahi, Bngladesh	University Malaya, Malaysia
Felicia Tersan (Dr.)	**Mohammadreza Hajjari (Dr.)**
Padawan District Office, Sarawak, Malaysia	Shahid Chamran University, Iran
Gail-Venzen (Professor)	**Monaliza Bt Hj Sarbini (Assoc. Professor)**
Long Island University-Brooklyn Campus, USA	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UniMAS), Malaysia
Gurnam Kaur Sidhu (Professor)	**Mostafa Neissi (Assoc. Professor)**
SEGI University, Malaysia	Islamic Azad University, Iran
Gyan Prakash (Dr.)	**Nayan Deep S. Kanwal (Professor)**
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India	Austin, Texas, USA
Harbans Lal (Professor Emeritus)	**Nguyễn Trường Sa (Dr.)**
University of North Texas, USA	Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Harpreet Kaur (Professor)	**Rabi N Subudhi (Professor)**
University of Delhi, India	Centurion University of Technology & Management, India

While every effort has been made to include a complete list of referees for the period stated above, however if any name(s) have been omitted unintentionally, please notify The Chief Executive Editor, *Horizon* Journals at CEE.horizon@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2024.v7.n1.idR.0016.p144

Reviewer	Affiliation
Rebecca Seligman (Assoc. Professor) Northwestern University (USA)	**Trân Thị Vân Dung (Dr.)** Hue College, Vietnam
Robin Levenson (Professor) Baruch College, USA	**Umie Kalsom Kassim (Assoc. Professor)** Sunway College, Malaysia
Sara Ravan Ramzani (Professor) GISMA Business School, Germany	**Vahid Nimehchisalem (Professor)** University of Economics & Human Sciences in Warsaw, Poland
Shirin Shafiei Ebrahimi (Professor) Lakehead University, Canada	**Vera Shamina (Professor)** Kazan Federal University, Russia
Souba Keavathi (Professor) Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UniMAS), Malaysia	**Võ Thanh Tuyền (Dr.)** Vietnam National University, Vietnam
Sridevi Sriniwass (Assoc. Professor) University Malaya, Malaysia	**Xuân Phan Thị Hồng (Assoc. Professor)** Vietnam National University, Vietnam
Sukjeet Kaur (Assoc. Professor) Taylor's University Malaysia, Malaysia	**Yanti Heriyawati (Dr.)** Institut Seni Budaya, Indonesia

Note

This issue of the JHSSR has been reviewed by experts in Education, Literature, Management, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, Social Studies, Technology, and Urban Studies.

These experts provided candid and critical comments, which helped our editorial team pinpoint the specific comments and improved the papers' quality. The JHSSR editorial board is very grateful for the invaluable contributions from all reviewers listed above *(sorted by alphabetical order by first name)*.

HORIZON JOURNALS

Inspire the world, Build Better Research!

Call for Papers 2025-26

JHSSR

Scholarly, peer-reviewed and open access

Horizon Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences Research (JHSSR)

Where Innovation Meets Impact

Submit Your Research to a Premier Global Platform

The Horizon Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences Research (JHSSR), e-ISSN 2682-9096 invites scholars, researchers, and postgraduate students to contribute to our 2025-26 issues. As a distinguished, peer-reviewed, open-access journal, JHSSR is committed to advancing interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences.

Why Publish with JHSSR?

- GLOBAL REACH: Published articles are disseminated to over 250 million researchers via platforms like **Academia.edu., Google Scholar, EBSCO and Institutional repositories**.
- RAPID DISSEMINATION: Articles receive **4.5 times more downloads** within the first week compared to other journals.
- ESTEEMED EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP: Led by Editor-in-Chief Dr. Brij Mohan, Dean Emeritus at Louisiana State University.
- RIGOROUS PEER REVIEW: Double-blind peer-review ensures scholarly excellence.
- ETHICAL PUBLISHING: Adheres to **COPE guidelines** for transparency and integrity.

Scope of the Journal

JHSSR welcomes original research or empirical articles, reviews, opinion pieces, short communications, case studies, action research, theological analysis and book reviews in areas including but not limited to:

- **Humanities**: Art, Music, Media Studies, Creative Writing, Gender Studies, Health and Social Care, Journalism, Communications, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Theology.

- **Social Sciences**: Anthropology, Business, Management, Economics, Education, Law, Legal Studies, Linguistics, Literary Studies, Marketing, Politics, International Relations, Psychology, Sociology.

Publication Highlights

- **Open Access**: Freely accessible under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 License.
- **Timely Publication**: Average timeline from submission to publication is approximately 4 months.
- **Affordable Processing**: Article Processing Charge (APC) of US$100 (discounted) with no additional fees.

Submission Deadlines

📣 JHSSR is inviting papers for its upcoming issues in 2025-26.

❖ *Regular Issues:* July & December

❖ Special/Thematic Issues: As announced on our website

Ready to Submit?

- **Submission E-mail**: cee.horizon@gmail.com | More Information here
- **Guidelines**: Follow Author Guidelines | Explore the Journal at: https://horizon-jhssr.com/index.php

The journal is published online with DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2025.v7.n1.id.0016c.p146

IMPORTANT DATE:

Invitations for paper submissions: [No Deadline for 2025-26].

EDITORS:

Editor-in-Chief: Brij Mohan, Ph.D.
Dean Emeritus, Louisiana State University
eic.horizon20@gmail.com

Chief Executive Editor: Nayan Kanwal, Ph.D.
cee.horizon@gmail.com | info.JHSSR@gmail.com

Join a community dedicated to advancing knowledge and fostering global academic collaboration. We look forward to your valuable contributions to JHSSR.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

(Manuscript Preparation & Submission Guide)

Revised: Dec. 2024

Please read the guidelines below and follow the instructions carefully. **Manuscripts that do not adhere to the Journal's guidelines will not be put into the peer-review process until requirements are met.**

MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

A well-formatted manuscript follows all journal instruction. All elements of the manuscript are printed in English with 1-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides. Right margins are unjustified. Horizon journals accept manuscript submissions which uses any consistent text— Format-free Submission! This saves you time and ensures you can focus on your priority: the research.

However, citations/ references must be formatted by you as per APA format.

Submission Preparation Checklist

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors that do not adhere to these guidelines.

- ✓ The submission represents an original work that has not been published elsewhere nor submitted to another journal in any language for publication;
- ✓ The submission cites current theoretical and empirically-based literature, including relevant articles published in the Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research;
- ✓ The submission is written in language that is engaging, lively, and direct, using active voice whenever possible;
- ✓ The submission includes a maximum of four tables and figures uploaded as separate files, if applicable;
- ✓ The submission adheres to word count and APA 7 stylistic and bibliographic requirements; and
- ✓ All identifying information has been removed from all documents and file names.

Checklist for Manuscript Submission

- Cover letter
- Declaration form
- Referral form
- Manuscript structure

(Title, Author details and affiliation, Abstract, Keywords, etc. using the **IMRAD** style). See below explanation.

Manuscript Types

Horizon accepts submission of mainly **four** types of manuscripts for peer-review.

1. **Regular Article**
   Regular articles are full-length original empirical investigations, consisting of introduction, materials and methods, results and discussion, conclusions. Original work must provide references and an explanation on research findings that contain new and significant findings.

   Size: Generally, these are expected to be **around 6,000** words (excluding the abstract, references, tables and/or figures), a maximum of 80 references, and an abstract of 100–150 words.

2. **Review Article**
   These report critical evaluation of materials about current research that has already been published by organizing, integrating, and evaluating previously published materials. It summarizes the status of knowledge and outline future directions of research within the journal scope. Review articles should aim to provide systemic overviews, evaluations and interpretations of research in a given field. Re-analyses as meta-analysis and systemic reviews are encouraged. The manuscript title must start with "Review Article".

Size: These articles do not have an expected page limit or maximum number of references, should include appropriate figures and/or tables, and an abstract of 100–150 words. Ideally, a review article should be **around 3,000 words**.

3. **SHORT COMMUNICATIONS**
They are timely, peer-reviewed and brief. These are suitable for the publication of significant technical advances and may be used to:

(a) Report new developments, significant advances and novel aspects of experimental and theoretical methods and techniques which are relevant for scientific investigations within the journal scope;
(b) Report/discuss on significant matters of policy and perspective related to the science of the journal, including 'personal' commentary;
(c) Disseminate information and data on topical events of significant scientific and/or social interest within the scope of the journal.

The manuscript title must start with "*Brief Communication*".

Size: These are usually **between 800 to 1,500 words** and have a maximum of three figures and/or tables, from 8 to 20 references, and an abstract length not exceeding 150 words. Information must be in short but complete form and it is not intended to publish preliminary results or to be a reduced version of Regular or Rapid Papers.

4. **OTHERS**
Book reviews, Brief reports, case studies, comments, concept papers, Letters to the Editor, and replies on previously published articles may be considered subject to the discretion of the journal editors.

PLEASE NOTE: NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE FOR PAGE LENGTH.

Manuscript Format

Horizon emphasizes on the linguistic accuracy of every manuscript published. Articles must be in English and they must be competently written and argued in clear and concise grammatical English. Contributors are strongly advised to have the manuscript checked by a colleague with ample experience in writing English manuscripts or a competent English language editor.

- **FILE TYPE**: MS WORD; Font-type: Times New Roman, Size 12 pts and 1.5 line-spaced.
- **WORD COUNT**: Adhere to the stipulated word-count. Regular articles: not more than 6,000 words, and Review articles: 3,000 words max. Headings: Ensure that they are clearly formatted throughout.
- **MANUSCRIPT STRUCTURE**: The journal uses IMRAD style.
- **TITLE**: Should be attractive and indicative. No more than 30 words.
- **RUNNING-HEAD**: No more than 40-character spaces.
- **ABSTRACT**: Should describe your entire study at a glance. No more than 150 words (maximum).
- **KEYWORDS**: Must provide as many as 8.
- **INTRODUCTION**: It should provide sufficient background about the work carried out.
- **METHODOLOGY**: This should include details of any experiments conducted or data collected.
- **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**: This section should answer the question you raised in the introduction.
- **CONCLUSION**: Here you should include your findings.
- **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**: This section should answer the question you raised in the introduction.
- **CONCLUSION**: Here you should include your findings.
- **COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT**: e.g. The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.
- **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**: This usually follows the Discussion and Conclusions sections. Its purpose is to thank all of the people who helped with the research but did not qualify for authorship.

  This could be someone from a sponsoring institution, a funding body, other researchers, or even family, friends or colleagues who have helped in the preparation. Individuals and entities that have provided essential support such as research grants and fellowships and other sources of funding should be acknowledged. Contributions that do not involve researching (clerical assistance or personal acknowledgements) should not appear in acknowledgements.
- **REFERENCES**: Lists every source (no limitation) but list those that may be of interest to readers and are current. "**Each reference cited in text must appear in the reference list**, and each entry in the reference list must be cited in text". There is no reason to include uncited sources in the reference list. **Cite what you use**, use what you cite. The references are to be alphabetized by the fist author's last name, or (if no author is listed) list by the organization or title. Ensure that in-text

citations and references are complete and consistently styled and formatted as per the journal's in-house style (APA Edn. 6 or 7) failing which your article will **not be accepted for peer-review**. You may refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association for further details (http://www.apastyle.org/). You may generate APA citations here: https://www.scribbr.com/apa-citation-generator/new/article-journal/ A video is available for your viewing pleasure at https://vimeo.com/191910171

Horizon takes unethical publishing strictly and reports each case of "ghost referencing" or "phantom referencing" to the Committee on Publication Ethics or COPE.

DOIs: Include the DOI at the very end of the APA reference entry. In the APA 7th edition, the DOI is preceded by 'https://doi.org/'.

APA citation example (7th edition)

Bakari, R. (2022). The relations among social media addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in university students. Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res., 4(1), 176–186. https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2022.v4.n1.id1148.p25

- **Biographical Statement of Authors**: Authors should submit a biographical statement to be included in the manuscript to be published by JHSSR. The biographical statement should include the author(s) full name, affiliation, email. In addition, it is also appropriate to discuss your personal history, academic program and/or field placement, and interest in the article's subject. The biographical statement may **not exceed 75 words**. The author biography should be **separately** accompanied with a **high-resolution picture** *(in JPEG file format)* of each author listed in this manuscript as this would be published along with the article ***(not pasted in a word file)***.
- **Appendix**: Includes additional data.
- **Footnotes**: Include necessary additional information.
- **Tables, figures, graphs**: Are complete, clear, attractive and of high-resolution. Avoid too long tables. Do not forget Table titles, figure and graph legends, and image captions. All Figures/ photographs to have a reference to the original source, unless created by the author.

Manuscript Structure

Most scientific papers are prepared according to a format called **IMRAD**. The term represents the first letters of the words **I**ntroduction, **M**aterials and Methods, **R**esults, **A**nd, **D**iscussion. IMRAD is simply a more 'defined' version of the "IBC" [Introduction, Body, Conclusion] format used for all academic writing. IMRAD indicates a pattern or format rather than a complete list of headings or components of research papers; the missing parts of a paper are: ***Title, Authors, Keywords, Abstract, Results & Discussion, Conclusions, Competing interests' statement, Acknowledgement, References*** and ***Biographical Statement of Author(s)***. Additionally, some papers include Appendices or Supplementary data.

The *Introduction* explains the scope and objective of the study in the light of current knowledge on the subject; the *Materials and Methods* describes how the study was conducted; the *Results* section reports what was found in the study; and the *Discussion* section explains meaning and significance of the results and provides suggestions for future directions of research. The manuscript must be prepared according to the Journal's style.

Manuscript Organisation

Manuscripts for submission to Horizon should be organised in the following order:

Page 1: Running head or title (No more than 40-character spaces).
This page should **only** contain the running title of your paper. The running title is an abbreviated title used as the running head on every page of the manuscript. The running title should not exceed 60 characters, counting letters and spaces.

Page 2: This page should contain the following:
Author(s) and Corresponding author information.
This page should also contain the **full title** of your paper not exceeding 30 words, with name(s) of all the authors, institutions and corresponding author's name, institution and full address (Street address, telephone number (including extension), hand phone number, and e-mail address) for editorial correspondence. First and corresponding authors must be clearly indicated.

The names of the authors stated must be **in full** (no initials).
e.g. Victor Terence King, Percival Bion Griffin, James William Chapman, Neelambar Hatti and Taher Badinjki.

Co-Authors: The commonly accepted guideline for authorship is that one must have substantially contributed to the development of the paper and share accountability for the results. Researchers should decide who will be an author and what order they will be listed depending upon their order of importance to the study. Other contributions should be cited in the manuscript's Acknowledgements.

Authors' Affiliation: The primary affiliation for each author should be the institution where the majority of their work was done. If an author has subsequently moved to another institution, the current address may also be stated in the footer.

Authors' addresses. Multiple authors with different addresses must indicate their respective addresses separately by superscript numbers:

Aimee Henderson[1] and Nayan Kanwal[2]

[1]Department of English Studies, Texas University, Dallas, USA., 2Department of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Texas University, Dallas, USA.

A **list** of **number of black and white / colour figures and tables should also be indicated on this page.**

Page 3: Abstract
This page should **repeat** the **full title** of your paper with only the **Abstract** and **Keywords**.

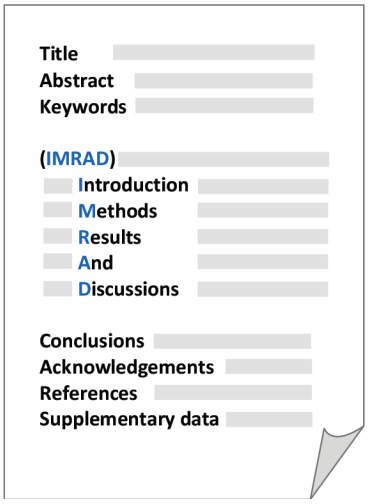
Abstract: The abstract should be around 150-200 words for a Regular Paper and up to 100 words for a Short Communication.

Keywords: Not more than eight keywords in alphabetical order must be provided to describe the contents of the manuscript.

Page 4: Introduction
This page should begin with the **Introduction** of your article and followed by the rest of your paper.

Manuscript Style

The manuscript should be written using the **IMRAD** style of writing. Regular Papers should be prepared with the headings Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion, Conclusions, Acknowledgements, References, and Supplementary data (if available) in this order.



Make your articles as concise as possible

Most scientific papers are prepared according to a format called IMRAD. The term represents the first letters of the words Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, And, Discussion. It indicates a pattern or format rather than a complete list of headings or components of research papers; the missing parts of a paper are: Title, Authors, Keywords, Abstract, Conclusions, and References. Additionally, some papers include Acknowledgments and Appendices.

The Introduction explains the scope and objective of the study in the light of current knowledge on the subject; the Materials and Methods describes how the study was conducted; the Results section reports what was found in the study; and the Discussion section explains meaning and significance of the results and provides suggestions for future directions of research. The manuscript must be prepared according to the Journal's instructions to authors.

Equations and Formulae

These must be set up clearly and should be typed double spaced. Numbers identifying equations should be in square brackets and placed on the right margin of the text.

Tables

All tables should be prepared in a form consistent with recent issues of Horizon and should be numbered consecutively with Roman numerals. Explanatory material should be given in the table legends and footnotes.

When a manuscript is submitted for publication, tables must also be submitted separately as data - .doc, .rtf, Excel or PowerPoint files- because tables submitted as image data cannot be edited for publication and are usually in low-resolution.

Figures & Photographs

Submit an **original** figure or photograph. **All Figures and/or photographs must include a reference to the original source**, unless you have created it yourself. Line drawings must be clear, with high black and white contrast. Each figure or photograph should be

prepared on a new page, embedded in the manuscript for reviewing to keep the file of the manuscript under 5 MB. These should be numbered consecutively with Roman numerals.

Figures or photographs must also be submitted separately as TIFF, JPEG, or Excel files- because figures or photographs submitted in low-resolution embedded in the manuscript cannot be accepted for publication. For electronic figures, create your figures using applications that are capable of preparing high resolution TIFF files. In general, we require **300 dpi or higher resolution** for coloured and half-tone artwork, and **1200 dpi or higher for line drawings** are required.

Failure to comply with these specifications will require new figures and delay in publication.

NOTE: Illustrations may be produced in colour at no extra cost at the discretion of the Publisher; the author could be charged USD 50 for each colour page.

General rules on Figures and Tables

- All Figures and Tables should be numbered sequentially (e.g. Table 1, Table 2 etc.) and cite each one in your writing as Table 1 or Figure 1.
- All tables should be referenced in the text of the paper and in the reference list.
- Each table should have an individual title. Each word in the title should be italicized and capitalized except with, of, in, and, etc.
- **Figure captions must be placed at the bottom of each figure.**
- **Captions for tables must be placed at the top of each table.**
- All Figures/ photographs **must include a reference to the original source**, unless you have created it yourself.

General Guidelines

Abbreviations: Define alphabetically, other than abbreviations that can be used without definition. Words or phrases that are abbreviated in the introduction and following text should be written out in **full the first time** that they appear in the text, with each abbreviated form in parenthesis. Include the common name or scientific name, or both, of animal and plant materials.

Authors' Affiliation: The primary affiliation for each author should be the institution where the majority of their work was done. If an author has subsequently moved to another institution, the current address may also be stated in the footer.

Co-Authors: The commonly accepted guideline for authorship is that one must have substantially contributed to the development of the paper and share accountability for the results. Researchers should decide who will be an author and what order they will be listed depending upon their order of importance to the study. Other contributions should be cited in the manuscript's Acknowledgements.

Originality: The author must ensure that when a manuscript is submitted to Horizon, the manuscript is an original work. The author should check the manuscript for any possible plagiarism using any software such as **TurnItIn, iThenticate** or any other similar program before submitting the manuscripts to the Horizon journal.

All submitted manuscripts must be in the Journal's acceptable **similarity index range**:

< 25%– PASS; **30-40%–** RESUBMIT MS; **> 40%**– REJECT.

Copyright: Authors publishing the Journal will be asked to sign a copyright form after acceptance of their article. In signing the form, it is assumed that authors have obtained permission to use any copyrighted or previously published material. All authors must read and agree to the conditions outlined in the form, and must sign the form or agree that the corresponding author can sign on their behalf.

Articles cannot be published until a signed form *(original pen-to-paper signature)* has been received.

Copyright Permissions: Authors should seek necessary permissions for quotations, artwork, boxes or tables taken from other publications or from other freely available sources on the Internet before submission to Horizon. Acknowledgement must be given to the original source in the illustration legend, in a table footnote, or at the end of the quotation.

Footnotes: Current addresses of authors if different from heading may be inserted here.

Page Numbering: Every page of the manuscript, including the title page, references, tables, etc. should be numbered.

Spelling: The journal uses American or British spelling and authors may follow the latest edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary for British spellings. **The spellings must be consistent with the same style throughout the manuscript**.

SUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Owing to the volume of manuscripts we receive, we must insist that all submissions be made electronically using the **online submission system™**, a web-based portal. For more information, go to our web page and click "**Online Submission**".

Please do **not** submit manuscripts to the Editor-in-Chief or to any other office directly. All submissions or queries must be directed to the **Chief Executive Editor** via email to CEE.horizon@gmail.com

Visit our Journal's website for more information at https://horizon-jhssr.com/index.php | DOI: https://doi.org/10.37534

Journal at a glance

Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (JHSSR), Online ISSN 2682-9096 is aimed at those in the academic world who are dedicated to advancing the field of social science education through their research. JHSSR provides a range of articles that speak to the major issues in social sciences across all content areas and disciplines. The Journal is peer edited through a blind review process that utilizes a national and international editorial board and peer reviewers, comprising of renowned scholars from various disciplines of research with diverse geographical backgrounds engaged with universities in 35 countries across the world.

JHSSR aspires to advance research in the field of social sciences through a collection of quality, relevant, and advanced interdisciplinary articles in the fields associated with the scope of the journal.

Published bi-annually, the journal encourages submission of manuscripts by lecturers, post-doctorates and scholars that use quantitative or qualitative methods. Articles combine disciplinary methods with critical insights to investigate major issues shaping national, state, and institutional contexts. We seek to present the cutting-edge innovations and/or latest insights and strive to maintain the highest standards of excellence for JHSSR.

Check our **Editorial Board**

Indexing

The journal is listed/indexed with: **Academia, Crossref, MyCite,** MCC, **ProQuest, Google Scholar, EBSCOHost,** *and* **ISC** amongst others.

JHSSR

Scholarly, peer-reviewed and open access

BACK ISSUES

JHSSRportfolio

Never Miss an Issue!

From our first issue until the latest, these covers represent several thousand pages of our publication history. The authors' excellent work adds great value. You may view complete articles at:

https://horizon-jhssr.com/past-issue.php

The journal is supported by an international and highly qualified Editorial Board comprising of over 35 countries and universities across the world.

Contact: info.jhssr@gmail.com

Horizon Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences Research

Vol. 7 (1) Jul. 2025

Contents

E-mail: CEE@horizon-jhssr.com
URL: www.horizon-jhssr.com

eISSN 2682-9096

PUBLISHER
B.P. Services
Masreca19, Persiaran Rimba Permai
Cyber 10, 63200 Cyberjaya, MALAYSIA

EDITORIAL OFFICE
6121 W. J. Voaz Road, Fort Worth
TX 76169, Texas, USA.
Tel: +1 (209) 302-9591.