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# The Effect of Service Quality Dimensions on Students' Satisfaction in University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) Hostel Accommodation (Sudan)

Khairi Mohamed Omar<sup>1</sup> & Ahmed Mohammed Arbab<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Business Administration Department, College of Administrative Sciences, Applied Science University, Kingdom of Bahrain.

Correspondence: Khairi Mohamed Omar, Assistant Professor in Business Administration Department, College of Administrative Sciences, Applied Science University, Kingdom of Bahrain. E-mail: khairi.omar@asu.edu.bh

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## Abstract

This paper aims to examine the effects of service quality dimensions on students' satisfaction in University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) students' hostel accommodation in Sudan. It is based on an empirical study conducted at one of the Sudanese Private University. A quantitative method was employed. Out of 367, there were 200 questionnaires were returned represented 55% of the study response rate. SPSS version 22 and AMOS version 21.0 were used in the analysis the collected data. The study proposed six direct effects. The results support two direct effects. Although the study conducted regarding the student's satisfaction in a Sudan education environment, the result of this study cannot be generalized.

**Keywords:** service quality dimensions, perceived value, students' satisfaction, hostel accommodation, University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST)

## 1. Introduction:

In the current competitive academic environment, where there is a verity of available options for the students, the factors that allow educational institutions to attract students must be studied seriously. The competitive advantage which all higher education institutions pursuing in the future, required a creative and effective means in order to retain, attract and foster stronger relations with students. Therefore, private organization, has to depend on the market interaction and the mechanism. As a result, the competition to encourage as many potential clients as possible can turn out to be more and more powerful.

It is normal for the private institution to depend on themselves in terms of financial support where they usually have no privilege to receive any types of government subsidies from the government (Teo, 2001). However, to give some insights into the real situation of the Higher Education Institutions, institutions must give a great deal of importance to meeting client expectations which are same with a business organization (Kanji, Abdul Malek, & Wallace, 1999). However, these institutions still facing lots of customer awareness issues among their staff, which unfortunately it has turned out to be a common drawback for a verity of institutions.

This leads to understanding that students are more likely will have supplementary chances to support their continued enrollment in the higher education institutions and how well these programs offered by the institutions and services will meet students' expectations for services. To sum up, it is the satisfaction with services will always make the difference (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1996). Which drew the importance of this study with its intention to explore the sides of the service quality and the satisfaction level of the private institutions' students of higher education.

## 2. Research Problem

With only five public universities and a limited number of students and no private universities the Sudan started the education sector in previous time. This has clearly imperfect the competing roles among the existed universities in attracting students. At present, there were more than 50 public and private universities and colleges operating in the country. Based on that, it resulted in a competitive academic environmental; where students have many options available to them; factors that enable educational institutions to attract and retain

students should be seriously studied. Higher education providers, who want to gain competitive advantages, may need to begin looking for practical and creative ways to attract, retain and foster stronger relationships with students. In turn, this will give the students more opportunity to support their continued enrollment into higher education providers and on how well the educational programs and services met students' expectations for services. Some public and private higher education providers in Sudan have progressed in the application of Service Quality Dimensions where they have gained considerable benefits. This had led the researchers to reflect on the topic and to find an answer to the following central research question: "To what extent the mediating perceived value effects on Service Quality Dimensions namely "Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy" and students' satisfaction relationship in UMST Hostel Accommodation?"

### **3. The Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study stems from the importance of Service Quality Dimensions, Perceived Value and Students' Satisfaction in all Sudanese Universities Hostel Accommodation and UMST Hostel Accommodation in particular.

### **4. Objectives of Study**

- i. To know the effect of Service Quality Dimensions on Students' satisfaction in UMST Hostel Accommodation.
- ii. To know the effect of Service Quality Dimensions on Students' Perceived Value in UMST Hostel Accommodation.
- iii. To know the mediating effects of Perceived value between the Service Quality Dimensions and Students' Satisfaction in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

### **5. Literature**

This section reviews the related literature:

#### *5.1 Student Satisfaction*

The satisfaction has been defined by several scholars as a case felt by an individual with experience performance or an outcome fulfill of a personal expectation (Kotler & Clarke, 1987). It is normally a function of the comparative level of comprehend performance. Students even enter the higher education may go as far as before their expectation which left the door open for the researchers to determine first what the students expect before entering the university (Palacio, Meneses, & Pérez, 2002). In contrary to Carey, Cambiano, & DeVore, (2002) where they believe that satisfaction covers matters of students' perception and experiences throughout their studies years. While most research regarding student satisfaction focuses on the perspective of the client, a problem of producing a typical explanation for students satisfaction are facing most of the researchers thus providing a necessity of customer satisfaction theory to be selected and adapted so that it can explain the meaning of student satisfaction (Omar, Mat, & Imhemed, 2102). Although it is dangerous to look at students as a client, given the current atmosphere of the higher education marketplace, there is a new moral privilege that the student has become a "clients" and thus, as fee payers, can reasonably ask for their views and act accordingly (William, 2002).

#### *5.2 Service Quality*

There are several definitions of quality, however, these definitions are revolves around the idea which is says quality should be a judged when evaluating or assessing a service provided to a consumer. The construction of quality as a conceptual is based on the literature of services on perceived quality. Recognized quality is defined as the judgment of the consumer on the experience or superiority of the entity in general (Zammuto et al., 1996; Zeithaml, 1987). Likewise, Zeithaml, and Berry (1990) reported that customer perceptions of quality of service as a result of comparing expectations before they receiving the service and testing service. According to Rowley, (1996), the perceived quality of any provided service is understood as a form of associated, but not the similar satisfaction that results of comparing expectations by means of performance perceptions. Thus, the perceived quality of service can be a product of assessments of some service meetings. In such case the students may range out from meetings with office staff to meetings with teachers and lecturers, heads of departments, etc. (Hill, 1995).

As a result, if an organization regularly provides a service beyond the client's expectations, the service will be considered high quality. On the contrary, if an organization does not meet the expectations of its client, it will be judged that the service is of poor quality (Zammuto et al., 1996).

Actually, based on the empirical evidence by Lassar, Manolis, and Winsor (2000) and Gronroos (1984), the most widespread two factors accepted perspectives on service quality include the service quality model and the



Technical Quality framework held that service quality is made up of three dimensions" the technical quality of the outcome, functional quality of the encounter and the company corporate image".

There is a great debate regarding to the examining of the determinants of quality, of course it is needed to differentiate between quality associated with the process of service delivery and quality associated with the outcome of service, judged by the consumer after the service is performed. There are a ten determinants of service quality which have been listed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), these ten determinants can be generalized to a verity of services, which is included "tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security and understanding". Absolutely, these ten determinants were then reformed in the famous five aspects "assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility" in the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1990). However, the complexity of tangibility, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance can increase consumer satisfaction towards the services rendered by the organization human resource department (Omar, 2016).

In general, there are three basic criteria that need to be satisfied for the students need (Requisite encounters, acceptable encounters and functional, an encounter of a practical or utilitarian nature. Oldfield and Barron (2000) reported that, these criteria are described as necessary meetings that enable students to meet their study obligations; acceptable interviews are recognized by students as desirable but not necessary during their studies. According to Lassar, Manolis and Winsor (2000), the two most widely accepted and widely accepted perspectives on quality of service include the service quality model and the functional quality framework.

Gronroos (1984) reported that the quality of service involves of three dimensions: "Professional Quality of the Result", "Functional Quality of Meeting" and "Company Image Company". This has been argued in the context of the study of quality determinants, which is essential to distinguish between the quality related to the delivered service process and the quality related with the results of the service, which the consumer assesses after being serviced. Nevertheless, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), have comprised more than nine service quality elements which can be widespread to any deal. They include ten dimensions of concrete, reliability, responsiveness, efficiency, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security and understanding. These ten dimensions have also been reassembled in the five well-known aspects of the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1990), which include affirmation, empathy, reliability, responsiveness and appropriateness. However, the complexity of reliability, empathy and concrete.

**6. Method of the Study**

Based on reviewing the related literature and the current study objectives, conceptual framework has been formulated as shown in Figure 1.

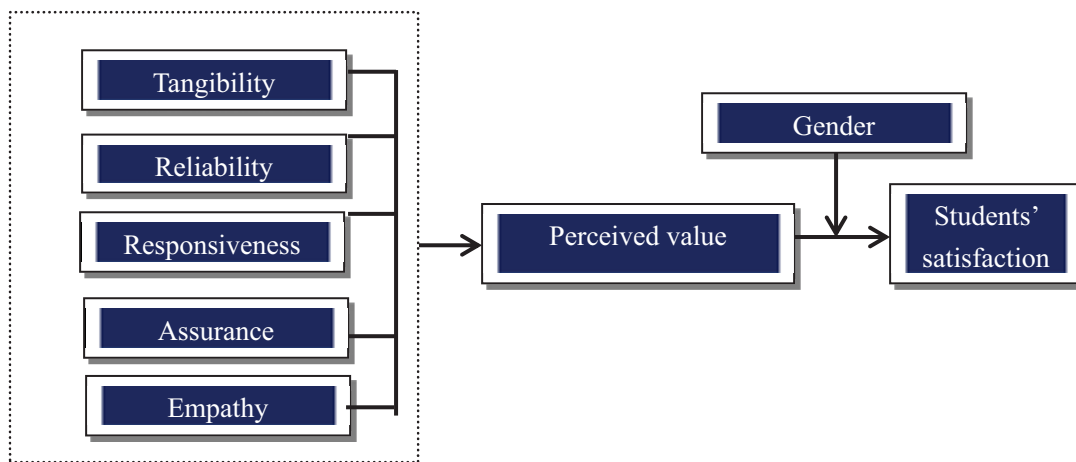


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

From the conceptual framework, it can be seen that SERVQUAL dimensions are directly predictors of perceived value. The perceived value is presented as direct predictor of students' satisfaction.

The establishing variables of this proposed conceptual framework are drawn using the error terms individually for each latent variable in the way to explain and interpret into the hypothesized model. Hence, the exogenous variables of the SERVQUAL dimensions, each contain four to six showing (observed items) variables correspondingly.

Therefore, an error for each piece is drawn as un-observed variables in circles and labeled e01 to e25. Where, the perceived value and students' satisfaction, as an endogenous latent variable the manifesting variables are five for each variable. The subsequent error terms are labeled e26 to e34 as in the diagram. However, a different error (R35 and R36) for each endogenous variable are attached by e as displayed in Figure 2.

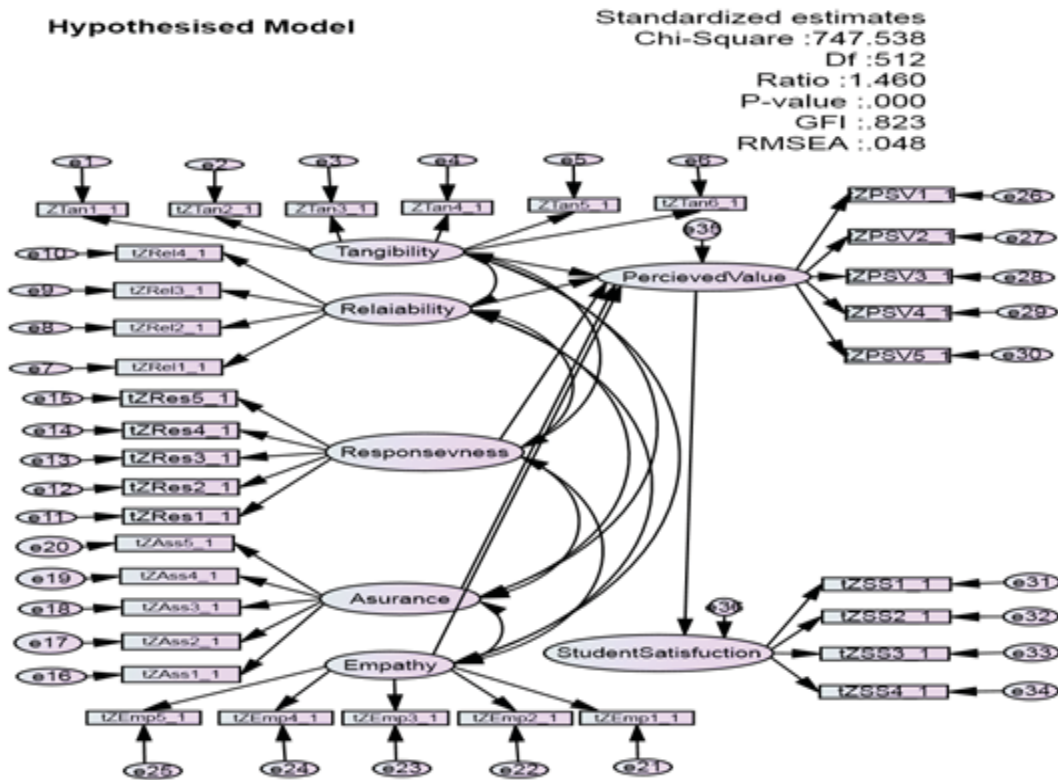


Figure 2. Hypothesized model

### 7. Research Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the hypothesized model and reviewing of the related studies and theories, the study hypotheses were formulated as below:

Hypothesis 1: Tangibility is the direct predictor of perceived values in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 2: Reliability is the direct predictor of perceived values in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 3: Responsiveness is the direct predictor of perceived values in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 4: Assurance is the direct predictor of perceived values in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 5: Empathy is the direct predictor of perceived values in UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived values are the direct predictor of students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 7: Perceived values mediate the relationship between tangibility and students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 8: Perceived values mediate the relationship between reliability and students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 9: Perceived values mediate the relationship between responsiveness and students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 10: Perceived values mediate the relationship between assurance and students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

Hypothesis 11: Perceived values mediate the relationship between empathy and students' satisfaction with UMST Hostel Accommodation.

## 8. Study Target Population, Sampling and Instrument

According to the university admission and registration department there are around 8000 students studying in UMST. For the aim of this research, the 370 is considered as the target population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Sekaran, 1992 & 2003, p, 278). Based on Hair, (2010), table for determining a sample size from population. A random sample of 370 students in were invited to complete a questionnaire that contained measures of the constructs of the study's concern. Using purposive sampling method the questionnaires were distributed to the targeted respondents in UMST campus. A 55% as response rate was collected back which corresponding to 200 distributed questionnaire.

Each variable were measured by using 7-point interval-scale as 1= strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree.

There are also seven demographic questions included in the instrument, which use ordinary and nominal scales such as gender, age, country, education, and marital status, duration living in hostel or room and roommates per hostel or room.

## 9. Data Screening and Analysis

The 200 dataset were coded and saved into SPSS version 19 and analyzed using AMOS version 7.0. There was no missing data. During the process of data screening for outliers, there was no dataset to delete due to Mahalanobis ( $D^2$ ) values not more than the  $\chi^2$  value ( $\chi^2=67.99$ ;  $n=36$ ,  $p<.005$ ).

For the purpose of checking the normality of the distributed data, the univariate normality computations were conducted using z-scores of Skewness statistics and standard error of Skewness as well as kurtosis statistics (Jr, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006).

## 10. Results

This section will report the result of the paper as following:

### 10.1 The Profile Demographic of Respondents

Based on the study results, it appeared that respondents' in terms of ages were ranged from 17 to 27 years old showing an average of 22 years old. The female represented 69%, where the male respondents were 31%. Regarding the respondents qualification, it was varies from bachelor's degree with 76%, where, respondents with diploma degree represented 24%. The major respondent's rate was Sudanese with 84%, other Arabic nationalities 11%, where the lowest percentage response rate were Africans students with 5%. The Marital status of the single was the highest with 93% and for married was only 7%. Furthermore, roommates living average in one room are funded to be one 15%, two 30%, three 50%, and no roommates are 5%. However, the results show an average duration with less than one year 6%, one to three years 14%, four to six years 75%, and more than six years 5%.

### 10.2 Variables Descriptive Analysis

The conceptual framework of this study consists of seven variables "five exogenous and two endogenous" each one of these constructs showed acceptable values of Cronbach's Alpha readings "above 0.6" (Nunnally, 1970). The Composite reliability as well showed a similar high reading as it displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable Name	No. of Items	Mean (Std. Dev)	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability
Tangibility	6	2.55 (0.943)	0.623	0.931
Reliability	4	1.60 (0.666)	0.770	0.937
Responsiveness	5	2.520 (0.437)	0.613	0.835
Assurance	5	1.601 (0.625)	0.715	0.931
Empathy	5	1.510 (0.686)	0.787	0.966
Perceived service	5	1.538 (0.705)	0.753	0.837
Students satisfaction	5	1.598 (0.744)	0.605	0.920
Total Items	35			



10.3 Convergent Validity (Confirmatory Factor Analysis-CFA)

Out of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) outcomes, it observed that the regression estimates (the factor loadings of all manifesting observed variables or items) are satisfactory ranging from (0.507) to (0.938). However, factor loadings of the latent variables to an observed should be over (0.50) (Hair et al., 2006). Therefore, the generated results indicate that all the constructs conform to construct convergent validity test.

10.4 Discriminant Validity

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) for the substantiating of the discriminant validity, Average Variance Extracted must be associated to correlation squared of the interrelated variables of concerned as it is displayed in below tables (Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. Squared multiple correlation results

Endogenous Variable	Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC) = R <sup>2</sup>
Perceived value	5.4%
Students satisfaction	75.8%

After the variance extracted, AVE calculated by averaging the two variances extracted from the variables. The results are displayed in a below Table 3.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) matrix of variables

Variable Name	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tangibility (1)						
Reliability (2)	1					
Responsiveness (3)	0.91	1				
Assurance (4)	0.99	0.91	1			
Empathy (5)	0.99	0.9	0.99	1		
Perceived service (6)	0.98	0.91	0.99	0.99	1	
Students satisfaction (7)	0.99	0.92	0.98	0.98	0.98	1

For the discriminant validity to be supported, AVE value must be greater than the correlation squared as shown in Table 4 below. For instance, amongst the variables Tangibility and Reliability, the AVE =0.910 as shown in Table 3, while correlation squared =0.025 as shown in Table 4 below. Hence, AVE > correlation squared, or Tangibility discriminates from Reliability. Thus, discriminant validity is supported. All constructs used for this study support discriminant validity.

Table 4. Correlation square matrix among variables

Variable Name	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tangibility (1)	1					
Reliability (2)	0.025**	1				
Responsiveness(3)	0.074 **	1.016**	1			
Assurance (4)	-0.126**	0.206 **	-0.179**	1		
Empathy (5)	0.017*	0.311**	0.494 **	0.619 **	1	
Perceived service (6)	-0.024	-0.013 **	0.413***	0.171 **	-0.173**	1
Students satisfaction (7)	0.569**	0.585***	0.494 **	0.461 **	0.394 **	0.83**

Significance Level: \* = .05, \*\* = .01, \*\*\* = .001

Note: Values below the diagonal are correlation estimates among constructs, diagonal elements are constructed variances, and values above the diagonal are squared correlation. Since all correlations are significant, mediation is plausible.

Nomological validity looks into the correlations between constructs in the measurement theory whether makes sense such that correlations necessity be positive or negative according to theory specified (Hair et al., 2006). All directions of correlations are in the hypothesized direction as stipulated in the hypotheses in accordance with the theory as it shows in Table 5. Thus, it can be say that nomological validity is substantiated for all measures used in this study.

10.5 Goodness of Fit of Structural Model

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted on every construct and measurement models in order to arrive at the final structural model (Table 5 and Table 6).

Table 5. Goodness of Fit Analysis-Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of Models (N=198)

Finals Models	Tangibility	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	Perceived service	Students satisfaction
Original Items	6	4	5	5	5	5	5
Items remain	5	3	5	3	3	3	3
CMIN	4.936	4.514	2.547	5.788	2.379	3.373	10.003
Df	5	2	5	2	2	2	5
CMIN/df	0.987	2.257	0.509	2.894	1.1901	1.687	2.001
p-value	0.424	0.105	0.769	0.055	0.304	0.185	0.075
GFI	0.99	0.989	0.995	0.986	0.994	0.991	0.891
RMSEA	0.066	0.08	0.099	0.098	0.031	0.059	0.071

Table 6. Goodness of Fit Analysis-Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of Models (N=198)

Finals Models	Exogenous: (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance & Empathy)	Endogenous (Perceived service & Students satisfaction)	Hypothesized Model	Revised Model
Original Items	25	10	35	25
Items remain	19	6	35	25
CMIN	148.2	14.682	747.538	260.59
Df	142	8	512	259
CMIN/df	1.044	1.835	1.46	1.006
p-value	0.344	0.066	0	0.461
GFI	0.927	0.977	0.823	0.903
RMSEA	0.015	0.065	0.048	0.006

According to Bagozzi & Yi (1988), goodness of fit helps to see the model fits into the variance-covariance matrix of the dataset which accordingly will enable the researcher to take the decision. All Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFAs) of constructs displayed produced a good fit as showed by the goodness of fit which indices such as CMIN/df ratio (<2); p-value (>0.05); Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of >0.95; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of values less than 0.08 (<0.08) (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 6 and Table 7 show that the goodness of fit of generated or revised model is better compared to the hypothesized model. This is expected as a hypothesized model is usually strictly confirmatory (Byrne, 2001). The revised model showed a better GFI 0.903 in comparing to the hypothesized model of 0.823. Furthermore, Root Mean Square Error Approximation shows as well an improved reading of 0.006 for the revised model n comparing to the hypothesized model of 0.043.

10.6 Hypotheses Results

The explanation of the result will be based on revised model results as it shown in (Table 7 and Figure 3).

Table 7. Direct Impact of Revised Model: Standardized Regression Weights

H	Endogenous		Exogenous	Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Status
H1	Perceived value	←	Tangibility	-0.083	0.03	-0.932	0.351	Not sig
H2	Perceived value	←	Reliability	-0.09	0.12	-0.106	0.916	Not sig
H3	Perceived value	←	Responsiveness	0.096	0.71	0.586	0.558	Not sig
H4	Perceived value	←	Assurance	0.171	0.14	1.203	0.229	sig
H5	Perceived value	←	Empathy	-0.134	0.17	-0.978	0.328	Not sig
H6	Student's satisfaction	←	Perceived service	0.83	0.1	8.812	***	Sig

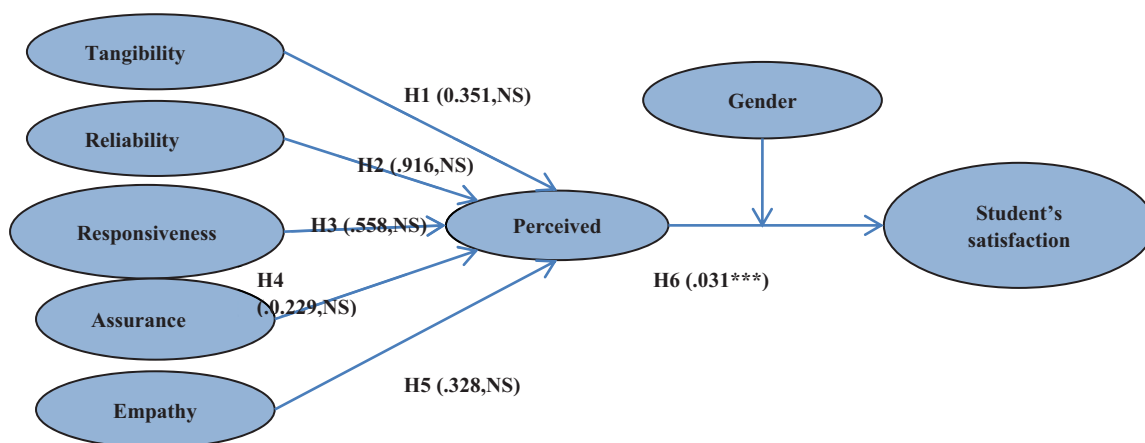


Figure 3. Direct path result of revised model

A significant positive antecedent of customer loyalty has been indicted by the study result with commitment. The perceived value appears to has a significant direct effect on student's satisfaction ( $\beta=0.830$ ;  $CR=8.812$ ;  $P<0.000$ ) therefore the H6 is asserted. On the other hand, the H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 fund to have insignificant effect, therefore, they H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are not asserted (insignificant Beta) which led to reject these hypotheses.

As indicated in Table 2, which point out the quantity of variance clarified by the exogenous variables in the revised model. Initially, empathy, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, tangibility explains 5.4% variance in perceived value. Secondly, perceived value explains 75.8% variance in student's satisfaction.

10.7 Mediating Effect Analysis of Revised Model

The indirect effect estimates to test the mediating effects of Perceived value on the five relationships as hypothesized in hypotheses H7 to H11 are displayed in Table 9 and 10. The result indicted that, H7 to H11 are not supported. It is revealed that perceived value does not mediate the relationship between responsiveness, reliability, tangibility, empathy, and assurance with student's satisfaction. There were no significant upsurges of indirect impacts on these relations compared to direct effects.

Table 8. Indirect effect of variables interaction

H	Exogenous		Mediated		Endogenous	direct Effects Estimate-No link	direct Effects Estimate-link	Mediating Hypothesis
H7	Tangibility	→	Perceived value	→	Students satisfaction	Tan PS=-.085NS PS SS=.83S	-.057NS .81S	Non mediator
H8	Reliability	→	Perceived value	→	Students satisfaction	Rel PS=.021NS PS SS=.83S	-.021NS .83S	Non mediator
H9	Responsiveness	→	Perceived value	→	Students satisfaction	Res PS=.06NS PS SS=.83S	.030NS .82S	Non mediator

H10	Assurance	→	Perceived value	→	Students satisfaction	Ass PS=.154NS PS SS=.83S	.045NS .83S	Non mediator
H11	Empathy	→	Perceived value	→	Students satisfaction	Emp PS=-.031NS PS SS=.84S	.061NS .84S	Non mediator

Table 10. Total effect of mediating variable

H	Exogenous		Mediated		Endogenous	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effect
H7	Tangibility	→	Perceived value	→	Student’s satisfaction	-0.134	-0.111	-0.245
H8	Reliability	→	Perceived value	→	Student’s satisfaction	0.171	0.142	0.313
H9	Responsiveness	→	Perceived value	→	Student’s satisfaction	0.096	0.079	0.175
H10	Assurance	→	Perceived value	→	Student’s satisfaction	-0.009	-0.008	-0.017
H11	Empathy	→	Perceived value	→	Student’s satisfaction	-0.083	-0.069	-0.152

Note: Standardized path estimates are reported

10.8 Overall Comparison Between Structural Models

By looking on Table 11, it shows a complete image of comparison between the two hypothesized and revised structural models of this study. The hypothesized model produces one significant direct impact and likewise the revised model as well. However, due to un-achievement of p-value ( $p < 0.05$ ) these results could not be generalized. On the other hand, it give the impression that a significant direct effect of perceived value on student’s satisfaction presented in (H6), is consistently significant across the two structural models. Alternatively, five direct paths, i.e., the paths from tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and student’s satisfaction are consistently insignificant across the structural models.

Among the two structural models, revised model achieved the higher squared multiple correlations (SMC) or ( $R^2$ ), in which the revised model explains 75.8% variance in Students satisfaction and 5.4% variance in perceived value. The hypothesized model only explains 69.8% variance in Students satisfaction and 2.9% variance in perceived value.

Table 11. Comparison between hypothesized model and generated model

H	Exogenous	Mediation	Endogenous	Hypothesized Model			Generated Model		
				Std. Estimate	P	Hypothesis Status	Std. Estimate	P	Hypothesis Status
H1	Tangibility		Perceived Value	-0.055	0.537	Rejected	-0.058	0.351	Rejected
H2	Reliability		Perceived Value	-0.008	0.936	Rejected	-0.17	0.916	Rejected
H3	Responsiveness		Perceived Value	0.08	0.472	Rejected	0.166	0.558	Rejected
H4	Assurance		Perceived Value	0.343	0.121	Rejected	0.09	0.229	Asserted
H5	Empathy		Perceived Value	-0.331	0.124	Rejected	0.001	-0.328	Rejected
H6	Perceived service		Students satisfaction	0.869	***	Asserted	0.83	***	Asserted
H7	Tangibility	Perceived Value	Students satisfaction	-	-	-	-0.083	0.105	Not mediating

H8	Reliability	Perceived Value	Students satisfaction	-	-	-	-0.09	0.285	Not mediating
H9	Responsiveness	Perceived Value	Students satisfaction	-	-	-	0.096	0.457	Not mediating
H10	Assurance	Perceived Value	Students satisfaction	-	-	-	0.171	0.302	Not mediating
H11	Empathy	Perceived Value	Students satisfaction	-	-	-	-0.134	0.285	Not mediating
Goodness of Fit Index:									
Chi-Square				747.538			260.59		
Chi-square change							486.948		
Df				512			259		
Df change							253		
Ratio				1.46			1.006		
P Value				0			0.454		
GFI				0.823			0.903		
RMSEA				0.048			0.006		
Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC):									
Perceived value				2.90%			5.40%		
Students satisfaction				69.80%			75.80%		

## 11. Conclusions

The University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST) began as a private, non-profit making educational institution, in Khartoum, Sudan, which was established in 1996 to serve the educational needs of Sudanese, African and Arab students. In a few years, UMST has expanded to ten faculties, namely, Medicine, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Dentistry, Dental Technology, Nursing, Computer Sciences, Administrative & Financial Sciences Biomedical Engineering and Anaesthetic Sciences. Officially accredited and recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Sudan. UMST offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees such as bachelor degrees, master degrees in several areas of study. It also provides several academic and non-academic facilities and services to students including a library, housing, sports facilities and activities, financial aids and scholarships, as well as administrative services

The purpose of this paper was to examine the effects of the Perceived mediating value on the relationship between the Service Quality Dimensions (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy) and Students' Satisfaction in UMST Hostel Accommodation. The research shows Perceived value has a significant direct impact on student's satisfaction Hostel Accommodation. It shows Perceived value does not mediate the relationship between tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and student's satisfaction Hostel Accommodation. There are no significant increases of indirect effects for these relationships compared to direct impacts. These findings can be generalized to all Sudanese educational providers because there are so many variables other than (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) may contribute to student's satisfaction not excluded in this study.

Also the ownership of Sudanese educational providers ranging from public universities, private universities and private but non-profit making universities.

This opens an area of conducting future researchers using other variables not included in addition to considering different types of ownership of Sudanese educational providers.

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# Enhancing Thai In-service Teachers' Perceptions of STEM Education with Tablet-based Professional Development

Sasithev Pitipornatapin<sup>1</sup>, Panuvit Chantara<sup>1</sup>, Wachira Srikoom<sup>2</sup>, Prasart Nuangchalerm<sup>3</sup> & Lisa M. Hines<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education, Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>2</sup> The Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST) Bangkok, Thailand

<sup>3</sup> Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University, Mahasarakham, Thailand

<sup>4</sup> Department of Biology, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA

Correspondence: Sasithev Pitipornatapin, Division of Science Education, Department of Education, Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand. Tel: 660-2579-7114 ext.161. E-mail: fedustp@ku.ac.th

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## Abstract

National efforts in Thailand are currently focused on promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education in order to better prepare the future generations to be an effective and productive workforce. In accordance with this mission, the goal of this research is to develop a tablet-based professional development (PD) program to enhance in-service teachers' perceptions of STEM education, which will directly affect both their decision to incorporate STEM, as well as their ability to effectively do so in their own classroom. To assess the efficacy of the PD program, we recruited 240 STEM and non-STEM teachers from basic education schools in Thailand to participate in the program. The activities in this program were divided into three parts: 1) increasing knowledge about STEM education, 2) providing demonstrations of STEM teaching, and 3) developing STEM-based lessons. Data were collected throughout the tablet-based PD program from focus group discussion sessions, pre-post questionnaires, and informal interviews. Data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that before participating in the tablet-based PD program, the majority of participants had limited knowledge on STEM education and were uncertain on how to integrate STEM into their instructional practices. They also had difficulty with connecting the different STEM disciplines in their activities. Although they were interested in implementing the STEM educational approach, they lacked confidence on how to accomplish this. After completing the tablet-based PD program, many participants had a much better understanding of STEM education and greater confidence with implementing STEM pedagogical approaches.

**Keywords:** STEM education, Tablet-based professional development, teachers' perceptions

## 1. Introduction

In Thailand, there are national efforts to transform society to a new economic model, known as the "Thailand 4.0" policy, which is focused on promoting *creativity, innovation, new technology, and the availability of high-level services* (Baxter, 2017). STEM education, a pedagogical approach that integrates Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, is considered a critical component to this transformation, as it provides the best opportunity to prepare the new generations of Thailand's workforce in several sectors, including industry, health services, environmental management, logistics, and transportation. The Thai government encourages all schools to implement STEM education into their curriculum, which should include project-based and problem-based learning activities that provide students the opportunity to solve problems in daily life, as well as challenge them to seek alternative solutions (Boonruang, 2015).

In addition, in-service teachers' strongly support the initiative to incorporate STEM education in their classrooms. Their perceptions and knowledge of the STEM approach are vital for the success of educational reform, since students' learning is directly related to their teachers' approaches to teaching (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). Currently, many pre-service teacher programs do not incorporate STEM training, and STEM concepts are often ambiguous among in-service teachers (Lederman & Lederman, 2013). Furthermore, there are few general guidelines or models available for teachers to integrate STEM approaches in their classrooms. Consequently,

there are some misconceptions regarding STEM education (Chulavatnatol, 2013). Srikoorn & Hanuscin (2017) found that the majority of the teachers in Thailand had very limited knowledge on STEM education, and some of them were unable to even interpret the definition of STEM education. To address these issues, PD programs in STEM are imperative for assuring teachers are prepared to effectively implement this educational reform.

According to the literature, an effective PD program should offer different forms of media for presentation and delivery of materials, as well as make training practical, relevant, hands-on, and interactive (Burgstahler, 2006). Furthermore, a successful PD program should be able to accommodate individual needs (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999), allow sufficient time, offer on-going professional support (Radford, 1998), and provide easy access to all the necessary resources (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Gains in both knowledge and perception require time and persistence (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). The process of change can only occur when the teachers are confident about the outcomes of the teaching strategies (Bell, 1998). Teachers must recognize a need, make plans to address this need, actively engage in improvements, and allow sufficient time to evaluate the efficacy of the new practices (Boling & Martin, 2005). Sikes (1992) suggested that in the change process, teachers are continually required to alter their administrative and organizational systems, their pedagogy, curriculum content, the resources and technology that they use, and their assessment procedures.

The use of technology for PD can provide teachers more opportunities to develop content knowledge, learn new pedagogies, deepen understanding of student thinking and learning, and enhance the utilization of varied teaching strategies (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). Tablet computers can be used as an effective tool for scaffolding learning and changing the learning environment (Melhuish & Falloon, 2010) because it provides users or learners with access to a myriad of software choices due to the various apps available (Shuler, 2012). Additionally, Sauers & McLeod (2011) reported that the use of the tablet computer could enhance teacher's engagement, develop cross-disciplinary knowledge, and enrich 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In addition, many educators agree that technology has great potential to improve education due to the capacity to support powerful and sophisticated learning environments (Hermans et al., 2008). Botha & Herselman (2015) found that teachers change from standing in front of a classroom of students sitting in rows to a more dynamic learning environment where learners are engaged in group projects using tablet computers. However, there is minimal research on the use of tablet computers for PD. The majority of published studies on the use of tablet computers for education in Thailand are focused on student learning. Sritha, Techakosit, & Patarathitinant (2003) found that using tablet computers helped students to better understand what they learned, and improved their motivation to participate in the classroom. However, poor quality of PC tablets, unstable internet accessibility, and the inability of teachers to directly control the technology were major concerns with this format. Therefore, this research is significant because it provides a model for institutes, schools, and universities on how to incorporate the use of tablet computers for PD and offers practical guidelines that will enhance in-service teachers' perceptions of STEM education.

## 2. Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of this research was to enhance perception of STEM education among in-services teachers across Northern, Northeastern, Central, and Southern Thailand using a tablet-based PD program. The overarching research question is: *"What changes in teachers' perceptions of STEM education occurred as a result of participating in the tablet-based PD program?"*

## 3. Research Methodology

To investigate in-service teachers' perceptions of STEM education regarding the definition of STEM education, the disciplines within STEM education, STEM integration, and implementation of STEM education in their classroom, the researchers used an interpretive paradigm that attempts to understand and explain human and social reality (Crotty, 1998). This study seeks to identify how teacher perceptions of STEM education were affected as a result of participating in the tablet-based PD program.

### 3.1 Context of the Study

This study involved the development of a new tablet-based PD program to enhance teacher knowledge of STEM education in order to promote educational reform among in-service teachers. This program was designed within a Thai context, and builds upon prior knowledge while promoting the construction of new knowledge (Bell, 1998). The program included many additional features, such as the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practices (Richardson & Placier, 2001), a follow-up phase to assess their progress (Fetters et al., 2002), activities that were relevant to the classroom (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003), and multiple strategies for teacher development (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003). While participating in the tablet-based PD program, they were asked to enroll in the iTunes University (iTunes U) program called *"iPad for STEM"* and participate in various

activities such as discussion, presentation, self-reflection, hands-on activities, interviews, and the sharing of ideas with guest speakers.

The tablet-based PD program comprises three main parts. In part I, in-service teachers were given an introduction of STEM education during a one-day meeting. The content included: 1) the definition of STEM education, 2) the importance of STEM education, 3) the role of technology in STEM education, 4) and teaching strategies in STEM education. Part II involved three demonstrations of STEM education that utilize the application of the iPad (tablet computer) for learning: Tall tower challenge with the application “*Book creator*”; Edible car with “*Keynote*”; and “*Oil spill*” with “*iMovie*”. In Part III, in-service teachers were asked to develop lesson plans in STEM education that integrate the iPad as a learning tool. The researchers developed this PD program. Prior to implementation during January-April 2017, the contents of the PD program were reviewed by three external experts, which included a scientist, a science educator, and an expert teacher. During this study, the role of the researcher was to act as a facilitator to clarify any points that the participants did not understand. Typically, this in-service teachers’ discussion took at least one hour per meeting with the teachers.

### 3.2 Research Participants

The research participants in this study were 240 in-service teachers from 50 public schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Thailand during the 2017 academic year. The participants comprised primary and secondary teachers, between 23-55 years old, who taught either science, mathematics, computer science, and English. The majority came from Northern, Northeastern, Central, and Southern parts of Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) willingness to participate in the tablet-based PD program, (2) interest in STEM education, and (3) ability to participate in the tablet-based program anytime.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using different methods at various times throughout the study. At the beginning of implementation of the tablet-based PD program, they were asked to enroll in the iTunes U program called “*iPad for STEM*” and complete an open-ended questionnaire that assesses their prior knowledge about STEM education. The questions included the definition of STEM education, their perceptions of each discipline in STEM education, STEM integration, and implementation of STEM education in their classroom.

During the program, the researchers asked participants to study the lessons provided in iTunes U. They had to work in groups of four-five to complete the assigned tasks in each lesson. After that, they completed each assignment, the researchers asked them to present their assignments and discuss their perceptions regarding STEM education. At the end of the program, all of them were asked to complete the same open-ended questionnaire that they completed at the beginning of the study. In addition, the researchers conducted group discussions during the tablet-based PD program to examine changes in their perceptions of STEM education. The researchers also used an informal 25-30 minute interview to clarify some points that the researchers did not understand. Oral consent was requested from all participants in order to take part in the research. Anonymity was preserved by assigning identification numbers to the participants after the data were collected.

For data analysis, the comparisons between the pre-test and post-test results were presented, in order to evaluate the influence of the intervention. The researchers used content analysis to analyze teachers’ responses on the questionnaires, group discussions, and informal interviews in order to assess the overall impact of the tablet-based PD program on teacher perception of STEM education. The researchers had to read raw data for interpreting and constructing categories to capture relevant characteristics of the content.

## 4. Findings

Researchers found that Thai in-service teacher’ perceptions of STEM education did change as a result of the tablet-based PD program. Here, we present a summary of their perceptions prior to and after completing the program on the definition of STEM education, the different disciplines in STEM education, STEM integration, and implementation of STEM education in the classroom.

### 4.1 STEM Definition

At the beginning of the tablet-based PD program, teachers were asked to define STEM education in their own words. Most of them had a partial understanding of STEM education. The majority of participants (201 teachers) viewed STEM education as simply a teaching approach that integrates several subjects. For example, one teacher stated, “It is a very interesting teaching approach that integrates four subjects together Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics”. With respect to the benefits of STEM education, some teachers (25 teachers) mentioned 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, as reflected in this comment, “STEM education is a new teaching approach for



promoting students' essential skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as problem solving, collaboration, creative thinking, and so on".

However, there were few of them (14 teachers) that did not answer several questions on the questionnaire. Informal interviews revealed that they did not know exactly what STEM education meant, as one stated, "*I have heard about STEM education, but I do not know what it is about*". These responses demonstrated that they lacked even a basic understanding of the STEM education approach.

By participating in the tablet-based PD program, they had the opportunity to learn the definition of STEM education from video clips produced by the Institution for Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST), which is an organization to drive STEM education for teaching and learning in Thailand. It defined STEM education as "*an approach that integrates science, engineering, technology, and mathematics, with a focus on solving real-life problems, including the development of new processes or products that benefit human life and work*".

After participation in the PD program, only one teacher skipped the question regarding the definition of STEM education. Most of them (190 teachers) perceived that STEM education is an integrated teaching approach, but they were only able to identify different aspects of this pedagogical approach, such as promoting students' application of knowledge. For example, a teacher commented, "*STEM education is for promoting students' to apply their knowledge in order to solve a problem*".

Similarly, some of them (30 teachers) viewed that their students will get a better understanding of concepts related to real-life situations. As reflected in this comment, "*Because STEM is related to real-life situations, students can learn the concepts behind the learning activities*". Moreover, few of them (20 teachers) also pointed out that STEM education involves project-based learning. One participant commented, "*Students learn to work together in groups to do a project that incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*".

#### 4.2 Science

When we asked teachers about what science in STEM education is, most of them (102 teachers) focused on science as content for students to learn. For example, one participant stated, "*Students have to learn basic science content integrated with other subjects in STEM education in order to have the ability to create new things*".

Some teachers (88 teachers) pointed out that science in STEM education is related to experiments. One teacher commented, "*I think that experimentation is the main part of science in STEM education*". Few of them (50 teachers) focused on the science process skills. Another teacher commented, "*In STEM education, science process skills have to be used to explain something or create new knowledge*". However, no one indicated the relation of science to other disciplines in STEM education, demonstrating that their perceptions were limited to a single STEM discipline.

To cope with this problem, they were asked to think from a student's view (as a learner) and reflect about the nature of science after completing each STEM activity. They seemed to have a better understanding of what science represents in STEM education. After participating in the tablet-based PD program, all of them (240 teachers) mentioned that teaching science should be focused more on developing scientific process skills' rather than the understanding of scientific concepts. Moreover, they knew the relationship between science and other subjects in STEM education.

For example, one participant stated, "*Science in STEM education is related to Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Science helps with technology development. In turn, technology helps to provide new knowledge in science. For engineering, science is used in the engineering process to create new technology. Lastly, mathematics is used in science*".

#### 4.3 Technology

Most of them (199 teachers) recognized that the "T" in STEM stands for technology, which is related to applying science and other subjects to create new inventions or products. One teacher stated, "*T is Technology. Technology comes from applying other subjects to create new inventions or products to simplify our life*". However, there were some misconceptions about what technology means in STEM education. Some of them (25 teachers) thought that technology is simply a craft. For example, one participant commented, "*I think that a craft that students can do step-by-step is related to technology in STEM education because it is about creating something new*".

In addition, few participants (15 teachers) pointed that technology in STEM education involves using a computer

or iPad. For example, one teacher stated, *“Technology in STEM involves the use of a computer or iPad to search for information when doing a presentation”*. There were a few teachers (5 teachers) who did not provide any ideas about technology in STEM education.

While participating in various activities in the PD program, they had a lot of opportunities to see many kinds of technology that could be used in STEM activities, as well as have discussions about the nature of technology. Consequently after participation in the tablet-based PD program, most of them (223 teachers) replied that technology in STEM education is not simply limited to a new invention or product, or the use of a computer to search information. Furthermore, some of them mentioned technology in terms of a new process. One of the participants defined technology as *“inventing a new process to solve a problem or create new things”*. A few teachers (17 teachers) pointed out that using technology itself to create innovation. Another teacher stated, *“We can describe technology in STEM as using technology, such as tools to create new products or processes for responding to human needs”*.

#### 4.4 Engineering

Initially, most of the teachers (123 teachers) in the tablet-based PD program perceived that engineering in STEM education only involves coming up with a design. For example, one teacher stated, *“Engineering is concerned with creating designs to build new things”*. Some of them (102 teachers) thought that engineering is about building the item. Another teacher commented, *“In STEM education, engineering is about building or construction”*. Surprisingly, some of them (15 teachers) believed that the word “E” in STEM education stands for “English” instead of “Engineering”. As stated by one participant, *“From my understanding, E in STEM education is about linking English with other subjects”*.

During the focus group discussions, some revealed that they did not expect engineering to be included in primary and secondary education. One participant stated, *“I did not think that primary and secondary students would be learning about engineering. Engineering is in the University, so I think the “E” should represent English in STEM Education”*. In addition, there were concerns about teaching engineering in their classroom. One participant stated, *“I have never taught engineering before, and I think that it will be difficult for my students”*.

During the PD program, they learned about the engineering design process and applied this process to solve a problem in given situations. Afterward, most of the participants (134 teachers) changed their perceptions about the engineering design process, which is composed of defining the problem, planning a solution, making a model, testing the model, reflecting and redesigning. Their changed perception was reflected in their responses to the questionnaire.

One participant commented, *“Engineering in STEM education relates to the process of discovering a solution to a problem. Many times the solution is concerned with designing a product. The process is like a cycle that starts with defining the problem, seeking a solution, coming up with a model, testing the model, and then going back to an earlier step to make a modification or change to your design”*. However, more than half of participants (106 teachers) stills perceived that engineering is just about creating designs to build new things.

#### 4.5 Mathematics

At the beginning of the tablet-based PD program, most teachers (168 teachers) had perceived mathematics as solely applying quantitative methods; *“Mathematics is about numbers, counting, calculations, and measurement”*. In addition, some of them (53 teachers) also talked about structure; *“Mathematics in STEM education is concerned with the shapes and motions of physical objects”*.

For discussion, they also pointed out that they always ask their students to measure different shapes when designing something; *“We apply mathematics in my class to measure different shapes when they design something”*. In the tablet-based PD program, they had chance to reflect on the application of mathematics in the provided STEM activities. After participation in the program, the majority of teachers (222 teachers) recognized that mathematics is more than just doing various operations. For example, one participant stated, *“Mathematics is about thinking and reasoning, logic, and solving problems”*.

Another participant commented, *“Mathematics also relates to patterns, for example, the door and window of a house have similar patterns. All leaves of the same tree have similar patterns of shape”*. In addition, few of them (18 teachers) pointed out the relation between mathematics and others subjects in STEM education, as reflected in this comment, *“Mathematics is used in science, technology and engineering”*.

#### 4.6 STEM Integration

Before participating in the tablet-based PD program, the majority of teachers (230 teachers) indicated that STEM

education is a teaching approach that integrates four subject matters: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics as a transdisciplinary course or program. For example, one participant stated, “*STEM is an integrated teaching approach that mixes up all STEM disciplines*”. However, some had limited knowledge. Another participant commented, “*I only know that there are four subject matters: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics that are integrated into the content that we are teaching*”.

In addition, there were some teachers (12 teachers) who thought that STEM education represented any single discipline within STEM, as illustrated in this comment, “*STEM education is a teaching approach in science subject that is linked with Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics for promoting students’ 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, such as creativity and innovation, collaborative working, communication skills, and so on*”. Furthermore, there were a few teachers (8 teachers) who did not provide any definition for STEM education. While participating in the tablet-based program, the participants engaged in several activities that provided examples of STEM integration. They also got direct experiences through role-playing as students in some activities. Consequently, most of them (178 teachers) discovered that STEM Integration was not strictly limited to a transdisciplinary course or a single disciplinary integration.

They were able to make connections between all the STEM disciplines, as reflected in this comment, “*STEM is both a science and math teaching approach that is also connected with concepts of technology and engineering*”. In addition, some teachers (62 teachers) also mentioned the complementary overlapping across disciplines, as reflected in this comment, “*STEM is a teaching approach that teaches science, technology, engineering, and math together within a specific theme*”. These perceptions were demonstrated again during the discussion after completing the tablet-based PD program. Overall, the participants had a better understanding of how to integrate STEM education in their classroom.

#### 4.7 Implementation of STEM Education

Before participating in the tablet-based PD program, we asked teachers about their confidence with implementing STEM education in their classroom, the majority of teachers (175 teachers) pointed that they were interested in STEM education because they thought that there are many benefits for their students. However, some of them (50 teachers) were concerned with how to integrate STEM education in their classroom. Specifically, they indicated that they did not know how to bring engineering into their lessons. One teacher commented, “*I have never used engineering in my class. I really do not know how to design my instruction*”. In addition, few teachers (8 teachers) also were concerned about the amount of time for science, technology, engineering and mathematics in their lesson, as reflected in this comment, “*I am worried about the time for teaching because it is limited. If I put STEM education in my lesson, I think that it will take too much class time*”.

Moreover, they (7 teachers) felt that they needed some support from their school. One teacher commented, “*The government is focused on Thailand 4.0, so the school has to improve the curriculum so that it includes STEM education. But in my school, there is not enough equipment for students to do STEM activities*”. After participation in the tablet-based program, many of the participants (190 teachers) gained more confidence on how to apply STEM education in their classrooms. One teacher stated, “*Now, I know how to design a STEM lesson, especially using the engineering process. I am quite sure that I will apply it in my classroom*”.

Some of them (28 teachers) reflected on the benefits that their students will get from a STEM lesson. For example, one teacher commented, “*I think that STEM education is good for my students. My students are more interested in science. There are many applications on the iPad such as iMovie, Book creator, Keynote that students can use while doing activities, and gain a lot of knowledge and skills*”. However, few teachers (20 teachers) are still concerned about time for STEM instruction. One commented, “*There are many activities in school, so bringing STEM into my lessons will require some thought on how to include such a time demanding activity.*” In addition, a few teachers (2 teachers) also commented on media and materials. One stated, “*There is a limited number of iPads for my students, and I have to use them carefully. As the teacher, I have to know how to update it, maintain it, and repair it*”.

## 5. Conclusions and Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that many in-service teachers held limited knowledge of STEM education before participating in the tablet-based PD program. Some could not provide a definition of STEM education, while others were inconsistent with the definition from IPST (2013), which defines STEM education as an approach that integrates science, engineering, technology, and mathematics, with a focus on solving real-life problems, including the development of new processes or products that benefit human life and work. These perceptions may have affected their previous experiences. Moreover, most of them seemed to view each STEM discipline separately as Bybee (2013) proposed, where STEM equals a quartet of separate disciplines with no

explicit connection among them. This can represent a course that provides general content of the STEM disciplines or four separate courses, one for each discipline. Most of them did not know how to integrate STEM in their instruction and could not connect the disciplines. Furthermore, they had limited knowledge within each of the STEM disciplines.

After participation in the tablet-based PD program, they resolved many of these issues. In the dimension of implication of STEM education in classroom, this research demonstrated that even if they had a strong desire to implement STEM education in their classroom, they still had concerns, especially with engineering. Many scholars agree that integrating engineering concepts into the lesson plan is a challenge for many science teachers (Haag & Megowan, 2015). Consequently, teachers with negative attitudes about STEM education will tend to avoid teaching STEM (Appleton, 2003). However, after participating in the tablet-based PD program, many teachers were more knowledgeable on the different ways to integrate STEM, and they were also more confident about doing so in their classroom. Research suggests that teacher confidence is an important predictor of ability for teaching STEM-related content, and teachers that tend to have problems with content, especially engineering, can have a negative influence on student learning (Harlen & Holroyd, 1997; Jarrett, 1999; Ford, 2007). The changes in teacher perceptions of STEM as a result of participating in the PD program are likely to enhance STEM education in the classroom (Nuangchalerm, 2018). Furthermore, the use of tablets could have greatly facilitated the impact of the PD program. Technology has great potential to improve education due to the capacity to support powerful and sophisticated learning environments (Hermans et al., 2008).

## 6. Recommendations

These findings demonstrate that a tablet-based PD program can enhance and promote teacher perception and understanding of STEM education. However, the researchers need to continue to follow-up on the participants in this tablet-based PD program to ultimately assess the impact of this program on student learning outcomes. Based on the substantial impact that this program had on the participants, we encourage teachers, administrators, professional programs and science educators to adopt or adapt this program or this professional framework in order to improve teaching practices. We also encourage them to apply this sort of technology to promote the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills among the next generation of students. In addition, policy makers and stakeholders need to invest in the development of adequate infrastructure and available resources to support the use of new technologies in the classroom.

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# Irrational Beliefs as Mediator in the Relationship Between Activating Event and Stress in Malaysian Fully Residential School Teachers

Mastura Mahfar<sup>1</sup>, Khoo Hui Xian<sup>1</sup>, Faizah Abd. Ghani<sup>2</sup>, Azlina Kosnin<sup>2</sup> & Aslan Amat Senin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Human Resource Development and Psychology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> School of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Correspondence: Mastura Mahfar, School of Human Resource Development and Psychology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. E-mail: mastura@utm.my

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## Abstract

Teacher stress has been a major concern among researchers as it has negative impact on teaching profession. This study aimed to test the mediating effect of irrational beliefs on the relationship between activating event as the independent variable and stress as the dependent variable. Data were collected from a sample of 201 teachers from seven Malaysian Fully Residential School (FRS) in the Johor state by using stratified random sampling. The Teacher Irrational Beliefs (TIB), Teacher Activating Event (TAE), and Teacher Stress (TRS) questionnaires were employed to measure irrational beliefs, activating events, and stress of teachers. The Pearson coefficient correlation was used to determine the relationships among variables and multiple regression analysis was used to verify the presence of mediation effects. In general, the correlation results showed that there were positive relationships among variables. The findings of regression analysis indicated that irrational beliefs mediate the relationship between activating event and stress among FRS teachers. This findings highlighted the teachers' irrational beliefs as the major determinants of emotional problems rather than activating event itself which comply with the ABC Model based on Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) approach.

**Keywords:** irrational beliefs, activating event, stress, fully residential school teachers

## 1. Introduction

Teaching is the most stressful occupation compared to other occupations, such as nursing, managing, professional and community service occupations (Health and Safety Executive, 2000). The Health and Safety Executive (2000) revealed that two out of five teachers in the United Kingdom suffered from stress, compared to one in five workers from other occupations. Teachers' work stress are related with unpleasant emotions that leads to several negative effects, including dysfunctional behaviors in relations to pupils, colleagues and parents (Bora et al., 2013), job burnout (McCarthy et al., 2009), decreased teaching efficacy and job satisfaction (Klassen, 2010), and teachers' commitments (Klassen & Chiu, 2011). Thus, teachers' risk of experienced burnout and stress are steadily increasing and therefore, the measuring of teacher stress is crucial in understanding the process that lead to teacher stress (Azlihanis et al., 2009).

In Malaysian studies, previous research showed that teachers with high level of stress faced many stressors at working environment (Jayakaran & Koroush, 2010; Nurul Izzah et al., 2010). Jayakaran and Koroush (2010) had found teachers' burnout level which closely related to stress were different with regard to different age group and workload categories among primary and secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Other than that, up to 34 percent of stress prevalence, 17.4 percent of mild-stress suffered by secondary school teachers, and indicated non-job-related factors such as age, duration of work and psychological job demands were significantly associated with stress level of teachers (Azlihanis et al., 2009).

According to Rational Emotive Behavior Theory which was previously known as Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) and was developed by Albert Ellis in the 1950's, "stress" or people's reactions including emotional and behavioral disturbances are not determined by the activating events, but by their beliefs about the activating event itself (Ellis et al., 1997). In other words, individuals experience depression, stress, anxiety, and other emotional disturbances are result from incorrect reasoning and irrational beliefs (Ellis, 1991; Ellis & Bernard,

2006).

Therefore, activating event was also considered as stressor and stress factors that may lead to stress among teachers. Hence, some research had studied and assessed about stress and its risk factors among teachers. A study conducted by Nurul Izzah et al. (2010) revealed that teacher stress was mainly due to student’s misbehaviour. Besides that, Nurul Izzah et al. (2010) also identified mental well-being of teacher was influenced by workload and gender which comply with findings of Jayakaran and Koroush (2010).

The ‘ABC’ Model is at the heart of the REBT theory of psychological disturbance which can help individuals to understand the causes of stress (Ellis, 1991; Dryden & Branch, 2008). According to ABC Model, activating event (A) such as stressor or stress factor is not the ultimate reason led to stress among teachers (see Figure 1). This situation had also lead to misconception of stress which was represented by C (Consequences). These consequences can be negative emotional, behavioural, and thinking in nature. “Stress” was determined by how individual perceived and evaluated negative activating events, not determined by actual event happened in daily lives (Ellis et al., 1997). In other words, stress is largely determined by cognitive factors or beliefs held by individuals (Dryden, 2012). Beliefs can be irrational or rational. Rational beliefs are associated with any flexible, logical and non-extreme views (Dryden & Branch, 2008). For example, “I would like to be successful, but if I’m not, I’m still a worthwhile person”. On the contrary, irrational beliefs are always related to rigid, illogical and non-extreme views (Dryden & Branch, 2008).

Besides that, individual with irrational beliefs (B) is also believed to experience unhealthy beliefs towards negative event (A) compared to individual with rational beliefs. Individuals with high levels of irrational beliefs develop unhealthy negative emotional responses in the presence of negative activating events (Ellis, 2002). Thus, stress experienced by individuals has a significant relationship with their beliefs system toward events (Ellis, 2002).

In educational setting, teachers’ mental health also has a great influence on their teaching performance in the classroom (Bora et al., 2013). Although teachers play an important part of their students’ spiritual and emotional lives due to their close relationship with students, however, many cases showed that teachers are more likely to use irrational thinking in the process of communicating with their students (Tanhan & Şenturk, 2011). The issue of teachers’ stress need to be taken into consideration because stress may affect their job satisfaction, teachers’ efficiency in schooling activities, their interactions to students and colleagues, and even their own families’ wellness (Bora et al., 2013). In addition, David and Szamoskozi (2011) suggest that future studies should further explore the relationships between irrationality and stress in organizational setting.

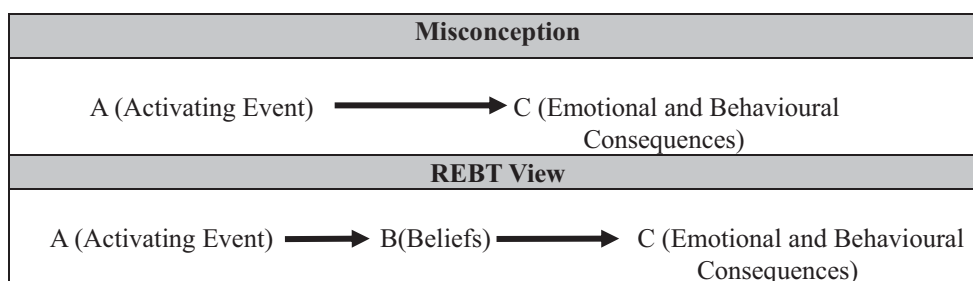


Figure 1. ABC Model based on REBT approach  
(Source: Ellis & Bernard, 1983)

Therefore, the objective of the study was to identify the relationships among variables which are between activating event and stress, activating event and irrational beliefs, and between irrational beliefs and stress among FRS teachers in Johor state. As there is possibility of indirect causes of stress, the influence of any mediator in the relationship between activating event and stress among teachers need to be studied. According to REBT approach, beliefs (B) mediate the impact of activating events (A) on emotional and behavioral disturbances (C) (Ellis, 1991; Dryden & Branch, 2008). Thus, this study was also carried out to test the mediating effects of irrational beliefs on the relationship between activating event and stress among Malaysian FRS teachers in Johor state.

**2. Literature Review**

The discussion of literature review is about the three main variables to be examined in this study which are

activating events, irrational beliefs and stress among teachers.

### 2.1 *Activating Events*

Activating event (A) refers to any inference that individual has made about the situation or some aspect of the situation (Dryden, 2006). Activating event can be actual events or inferences which may be correct or incorrect. Moreover, activating event can be external events or internal events and can stand for past, present or future events. However, the event is not a direct cause to the positive or negative feelings of an individual (Koffler, 2005).

### 2.2 *Irrational Beliefs*

In REBT, any rigid, illogical and extreme ideas or views are known as irrational beliefs (Dryden & Branch, 2008). The irrational beliefs produce inappropriate emotional and behavioral disturbances (Ellis, 2002; Tanhan, 2014). There are four categories of irrational beliefs, namely demandingness (e.g., “My colleagues must always respect me”), awfulizing/catastrophizing (e.g., “It is awful if my colleagues do not respect me”), low frustration tolerance (e.g. “I cannot stand if colleagues do not respect me”), and global evaluation (e.g., “My colleagues are bad if they do not respect me”) (DiLorenzo et al., 2007; David et al., 2005; Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Walen et al., 1992). The demandingness is viewed as a core belief in which a person has absolutistic ideas that expressed in the form of “should,” “ought” and “musts” either towards self, others or life condition (Ellis, 1991; David et al, 2005; DiLorenzo et al., 2007).

### 2.3 *Stress*

Stress is represented by consequences (C) of holding beliefs about critical or negative event based on REBT approach (Dryden & Branch, 2008). Stress is defined as a condition where the mental and physical of individuals need to be arranged or adapted according to the environment (Coon & Mitterer, 2007). Besides that, stress is an adaptive response that is experienced by the individual differences due to an action, situation or event that place a specific demand on the person (Gibson et al., 2003). However, Amat Taap et al. (2003) asserted that stress at the workplace can occur when employees feel “under loaded” through lack of stimulus and social contact.

### 2.4 *Hypotheses Development*

#### 2.4.1 Relationship Between Activating Event and Stress

Shermoff et al. (2011) had carried out a qualitative study among 14 urban teachers in Midwestern city, USA. The findings of their study showed that there are several sources of stress which are physical health, personal relationship, work performance, and emotional well-being. The identified impacts of occupational stress are all negative towards job performance, relationship with students, job satisfaction, career engagement, and attendance.

Other than that, Kyriacou (2001) identified a number of sources of teachers stress in his study. These include demotivated and unruly students in class; time pressure and heavy load of curricular and extracurricular duties; ever-changing educational system; problems with colleagues and school administration; low self-esteem; role conflict and ambiguity, and unconducive working conditions. These sources can be considered negative activating events experienced by the teachers. However, these sources of stress are distinct for each teacher individually. Therefore, the hypothesis was developed as follow:

**H<sub>1</sub>**, Activating event (A) is significantly related to stress (C) among FRS teachers.

#### 2.4.2 Relationship Between Activating Event and Irrational Beliefs

The relationship between activating event and irrational beliefs was further supported by David et al. (2005) who conducted a study on empirical investigation of Albert Ellis’s Binary Model of Distress among U.S. and Romanian context breast-cancer patient. The findings of their study showed that the patient who facing stressful situation such as upcoming breast surgery had experienced high level of irrational beliefs with both functional and dysfunctional negative feelings.

Tanhan (2014) in his study revealed that irrational beliefs were found to be significantly influenced by factors such as satisfaction with the teaching profession, seniority, depression, and industry variables among voluntarily-participating teachers working in Van. Therefore, this study suggests that:

**H<sub>2</sub>**, Activating event (A) is significantly related to irrational beliefs (B) among FRS teachers.

#### 2.4.3 Relationship Between Irrational Beliefs (B) and Stress (C)

The presence of irrational beliefs in relation to distress has been strongly supported by research data. For example, Stebbins and Pakenham (2001) in their study found that irrational beliefs were related to higher levels

of psychological distress in caregivers of persons with traumatic brain injury. Meanwhile, a study by Laura and Maria (2006) had also found the relationship between the four types of irrational beliefs and distress among secondary school teachers in Madrid region. Furthermore, teachers with lower levels of irrational beliefs were perceived more effective than teachers who reported higher levels of irrational beliefs (Endes, 1996).

Meehan (2011) also discovered the relationship between irrational beliefs and stress among teachers in which teachers possessing high level of irrational beliefs may view themselves as having high level of stress. Moreover, local research done by Mastura et al. (2012) proved positive relationships between the four subscales of irrational beliefs (demandingness, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance, and global evaluation) and stress among FRS respondents in Johor state. Thus, the hypothesis was developed as follow:

**H<sub>3</sub>**: Irrational beliefs (B) is significantly related to stress (C) among FRS teachers.

#### 2.4.4 Mediation Effects of Irrational Beliefs (B) on the Relationship Between Activating Event (A) and Stress (C)

There are some early scientific evidence for this relation from Western perspective, for example, a study by Jacofsky (2005). However, the irrational beliefs have been far less investigated as mediator in the relationship between activating event and stress, especially in the fully residential school context. Jacofsky (2005) proved that irrational beliefs as partial mediator in the relationship between activating event and stress among psychology graduate students. In fact, Bora et al. (2013) have studied teachers' irrational beliefs as mediator, however, the independent variable in their study was different from the current study which is REBT intervention (independent variable) and the dependent variable is teachers' behaviors and emotions.

In addition, there are many previous studies carried out on the relationship between activating event (stressor) and stress, activating event and irrational beliefs, and the relationship between irrational beliefs and stress. However, further research still needs to clarify the nature of functional and dysfunctional emotions and the role of rational and irrational beliefs (Mogoase et al., 2013).

Ellis (1991) asserted that different stress situation has significant relationship with individual's perception and cognitive towards that particular situation. Thus, stressor, irrational beliefs and teacher stress can be put into discussion in the context of ABC Model. This can be done by discussing stressor in the context of activating event (A), irrational belief in the context of beliefs (B), and stress in the context of consequences (C) to avoid general assumption of stress is determined by the activating event. Thus, this study suggests that:

**H<sub>4</sub>**: Irrational beliefs (B) mediate the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) among FRS teachers.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants and Sampling Procedures

The participants in this study were 201 FRS teachers in Johor state. According to data from Education Management Information System (EMIS), the population of FRS teachers from all seven fully residential schools in Johor state, Malaysia is 420. The sample size was determined through Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. Based on the table, a sample size of 201 FRS teachers was taken as the representative sample of the target population.

Then the stratified random sampling method was applied for selecting the sample of this study. Stratified random sampling is particularly useful because the subsets of each stratum are taken in proportion to the size of each strata (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). In this study, the population was randomly stratified based on seven fully residential schools. Each subgroup in the sample must contain enough individuals to adequately represent its segment of the population. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by using a random number table to ensure that everyone has probability to be chosen as a respondent.

#### 3.2 Measures

*Teacher Irrational Beliefs (TIB)* (Mastura, 2015) was used to evaluate irrational beliefs of FRS teachers. The TIB was developed by taking into account fully residential school teachers' cultural norms and background contexts. The scale contained 49 items to measure FRS teacher's irrational beliefs based on four dimensions, namely demandingness, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance and global evaluation which were derived from REBT approach. Reliability analysis of TIB was done by using Rasch analysis which showed high item reliability ( $\alpha=.95$ ) and acceptable person reliability ( $\alpha=.78$ ).

*Teacher Activating Event (TAE)* (Mastura, 2015) was used to measure teachers' activating events. The TAE scale consists of 34 items to measure FRS teachers' activating events that frequently encountered by FRS teachers

such as workload, student’s attitude, administration’s attitude, and teacher’s (colleague) attitude. Reliability analysis of the TAE showed acceptable item reliability ( $\alpha=.74$ ) and high person reliability ( $\alpha=.92$ ).

*Teacher Stress (TRS)* (Mastura, 2015) is a 34-item that measures teachers stress. The TRS asked respondents to rate each item which related to stress that frequently encountered such as workload, student’s attitude, administration’s attitude, and teacher’s (colleague) attitude. Reliability analysis of the TAE also showed acceptable item reliability ( $\alpha=.81$ ) and high person reliability ( $\alpha=.96$ ) for stress.

The three questionnaires also showed that the principal component analysis (PCA) returned an observed value of more than 40% variance, explained by measures which indicated that the TIB, TAE, and TRS measured the stipulated variables. A 5-point Likert-type scale was employed to present the score of irrational beliefs, activating event and stress indicated among each respondent. Furthermore, a questionnaire was drawn up to collect basic demographic information of respondents.

**4. Results**

*4.1 Initial Data Analysis*

The data was first analyzed using descriptive statistic to give an overview regarding the distribution of data. A total of 201 FRS teachers participated in the study. Male teachers consist of 32.8% (n=66) of the sample and female teachers 67.2% (n=135). The major portion of the respondents (34.8%) was aged between 21 to 30 years old, followed by the respondents aged between 31 to 40 years old. Besides that, there were 24.4% of respondent who aged between 41 to 50 years old and the minority of respondents was who aged between 51 to 60 years old with population of 4.0%. On the other hand, there were 7.9% of respondents was neither above 21 years old nor below 60 years old. 190 (94.5%) teachers were Malay, 141 were married (70%), 191 (95%) had a degree and 122 have teaching experience less than 10 years.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics which computed for all data prior to the stage of conducting the detailed statistical analyses. The results showed that the irrational beliefs mean is 155.95 (SD=9.47), the activating event mean is 127.20 (SD=14.35), and the stress mean is 120.00 (SD=19.58).

The Pearson coefficient correlation is used to explain the relationships among variables. The results showed that the three hypotheses ( $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ , and  $H_3$ ) have been supported in this study. The results indicate that activating event ( $r = 0.67, p<.05$ ) has a significant relationship with stress, and irrational beliefs ( $r = 0.15, p<.05$ ). Irrational beliefs have been shown to have a significant relationship with stress ( $r = 0.21, p<.05$ ).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Coefficient Correlations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	I	II	III
Activating event (A)	127.20	14.35	1		
Irrational beliefs (B)	155.93	9.47	0.15*	1	
Stress (C)	120.00	19.58	0.67*	0.21*	1

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

I = Activating event, II = Irrational beliefs, III = Stress

*4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis*

The scores of TIB, TAE and TRS were used to describe the normality distribution of the data. The values of skewness and kurtosis for all variables in items were indicated with normal distribution before proceeding hierarchical multiple regression, normality of the data was confirmed. The associations between scores of activating event (A), irrational beliefs (B) and stress (C) was analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression.

The detailed result of the mediation analysis using hierarchical multiple regressions with the aim of identify the mediation effect of irrational beliefs (B) were illustrated in Table 2. The result highlights that irrational beliefs (B) significantly mediated on the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) not completely but mediated partially. The simple linear regression in Step 1 to Step 3 had shown significant effect of each variable onto each other. The results of simple linear regression in Step 1 to Step 3 revealed activating event (A) as significant estimator to stress (C) ( $\beta=.67$ ), activating event (A) as significant estimator to irrational beliefs (B) ( $\beta=.145$ ) and also irrational beliefs (B) as significant estimator to stress (C) ( $\beta=.212$ ) at significant level of  $p<.05$ .

Lastly in Step 4 of mediation analysis, irrational beliefs (B) was found to partially mediate on the relationship



between activating event (A) and stress (C) since the regression after insertion of irrational beliefs (B) was not zero and significant ( $\beta=.653$ ) at level of  $p<.05$ . As can be seen, the first block of regression explained 44.9% of the total variance of irrational beliefs [F (1,199) =162.172,  $p<.05$ ]. Addition of the remaining variables to the model (Block 2) decreased the percentage of explained stress by only 1.3% (0.013). However, this decrement was statistically significant [F(1, 199) =85.137,  $p<.05$ ], thus partially supporting the hypothesis, H<sub>4</sub>.

Next, the mediation of irrational beliefs was treated with Sobel test to analyze the effect of mediator in a more specific manner. The Sobel test is about testing how large is value of *product of coefficient*. The *product of coefficient* is the amount of variance in stress (C) that is accounted by the activating event (A) through the mechanism of mediator, and also considered as the indirect impact. If *product of coefficient* or (*c-c'*) is sufficiently large, then Sobel's test is significant and significant mediation has occurred. The result of Sobel Test had revealed statistic value ( $Z=1.337$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This means, irrational beliefs partially mediated the relationship between activating events and stress.

Table 2. Mediation Analysis: Hierarchical Multiple Regression.

	Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	β (Beta)	Sig	F
<b>Step 1:</b>							
c	X=Activating Event (A) Y=Stress (C)	.670	.449		.670	.000*	162.172
<b>Step 2:</b>							
a	X=Activating Event (A) Y= Irrational Beliefs (B)	.145	.021		.145	.040*	4.295
<b>Step 3:</b>							
b	X= Irrational Beliefs (B) Y= Stress (C)	.212	.045		.212	.003*	9.335
<b>Step 4:</b>							
Block 1:							
	X= Activating Event (A) Y= Stress (C)	.670	.449		.670	.000	162.172
Block 2:							
c'	X= Irrational Beliefs (B) Y= Stress (C)	.680	.462	.013	.653 .117	.000* .028	85.137

Note: \* $p<.05$ ; N=201

### 5. Discussion

The main aim of this study is to test the assumption of irrational beliefs (B) as mediator in the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) among FRS teachers. The findings of this study revealed that activating event (A) has significantly related to stress (C) among FRS teachers This finding was consistently reported in previous studies (Kyriacou, 2001; Azlihanis et al., 2009; Shernoff et al., 2011) which indicated some stressors (activating events) were significantly associated with stress among teachers. Meanwhile, this finding was also consistent with the findings of studies by Ohue et al. (2010) where stressors that affecting burnout among staff nurses were conflict with colleagues, conflict with patient, role conflict, quantitative workload and qualitative workload. This study found that teaching can be a stressful job due to high expectations from parents and students as well as pressures from colleagues and superiors. This made worse by high workload, ever changing policies and lack of appreciation for achievements (Klassen et al., 2010).

Similarly, it was also shown that activating event (A) has significantly related to irrational beliefs (B) among FRS teachers. In other words, an activating event (A) experienced by FRS teachers is regarded as a key event in triggering their irrational beliefs (B). This study was consistent with the findings of previous research (David et al., 2005) which showed that low levels of irrational beliefs were associated with low level of dysfunctional negative feelings and high level of functional negative feelings in a stressful situation.

Other than that, the results also showed that irrational beliefs (B) has significantly related to stress (C) among FRS teachers. This finding is similar to the findings of previous research (Laura & Maria, 2006; Lucica, 2012) which found the strong correlations between high level of distress and high irrationality among teachers. In addition, this finding was also consistent with the basic tenet of REBT where unhealthy emotions and psychological disturbances are largely due to irrationality (Ellis, 1997; Dryden, 2012). Teachers who possessed high irrational thoughts may view themselves as having less social support, more role ambiguity, and higher level of stress (Meehan, 2011). Irrational beliefs are one of the factors that could sustain the distress and, as a result, it may lead to emotional disorders (David et al., 2008). In fact, posttraumatic stress responses are also considered to be affected by irrational beliefs (Hyland et al., 2015).

Interestingly, the findings of this study have revealed that irrational beliefs (B) acts as partial mediator in the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C). The finding of irrational beliefs as partial mediator was consistently reported in the finding of previous study by Jacofsky (2005) which showed irrational beliefs partially mediate the relationships between stress exposure and stress severity among psychology undergraduate students. This finding of study suggests that the relationship between activating events (stressors) and teacher stress is not direct, but rather it is mediated by another variable which is teachers' irrational beliefs. In other words, stressors or negative activating events as an antecedent of irrational beliefs, and this in turn will lead to emotional disturbances of FRS teachers.

This is theoretically relevant as it shows the importance of irrational beliefs as the major determinants of emotional problems rather than activating event itself which confirmed the ABC Model in the REBT approach. The key aspect of ABC Model in the REBT which explains the sequence of emotional disturbances can be used to assist individuals understand that their emotional disturbances result from their evaluations and beliefs they have toward negative life events rather than by the events per se (Ellis et al., 1997; Davies, 2006).

According to David et al. (2010), irrational beliefs can lead to dysfunctional emotions and maladaptive behaviours. On the contrary, teachers who have the ability to think rationally and make rational decisions are integral to achieving the goals desired from education (Tanhan, 2014). The significant way of reducing dysfunctional emotions and behaviors is through the modification of people's irrational thoughts (Ellis, 1991; Dryden & Branch, 2008). Therefore, school counselors who offering assistance to teachers should take into consideration teachers' irrational beliefs, so that they can modified their dysfunctional emotions and maladaptive behaviors efficiently (Bora et al., 2009). Many previous studies have proved that the Rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) can also be applied in the educational field and in organizations (Bora et al., 2009; David & Szamoskozi, 2011; Ugwoke et al., 2018).

Other than that, the application of ABC Model has also been proved to be suitable for Malaysian FRS teachers. Figure 2 presents the summary of research outcome for this research in which irrational belief was proved as significant mediator in the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) among FRS teachers.

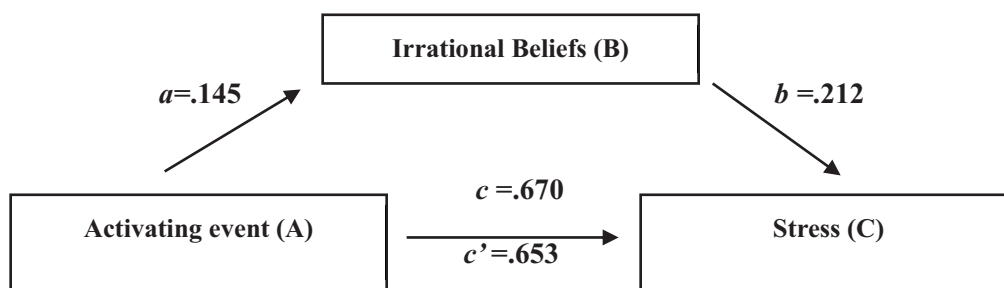


Figure 2. Summary of research outcome

However, we also acknowledged some limitations of the present study and the need for further research. This study is cross-sectional and therefore, it cannot be concluded the direction of causality in this research, for example, possessing irrational beliefs affects the teachers stress. To investigate the direction of causality, an experimental design can be used to gain more details about the findings of study. Another limitation is the study is limited to a small sample of fully residential school teachers in Johor state. Thus, the results may not be representative of the secondary school or private funded schools in Malaysia. Hence, future studies could use a diverse and larger sample, for example teachers from other states or other levels in order to gain better understanding of the study among teachers in Malaysia. Finally, future studies could explore in more detail by focusing on each dimension of irrational beliefs (demandingness, awfulizing, low frustration tolerance and global

evaluation) to identify their mediator effects in the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) as they could prove significant from a theoretical aspect.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to extend the existing literature using ABC Model based on REBT approach to test whether the irrational beliefs (B) act as mediator in the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) among FRS teachers. In conclusion, this study reveals that irrational beliefs (B) mediate the relationship between activating event (A) and stress (C) among FRS teachers. The result obtained from the regression model complies with the ABC Model based on Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) approach. These findings suggest the importance of the irrational beliefs and its impact on teachers stress rather than activating event itself. The REBT approach is also viewed as a cognitive orientation which are comprehensive, and psychoeducational in order to help individuals manage their emotional and behavioral disturbances by thinking rationally (Bernard & Joyce, 1984; Ellis & Bernard, 2006). Considering the evidence from previous research and the present study, these findings should be given due attention in promoting rational beliefs in order to reduce the FRS teachers' stress.

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# Malay Epic and Historiography Literature Students' Perception Towards Interface Design Elements

Salmah J. N. Muhammad<sup>1</sup> & Khairul Z. Jasni<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Correspondence: Salmah J. N. Muhammad, Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. Tel: 603-8946-8676. E-mail: salmahjan@upm.edu.my

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## Abstract

The interface is an important element in delivering information. This is because the interface becomes an early attraction to the user's perception before going to the next level. A good interface design will emphasize easy and user-friendly elements. Unfriendly interface design may impact the activity provided. This study aims to identify, parse and analyze user ratings on interface design. The respondents of the study involved 87 BBK 3311 Malay Epic and Historiography Literature at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The emphasis of this study will focus on nine interface design elements. The quantitative approach is used to carry out this study. A questionnaire instrument specifically designed to assess respondents' assessment of the interface design. This survey is available online using the Survey Monkey website and analyzed based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) approach. This is because this approach is specifically designed to analyze the acceptance of the technology. The results of the study showed the level of tendency of students to be interested in the interface design. The results of the study can also help in giving an overview to the online course builder on the interface design that affects students' interest. Furthermore, it is hoped that the results of this study will be a guideline in building interface designs in the website.

**Keywords:** design, interface, technology, TAM, Malay artistry

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to Problem

Interface design is an important part of receiving and transmitting information process between humans and computer systems. An interface is also a sub field of computer science. Building a design is important to facilitate the smooth learning process, making it easier for information to be communicated. Constructing a design should be carefully planned as well as meeting the requirements and standards of the user; this is because the design that is used as an interaction relationship connects the user with the system application. The development of a clear and easy-to-navigate interface does not make it difficult for users to interact and carry out the activities provided in the system. The interface also focuses on the visual display presented in a site whether printed or electronic that intermediates between visual displays with the user. Interface designs also need to be developed to make it appealing and to be effective in order to influence the way they interact. A clear interface includes graphics, texts and information presented to the public. Definition of interface provided by Galitz (1997, p. 13) states that the user interface is a combination of the techniques and mechanisms used to communicate with something. Additionally, he notes that the interface allows users to listen, look and touch as well as understand directly or indirectly. The interface is categorised into two that is output and input. Input includes material such as mouse, keyboard, screen and voice while the output touches on computer process and needs to the user. Jian Zhang et al. (2017) divided the interface into traditional and open. Traditional refers to the interface used to link specific modules in the interface design process. Meanwhile, an open interface is an interface used to connect platforms with unrecognized modules provided by manufacturers from third parties. Syahrul Nizam Junaini (2014) stated that the usability issues of the website are seen in some aspects including user-friendly. Rating of websites is assessed in terms of icons, menus and other interface elements that facilitate the user's understanding and interaction. This is important because the user's first experience is important to encourage revisit the same page or vice versa. The above studies are in line with studies by Azizah Jaafar et al. (2013) and Razli Ahmad,

Hanum Hassan & Azuddin Bahari (2013).

### *1.2 Relevant Scholarship*

Hazwani Nordin dan Dhalbir Sigh (2016) touch on the e-learning that was implemented in the Malaysian education system. The application of e-learning can improve the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging the involvement and commitment of students in learning. The result of this study is the issues related to the interface design that are constantly changing according to the user's suitability. The success of the interface design helps students understand the meaning of the e-learning interface used. Yusup hashim (2012) also discusses the effectiveness of e-learning in teaching and learning. The exciting digital era focuses on e-learning that has shifted from technology to the era of learning design technology. The technology seen can play an important role in attracting students to explore the areas of interest. Therefore, the interface design is part of a contributor to encourage the student's interest in accessing a site over and over again. Meanwhile, Hazwani Mohd Najib, Noor Raudhiah Abu Bakar and Norziah Othman (2017) state that effective e-learning can produce highly self-taught students producing more literate students in technology indirectly and at the same time forming a holistic student in everything. The above studies are in line with a study by Ahmad Syukkri Adnan, Mumammad Ali Reza Ahmad & Azfi Zaidi Mohammad Sofi (2015) on the utilisation of visual elements on interface design of e-learning.

The next study by Tengku Siti Meriam Tengku Wook et al., (2016) also touches on the face display. She noted that the technology approach is not immersive by implementing information visualization techniques and virtual reality as a visual interface display used as a model for developing communication designs among users in virtual museums. The following study by Tan Li Yin, Nazlena Mohamad Ali dan Shahrul Azman Mohd Noah (2016) in the assessment of the nutritional information interface design for the elderly states that nutrient-related information is now available easily through the internet. However, there are problems faced by the elderly because of their inability to adapt to the interface design. This is different from adult users. This study was carried out to take into account the results of the assessment from the focus group of the study. The above studies are in line with studies by Hashiroh Hussain & Norshuhada Shiratuddin (2016) and Norasikin Fabil & Zawawi Ismail (2018).

The following study looks at the promotion through the website by Hejrahtul Amani Halim and Zakirah Othman (2017) in covering promotional strategies conducted through a website consisting of two features which are aspects of the quality and aspect of the relationship to social sites. They listed that the quality of the site's content contains several aspects such as interface and design, data collection, navigation, search, pictures and unique language. Based on this study, the researcher concluded that interface display plays an important role in the promotion of a product. The uniqueness and capabilities of the interface help to promote more effectively. A proposed study is about speed, security and links to run in the future. Meanwhile, according to Rasyiqah Rusdi, Noraidah Sahari @ Ashaari and Siti Fadzilah Mat Noor (2017), the ideal interface for senior citizens should be more user-friendly in the aspect of color, language, large font, easy-to-use navigation and media integration such as video and audio-visual. Guidelines created must be in line with the target group.

Based on the above literature review, this study will identify and discuss the evaluation of interface design among BBK 3311 Malay Epic and Historiography Literature students. Additionally, this study will analyze and describe the items contained in the interface design based on the questionnaires that have been conducted.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Sampling Procedures*

This study will use quantitative methods to see the assessment of the interface design. This study was conducted at Universiti Putra Malaysia involving 84 respondents. The respondents of the study are students from BBK 3311 Malay Epic and Historiography Literature course. The location of the study was chosen because Universiti Putra Malaysia is an institution that offered the Malay Epic and Historiography Literature courses. Respondents also consist of students who study the course. This will make it easier for students to answer the questionnaire provided. The questionnaire instrument will be used in conducting this study. Questionnaire forms are available online by using SurveyMonkey's website. Question submitted consists of 9 items related to assessment of interface design. Respondents only need to answer SurveyMonkey online surveys. This instrument is used to save costs because researchers do not have to spend on printing costs. This study will also use the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory. This theory was introduced by Davis (1986). TAM is a model developed for the purpose of analyzing and understanding the factors that influence the acceptance of information technology used. The TAM model developed from psychological theory explains the behavior of computer users based on the beliefs, attitudes, desires and user's relationship behavior. The purpose of this model is to explain the key

factors of user behavior towards technology acceptance. More detail describes TI acceptance with a certain dimension that can affect TI by users. This model places the attitude factor of each user's behavior with two variables which are convenience and usefulness. These two variables explain the aspects of user behavior. The conclusion is that the TAM model can explain that user perceptions will determine their attitude in the benefit of TI users. This model illustrates more clearly that the acceptance of TI use is influenced by the usefulness and ease of use. This study uses 5 modules that have been modified from previous TAM research models which are perceptions of ease of use, perceptions of benefits, usage attitudes, behavior to use, and the apparent state of the system. The question in the questionnaire item is presented in the interface aspect in a display. Questions submitted are using interval scale of 1-5 (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Medium, 4 = Disagree and 5 = Strongly Disagree) which is to evaluate the level of respondent's consent to interface design provided.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

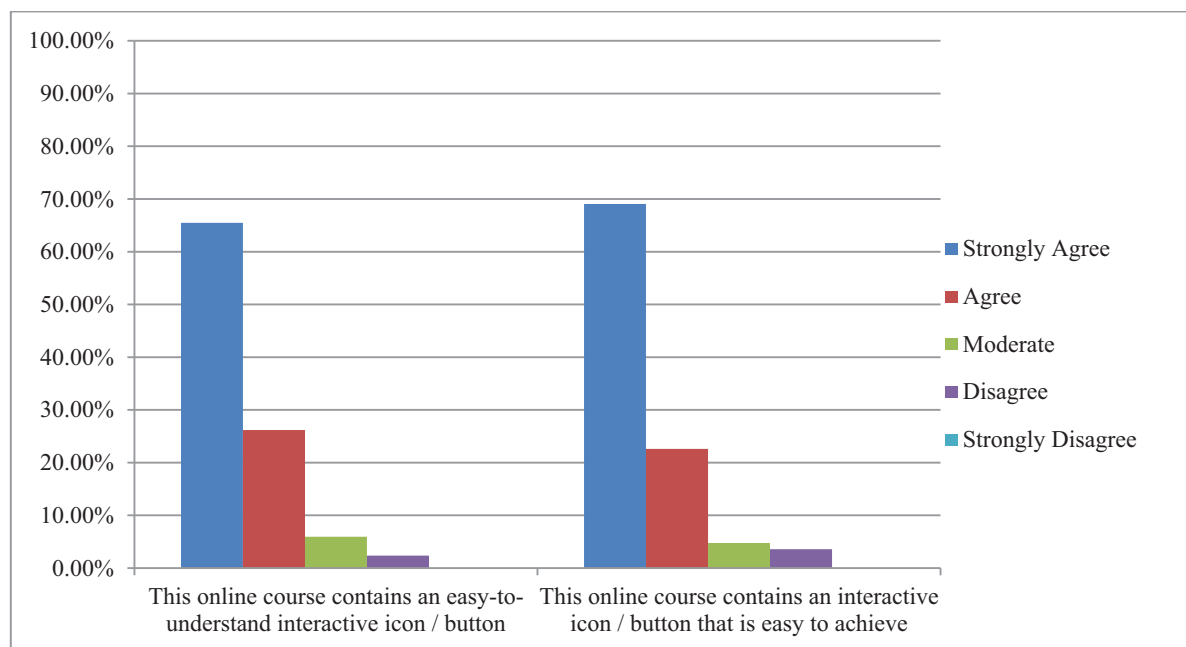


Figure 1. Assessment of the Interface Design for Item 1 and Item 2

Figure 1 above shows the Assessment of Design Interface for item 1 and item 2. Item 1, "This online course contains an easy-to-understand interactive icon / button" shows that 55 students (65.48%) prefer to strongly agree while 22 students (26.19%) choose to agree. Furthermore, none of the students chose to strongly disagree but 2 students (2.38%) chose to disagree with the item. Meanwhile, 5 students (5.95%) chose moderate. The above results indicate that students are more likely to use interactive buttons. It is also possible that the icon / button is easy to understand. Easy-to-understand icons help students to do activities quickly and easily because it does not take long to understand the meaning of each icon / button displayed. Item 2 in Figure 1 is "This online course contains an interactive icon / button that is easy to achieve". This item shows that 87 students (69.05%) strongly agree and 19 students (22.62%) agree. Furthermore, no one strongly disagrees and three (3.57%) students disagree with item 2. Four students (4.76%) chose moderate. The result of item 2 indicates that it is easy for students to achieve the interactive button provided. This is because most students are more proficient in technology and make it easier for them to know the icons / buttons provided without having to look for icons / buttons to access.

Based on the usefulness of the concepts in the theory of technology acceptance model, the result of data processing, the value of strongly agree for both items is among the highest compared to others. This is because, respondents have the perception that these two items provide information that there is a significant influence on the attitude of the user because it fulfills the requirements in the interface of a website that is easy to understand and easy to achieve. These two items are the main requirements for building a website because it can drive users to the next level up to real users. Therefore it can be concluded that in item 1 and item 2 analysis benefited respondents who are real users.

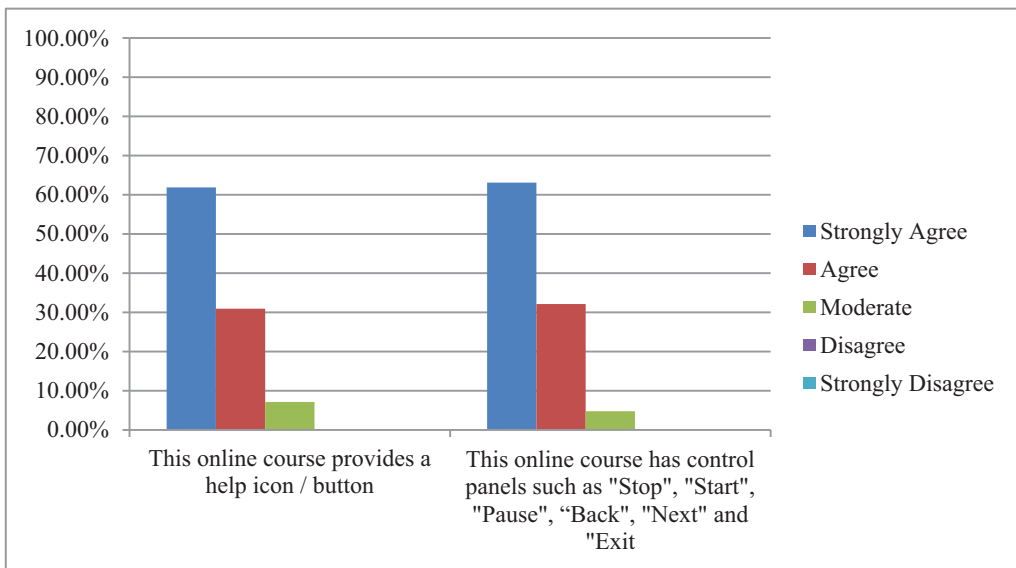


Figure 2. Assessment of the Interface Design for Item 3 dan Item 4

Figure 2 above shows the Assessment of the Interface Design of item 3 and item 4. Item 3, "This online course provides a help icon / button" shows the highest number to strongly agree with 52 students (61.95%) followed by 26 students (30.95%) agree. Next, no student chose strongly disagree and disagree with item 3. Meanwhile, 6 people (7.14%) chose moderate. Results show that the majority of students agree this item provides a help icon / button. This is because the help icon / button is clear and accessible to students. Students can use the help icon / button provided. Item 4 in Figure 4 "This online course has control panels such as "Stop", "Start", "Pause", "Back", "Next" and "Exit" showed the highest percentage (63.10%) as many as 53 students chose to strongly agree and followed by 27 people (32.14%) chose to agree. While no student chose to strongly disagree and disagree with this item. Next, up to 4 people (4.76%) chose moderate with item 4. The results show students are more likely to choose to strongly agree with this item. This is because, this item is very important to help students carry out the activities provided in this course. The control panel provided may be clearly achieved by the student.

Furthermore, based on the Technology Acceptance Model, Perceived Ease of Use-PEOU, the analysis of items 2 and 3 show these items are accepted as most respondents strongly agree that the items are available in the questionnaire provided. This can drive their desire to behave as an actual user of the website. Users will be encouraged to use websites that are easy to access if it is clear and user-friendly.

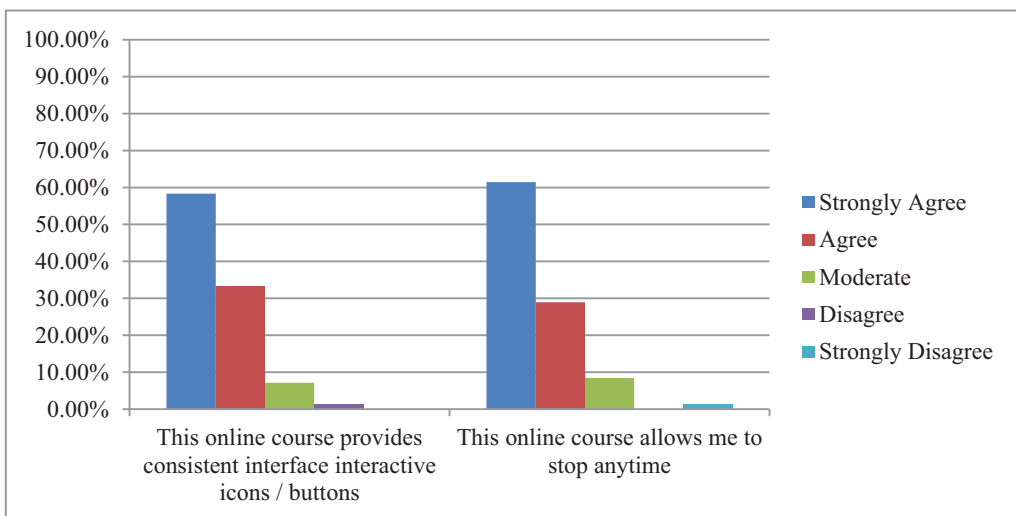


Figure 3. Assessment of the Interface Design for Item 5 dan Item 6

Figure 3 shows the Assessment of the Interface Design of item 5 and item 6. Item 5, "This online course provides consistent interface interactive icons / buttons" showing 49 students (58.33%) strongly agree with this item

followed by 28 students (33.33%) agree. Meanwhile, no student strongly disagrees and (1.19%) 1 person disagrees with the item. Next, 6 students claim that it is possible that consistent interface icons / buttons help students understand the content provided. 1 student (7.14%) chose moderate. This item shows the most strongly agree results. Hence, students can make the activities more consistent and know the position of the icons / buttons more easily.

Next, item 6 is "This online course allows me to stop anytime" indicating that 52 students (61.45%) choose to strongly agree and 24 students (28.92%) agree. Next, 1 student (1.20%) strongly disagrees with the item and no one disagrees. Meanwhile, 7 students (8.43%) choose moderate. Overall results show that students tend to choose strongly agrees compared to the others. This is likely because, students can stop and resume activities that are created at any time. This online course requires students to have the internet to access and facilitate students to perform activities easily and according to student time.

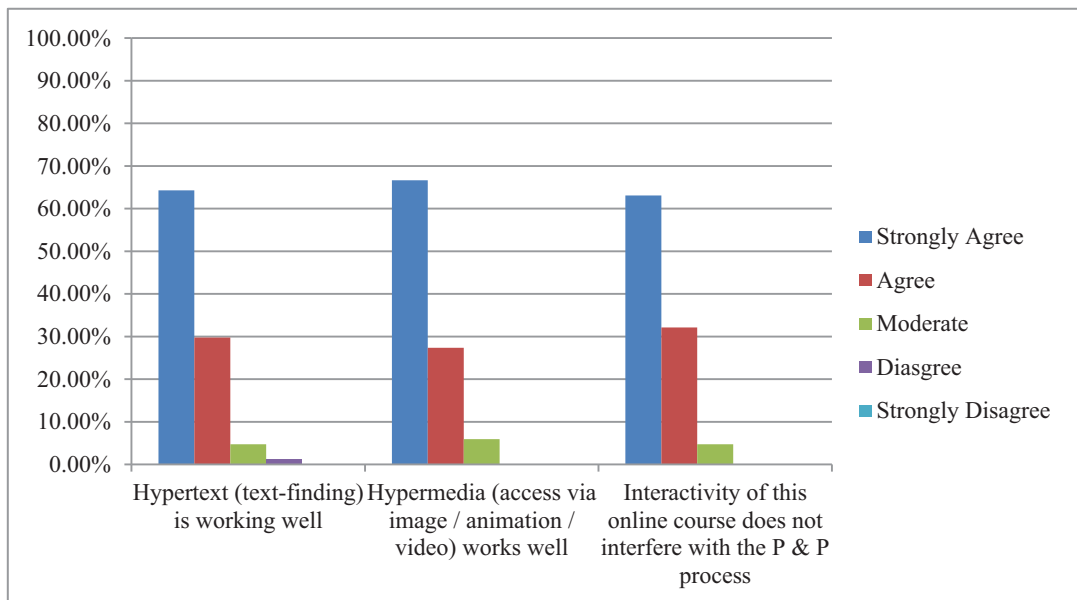


Figure 4. Assessment of the Interface Design for Item 7, Item 8 dan Item 9

Figure 4 shows the Assessment of the Interface Designs for item 7, item 8 and item 9. Item 7, "Hypertext (text-finding) is working well" shows that 54 students (64.29%) chose to strongly agree and 25 students (29.76%) to agree. While no students chose to strongly disagree and 1 student (1.19%) disagrees with this item. Next, only 4 students (4.76%) chose moderate. The results are more likely to be strongly agree as the texts being delivered is working well and help students to understand each activity provided. Access via good texts helps students to engage in activities easily and quickly.

Item 8 in Figure 4, "Hypermedia (access via image / animation / video) works well, indicating that 56 students (66.67%) strongly agree and 23 students (27.38%) to agree. While no student disagree and strongly disagree, but 5 students (5.95%) chose moderate. Students are more likely to strongly agree with the above figure. This is likely because, students are more interested in images, animation and videos in the carried out activities. The media can help to attract the students' attention into doing activities and more interesting than texts. Hence, activities can be implemented well and easy to understand.

Next, item 9, "Interactivity of this online course does not interfere with the P & P process" shows that 53 students (63.10%) strongly agree while 27 students (32.14%) agree. No student disagree and strongly disagree with item 9. Next, 4 students (4.76%) chose moderate. The results show that students strongly agree that this online activity does not interfere with P & P. This is likely because, the students are excited about the activities done online and it can help them in learning. Hence, online activities provide them with exposure and easy to understand subjects learned.

Based on the result of data processing, the value of strongly agree is higher as shown in Figure 4. The results of this analysis provide benefits to users in the technology acceptance model. The interface presented provides the perceptions of facilities that affect the usage attitudes influenced by consumerism attitude towards user behavioral interest. The results show that the use of websites can provide information system benefits.



Respondents comprising university students can utilize the system to collect information for learning and lecture before starting a course in the classroom.

#### 4. Discussion

In conclusion, the highest percentage of items that strongly agree is the second item that is 58 students (69.05%). While item 5 shows the least to strongly agree with a total of 49 students (58.33%). Furthermore, for the total numbers of students agree has the highest number of 28 students (33.33%) for item 5 compared to item 2 which was the lowest with only 19 students (22.62%). In addition, the results show item 6 has the most strongly disagree with 1 student (1.20%). For ratio of disagree, the highest is item 2 which shows 3 students (3.57%). At the same time, item 6 shows the highest achievement for a moderate with the amount of 7 students (8.47%). Most of the lowest result shows 4 students (4.76%) for item 2, item 4, item 7 and item 9. The results show that students are more likely to choose things that are easy and easy to achieve as shown in item 2. Additionally, students also tend to be interested in things that are consistent with the interface because something consistent will be easy to understand and navigate. Furthermore, the results also show that students love things that are animated and images. This is because nowadays students tend to be more interested in these things. Generally, the results of this study are very similar to the study conducted by Syahrudin Junaidi (2014), Normaliza Abd Rahim, Awang Azman Awang Pawi & Nik Rafidah Nik Muhamad Affendi (2018) and Normaliza Abd Rahim, Nik Rafidah Nik Muhammad Affendi & Awang Azman Awang Pawi (2017) which state that there is a weak and less popular social media integration constraint and a slow display. Complex site design makes it difficult for users to access websites easily. Design improvements are also suggested to be more compact and user-friendly. This is because the user-friendly design will make the website a one-stop consumer choice.

This study focuses only on BBK 3311 Malay Epic and Historiography Literature course students at Universiti Putra Malaysia. This study is expected to benefit the Ministry of Education to develop programs on websites that emphasize the use of technology. The ministry can examine the importance of interface design before building any program for teaching and learning activities by using online technology. Furthermore, this study can also help online course builders to design an interface design to increase students' interest in pursuing online learning. It is hoped that future research will be more focused on the basic elements in the design of wider interface. Other studies such as display styles and layout of multimedia elements are widely carried out to ensure that each interface design built is beneficial to users and students.

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# Indonesian Women's Struggle Towards Transformation: A Case from 'Rusunawa' Community

Lasmery RM Girsang<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Sihabudin<sup>2</sup> & Mirza Ronda<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bunda Mulia University, North Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Tirta Ageng University, Banten, Serang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> SAHID University, Central Jakarta, Indonesia

Correspondence: Lasmery RM Girsang, Bunda Mulia University, North Jakarta, Indonesia. Tel: 62-812-1027-5990. E-mail: lgirsang@bundamulia.ac.id

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## Abstract

This article discusses roles of women in struggling transformation within their community. As one of governmental policies in 2015 about eradication of slum areas under BasukiTjahajaPurnama ('Ahok') as previous governor of Jakarta, many flats were built and provided to those who became the target of that program. It's called 'Rusunawa'—low cost simple flat. Researchers choose 'Rusunawa' Pulogebang (the first flat located on East Jakarta) as the locus of research. Unfortunately, there are new social problems emerge. One of them is adaptation matter: changing habits from previous location to new situation. Crashed by new system—such as paying room regularly every month meanwhile having no permanent job/work yet—occurs seriously impact until now. Besides that, losing home also keep them traumatic. In such situation, not all people can change their way of life rapidly till some women—driven by awareness—striving for changing the community decisively by various sustainable efforts. Therefore, this qualitative research will analyze the three main ideas in Feminist Standpoint Theory: knowledge, experience and power relation. Intrinsic case study is used to get in-depth inquiry. Also, researchers conduct as participant observers and in-depth interviewers towards key informants and community itself. Finally, based on critical paradigm, the results show that those women succeed to lead the community towards social transformation in health, education, economic, and leadership fields.

**Keywords:** female actor, flat, empowerment, Feminist Standpoint theory

## 1. Introduction

The government's efforts in regulating of urban settlements must again 'get rid of' marginal society. On 2015, provincial government of DKI Jakarta had to evict slum areas (such as: *KampungPulo*, *Bukit Duri*, *Kalijodo*, *PasarIkan*, *Bidaracina*, *Pinangsia*, *Kemayoran*, *WadukPuit*, *Menteng Dalam* and many else). That policy results rejection among many people living under those poverty lines. Even, till the society had been moved to new location—vertical settlement called 'Rusunawa'—still becomes more complicated social reality.

'Rusunawa'—low cost simple flat with different payment from Rp 150.000 until Rp 250.000/month (equals to US\$18 up)—is a new phenomenon for those societies. A new social-world order has been created that gives impact on changing people's perspective. Lifestyle, the way of thinking, habit, behaviour and social interaction that lasted for long time ago collided due to adjustments to the prevailing system. Most of them worked in informal sector whereas having low economic and education level. Meanwhile, 'Rusunawa' (five floor building) is a new ordered-system environment. Completed by public facilities, there are heterogenous background of people lived at 'Rusunawa' Pulogebang. Each has different characteristic which can be potential conflict. Also, one of the social issues (till now) is individual's obligation in paying unit routinely. In fact, most of them have no permanent job yet since relocated from slum areas. Even, there are some members of community cannot pay the room since 2016. Ironic, like a circle: 'from poor back to be poor again'. This is still a big problem for the community and government, too.

Wrapped by such situation, women still become part of community who were oppressed and marginalized. They could not fight against the rules. Besides that, the characteristic of community of 'Rusunawa' accommodates people (mostly Javaneese) lives individualistic and less motivated people (includes men's participation).

Supported by the idea that women are also eligible for having different worldview than men (whereas the worldview is still dominated by masculine forces), women should be able to behave in their social world. They also gain knowledge and maximize their capacity to build power relation among stakeholder, too. Women have their own (specific) experience to solve their problems. The experience which had been formed from the social world ultimately leads to knowledge.

Nowadays, the feminism perspective continues to grow and encourage activists/observers of feminism to actively fight for equal rights of women who also have the same ability with the masculine. Thus, that social reality that these actors face is a part of picture of the social world that cannot be separated from the layers of structure that shelter it. Neuman asserts that the structures are not permanent, but can be developed even can be modified. The mutually negating structures can also compress or complicate the surface appearance of other structures. This perpetual contradiction needs to be regulated through a certain mechanism. The mechanism may contain opposing or contradictory forces or processes; but actually become part of a larger single process (2013: 124-125).

If we look further from the communication side, the picture of above social world underlies the researchers to examine the role of female actors (as communicator). The actors have to fight for themselves in advance in order to prove to the society and the apparatus (government). Although persuasive efforts have not produced the results as expected by the actor yet, long struggle certainly succeeded in incising some achievement to lift the 'degree' of society up at 'Rusunawa' to the next (better) level.

Therefore, this research stands on the science of social critical (critical social science). According to Fay (1987), critical social researchers aim to criticize and change social relations by revealing the sources underlying social control, power relations and inequality. By revealing conditions, critical social research seeks to empower people, especially those in marginal, defenseless societies. Critical social science is also aimed at exposing myths; uncovering hidden truths and helping people improve their lives. So the purpose of the study is to explain the social order in such a way as to be a catalyst for itself that leads to the transformation of the social order (in Neuman, 2013: 124). In other words, the arena is considered as 'struggle' in which human strategy is associated with the affirmation or upgrading of their positions.

In this context, this article will expose woman's standpoint in adapting within new situation ('Rusunawa'). Before, there're many literatures refer to this feminist perspective. In short, standpoint is a place from which to critically view the world around us. Whatever our vantage point its location tends to focus our attention on some features of the natural and social landscape while obscuring others. Standpoint can be called by other synonyms: viewpoint, perspective, outlook, position (Griffin, 2012: 447). The objective of this study is to explore knowledge, experience, and power relation belongs to women while they're struggling transformation within community at 'Rusunawa'.

Introduced by Harding & Wood, Feminist Standpoint Theory is developed vary by some scientists such as Collins (1986), Haraway (1988), Hartsock (1983), Rose (1983) & Smith (1987). Also in some previous study, there were several researches emphasizing the concepts from Feminist Standpoint Theory, namely Changfoot (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453704044024>); Ardill (<https://doi.org/10.1080/10383441.2013.10854778>); Sandford (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276415594238>); Flatschart (<https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2017.1313650>); Potter (<https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2012.727399>); Mosedale (<https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3050>); Naidu (<https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2010.9676289>); Weisman (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731516668037>).

From references before, however, there is none stressing the role of female actor in local society. Thus, this article is important to be known as a part of platform for designing settlement public policy.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### *2.1 Feminist Standpoint Theory*

As stated previously, three main concepts derived from Feminist Standpoint Theory namely: knowledge, experience, and power relation. Here are some definitions given. Harstock (1983) defines: "...the attempt to develop, on the methodological base provided by Marxian theory, an important epistemological tool for understanding and opposing all forms of domination-a feminist standpoint." Hennessey (1995) clarifies: "Marxism's usefulness to feminism is that it understands the social ensemble of economic, political, and ideological arrangements. A feminist standpoint therefore is essential to examining the systemic oppressions in society that devalue women's knowledge". Meanwhile, Hennessey (1995) states as: "Most significantly, in attending to the complex material forces that structure the relations between social positioning and ways of knowing, feminist standpoint theories have challenged the assumption that simply to be a woman guarantees a

feminist understanding of the world” (<https://search.proquest.com/docview/198271779/fulltext/51628E60F02B4EEFPQ/2?accountid=38628>).

### 2.2 Opinion Leader

Other concept used to describe the actor is opinion leader. In a community, there will be influencing people. At least, there are two types of opinion leader:

- a) Formal opinion leader (having function in society based on official instruction)
- b) Informal opinion leader (famous/leading person within society or non-official appointed but influencing within society).

These opinion leaders—in this context of research—have so big volume of information that many they know various matters. Also added six criteria to be opinion leader:

- a) Actively participating in some society’s problem
- b) Showing dependence from society and having need for society itself
- c) Having firmness
- d) Fluent in speaking
- e) Having self-confidence
- f) Being popular in group and society (Arifin, 2010: 111-112).

### 2.3 Gender in Leadership

This study is also enriched by gender in leadership. Nowadays, there is high tendency in academic interest/ research in demonstrating women’s role as leaders. Actually, women have been already spread in various fields of activity such as showed by Vinnicombe, Burke, Blake-Beard, & Moore (2013), Eagly & Karau (2002); Heilman, (1983, 2012), Pew Research Center (2015), Heilman (1983, 2012) and Kumra, Simpson, & Burke (2014) (<https://sci-hub.tw/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00175.x>).

Based on concepts built, we design a simple model to be simplified as a conceptual framework.

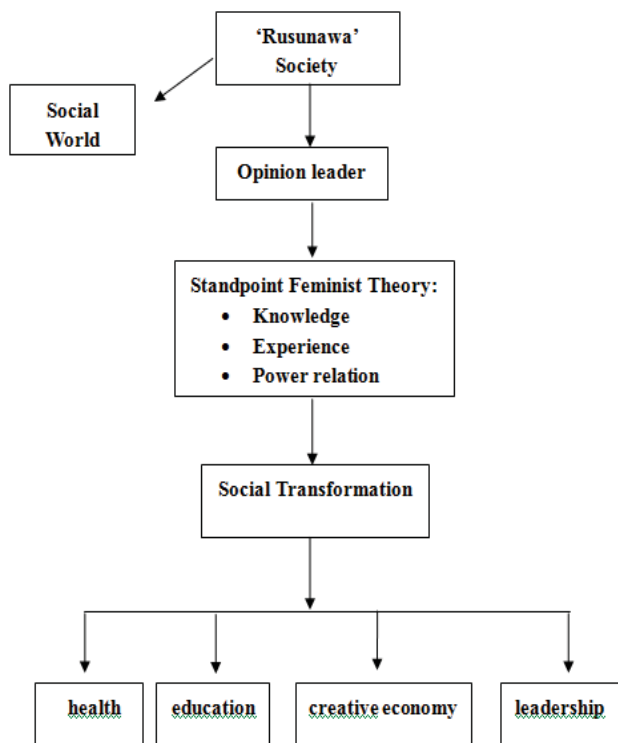


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

### 3. Method

This qualitative research uses critical paradigm—which refers to Marxist. Qualitative research is an inquiry



process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, report detailed views of information, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp. 244-245).

Researchers use intrinsic case study as the method. By using exploratory type to develop initial idea to the research problem, researchers rely on participant observation and in-depth interview over two main actors and a group of people in community.

Here are brief descriptions related to the informants. First actor—Mestikasari—has lived at ‘Rusunawa’ since 2015; secondly, Nurkhasanah has lived since 2016. Both of them come from non-relocation program. Clearly, below are competencies of each:

Table 1. Actor’s profiles

Actors	Descriptions	Competencies
Actor 1	41 years old, Javaneese	Skillful in health and informal education
		Active and participate in many society’s matter
		Fluent in speaking
		Have self-confidence
Actor 2	47 years old, Javaneese	Skillful in creative economic
		Famous in group and society
		Have firmness

Source: Researcher’s observation and in-depth interview

### 3. Results

In this part, followings are some findings involving actor’s role in practice the knowledge, experience and power relation applied to serve the community.

#### Actor 1

To improve the welfare of community, many efforts had done. Driven by high awareness about health, first actor—Mestikasari—initiates most of new programs. Since 2015 living at ‘Rusunawa’, the actor has concerned in health care. Having experience in health practice previously, actor begins to introduce healthy habits to community. Especially for children below 5 years old, actor actively educates hygiene habits such as: washing hand, taking a bath regularly, keeping things tidy, until having nutritious food for the growth. This actor also sustainably stresses the standard of health based on profound knowledge and long experience as a medical staff and nurse in KARTIKA clinic (North Jakarta) since 1996. Without any medical background before, actor got training directly from experienced doctors and nurses to treat patients. Briefly, Table 2 shows the roles of actor in creating good standard of life within community.

Table 2. Roles of actor in health (1)

No	Types of activity	knowledge	experience	power relation
1.	Encourage awareness to live healthy	V	V	-
2.	Socialize campaign for “Stop Smoking”	V	V	-
3.	Do monitoring to adolescent lifestyle	V	V	-

Source: Researcher’s observation and in-depth interview

As motivator in health sector, actor does a few of socialization through those activities. Lung disease and tuberculosis (examples of danger of smoking) becomes a component of her ‘little campaign’ to adults. However, in fact, that efforts lead actor to take risk being hostile within the community. But actor never gives up; keeps trying and giving time to cultivate good standard for living healthy. Finally, all of her struggles could be accepted after running within these last three years. Meanwhile, actor also involves herself to protect the lifestyle adapted by teenagers and adolescents. Keeping old perspective up, it is found that most of the community still has negative mindset and behavior; for example consuming drugs and free-lifestyle. Therefore, actor takes time to monitor routinely to avoid bad incident happened. After getting enough information, actor reports to the leader.

Next, supported by her skill, the actor also provides some treatments voluntarily. As seen at table below.

Table 3. Roles of actor in health (2)

No	Types of activity	Knowledge	experience	power relation
1	Support free medicine & consultancy	V	V	-
2	Serve people at home with pleasure	V	V	-
3	Do empowerment	V	V	V

Source: Researcher’s observation and in-depth interview

Without hesitation, actor welcomes people in asking help for sickness. By giving free medicine and consultancy, actor sets the living room up to be a place to give treatment for those who need it. Not ending in health field, actor also contributes more in education sector as mentor. Firstly, the participation of students at ‘PAUD’ (an early childhood education program) can be seen below.

Table 4. Total of student’s passing at ‘PAUD’

Year	Number of students	Passing
2016	26	8
2017	34	10
2018	43	15

Source: Researcher’s in-depth interview

Table 4 shows the number of children involved for the last three years. There are many difficulties and constraints in process but cannot stop her way to struggle for the children’s need in education. Besides mentor, actor develops many daily activities to encourage them to have willingness to get education. Some activities are listed below.

Table 5. Roles of actor in education

No	Kinds of activity	knowledge	experience	power relation
1.	Encouraging students at class	V	V	V
2.	Making creative activity	V	V	V
3.	Preparing administrative task	V	V	V
4.	Looking for sponsorship	V	V	V

Source: Researcher’s observation and in-depth interview

Table 5 shows the actor’s responsibility in running the program. Although completing formal education only until at senior high school level, but driven by higher vision to educate Rusunawa’s people, actor initiates to extend the scope of education for other group of people. Supported by the leader of ‘Rusunawa’, actor develops ‘PKBM’ (Society Learning Center).

Table 6. Total of student’s passing at ‘PKBM’

Year	Member	Passing exam
2016	66	63
2017	68	42
2018	19	Still running

Source: Researcher’s observation and in-depth interview

Table 6 shows the number of teenager and adult for the last three years. Due to so many drop-out students since most of residents at ‘Rusunawa’ did not have opportunity to complete education while government demolished their settlements, actor begins to facilitate education programs. “Packet A” (equals to senior high school level), “Packet B” (equals to junior high school level) and “Packet C” (equals to elementary school level) are opened freely. Her efforts impact positively finally. Most of the members can pass the examination and get transcript at the end. As known, that document is still being a part of obligation applied to gain a job. Siti Zulaiha—a jobless single parent feels satisfy for having new job to be a security staff in ‘Rusunawa’ after passing ‘Packet C’. Continuously motivated by actor to complete the studying process at ‘PKBM’, Zulaiha is an example of woman who dares to gain her dream to get out from poverty by finishing education to have better job. This picture of reality cannot be released from the role of actor, of course. As a mentor, actor has many responsibilities to ensure

the process of studying runs well. As shown below:

Table 7. Roles of actor at ‘PKBM’

No	Types of activity	knowledge	experience	power relation
1.	Conducting tutorial	V	V	V
2.	Facilitating student’s equipment for studying	V	V	V
3.	Preparing administration for studying & examination	V	V	V
4.	Doing consultancy and empowerment	V	V	V
5.	Giving moral support and solution	V	V	V
6.	Conducting as supervisor at examination	V	V	V
7.	Looking for sponsorship	V	V	V

Source: Researcher’s observation and in depth-interview

Table 7 shows various roles tied to actor. Including last activity inside the table, actor fights in looking for sponsorship to support operational needs. Finally in 2016 through long and fully administrative process—one of the Moeslem’s charity agents in Jakarta (BAZIZ)—is ready to help to finance PKBM needs. By this funding, actor can prepare and manage the process of studying, including paying the tutors.

#### Actor 2

Following female actor develops economic sector especially creative/home industry. The 2<sup>nd</sup> actor—Nurkhasanah—also practices her skill due to her passion. After living at ‘Rusunawa’, actor left her early profession as a private teacher. Actor interests to learn autodidactly and successfully produces home-made bags and other accessories (one of the creative industry products). In short, her capability was known by external stakeholders through printed media, television and also new media as seen from this table.

Table 8. Roles of actor in economic sector

No	Type of activity	knowledge	experience	power relation
1.	Initiating, mentoring & evaluating program/event	V	V	V
2.	Making good cooperation with internal leader at ‘Rusunawa’	V	V	V
3.	Managing good external relations with stakeholder (media, agent & customer)	V	V	V
4.	Empowering member by giving support, facility and incentive/reward	V	V	V
5.	Giving open opportunity to members for joining program/event	V	V	V
6.	Recruiting women to be member of program/event	V	V	V

Source: researcher’s observation and in depth interview

Table 8 shows the roles of the 2<sup>nd</sup> actor. Intensively producing things influences other women surrounding at ‘Rusunawa’. Step by step, many women offer themselves to be mentored by actor. Without any payment, actor invites whoever to get lesson/practice related to skill of sewing and ‘batik’—the last is one of the well-known Indonesian heritage. However, not all of those activities can be managed smoothly. There are some difficulties that inhibit the process of production. One of them is negative attitude/behavior matter preventing getting the success—such as boring and lazy. Most of members just need direct output: payment! In fact, the process of production needs more time—from preparing, finishing and selling to customer—as well as each capacity also must be upgraded to get the best quality. Thus, there are many gaps in knowledge and experience, sometimes make actor gives up. But her leadership mental pushes her to empower women patiently to raise their family economic up to a better condition.

Interest to the actor’s competency, finally some agents offer cooperation. One of them is *Jakarta Creative Hub*—an agent founded by government—asks her to be a trainer, giving practice to employee in making creative product. Also, *Jakarta Creative Hub* (JCH) gives opportunity more to the actor to produce orders to be launched widely. Next, actor deals with some projects and surely gets benefit for that effort. The actor can encourage

women to be involved and finally able to produce their own product.

Her successful effort in creative economic side is also treated by Sampoerna Foundation—the largest tobacco company in Indonesia. Pointed out as the coordinator, actor plays her role to supervise events involving all women at ‘Rusunawa’. A workshop in doing domestic business held for 4 months (January-May 2018)—conducted by Sampoerna Foundation—sharpens her ability to be opinion leader among the community, especially for women.

#### 4. Discussion

The phenomenon explained advance indicates how a new world-order as a reality has begun. From the government, that policy becomes a solution to transform the urban settlement. A ‘new face’ of Jakarta grows up to be a humane city. Unfortunately—not like other developed countries—government neglects most of the human’s capability to be adjusted into new system. Lack of certain skill and knowledge, again, women—in this case—are not ready to compete yet to the environment that still be dominated by masculinity perspective. Having no choice, women at ‘Rusunawa’ community are still powerless to determine their own fate. Various activities to empower them seem to take any longer time. Until now, they still fight for the fulfillment of their own daily needs. As stated earlier, ‘Rusunawa’ community is derived from heterogeneous level of society: Moslem is major among other religions; Javaneese is major among other tribes; women are major than men; and poor (because of jobless) are still dominant. From this location, the biggest challenge for actors is changing mindset. In the past, through emotional and tribe bounding as a (big) family, the society lived comfortably within their group for years. It has generally shaped the society less-motivated into new system. They tend to achieve the reality as a destiny without fighting for changing their life since regulated by the structure. In fact, the social location frames different insight to a group of women who care of their society. Unlike masculinity view, those actors strive for helping marginalized women up to interpret their own experience and ability. Those actors will not let the community as receiver of programs proposed by institution only. In contrast, the actors imbue them to make sense their own lives consciously. Hence, emerging actors are able to reach community by persuasive approach. Negotiated efforts on behalf of other (aimed to both internal and external parties) are done to foster the development progress of community itself. By addressing feminine intuition (empathy and patient, for instance), the actors also demonstrate their power in bargaining in a wide range of networking. Often, the actors have to take risk while against the rulers. Perhaps in doing so, the actors give another woman an opportunity to seize their capacity to improve better life.

#### 5. Conclusion

In sum, the communal behavior captured from this article is the practice of social interaction manifested by actors and women in ‘Rusunawa’ community. The ability to dialogue/persuade/influence the community is the power of feminist standpoint perspective in recognizing women in handling situation. Above all, researchers admit that there are still many flats in Jakarta which haven’t been observed yet. This becomes the limitation of this research. We encourage other researches related to marginalized women in struggle for live in a new settlement.

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# Training Transfer: Does Training Design Preserve Training Memory?

Saeed Khalifa Alshaali<sup>1</sup>, Kamal Ab Hamid<sup>2</sup> & Ali Ali Al-Ansi<sup>3,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Business Management, College of Business, University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> School of Accountancy, College of Business, University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz, School of Accountancy, College of Business, University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup> College of Business Administration, Shaqra University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Saeed Khalifa Alshaali. E-mail: skalshal@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Billions of dollars are lost by low application of ineffective training. Fast declination of training memory may contribute this loss. The present study uses theoretical examinations via a conceptual model to examine the relationship between training memory and transfer behaviour. Training design, training retention (training memory), and training transfer are the study variables. The study population, is the federal ministries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was assessed via random sampling. Data were collected by a cross-sectional approach via questionnaires. Back-translation (English to Arabic), a pre-test, and a pilot test were applied to ensure that any modifications of the questionnaire items were precise and effective. The study was analysed via PLS-SEM. Based on the results, all of the study's hypotheses were accepted, and significant relationships were revealed between the study variables. Training design is highly correlated with training retention, i.e., a premium training design will lead to a high preservation of the knowledge and skills gained from the training programme. Due to the low correlation between training retention and training transfer, the training retention was considered a secondary contributor of applying training to the work environment. If managers and practitioners tend to achieve successful training transfer, their efforts should concentrate on adopting modern training design techniques, which could sufficiently maintain the training memory and increase training transfer.

**Keywords:** training transfer, training design, training retention, memory, training techniques and instrumental methods

## 1. Introduction

Training transfer, or applying training on the job, is a global concern in human resources management (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Accordingly, training transfer has garnered considerable attention from researchers and training professionals (Bhatti, Kaur, & Battour, 2013). In other words, this transfer has become a key criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of training programmes (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Due to the low number of applications (transfer) and the high expenditures of training at work, many scholars began theorizing about this phenomenon to understand the transfer complex process (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton, 1996, 2005; Kavanagh, 1998; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995). For instance, Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Holton, Bates, and Ruona (2000) established the most common models of training transfer in the pursuit of a holistic understanding of the transfer process. This study considered those efforts valuable contributions toward theorizing training transfer and therefore the present study aims to examine a new conceptual model consisting of three variables (training design, training retention (mediator), and training transfer; dependent variables) with detailed justifications of the relationship between training design and training retention (training memory). Accordingly, several hypotheses are suggested for the study's conceptual model.

Another important contribution of the present study is that it is applied in the governmental sector. In general, transfer studies have rarely focused on the public sector (McCracken, Brown, & O'Kane, 2012). In detail, what is remarkable about this study is the broad description and review of the relationship between training design and training retention. Furthermore, this study draws a new logical (practical) diagram that explains how training design could preserve training memory with the consideration of time. Therefore, this study recalled several physiological theories to add significant value to its argument. Subsequently, this review raised the

understanding of how, practically and rationally, training design could affect training retention. In this study, whenever the term “retention” is mentioned, it represents the term “memory” and vice versa.

## 2. The Practical Consequences of Transfer and Memory Loss

The weekly applications of training on the job (effectiveness), as well as the high training expenditure (efficiency), are the main tangible and practical problems of training transfer. Despite the considerable expenditures on training worldwide (USA - 1982, UK – 2010, and Germany - 2010 annually spend as much as \$100 billion, £38.6 billion, and 28.6 billion euros, respectively), only 10%-27% of training programmes are applied to the job (Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003; CIPD, 2015; Ford, 2009; Georgenson, 1982; Griffin, 2010; Industry Report, 2000).

In addition to the problem of the low transfer rate and the significant expenditures for training, the high rates of participants’ forgetting the knowledge and skills learned from the training programme are also challenging. Generally, it is known that all kinds of learned knowledge and skills are typically forgotten, either gradually or rapidly, after the learning activity (Custers, 2010; Jaber & Sikström, 2004; Mozer & Lindsey, 2016; Ritter, Baxter, Kim, & Srinivasamurthy, 2011); Ritter et al. (2011) described the high forgetting rate of trained skills as a dangerous phenomenon. Other researchers have estimated that approximately 40% of training content is usually transferred immediately after training, 25% is retained after six months, and only 10-15% is retained after one year (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Wexley & Latham, 2002). Furthermore, Ebbinghaus (1964), the innovator of the “Forgotten curve”, proved that more than 33% and 21% of the newly-learned information is retained for only one day and one month, respectively.

## 3. Theoretical Foundation

The reliance on a theoretical foundation serves to help the researcher to test or contribute to the existing literature or to explain and understand the interactional factors in a specific domain (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Kerlinger, 1979). In particular, this reliance helps the researcher explore the research questions and also serves as a prediction agent (Creswell, 2013). This study includes two types of theories: the main study theory and the underlying theories.

The purpose of employing the theoretical foundation is to support the aim of the present study. Mainly, the training transfer model (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) and its literature are considered the main directive basis of this study’s framework. Conversely, the underlying theories are used to partially explain the relation between the study variables. Those underlying theories are the “Social cognitive theory” (Bandura, 1997) and “Forgotten theory” (Ebbinghaus, 1964).

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Training Transfer

Most scholars in the training transfer domain are deliberating over the precise definition of training transfer. In accordance with previous work in the training transfer domain (Al-Eisa et al., 2009; Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Burke & Saks, 2009; Dvir et al., 2002; Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Kraiger, 2002; Theorell et al., 2001; Twitchell, Holton, & Trott, 2000), this study considers the operational definition of training transfer as “the transfer and application of the trained knowledge, skills and attitude as a behaviour on the job”.

Generally, training transfer, or the implementation of training in the work environment, is complex and problematic (Al-Eisa, Furayyan, & Alhemoud, 2009; Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Therefore, the transfer problem is considered a serious organizational concern for researchers and practitioners (Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2017; Donovan, & Fu, 2018; Werrlich, Nguyen, & Notni, 2018). For instance, U.S. corporations spent \$356 billion in 2015 on training without improvements in corporate performance (Beer et al., 2016). Therefore, one of the main theoretical problems in training transfer is developing a rooted theory related to this domain (Bhatti & Kaur, 2009). Thus, this study would contribute to the literature by theorizing the training transfer model.

Grossman and Salas (2011) noted that, although several authors had reviewed and summarized the extant literature (Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2009; Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Cheng & Ho, 1998; Merriam & Leahy, 2005), their conclusions regarding the key components of transfer remained somewhat ambivalent. Clearly, inconsistent and ambivalent findings in the training transfer literature suggest that more effort is required to develop a comprehensive training transfer theory.

To aid in the general investigation of training transfer, this variable was added to the present conceptual model of this study.

#### 4.2 Training Design

Training design can be defined as “the level to which (i) training has been designed and delivered to give trainees the capability of transferring learning to the job, and (ii) training instructions match job requirements” (Holton et al., 2000).

Training design has a large and dominant influence on the training transfer process (Gyimah, 2015; Nikandrou, Brinia, & Bereri, 2009). Additionally, Bell, Tannenbaum, Ford, Noe, and Kraiger (2017) found that training design is one of the main themes of the training transfer domain. Training design is considered the basis for improving trainees’ competencies on the job (Bhatti et al., 2013). Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, and Kavanagh (2007) found that training design was significantly correlated with transfer. Furthermore, training design is considered, among all transfer models, as an important antecedent of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Indeed, it is stated that training design strategies represented 46% of trainers’ reported best practices for influencing transfer (Saks & Burke-Smalley, 2014). Indeed, if instrumental methods are described as best practice methods, then those methods significantly promote training transfer (Bhatti et al., 2013; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

Recently, Baldwin et al. (2017) reported that more confirmation related to training design and the implementations of training initiatives is required. Likewise, Bell et al. (2017) emphasized that more effort is necessary for investigating training design.

Training design in general and training techniques in particular show important and strong relationships with training transfer (Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Gyimah, 2015; Nikandrou et al., 2009), which suggests that transfer design should be investigated further (Baldwin et al., 2017; Bhatti et al., 2013). Furthermore, Nikandrou, Brinia, and Bereri (2009) indicated that studies have seldom examined the impact of training design and other mechanisms (methods of design) on actual training transfer. Consequently, this study tested the following hypothesis:

H1: Training design has a positive influence on training transfer.

#### 4.3 Training Design and Memory

This section aims to justify, describe, and review the relation between training design and training retention, i.e., how does training design preserve training memory? The purpose of this review is to precisely understand and then suggest a hypothesis for this relation. Therefore, and as mentioned before, relying on training design as a general term may be confusing. Practically, explaining design techniques instead of the general term (training design) would make the explanations more precise and may produce new insights for future studies.

Training design features and mechanisms are the detailed aspects and elements of training design (Bhatti et al., 2013) and are significant concerns in the training transfer literature (Nikandrou et al., 2009). Furthermore, traditional education methods (techniques) fail to optimize long-term memory (Kerfoot, 2010). In general, training design features are the tangible instruments of training design; this is represented by several terms, such as mechanisms, methods, elements, strategies, and/or techniques (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Lim & Morris, 2006; Nikandrou et al., 2009; Smolen, Zhang, & Byrne, 2016). For simplicity, this study uses the term “techniques” instead of using several other terms.

It is argued that training professionals can use certain techniques in training design to increase training transfer in the workplace (Curado, Henriques, & Ribeiro, 2015; Smolen et al., 2016). Therefore, many researchers have noted several types of training techniques (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011). For instance, Baldwin and Ford (1988) highlighted the following techniques: conditions of transfer (e.g., over-learning), general principles (teaching the general rules), identical elements (having identical stimulus and response elements in training and transfer settings), and stimulus variability (using a variety of training stimuli). Additionally, Burke and Hutchins (2007) categorized training techniques by several features, e.g., by identification of learning needs, learning goals, content relevance, prominent instructional strategies and methods, self-management strategies, and/or instructional media.

Other examples of training design techniques are behavioural modelling, error management (error training), and realistic training environments, all of which have shown strong relationships with training transfer (Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

The spacing effect and overlearning are remarkable techniques that can clarify the importance of training design for training retention. The spacing effect is a highly-valued technique that is used in several specializations (Bandura, 1989; Deffenbacher et al., 2008; Driskell, Willis, & Copper, 1992; Ebbinghaus, 1964; Jaber, 2006; Ritter et al., 2011). Moreover, the spacing effect has many synonyms, such as retention interval (Driskell et al.,

1992). The spacing effect is described as the rehearsal of the training content at specific intervals (Ebbinghaus, 1964; Ritter et al., 2011) in order to increase the recall rate of the new information learned from the training programme (Jaber, 2006). Therefore, the overlearning technique is an approach that represents the repetition of practices to retain employee competencies (Ritter et al., 2011). As a method, the greater the degree of overlearning is, the greater its effect on memorizing knowledge and skills (Nijman, Nijhof, Wognum, & Veldkamp, 2006).

Generally, it is obvious that training design has a fundamental role in promoting training retention via its techniques. In addition, training techniques provide a clear representation of training design.

Furthermore, this study draws a new logical diagram that explains how training design could preserve training memory with the consideration of time (Figure 1). As stated by Ebbinghaus, time is the main construct that affects memory. Therefore, well-designed training programmes are more successful in improving the trainees' retention (Martin, 2010). Therefore, a weak training design will delay the application of the training post-period, which will ultimately lead to low training retention. A suitable, timely plan (design) may be invested in the post-period of the training or after a short period of applying the training programme. Accordingly, the most focal means to explain that relation between training design and training retention is to compare strong and weak designs and their effects on retention (remembering) over time. In conclusion, the design that concentrates on the means that cause remembering could increase the rate of retention.

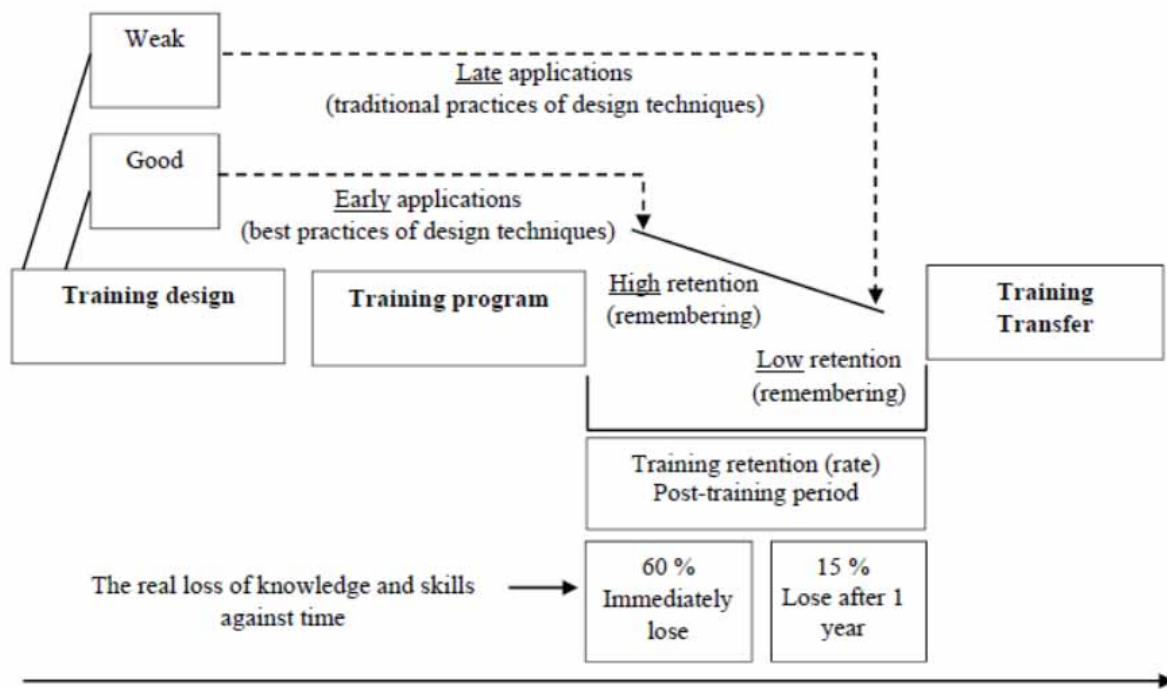


Figure 1. A Logical Discrimination between Weak and Good Training Designs Affecting Training Retention. The rates of retention are adopted from Wexley and Latham (2002)

Bhatti et al. (2013) noted that training design may influence training retention or help trainees to retain the learned skills. It is noteworthy that Velada et al. (2007) were the only researchers in the domain of training transfer who empirically studied the relation between training design and training retention; however, the relation between training design and training retention was not the main concern of Velada et al. (2007) or Bhatti et al. (2013).

Finally, most researchers provided reasonable perspectives of the relation between training design and training retention; however, few studies had applied any empirical investigation specifically in the domain of training transfer.

In accordance with the previous review, the following hypothesis was examined in this study:

H2: Training design has a positive influence on training retention.



#### 4.4 Training Retention and Training Transfer

Training retention represents the retention of information, knowledge, or skills that were obtained from training (Velada et al., 2007). Training retention is mainly associated with the memory (remembering) of the training content (Deffenbacher et al., 2008; Ong & Tasir, 2015; Sakul-Thanasakdi, 2001; Velada et al., 2007).

Basically, the importance of retention has emerged because memory is a synonym of behaviour. For this, the weakening of behaviour is a consequence of forgetting (Donahoe & Palmer, 1994; Pierce & Cheney, 2013). Thus, memory is a central topic to behaviour science (Fryling & Hayes, 2010). Similarly, May and Kahnweiler (2000) suggested that the lack of training retention could lead to inadequate training transfer. Overall, training retention (memory) has an obvious interaction with training transfer (behaviour).

Additionally, the domain of memory research has been applied in both laboratories and organizational (field) studies; however, one of the problems in studying skill retention and memory is that cognitive abilities have been found to be more important in laboratory studies than in field contexts or within organizational settings (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010). Therefore, increasing the number of organizational studies in the domain of memory (training retention) is suggested, instead of restricting such studies to laboratory experiments.

In the domain of training transfer, a few recent studies examined relation between training retention and training transfer (see, for example, Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017; Govaerts, Kyndt, & Dochy, 2018). Bhatti et al. (2013) noted that few researchers included training retention in the training transfer theory. Similarly, Bhatti and Kaur (2009) indicated that studying training retention in the training and development (T&D) field has inherent limitations.

Therefore, training retention was considered a mediator in this study. Baldwin and Ford (1988) also considered it a mediator in their transfer model. Furthermore, the mediating role of training retention is to be expected when, as reported by Bhatti et al. (2013), the training design has an indirect effect on training transfer.

According to the training retention literature, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H3: Training retention has a positive influence on training transfer.

H4: Training design has an influence on training transfer that is mediated by training retention.

#### 5. Proposed Study Model

The proposed study model is primarily based upon the main training transfer model (Baldwin & Ford, 1988), as well as the supporting theories. Then, the proposed model was modified according to the theoretical gaps noted in our literature review. Accordingly, the following model is recommended (Figure 2):

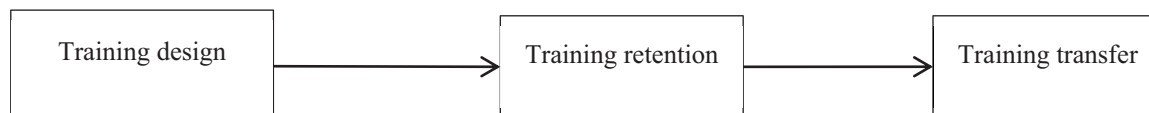


Figure 2. Conceptual Model

#### 6. Methodology

In this study, the study population is the federal ministries of the UAE. Six out of 17 basic ministries were selected for data collection. These six ministries represent a variety of important sectors (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Prevention, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs). A proportion (six ministries) of the total population was selected for the purpose of efficient data collection. Since the total population number is 52, 000, the statistically-necessary sample number was stated as 382 employees (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Each sampling method aims to maximize the representation of the study population (Salkind, 2012). All employees in the federal ministries are responsible for applying (transferring) the training to their jobs. Since all the elements in the population are considered and each element has an equal chance of being chosen as the subject, simple random sampling was used in this study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

The unit of analysis in this study, nominated as an individual unit, is the employee in one of the federal ministries. The behavioural nature (transfer behaviour) of the study variable led the researchers to choose the employee as the unit of analysis. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) gave an example of choosing the individual level by considering the nature of the research variables, e.g., motivation. The individual nature (trainee memory) also advocates for studying the individual unit. Additionally, the individual level is common in the training transfer domain (Bhatti et al., 2013; Cheng & Hampson, 2015; Holton et al., 2000; Velada et al., 2009).

This study is a cross-sectional data collection that collected data at a point in time. This study aims to study the



relationships between variables against changes in specific situations (or indicators) through different points of time. This study is intended to take a general feature of the training transfer training phenomenon, in a very general format, linked to the federal ministries for a general period of time. For all these reasons, cross-sectional data collection was selected.

6.1 Research Questionnaire

Operationalization of the study variables was referred from the main resources in the training transfer domain (Table 1). Operationalization is utilized to ensure that the study items are accurate.

In particular, training retention identification is related to a specific concept in the process of training transfer. Referring to psychology, “retention” is mainly associated with memory (Deffenbacher, Bornstein, McGorty, & Penrod, 2008; Ong & Tasir, 2015; Sakul-Thanasakdi, 2001). Particularly, retention in the domain of training transfer is traditionally related to remembering or is considered a cognition attribute that represents the degree to which the trainee remembers the training (Velada et al., 2007).

The study questionnaire consisted of two sections: (i) demographic information and (ii) study items (questions). The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with the following responses: strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neutral=3, agree=4, and strongly agree=5. The study items were founded from the dependable key resources shown in Table 1.

The work of Holton et al. (2000) is widely regarded as a major contribution to the identification of training design in the training transfer field (Bates et al., 2007, 2012; Khasawneh et al., 2006; Velada et al., 2007); hence, Holton et al.’s (2000) identification of training design is used in this study.

6.2 Modification of Study Items

Three stages of the study modification were applied: (i) back-translation, (ii) pre-test, and (iii) pilot test. Since our items were initially expressed in the English language, back-translation was applied to ensure a precise translation into Arabic. Backward translation was implemented according to the methods of Brislin (1970, 1986) and Banville et al. (2000). Therefore, a pre-test was performed, following the method of Sekaran and Bougie (2013). Sekaran and Bougie described pre-testing as the use of a small number of respondents (focus group) to test the appropriateness of questions and their comprehension. A group of five participants had modified the questionnaire items to suit the real study population participants. Following the pre-test, a pilot test was performed. The pilot test’s purpose is to test the items’ reliability (consistency) (Piaw, 2012). Accordingly, the study items achieved a reliable result (Cronbach’s alphas > 0.7) and then the modified study items were ready to be used with the target population.

Table 1. Operational definitions and study items

Variable	Operational definition	Reference	No. of items	Reference
Training Retention	The degree to which the trainee retains the content after training is completed.	Velada et al., 2007	4	Velada et al., 2007
Training Design	The extent to which training is designed and delivered in a manner that enables trainees to transfer learning to their job.	Holton et al., 2000; Bhatti et al., 2013.	4	Holton et al., 2000.
Training Transfer	Transfer and application of knowledge, skills and attitude as workplace behaviour.	Ford and Weissbein, 1997; Kraiger, 2002; Al-Eisa et al., 2009; Burke and Saks, 2009.	6	Tesluk, Farr, Mathieu, and Vance, 1995; Xiao, 1996.

6.3 Data Collection and Statistical Techniques

The study questionnaires were accompanied by an explanatory introduction, and the questionnaires were sent to all employees in the specified federal ministries. Questionnaires were sent via email to the employees’ work email addresses. A total of 552 respondents completed and returned questionnaires. Incorrectly completed questionnaires and respondents who had not enrolled in any training in the past year were excluded, leaving 444 valid questionnaires (Table 2). Furthermore, the participant number (444 employees) exceeded the statistical requirements (382 employees). Schumacker and Lomax (2016, p. 47), stated that a sample size of 100-150 is sufficient for testing small models with well-behaved data.

Table 2. General information on the response rate.

Total Number of Distributed Questionnaires	44,527
Total Number of Received Questionnaires	552
Response rate (%)	1.2
Number of Excluded Questionnaires (Abnormal Filling)	108
Final Number of Questionnaires For Analysis (After Cleaning)	444
Sample Size Required	382
Actual Sample Size as % of Required	116.2

In order to test our hypotheses, which included a mediating role, the researchers analysed the study results using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2016; Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017); this analysis was performed using SmartPLS software (Hair et al., 2017).

To get a precise result, a non-response bias assessment was conducted. The study data were collected for a period of approximately three months. Data were split into two groups: the early and late groups. The resulting analysis (after applying PLS-MGA) showed non-significant differences between the early group and the late group. Thus, the study was considered to have acceptable (stable) reliability.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics showed a diverse set of employees, which represents a generalizable population sample (Table 3).

All data were tested after ensuring that discriminant validity had been established. Discriminant validity is a statistical test that ensures that questionnaire items from different variables are distinct and do not correlate to each other (Hair et al., 2016). We performed a discriminant validity analysis (Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loading) in order to eliminate inappropriate items. The recommendations of Hair et al. (2017) relating to discriminant validity were applied. According to the discriminant validity test, one item out of 14 items was eliminated; this eliminated item was related the training design variable.

Table 3. Morphological Information and Respondents' Profiles (n=444)

Profile type	Details
Study population No.	52 thousand employees
Supervisory role employee (%)	51.3
Subordinate employee (%)	48.7
Training course attendance (%)	93.2
Secondary level (%)	7.5
Diploma (%)	11.0
Bachelor's (%)	57.0
Master's (%)	17.4
PhD (%)	7.2
Administrative job (%)	41.5
A technical (specialized) job (%)	25.8
Administrative and technical job (%)	19.0
Administrative and field job (%)	10.7
A field job (%)	3.0
Male (%)	33.5
Female (%)	66.5
Mean experience (years)	15.4 (Max=40, Min=1)
Mean age (years)	45.6 (Max=67, Min=19)

7.2 Correlation, Reliability, and Hypothesis Testing

All items had acceptable reliability (Cronbach’s alpha > 0.70). Also, all the hypotheses were accepted (H1, H2, H3, and H4) (Table 4). In general, all correlational effects were high, except the relation between training retention and training transfer (0.143).

The fourth hypothesis (H4) represents the mediating effect of training retention on the relationship between training design and training transfer. According to bootstrapping analysis, the mediating role of training retention had a total effect of 0.089 and a significant result ( $p = 0.001$ , T statistic = 3.242, confidence intervals bias corrected: 5.00% = 0.044 and 95.00% = 0.135). The data analysis also showed that training design has an indirect effect on training transfer.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliabilities of variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Training Design	Training Retention	Training Transfer
Training Design	3.36	1.07	(0.93)		
Training Retention	3.65	0.99	0.618*	(0.947)	
Training Transfer	3.54	1.08	0.839*	0.143*	(0.931)

Note: \* $p$ -values < 0.05;  $\alpha$  values (reliability) shown in parentheses

8. Discussion

All the hypotheses were accepted, though with different correlational effects. Training design had a significant (positive) influence on training transfer, with a high correlational (indirect) effect (0.839). This significant result is confirmed by other studies (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Velada et al., 2007).

Training design had a significant (positive) influence on training retention, with a high correlational effect (0.618); however, Velada et al. (2007) reported an insignificant relation result. This contrast may be due to cultural and institutional differences. The present study was applied in a governmental sector, whereas Velada et al.’s study was applied in a private entity (grocery organization). It has been noted that there are significant cultural differences between regions around the world (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), which would influence employees’ personal traits and organizational practices and cultures (Abdullah, 1992; Hassi & Storti, 2011; Pattni & Soutar, 2009; Rogers & Spitzmueller, 2009).

The relation between training design and training retention gained central importance in the present study, as represented by the study title, “Does training design preserve training memory?” According to the study empirical result (Table 4), training design effectively preserves training memory. Training design techniques significantly influence whether the participants remember (retain) the knowledge and skills gained from the training programme.

In addition, training retention has a significant (positive) influence on training transfer, but a low correlation effect (0.143). Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) and Velada et al. (2007) reported similar results, i.e., both studies reported significant correlations between training retention and training transfer with low total effects (0.227 and 0.33, respectively). Additionally, Govaerts, Kyndt, and Dochy (2018) reported that training retention has a significant effect on training transfer. Although many studies in psychology showed that memory has a considerable influence on behaviour (Donahoe & Palmer, 1994; Pierce & Cheney, 2013), the present study and other studies in the domain of training transfer (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017; Velada et al., 2007; Govaerts et al., 2018) imply that memory is less important. This study showed that training retention is a secondary contributor of transferring training.

The most crucial reason for the differences between the study’s results in the domain of training transfer and psychology is due to the differences in research methodologies. The present study used a subjective methodology (questionnaire), whereas in psychology, the objective approach is dominant (experiments). Baldwin and Ford (1988) mentioned that, in psychology, the research is concentrated in laboratory settings rather than organizational settings. Also, studying memory in some cases focuses on the newly learned knowledge (see, for instance, Bandura, 1997; Ebbinghaus, 1964). Thus, the training courses in this study may be a sequence of repeated courses in some form, which leads to the low observed effect of training retention toward training transfer.

## 9. Managerial Implications

The training design remains the effective agent and dominant influencer of the training transfer process. Therefore, human resource departments and their supervisors must be highly qualified in designing training.

Training design also has a clear impact on maintaining training memory, and so it is emphasized again to avoid applying traditional training techniques. Evidence-based training techniques, such as “spacing” and “overlearning” and many others, would reduce the significant memory losses of traditional training programs.

## 10. Study Limitations

Training design predicts (or explains) only 32% (R-squared value of 0.32) of training retention. Hence, many variables affect training retention and further research is necessary to identify them. The present study domain is general (all federal employees); as such, it is advisable to conduct a similar study on a particular sector, for instance, a medical or educational field. Applying the study variable in a particular field would demonstrate new insights. The present study is limited to the public sector; applying the study variable in the private sector would be more valuable. This study does not distinguish between the different types of job skills. In general, skill types consist of motor skills (musculoskeletal system to perform behavioural activities), cognitive skills (thinking, idea generation, etc.), and personal skills (interacting with others) (Arthur et al., 2003). When examining memory, these skill types must be considered (Arthur et al., 1998; Salas, Milham, & Bowers, 2003; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992).

## 11. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Study Directions

Billions of dollars are lost by low application of training. Fast decline of training memory may contribute this loss. Therefore, the present study examined how to reduce that loss by testing several hypotheses as part of generating a conceptual model. Accordingly, this study demonstrates the significant relation between training design and training transfer. Training design is a dominant influencer of the training transfer process. Excellent training design is the crucial agent of a successful organizational training program.

This study also demonstrated that training design is one of the main preservers of training memory. Thus, training retention via training design will increase the retention of the training memory for a long period and thereby lower training expenses. It is highly recommended that future research examine the influence of training design on memory preservation (training retention), specifically in the organizational context, and in several types of skills and sectors since the training retention variable is one of the most important variables in the training transfer domain and is a critical research limitation.

In addition, training retention plays a central mediating role in the transfer model. Furthermore, training memory is one of the precursors of transfer behaviour. Therefore, addressing group memory is considered a valuable future direction. For instance, enrolling a group of employees in a training programme would increase the training memory versus individual enrolment.

Generally, it is fundamentally recommended to apply several investigations related to the present study's conceptual model (variables).

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# Assessing the Impact of International Fieldwork: The Case of J. F. Oberlin University, Japan

Chisato Igano<sup>1</sup> & Hiroshi Ito<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Arts and Sciences, J. F. Oberlin University, Tokyo, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Graduate School of Management, Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Nagoya, Japan

Correspondence: Hiroshi Ito, Graduate School of Management, NUCB Business School, Nagoya, Japan. Tel: 81-52-203-8111 E-mail: hito@nucba.ac.jp

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of international fieldwork in developing students' generic, transferable, life, and soft skills and attributes by comparing reported scores of these skills and attributes through self-evaluation surveys before and after the fieldwork and interviewing students to explore why they think that certain skills and attributes improved while other skills and attributes did not. Findings suggest that the international fieldwork may enhance skills and attributes related to initiative, execution, detecting issues, planning, delivering messages, and flexibility. However, the fieldwork did not seem to enhance skills and attributes to influence others, to listen, to grasp situations, to apply rules, to control stress, and creativity. Possible explanations for certain skills and attributes improvement and stagnation are provided in addition to suggestions for future research.

**Keywords:** fieldwork, skills development, higher education, generic skills, Japan

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

There is an increasing presence of short-term international fieldwork programs worldwide (Mullens, Bristow, & Cuper, 2012). This study examines the effectiveness of an international fieldwork program in India offered by J. F. Oberlin University of Tokyo, Japan, focusing specifically on developing generic skills and attributes, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, as a mode of teaching and learning. Fieldwork is an important teaching and learning method to acquire such skills that improve student employability (Clarke, 1996; Gonzales & Semken, 2006; Rydant, Shiplee, Smith, & Middlekauff, 2010; Wall & Speake, 2012).

Boyle et al. (2007) define fieldwork as a component of leaving the classroom and learning through first-hand experiences in the real world. Commonly stated aims of fieldwork include the following: 1) to introduce, reinforce, and develop both general and subject-specific skills and attributes; 2) to provide the opportunity for experiential learning; and 3) to develop experience facing the challenges of different socio-cultural environments (McEwen, 1996). That is, fieldwork enables students to acquire skills and attributes through experiential learning in different environments.

Previous research indicates that fieldwork has been perceived positively by both teachers and students (Charles-Edwards, Bell, & Corcoran, 2014; Connell, 2006; Fuller et al., 2003; Fuller et al., 2006; Goodenough et al., 2014; Hope, 2009). Fieldwork can be a pedagogical tool for directing student attention (McMorran, 2015) and problem-solving student-centered learning (Dalton, 2001). Fieldwork offers opportunities to encourage different types of teaching and learning and to reflect on what effective learning might be in this context (Coe & Smyth, 2010). Wilson (2008) and Goodenough et al. (2014) also explain that fieldwork is an important element of many undergraduate degree courses. It provides students with opportunities to deepen their understanding of the connections between theory and practice through active, immersive, and inquiry-based learning. Mullens et al. (2012) also argue that international fieldwork provides an opportunity to enhance what they have learned in the classroom, which sometimes cannot be covered by local/regional/national fieldwork. For instance, issues that India can be learnt in the classroom but cannot certainly addressed in the real world context unless being there.



### 1.2 Fieldwork as a Learning Strategy and Skills Development Mechanism

Fieldwork has evolved from simple observations into a wider variety of learning and teaching processes, such as active learning (Fuller et al., 2006, pp. 90-91), experiential learning (McEwen, 1996), and reflective learning (Dummer et al., 2008), all of which can be interrelated and lead to deep learning (Coe & Smyth, 2010; Hill & Woodland, 2002; Matsushita, 2017). Deep learning refers to learning that encompasses the acquisition and application of higher order skills, such as analyzing and interpreting data in order to encourage students to modify or evaluate their ideas or knowledge through a critical reflection process (Moon, 2005). Dummer et al. (2008) argues that reflective learning constitutes a principal part of deep learning. Dummer et al. continue to say that Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory serves for discussions on reflective learning.

Kolb's learning cycle outlines how learners use experiences, observations, and reflections to help understand concepts and create new ideas. Gibbs (1988) defines such a process as active learning (learning by doing) promoted by reflecting on what we are doing. In active learning and experiential fieldwork, by definition, students learn by applying theories into practice (Gibbs, 1988) and learn by actively engaging in all four aspects of Kolb's learning cycle (Dummer et al., 2008; Pelley, 2014). However, the assessment of reflective learning can be problematic in part because it is difficult to observe (Dummer et al., 2008; Wilson, 2008). In this context, we employ skills/attributes development measurement. Fieldwork helps develop generic, transferable, research, and life skills such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and communication skills, teamwork, and leaderships (Dalton, 2001; Everill, 2015; Fuller et al., 2006; Ito & Kawazoe, 2015; McEwen, 1996; Panelli & Welch, 2005; Pawson & Teather, 2002; Smith, 2004) as well as awareness of cultural difference (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). There are scarce international studies on the role of fieldwork and its effectiveness in developing skills and attributes (Fuller et al., 2006). The current research intends to close the gap by offering a case-study of an international fieldwork program offered by J. F. Oberlin University in Tokyo, Japan.

### 1.3 International Fieldwork at J. F. Oberlin University

J. F. Oberlin University is a private university founded in Tokyo in 1921. It is named after Oberlin College in Ohio where the university's founder attended. J. F. Oberlin University's Department of International Cooperation aims to help students learn about the current status and causes of global issues such as environmental degradation, poverty, and violation of human rights. In this context, the department provides students with fieldwork opportunities to learn about specific development issues such as gender discrimination and child protection through a two-week international program in Bangalore, South India. In 2018, 14 sophomore-to-senior students voluntarily participated in the program.

The country is located in a relatively convenient area from Japan, an approximately eight to nine hour flight with two hour time difference. This may be an important factor because the increased travel time exhaust staff and students and jet lag may adversely affect the performance (Fuller, 2006).

In the first half of the fieldwork experience, students stay in Bangalore, working with a local NGO. They visit slums, interview sex workers infected with HIV/AIDS, and interact with street children to contemplate issues of poverty, gender, and child education in the city. In the second half of the fieldwork, students stay at VEDIKE (a private nonprofit organization that provides schooling children who cannot receive formal education) in the suburban area of Bangalore. In addition to daily interactions with children at VEDIKE, students also collaborate in the construction of school buildings and lodging houses. As Nash (2000) notes, fieldwork may involve voluntary work like this or other research work, which could contribute to an undergraduate product.

Also, through homestay with the women's groups in the surrounding villages, students are given opportunities to consider the disparity between urban and rural areas. By experiencing the environment close to the lives of local people, students begin to understand the current situation and real problems. After returning to Japan, students think about how they could address the issues of developing countries.

The fieldwork offered by Oberlin University is an example of service learning and the following are taken as important aspects of the program: 1) through social activities conducted through on-site-training, students engage in addressing issues that local people face in the community and 2) students raise awareness, enhance sensitivity, and acquire generic and transferable skills/attributes. The goal of the fieldwork course incorporating service learning is to acquire the abilities and attitudes that are mentioned in *syakaijin kisoryoku*, a conceptual set of skills and attributes promoted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (2014), which will be discussed in the next section.

## 2. Method

There has been considerable debate on competency-based assessment such as which competencies need to be



achieved and how such competencies can be measured (Dummer et al., 2008; Hay & O’Donoghue, 2009, p. 43). The current research focuses on *syakaijin kisoryoku*. These are generic, transferable, research, and life skills/attributes that are considered fundamental for working persons (See Ito & Kawazoe, 2015, for more details). *Syakaijin kisoryoku*, skills/attributes to be measured in the current research, are described as follows:

1. Initiative: Ability to initiate things proactively
2. Ability to influence: Ability to influence and involve others
3. Execution skill: Ability to set goals and execute with conviction
4. Ability to detect issues: Ability to analyze status quo and clarify issues
5. Planning skill: Ability to clarify procedures to solve issues and prepare
6. Creativity: Ability to create new values
7. Ability to deliver messages
8. Ability to listen closely and carefully
9. Flexibility
10. Ability to grasp situations
11. Ability to apply rules and regulations
12. Ability to control stress

It is hypothesized that these skills and attributes improved after the fieldwork experience of living in a different environment, interacting with people from another country, and doing various assignments such as a project write-up (Nash, 2000) and reflective journals and essays (Hay & O’Donoghue, 2009). Writing assignments are particularly important to improve students’ generic and transferable skills and attributes because as Dummer et al. (2008) as well as Park (2003) note, reflective fieldwork written assignment “offer an innovative and flexible approach to teaching, learning and assessment that encourages deep learning. The method enhances students’ critical self-reflection and communication skills” (Dummer et al., 2008, p. 459).

The methods to assess the changes in these skills/attributes are student self-survey evaluation and semi-structured interviews with questions based on the self-evaluations. The self-evaluation uses the five Likert scale from 1 indicating very bad to 5 indicating very good. We then conduct semi-structured interviews to ask participants why they thought that some skills and attributes improved while others did not after the fieldwork. The number of students who participated in the study is eight (three males and five females). The results of the self-evaluation were analyzed using t-test to identify skills/attributes that have changed statistically signify before and after the international fieldwork.

### 3. Results

Table 1. Self-evaluation surveys in *syakaijin kisoryoku* before (left) and after (right) the fieldwork

Name	Sex	Initiative	Influencing	Execution	Detect issues	Planning	Creativity	Delivering messages	Listening	Flexibility	Grasping situations	Applying rules	Controlling stress
Mayuko	F	3 3	2 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	2 3	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	2 2
Yuzuka	F	4 4	3 3	2 3	3 4	2 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 4	3 3	3 3	3 3
Akashi	M	3 4	2 4	2 3	3 3	2 3	3 3	3 3	4 4	2 4	3 3	2 2	5 5
Syota	M	5 5	5 5	4 5	4 4	5 5	4 4	4 5	5 5	4 5	5 5	5 5	3 3
Harune	F	3 4	3 3	4 4	3 4	4 4	4 4	2 3	3 3	4 4	3 3	3 4	3 3
Chinatsu	F	2 4	2 3	4 4	2 4	3 4	3 3	2 2	4 5	5 5	4 5	4 5	5 5
Haruyuki	M	2 3	2 2	3 3	3 4	3 3	2 3	2 2	3 4	4 5	2 2	3 3	3 3
Mutsumi	F	3 3	3 3	2 2	3 3	2 2	2 2	2 2	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3	3 3
Total		25 #	22 26	23 27	24 29	24 27	24 25	20 23	28 30	27 33	26 27	26 28	27 27
Ave.		3.13 #	2.75 3.25	2.88 3.38	3.00 3.63	3.00 3.38	3.00 3.13	2.50 2.88	3.50 3.75	3.38 4.13	3.25 3.38	3.25 3.50	3.38 3.38
Sig.		0.025 *	0.052	0.017 *	0.025 *	0.04 *	0.18	0.0398 *	0.1	0.01 **	0.175	0.09	-

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01

According to the results of the student self-survey evaluation, skills related to initiative, execution, detecting issues, planning, and delivering messages statistically significantly improved at the .01 level, and flexibility statistically significantly improved at the .05 level after the international fieldwork in India.

We then conducted semi-structured interviews to ask them why they thought that some skills and attributes improved while others did not after the fieldwork.

Mayuko reported that her execution skills and ability to deliver messages improved by one point. Before going

to the fieldwork, she thought that there was no need to tell someone her thoughts. However, she has begun to make efforts to inform people of what she knows and what they may not know. After she came back to Japan from India, she became much more active. For instance, she has been involved in the activities of Oxfam, a British originated, humanitarian aid NPO/NGO. Before, she did not trust NPOs in part because she was not sure how the money they fundraised was used. After working with a local NGO in India, she has a concrete idea of what NPOs are doing and would like people around her to understand it, too. Yuzuka reported that her execution skills, planning skills, and flexibility improved by one point respectively. She claims that she was originally a person without execution and planning skills. Even if she made a plan, she could not carry it out. Since she came back from the fieldwork in India, however, she feels that she has more planning and execution skills. She remembers that the street children that she interacted in India studied hard to learn to write or speak English. That experience made her realize how lucky she is and that she has to make more efforts toward setting and achieving goals. She also feels that she has become more flexible because she faced many kinds of cultural differences in India, such as not throwing toilet papers into the urinal or having to sleep with a dirty blanket.

Akashi reported that his execution skills improved by one point and flexibility by two points. Before he went to the fieldwork in India, she had no execution skills. Afterwards, he did and interacted with many different kinds of people. He became interested in many things, such as the issues of poverty. After she came back to Japan, he is now able to make a plan and carry it out. He started working with homeless people or people in poor areas, for example. Regarding flexibility, at first, she had no idea what to do about cultural and language differences between Japanese and India. However, through interactions with many people with different backgrounds, she now understands cultural differences better and feels much more flexible than before.

Syota claimed that his execution skills and flexibility improved by one point. He explained that he thought that he originally had execution skills but they were enhanced after he went to the fieldwork and saw a harsh reality in India. He then became more active, for example, collecting information and doing research to analyze the situation in India. Regarding flexibility, now that Japanese and others have different ways of thinking, he can now accept the opinions of others as they are, without denying them. Even if he tells people to change, they will not. He has to deal with them flexibly.

Haruyuki reported that her skills related to initiative, detecting issues, creativity, listening to others, and flexibility improved by one point respectively. He said that he started telling people his experiences in India. For example, he now conducts workshops about international development issues and tell audience what she learned in India. He feels that she has more initiative than before when she tells people what she learns. Before, she had prejudice against issues faced by India. She thought that few households had electricity and TVs. After she went there, however, he faced different issues: toilets and/or domestic waste water were dirty and could do harm to one's health. She also reported that because he was in a different environment from that of Japan, his imagination has enhanced and thus his creativity also enhanced. In India, he talked to people with different cultures as well as socio-economic backgrounds. When he meets people with different values in Japan, he can now respect them. Before the fieldwork, he tried avoiding them. Also in India, she was in an environment that was totally different from that of Japan, she became much more flexible now.

Chika reported that skills related to initiative improved by two points, and skills related to detecting issues, planning, listening, grasping situations, applying rules and regulations improved by one point. She said that she was not an active person before but became more active during the fieldwork in India. Looking at people who struggle to live hard, she came to think that she could do more and how to achieve it. For instance, there was an activity to carry blocks to build a school for street children. She made efforts to elaborate on how to do it more effectively. She thinks that she has gained ability to examine surrounding situations and find issues. For instance, she had a prototype that Indian women were socially disadvantaged. After observing them in India, however, they are not as discriminated against as expected. She said that she did not have planning skills. She used to just think and do things. However, through the variety of assignments such as post-fieldwork reports, she started to write long term as well as short-term goals in her agenda and to think how she could achieve them. She noted that overseas, where languages and cultural contexts are different, we would not be able to get any information without efforts to ask and listen to actively and carefully. She claimed that there is a gap between what students learn in the classroom and issues faced in the field. She realized it while in India. For instance, she learned about issues of gender and discrimination against women in the classroom, but she found children's education more problematic there when she actually saw it. This kind of gap between what is learned in the classroom and what is seen in the field seems common (Mullens et al., 2012). Also, before, she was not aware of rules and regulations. After going to India, yet, she became aware of the importance of rules and regulations because they are not respected in India.

Harune claimed that skills related to initiative, detecting issues, delivering messages, and applying rules and regulations improved by one point. Right after doing the fieldwork, she started job hunting. She had been interested in the fashion industry, but now she is aware that many factories in the fashion industry are located in developing countries. Although she has been studying international cooperation, the industry that she would like to work in may be exploiting developing countries. However, though the industry itself may be exploiting, there is something that she could do for developing countries, such as volunteering.

Mutsumi reported that all the skills and attributes remained the same before and after the fieldwork.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study suggests that international fieldwork may enhance skills/attributes related to initiative, execution, detecting issues, planning, delivering messages, and flexibility, as these skills and attributes improved statistically significantly after the fieldwork. Although the students who participated in the fieldwork learned these skills and attributes in various contexts, how these skills are developed through fieldwork is often difficult to analyze. Indeed, few studies “delve beyond the surface into a more systematic framework for skills development or authentic assessments of their efficacy (Rydant et al., 2010, p. 221).

The skills and attributes that significantly improved through the fieldwork are initiative, execution, detecting issues, planning, delivering messages, and flexibility. Among them, improving skills related to initiative and execution require students’ heightened proactiveness. Perhaps, this process occurs, as fieldwork stimulates independent learning whilst providing for the development of personal skills (May, 1999) and boost students’ self-confidence (Wall & Speake, 2012). Regarding skills related to detect issues, as Rydant et al. (2010) note, fieldwork helps develop observational skills, which enables students to think critically about form and process and thus find and examine issues (Rydant et al., 2010).

As for planning, as a respondent of the current research also mentioned, fieldwork involves designing of fieldwork activities and assignments, including organizing daily work program and time management (Rydant et al., 2010). This helps students to learn to make plans. Concerning skills to deliver messages, by exposing themselves to new and different landscapes, students develop awareness of features, learning to describe and articulate impressions (Rydant et al., 2010).

With respect to flexibility, as Wall and Speake (2012) note, international fieldwork develops “a distinctive and somewhat different set of competencies including a potential understanding and tolerance of cultural differences” (p. 431). They continue to state that “observations and experiences as cultural outsiders (others) themselves exemplifying the process of ‘othering’ whilst challenging the stereotype central to it” (Wall & Speake, 2012, p. 431). Hence, international fieldwork certainly helps students become more flexible in thinking and behavior.

Although no skills and attributes were reported deteriorated, there were skills/attributes that did not improve significantly: skills/attributes pertained to influencing others, creativity, listening, grasping situations, applying rules, and controlling stress. Given that skills to deliver messages improved, it is a little surprising that the skill to influence others did not because these two skills seem relevant. While students are more expressive now, they may not intend to influence others after being in an environment where they were primarily influenced by others rather than influencing others. Also, if we take a closer look, the significant level of this item (i.e., skills to influence others) is .052 before and after the fieldwork and thus the improvement is almost statistically significant. It may also be surprising that creativity did not improve, either. As Dyer et al. (2011) note, having stayed in a foreign country likely enhances creativity. However, creativity may not be a skill or attribute that can be improved within a few weeks. Also, the nature of the work does not seem focused on creativity. Future research should take this point into account and examine a longer fieldwork and/or a fieldwork that focuses on enhancing creativity. It may be odd that abilities to listen and grasp situations did not improve because abilities to deliver messages or detect issues, which seem relevant to these skills, improved. There may be some possible explanations for this such as language barriers as local people spoke their native languages and students were not comfortable with even understanding English. These are issues to be addressed by future research.

The ability to apply rules did not improve possibly because rules may not be as strictly respected in India as in Japan. Therefore, students may not have been aware of this ability while being there. Ability to control stress did not improve, either. This may be because those were willing to go to India expected a harsh condition even before going there and thus did not feel stressed as much as expected.

#### **5. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research**

The current research indicates that the international fieldwork can enhance skills/attributes related to initiative, execution, detecting issues, planning, delivering messages, and flexibility, whereas skills/attributes pertaining to

influencing others, creativity, listening, grasping situations, applying rules, and controlling stress did not improve significantly. One limitation of the current research is that it asked students why certain skills/attributes improved after or during the fieldwork, but it did not ask them why certain skills/attributes did not. Future research should address this issue. Also, the current research only examined one two-week fieldwork course in India and findings cannot be generalized. Therefore, future research should analyze longer-term fieldwork courses in different places. It may also be interesting to examine how these same students see this fieldwork experience as a formative role in developing their skill set in five or ten years. Nevertheless, the current research provides a case-study of fieldwork in an international setting. Given that few studies on international fieldwork in developing skills/attributes exist, we expect the current research will make a contribution to this area.

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# Status of Political Reforms Toward Violence's Against Women in the Middle East

Abdulahman Al-Fawwaz<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Humanities, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Amman, Jordan

Correspondence: Abdulrahman Al-Fawwaz. E-mail: dr\_fawwaz77@bau.edu.jo; fawwaz77@yahoo.com

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## Abstract

Women are considered as equal and essential part of the society, and have all the rights to live according to their will. However, in various countries, they are not given such chances; even their legislative positioning is also weak. The purpose of the study is to critically review the status of political reforms made towards violence against women in the Middle East. The paper tends to investigate that how women of Middle East are treated unequally and unfairly.

The findings of the paper reveals that the status of political reforms towards violence against women in the Middle East is weak as the societies are male-dominated. Females are not given equal opportunity to live and their quality of life is poor because there is no such strong implementation of legislative policies.

There is much need of policy implications so that the political reforms can be made towards providing equal and fair rights to females. Women due to poor implementation of policies face the violence; however, governmental interventions can help to overcome such inequality in the Middle East.

**Keywords:** political reforms, violence, women, Middle East

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

For any civil society, the fundamental aspect of living is to maintain the equality within its socio-economic and political system. Civil laws and regulations are inflicted to assure society that their personal viewpoints will be safeguarded and fair treatment will be given to all the citizens irrespective of their gender, ethnic background, and status. This trust of civilians on receiving safety makes them stronger to face personal injustice (Iyer, Mani, Mishra, & Topalova, 2012). However, despite such pledge by states, there is always a challenge for a state government to protect the rights of such people who face societal pressures (such as minorities, unrepresented citizens, and females). Individuals who belong to such groups often face a long gamut of unfairness (Htun & Weldon, 2015). The paper tends to investigate that how reforms are made over the years to overcome the injustice faced by women in the society.

### 1.2 Background of the Issue

In the Arab world, the common form of violence reports is the violence against women. According to the report of World Health Organisation (WHO), approx 37% women in the Middle East have experienced violence from their partners. The report further states that the political, economic, and national security situation in the Middle Eastern region fuelled this problem, where there is a direct relationship between regional crises with the domestic violence. During the Gaza conflict, 700% rise was seen in violence against women by their own partners due to the feeling of humiliation, insufficient opportunities, and hopelessness towards better living (Abraham, 2017; Skaff, 2013). Further, statistical figures indicate that approx 87% of females aged between 15-49 undergone mutilation process (Female genital mutilation) in Sudan and Egypt, whereas approx 19% have faced similar violence in Yemen and 8% faced the same issue in Iraq during the year 2015. This shows that the type of violence faced by women is not same as in many cases, not only their partners who abuse them but their families and society too (Kadi, 2017).

### 1.3 Problem Statement

Violence faced by women has been reported as the global problem because almost every developed,

under-developed, or developing nation faces the cases in which women are treated imprudently (Weldon and Htun, 2013). Research from different parts of the world, irrespective of East or West, astonishingly reported a higher rate of women trafficking, sexual assault, violence in a relationship, stalking, and another type of violations done at women psyches and bodies. Although from a human rights point of view, this is a clear assault and considered as a crime, at the same time, it violates the liberty of women to face and move within society. In the present scenario, Violence against Women (VAW) clearly highlights a question towards fundamental rights of women (Htun & Weldon, 2015). Interestingly, many nations and their governments have realised the need of bringing political reforms for giving basic protection to women from violence, but there is still much development needed in bringing legal reforms, establishing Non-governmental organisations to shelter such females who are victim of extreme violence and are shattered, need of public education, rape and rehabilitation centres and awareness campaigns. Precisely, there is lack of political reforms seen in protecting women rights and shielding them from any violence and assault (Ortiz-Barreda, Vives-Cases, & Gil-González, 2011; Htun & Weldon, 2015). Based on this, the problem statement of the study is *to critically review the status of political reforms toward violence's against women in the Middle East*.

#### 1.4 Aim

The aim of the paper is to critically review the concept of violence against women and the political reforms made to overcome this societal injustice in the Middle East.

#### 1.5 Research Questions

The questions of the study are as follows:

What is violence against women and its consequences on the society?

Why there is need of bringing political reforms towards violence against women?

What is the status of violence against women in the Middle East based upon policies and legislation?

What are the possible policy implications towards overcoming violence against women in the Middle East?

#### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The study plays a significant role in understanding the need of bringing political reforms to overcome the major issue that most of the societies face i.e. violence against women. It plays a fundamental role in knowing how the economic growth is affected due to the pressures that women face in terms of violence and how it is affecting the entire social system from being liberal. Especially, the need for strong legislation can help from the political point of view to protect women rights at every platform. Hence, the study plays a significant part to understand that how the Middle Eastern societies have moved in all these years from being extremely rigid to little flexible towards the female gender. It tends to provide an imperative understanding to academic practitioners and policymakers to know the need of investigating the status of women in Middle Eastern countries and ways through which the government can protect their rights so that they can live in complete justice and equality.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Violence

Violence is explained as the intentional or unintentional behavior by physical force, which intends to damage, hurt, or kill someone. The violence is the anger that causes harm to another person based on aggression. According to World Report violence is always the part of human experiences and today still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it affected more than 1.5 million people despite many reforms (Anand, Grover, Kumar, Kumar, & Ingle, 2016). Majority of people who suffers from violence are facing nonfatal injuries, Chronic injuries, health consequences, low self-esteem. The violence is remained in the society since long and despite various interventions; it has been not prevented yet due to other external factors from society and traditions. The violence is the leading cause of fatality especially people who are aged 15 to 44 years. According to World Health Organization (WHO) globally there are 470,000 homicides that occur each year and more than millions of people does suffer from the violence-related injuries (Shahzad & Malik, 2014).

The exposure to domestic violence increases the women exposure towards mental illness, drugs abuse, alcohol use, HIV, and chronic heart diseases. It not only affects women psychologically, but it also affects them physically, which creates long-lasting effects. However, multiple studies shared that violence can be easily prevented by interventions (Copeland & Henry, 2017). The prevention of violence against women not only benefits a person, but it benefits a society in term of advancement and progression. The interventions regarding violence against women are the concern towards public health, which aims to:

- (i) Define problems
- (ii) Identify risk factors and causes
- (iii) Designing interventions and testing them
- (iv) Increasing effective interventions

According to the studies of Jiao, Ning, Li, Gao, Cui, Sun, Kang, Liang, Wu and Hao (2015); Hanson et al., (2015); Phillips (2016); the violence is a patterns of the behaviour that involves abuse by one person against another person within the domestic settings such cohabitation or marriage. It is also termed as the intimate partner violence in which the spouse or partner is an intimate relationship with their partner. It also includes the emotional, verbal, psychological, reproductive, religious, and sexual abuse and the women are the more serious victims of violence than men (Pearlman, Zierler, Gjelsvik, & Verhoek-Oftedahl, 2016).

### 2.2 Violence Against Women

According to Ellsberg et al., (2015); Alesina, Brioschi, and Ferrara (2016); Varghese and Sarkute (2017), the violence against women encompasses wide range of views, which are not limited to physical, psychological, sexual violence occurring in the family, but it also includes sexual abuse, battering of young females, martial rape, dowry-related violence, genital mutilation and other harmful acts. It also includes sexual harassment, rape, and intimation at the workplace, trafficking, discrimination, which is at a community or state level. The violence has been ignored largely due to lack of clear definition and public health issues (García-Moreno et al., 2015). It is the complex and diffusive phenomena, which is not defined due to an exact science, but it is defined as the matter of judgment. It is the notions of what is acceptance and what is unacceptable in term of constitutes harm, behavior, and social norms.

According to the typology of violence, it can be categorized as self-directed, interpersonal, or collective violence. The self –directed violence results in self-abuse or suicidal behavior (Sanjel, 2015). The interpersonal violence can be from the community or from family or partner against a female child, elder or partner. Lastly, the collective violence is due to social, economic, and political objectives. It includes genocide, violent crime, terrorism, and human right abuses. According to Universal Deceleration of Human Right Article 7, it is ensured that the women must have right to elect and participate in the formulation of governmental policies. The women can participate in any type of non-governmental organization. According to Alesina, Brioschi, and Ferrara (2016), the violence against women in politics are defined in different ways and there are various situations that deprive women of their rights.

### 2.3 Types of Violence

As shared by Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt, and Zimmerman (2015), the violence against women starts before birth or at infancy period. For instance, in many countries the female face from sex-selective aborting to infanticide. In childhood stage, the abuse against girls, include malnutrition, FGM, excessive discipline, pornography, prostitution, begging, child marriage, and labor. In adolescence stage, the female suffers form force prostitution, early marriages, rape, or psychological abuse. In reproductive stage, the honor kills, bribes, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and intimidation are often faced (Basile et al., 2016). In elder stage, the women are often suffering from widow abuse. There are multiple types of violence against women, which are:

**Gender-based Violence** – As mentioned in the study of Basile et al., (2016), it is referred as the harm that is committed against the persons and it results from inequalities based on the gender roles. The gender-based violence creates a huge negative impact on the girls and women well-being (Afshar, 2016).

**Domestic Violence** – García-Moreno et al., (2015), highlighted that the domestic violence takes place among the intimate partners of the members family. For instance:

- (i) Violence by fathers towards their daughters
- (ii) Violence by mother-in-law towards daughter-in-law
- (iii) Violence by brothers towards sisters

The domestic violence includes the psychological, sexual or the physical abuse.

**Intimate Partner Violence** – Shahzad and Malik (2014) mentioned that the intimate partner violence can be or cannot be cohabitating. The relationship does not include sexual activities and it if from the former spouses' current partners, non-marital partners, etc.

**Sexual Violence** – Pearlman et al., (2016), elucidated that the sexual violence is the term, which includes the sex act or an attempt sex act with involving a victim that is unable to refuse or consent. The non-contact sexual abuse

includes the act of intentional exposure or voyeurism. It can be behavioral or verbal sexual harassment and the person can be involved in capturing nude photographs of another person with any consent (Alesina, Brioschi, & Ferrara, 2016).

#### *2.4 Consequences of Violence*

The violence against girls and women increases the risk of poor well-being and health. The growing numbers of researchers Ellsberg et al., (2015); Alesina, Brioschi, and Ferrara (2016); McDaniel (2017), proved that violence creates adverse effects on health and well-being. Numerous studies reported that their former partners kill women that die due to homicide. The below are the consequences of violence against the woman:

The violence creates immediate effects on women health that are fatal. The health consequences can be acute and immediate or they can be chronic and long-lasting. The researchers of Jiao et al., (2015); Hanson et al., (2015); Phillips (2016) found that violence creates greater influence on mental and physical well being. The physical consequences include (i). Immediate or acute physical injuries such as lacerations, bruises, burns, punctures, bites, broken bones or abrasion. (ii) The gastrointestinal condition includes poor health status, long-term health issues, and chronic pain syndromes. (iii) The more serious physical injuries are disabilities or injury to eyes, abdomen, ears or chest (iv) The psychical consequences further includes homicide and death due to AIDS

On another hand the reproductive or sexual consequences are:

- (i) Unwanted pregnancy, (ii) Sexually transmitted infection, (iii), Unsafe abortions, (iv) Urinary infections, (v) Vaginal inflection, (vi) Sexual dysfunctions (vii) Painful sexual intercourse

The mental consequences are:

- (i) Eating disorder, (ii) Depression, (iii) Poor self-esteem, (iv) Trauma stress disorder, (v) Eating disorder, (vi) Self-harm, (vii) Suicide attempts, (viii) Seizures

Lastly, the behavioral consequences are:

- (i) Multiple sex partners, (ii) Lower use of condom or contraception, (iii) Harmful substance or alcohol use (iv) Selection of abusive partners in later life

### **3. Methods**

#### *3.1 Research Methods*

As the study tends to provide a critical review on the status of political reforms towards violence's against women; therefore, the suitable way of conducting the research was secondary. The study was executed based on the idea of conducting secondary research. The entire paradigm of the study focused on providing a societal viewpoint on the social study and for this, it was essential to choose the right philosophy for the research. Hence, the chosen philosophy as social constructivism. The study was based upon constructing the meaning on the issue by gathering information on such aspects that form a social construction of the entire scenario. The knowledge obtained on the phenomenon was based upon the experiences gained from the surroundings based upon several interactions that helped to construct the key arguments on the issue. The theory of social constructivism helped in answering the underlying subjectivity on the issue of violence against women based upon interacting with the existing information. Based upon this, the research design suitable on the present scenario was exploratory research design. As this was secondary study; therefore, it was meant to explore the issue in the light of the critical review. By means of exploratory research design, the limitation was only gathering the evidence from the past so that the analysis can be conducted on knowing the facts that how many political reforms are being made to overcome violence against women in the Middle East. Based upon this, the information was obtained from secondary sources, as the investigation was secondary-based. Mainly, facts and evidence obtained from existing literature, news and reports were analysed so that the research problem can be addressed concisely.

#### *3.2 Material and Procedure*

The material gathered for the investigation was from official and published reports. Different research papers have also been used to provide much in-depth information, but the facts that have been obtained from different reports provided data on violence against women in the Middle East in terms of political reforms made so far.

The procedure adopted for information gathering was based upon in-depth searching. Mainly, data was researched on a web engine and scholarly databases so that relevant information can be obtained. After going through the data, the analysis was made. The report that was studied exclusively was Factsheet of World Health Organisation (WHO) that helped in providing facts regarding the status of political reforms and the figures reported by the legislative bodies on violence against women. Besides, the research papers have been used



greatly to analyse the data on the issue and for this, the most studied papers were of Masterson, et al. (2014) on the 'Assessment of reproductive health and violence against women among displaced Syrians in Lebanon'; Ahram, 2015 on 'Sexual Violence and the Making of ISIS'; Viergever, et al. (2015) on 'Health care providers and human trafficking: what do they know, what do they need to know? Findings from the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Central America', etc. Apart from this, more papers and published articles have been reviewed to conduct the analysis.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

##### 4.1 Violence Against Women in the Middle East

The Middle Eastern region is the transcontinental region, which is in the center of Western Asia. According to the World Health Organization (2015), in Middle Eastern countries about 1 in 3<sup>rd</sup> women experience sexual violence or physical violence at least once in their lifetime. Especially, the intimate partners are highly involved in women sexual abuse and psychological violence. The report further justifies that in some countries of Middle East 70% women are experiences the sexual violence and abuse. About 37% Women in Arab do experienced violence and nearly about 4 in 10 women are suffering from homicide (Abrahams et al., 2014). The data also shows that 133 million women alive are experiencing female mutilation and in Egypt, about 92% of women aged between 15 to 49 years suffered from Female Genital Mutilation. Besides this, 700 million women alive in Middle East countries are married under the age of 18. More than 70% of women are a victim of human trafficking and the rapist is often showed leniency in the Arab region (Alesina, Brioschi, & Ferrara, 2016). This statistic shows that the violence against women is the issue, which prevents the societies from progress and it is rooted due to the low status of women in their families (Masterson, Usta, Gupta, & Ettinger, 2014).

According to the report of Guedes, Bott, Garcia-Moreno, and Colombini (2016), in Egypt during the political reforms, there was a rise in the assault of women at public places. This incident brought attention to the public health issue and the Egyptian center of the human right (ECWR) claimed that about 83% women experience the sexual harassment at the public. According to the Criminal code and constitution the articles 11, 52, 60, 67, 71, 80 and 89 ensure the protection of women from the violence that occurs due to organ trade, torture, mutilation etc (Viergever, West, Borland, & Zimmerman, 2015). The Egyptian has developed the Violence against Women Act (VAW), which aims to help a female who report the crimes of violence by providing them psychological and social support. The counties such as Jordan and Djibouti recently introduced quota for women in the local council and parliament in order to ensure equality in governmental affairs. About 25% of parliament's seats are allocated to women, which secures the equal work and remuneration (Fulu & Miedema, 2015).

In UAE the authorities are failed to respond adequately towards the domestic violence due to lack of recognition. According to the recent survey by Ahram (2015); Alesina, Brioschi and Ferrara (2016), over 1500 cases have been reported against domestic violence in past 7 years but yet no measures have been taken. This is because the country has no law, which prevents women from domestic violence. The country is high on women discrimination and about 20% Emirati women are the part of labor (Varghese & Sarkute, 2017). The country is on the second number while measuring the percentage of women workforce. However, the recent reforms such as Dubai women Establishment support the women employment and the main objective is to provide equal opportunities to women by increasing the effective participation (Anand et al., 2016).

Syria is another country that is on top of the list when it comes to women violence in the Middle East. The violence against women in Syria did not start after the armed conflict but they were deeply rooted in the society due to laws and regulation, which are against women protection. The women in Syria are bearing the violence due to which they lost security, social status, family, home and lives (Oram, Khalifeh, & Howard, 2017). The empowerment and protection of women in Syria require active measures and recognition. Likewise, other Middle East countries Bahrain also face the similar issues of violence against women and the country has recently launched the program of "takeoff" which is one of the international efforts in order to combat against the women violence. The program is the database which monitors the violence against women and it enables parties to provide support and care services in order to facilitate victim with social, psychological and psychological treatments (Varghese & Sarkute, 2017). Hence, the data shows that Middle East countries are suffering from women violence since long and the multiple initiative and intervention has been taken in order to prevent women from violence and reduce gender-based discrimination from social, political and legal context (Adineh, Almasi, Rad, Zareban, & Moghaddam, 2016).

##### 4.2 Traditions and Legislation of Human Right Conventions in the Middle East

**Syria** – Before the conflicts, the discriminatory practices and laws encouraged the impunity for violence against women. Not only this, but the Syrian government prevents women, LGBT, and girls to access their right and



justice. Syria also does not recognize the spousal rape under its law and the penal code do facilities impunity due to cultural pressure and traditions (Pottie, Greenaway, Hassan, Hui, & Kirmayer, 2016). The rapists are free to escape from the punishment and even if they marry to the victims then they are not criminalized.

**United Arab Emirates** – United Arab Emirates has developed multiple laws and legislation in order to prevent women from discrimination. The UAE has its Shariah Law and Civil Law and these courts are strict towards criminal offenses including premarital sex, adultery and alcohol consumptions (Temmerman, 2015). The society is male-dominated society and the women need to have permission from their guardian before marrying or re-marrying. The marriage among Muslim women and non-Muslim women is punishable and the homosexuality is illegal. In 2004 UAE ratified the CEDAW and become the member of an international convention in order to prevent women from violence and discrimination. UAE also signed multiple other treaties in order to protect their women. These treaties include Minimum age convention, Hours of work convention, Right of Child and equal Remuneration convention (Abrahams et al., 2014).

**Bahrain** – In Bahrain the women right has been a cornerstone of political reforms which are initiated by King Hamad. After the constitution of 2002, the women were provided with the right to contribute in political affairs and stand as the candidates in the national elections. The several reforms towards women equality have been a key driver, which promotes women to gain top position in public and private sector (Alesina, Brioschi, & Ferrara, 2016). However, before 2002 the women were not provided with any type of political right and they were not even allowed to vote in the elections. This followed the performance of women and by recognizing the productivity gap the reforms were made and today Bahrain encourages women right (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

**Egypt** – In Egypt, the women are stated lower than the men due to masculine society. Despite equality, the women are still expected to avoid direct contact with men. Women in the adolescent age are raised by the dependant on them such as brother and father. When the women are married then she totally depends on his husband (Alesina, Brioschi, & Ferrara, 2016). The gender segregate is highly encouraged and the majority of females tend to withdraw from school when they reach the puberty stage.

In Middle Eastern countries the violence against women is the hate crime which gives unequal power and hinders right of women (McDaniel, 2017). The gender-based violence affects the women reproduction and it affects their physical and mental health. The violence also results in women death and it creates fatal and non-fatal outcomes.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis and the findings of the paper revealed that the Middle Eastern economy is in the great transition towards bringing equality and justice in its society. WHO (2015) also reported major conflicts seen in the economic growth among which one of the major challenges is inequality within the society. Women are facing constraints to live with liberty because the society is male-dominated. This is creating a hindrance to maintaining social equality and balance. According to the facts defined in the analysis, women in some of the Middle Eastern parts are facing violence and no one takes action against it. As a result, they are facing severe mental and physical illness. Besides, nearly every fourth women in facing the same challenges and assault from their immediate partners, family members or strangers (García-Moreno et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, the government of the UAE and various other countries of the Middle East have so far failed to address this key issue at the major level. Considering the economy of the Middle East as rich in terms of oil and gas, it is seen that the policies do not imply on providing fair and equal rights to women to overcome the social pressures they are facing (Moghissi, 2016). Ahram (2015) investigated that many cases have been reported on domestic violence and other types of violence faced by women, but no such actions are taken. Policies and reforms are not made at a major level to overcome this social issue. Even in the politics and national assemblies, inequality is seen because women are not elected to higher positions or for any higher political position. This discrimination is a witness at the community level as well where women are considered as inferior as the culture exhibit the characteristics of male domination. This can be considered as one of the major reason for poor political reforms to overcome violence against women.

It was also identified from the gathered information in prior chapters that violence not only in terms of inequality and abuse is seen, but there are various other types of violence's reported such as FGM, rape, girls being publicly abused, females abused by male members of the family and abuse at the workplace. Hence, the society is facing the challenge not because of poor reforms in legislation, but due to inequality in accepting women as equal part of the society compared to males. This is creating a major hindrance from witnessing political reforms on the issue (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015).

## 6. Conclusions and Implications

The paper summarises that there is the weak status of political reports towards violence against women in the Middle Eastern region and the reason for such ignorance is lack of attention given to the development of female segment within the society. Women in the Arab world are still struggling to receive education and proper facilities for living. They are being trained to listen to the male members of the family and not to question. Due to such training since childhood, they are reluctant to raise the voice for any sort of injustice they face. Even when they face the situation of violence by anyone, they do not report with the fear that their immediate family will not consider their concern. However, after a struggle for decades, they are not given an opportunity to receive vocational training and to some extent, they are given chance to seek education at higher level. Despite this, still, lack of reforms has been seen in protecting women rights. This is giving more confidence to the male segment to treat their females with injustice. The paper revealed that the major shift seen in the Arab politics gave a rise to the violence against women. In such countries of the Middle East that are facing political conflicts, the situation of women rights is even worst as compared to the countries that are developed. There is much need for implementing proper policies and introducing such laws that merely focus on protecting females from any sort of assault.

The gathered data also revealed that if the actions at political level are not taken, then increasing healthcare issues could be seen in females, ranging from mental illness to physical illness. Female members of the society needed to be given special consideration so that equality can be maintained, but lack of political reforms can result in worst or alarming effect on the social development of the economy. The United Nations and the World Health Organisation collaborated with the women wing of the Middle Eastern countries to work for women rights assurance and their quality of lives, but there need to be major reforms needed at a legislative level so that the policies can be practiced as the law of the state. This can help the countries to overcome the issue to some extent and the continuous reforms can help in overcoming the major barrier towards women empowerment to a greater extent.

There is much need of policy implications at the major level. Providing women of the state a chance to be officially the part of the politics can help in empowering women of the region. They cannot be treated parallel to males but can be given a chance to represent females so that the issues faced by this gender segment can be overcome. Giving aid to NGOs that protect women rights can help to overcome violence faced by women, especially, the chance given to such females who are a victim of violence can help in regaining their confidence to survive. Immediate actions on cases reported on violence against women can help to witness a reduction in such type of acts. This can also help male members of the society to consider women as equal part of their system. By doing so, major reforms can be seen in the policies of the state and can help to reduce the violence against women.

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# Taiwanese Students' Considering Factors and Practical Suggestions Toward Studying Abroad in New Southbound Policy Countries

Yu-Hsien Sung<sup>1,2</sup> & Hsien-Ming Lin<sup>3,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Studies, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Education, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

<sup>3</sup> Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Center, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Political Sciences, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

Correspondence: Hsien-Ming Lin. Tel: 32-487-38-0158. E-mail: hsienming79@gmail.com

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## Abstract

In 2017, Taiwanese government started to implement New Southbound Policy. For this policy, strengthening the cultivation and exchange of skilled people, or “talent,” between Taiwan and the southbound countries (NSPC) is the most important purpose. Notably, current data revealed that students of NSPC are more likely to study abroad in Taiwan; moreover, previous studies have explored this phenomenon called as ‘Global South to Global North’, which means the experiences of students from developing countries studying in developed countries. However, compared to students of NSPC, the number of Taiwanese students studying abroad in NSPC is relatively less. To our understanding, no studies have explored what the causes for the above are. Therefore, this is a pioneer study to explore the perspectives of the students from developed countries toward studying abroad in developing countries, so that we can understand what are the main factors which may be considered when Taiwanese students consider studying abroad to NSPC (except for Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand). The mixed methods design was adopted in this study. 147 Taiwanese students accepted the questionnaire survey, 8 Taiwanese students were interviewed. The results indicated that, the following three factors are mainly taken into consideration by Taiwanese students when considering studying abroad to NSPC: academic, economic, and personal factor. Moreover, the results also echoed with the perspective of rational choice theory, which means the above three factors will be considered by students rationally, thereby influencing their decision-making on studying abroad. Furthermore, three suggestions were proposed for promoting Taiwanese students to study abroad in new southbound countries: first, Taiwanese government could assist public to broaden their understanding of these countries; second, Taiwanese government could provide students more necessary information such as the prominent academic subjects and its development in these countries, thereby helping them make decision on studying abroad in NSPC. Third, Taiwanese government could create more working opportunities for these Taiwanese students who graduate from NSPC.

**Keywords:** new southbound policy, choice factor, Taiwanese students, study abroad

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The Ideas and Goals of the New Southbound Policy in Taiwan*

After Taiwan's new president (i.e. Tsai Ing-wen) took power in May 2008, she announced an important new regional strategic policy called the New Southbound Policy (NSP). The policy targets 18 countries, including the 10 Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) member countries, six south-Asian countries, Australia, and New Zealand. In the past, the southbound policy focused on promoting and facilitating economic and trade relationships between Taiwan and these countries, which meant the Taiwanese government provided significant development assistance to many of them as part of this policy. However, this time, the core concept of the NSP is that it is “People-Oriented,” which means that it not only concerns trade and economic issues, but also emphasizes interaction and cooperation in areas such as economy, industry, talent exchange, technology, etc. Therefore, it is apparent that the Tsai Ing-wen administration is moving toward a focus on collaboration rather than aid and attaching greater importance to establishing “a sense of community” between Taiwan and these southbound countries by creating mutual benefit and mutual growth (Yang, 2017).



Because the (NSP) is based on the People-Oriented perspective, strengthening the cultivation and exchange of skilled people, or “talent,” between Taiwan and the southbound countries is the most important purpose of this policy for relevant government departments. In this regard, Taiwan’s Ministry of Education developed a three-year program (2017-2020) for “Talent Cultivation between Taiwan and New Southbound Policy Countries” (NSPC) based on the NSP guidelines and promotion program. The program emphasizes that Taiwan’s government will not only provide more grants and scholarships to the students of NSPC who are willing to study in Taiwan (i.e. the attracting strategy), but will also provide such financial aid to Taiwanese students who want to go to other NSPC countries for education, internships, etc. (i.e. the go out strategy). By doing so, Taiwan’s government hopes to promote Taiwanese universities and colleges, to create more educational exchange opportunities for those in NSPC, and to deepen interactions and relations between Taiwan and the southbound countries. Thus, this deepened commitment to fostering educational exchange will help fulfill the NSP vision for the promotion of economic development through cooperation and educational exchange. Specifically, through the implementation of this program, the Taiwanese government expects that the number of students in Taiwan from NSPC will grow 20% per year from 2017 to 2020 so that by 2020, the total number of students from NSPC will be 58,000, while the number of Taiwanese students who study or intern in NSPC countries will be 3280 (Yang, 2017).

*1.2 The Number of Taiwanese Students Who Study in NSPC and the Number of NSPC Students Who Study in Taiwan*

The problem of facilitating opportunities for student interaction has become a crucial part of implementing the policy. The following data provides some evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the “attracting policy.” As shown in Table 1, from 2007 to 2015 the number of degree- oriented students from the NSPC rose from 8,760 to 19,747, an increase of 125.42%. The number of NSPC students increased further in 2016, to 21,882. Degree-oriented students from the NSPC accounted for 42.29% of the total number of foreign degree-oriented students in Taiwan, making NSPC the most significant source of foreign students in Taiwan. Notably, among the 18 NSPC, most students come from Malaysia, followed by Indonesia, India, Thailand, and Myanmar. The study conducted by Lin (in press) demonstrated that the reference groups have the most powerful influence on the students from Malaysia and Indonesia for deciding to study in Taiwan. Lin found that a large number of overseas Chinese and foreign students from Malaysia have studied in Taiwan for a long time, which has resulted in an abundance of interpersonal alumni networks in Malaysia. These alumni networks have played a crucial role in helping other students determine whether they want to study in Taiwan or not. “The Federation of Alumni Associations of Taiwan Universities, Malaysia,” established in 1974, has been in existence for more than 40 years. Every year, this alumni group not only organizes an educational fair to introduce the students to study in Taiwan but also publishes a guide for the students know more about some information about studying in Taiwan. Additionally, the association has helped students buy cheaper flight tickets by negotiating with the airlines. The goals of this association not only bind the alumni together but also encourage more Malaysian students to study in Taiwan, and even the association also emphasizes on facilitating mutual interaction between the universities and the governments of Malaysia and Taiwan. According to statistical data from the association, in 2003 there were 2000 teachers in the overseas Chinese private senior high school in Malaysia, and more than half of these teachers earned their degrees in Taiwan. The alumni networks and associations have played a critical part in helping students decide to study in Taiwan (James-Maceachern & Yun, 2017). Moreover, the most popular disciplines for the degree-oriented students from the NSPC are business and management, engineering, humanities, and communications studies, while the least popular includes environment, transportation, social services, law, and mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Table 1. The number of the Degree-Oriented Students from New southbound countries in Taiwan

Country/Year	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Malaysia	11,534	9,925	8,141	6,927	6,039	5,444	4,828	4,106	3,775
Vietnam	2,895	2,741	2,568	2,535	2,244	3,442	1,623	1,169	873
Indonesia	2,725	2,345	2,043	1,855	1,677	2,301	1,392	1,353	1,287
Thailand	768	816	799	725	718	680	659	638	571
Myanmar	467	412	407	433	558	726	994	1,229	1,582
Singapore	190	199	181	179	158	136	117	84	75

Philippines	174	171	190	178	159	172	200	193	144
Brunei	18	16	13	14	11	8	6	7	6
Cambodia	3	2	2	6	7	6	11	17	28
Laos	4	4	4	2	1	-	-	-	-
India	804	649	496	439	388	368	342	323	309
Nepal	34	29	28	21	16	18	16	15	11
Pakistan	36	21	14	8	3	3	2	2	2
Sri Lanka	17	15	15	13	5	8	7	5	4
Bengal	15	13	20	22	22	17	16	14	11
Bhutan	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Australia	31	35	27	38	36	39	47	49	45
New Zealand	31	34	34	35	30	29	34	35	37
Total	19,747	17,428	14,983	13,430	12,072	13,397	10,294	9,239	8,760

Table 2 is regarding the non-degree-oriented students. The number of NSPC students who study in Taiwan increased from 4,195 in 2007 to 9,649 in 2016, an increase of 130%. In 2016, most non-degree-oriented students came from Malaysia, which accounts for 35% of the total number of non-degree-oriented students from NSPC. Malaysia is followed by Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore. Of the non-degree students who came from south-Asian countries in the NSP, the biggest proportion were from India. The number of students from Australia exceeded that from New Zealand.

To sum up, the majority of students who come from NSPC are doing so with the purpose of earning a degree from Taiwanese universities or colleges. However, the number of both degree-oriented and non-degree-oriented students has grown rapidly in the past ten years. It seems that the “attracting strategy” has had an impact.

Table 2. The number of the Non-Degree-Oriented Students from New southbound countries in Taiwan

Country/Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Malaysia	223	173	430	417	2196	2563	3224	3361	3412	3362
Vietnam	634	739	1161	1917	1668	1383	1065	974	1148	1609
Indonesia	1243	1537	901	1487	898	1048	1143	1214	1669	1943
Thailand	364	413	509	532	586	721	747	719	713	965
Myanmar	30	6	7	4	7	23	33	76	112	78
Singapore	83	118	123	159	196	242	425	479	557	434
Philippines	144	169	185	211	314	317	336	395	359	446
Brunei	1	1	0	1	6	6	12	7	7	15
Cambodia	8	7	3	0	2	0	2	2	1	2
Laos	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1	0	1
India	106	85	96	109	157	149	149	208	339	377
Nepal	7	6	5	7	14	14	9	24	20	14
Pakistan	1	1	0	5	3	4	3	2	3	9
Sri Lanka	2	1	1	3	4	5	3	1	1	4
Bengal	0	0	1	4	4	3	2	3	0	1
Bhutan	5	4	0	2	0	2	5	11	14	8
Australia	162	158	212	231	219	233	286	336	376	305
New Zealand	92	69	40	59	75	63	67	48	72	76
Total	4195	3487	3674	5151	6350	6777	7511	7861	8803	9649

Compared to the “attracting strategy,” the effects of the “go out” policy have been limited. The following table (Table 3) shows the number of Taiwanese students who learn and intern in the NSPC. From 2014 to 2016, the number of Taiwanese students in the NSPC decreased from 658 to 179, its lowest point and a decrease of 267%. Moreover, the number of degree-oriented Taiwanese students in NSPC also decreased, by 33%, from 241 in 2013 to 161 in 2016. To sum up, the number of Taiwanese students who study in NSPC is much lower than the number of NSPC who study in Taiwan. This raises the question: What factors do Taiwanese students consider when making the decision to study abroad?

Table 3. The number of the Taiwanese students for interning and learning in new southbound countries

Country/Year	2015	2014	2013
Malaysia	69	95	17
Vietnam	90	81	14
Indonesia	31	30	20
Thailand	102	152	68
Myanmar	0	0	0
Singapore	238	290	47
Philippines	0	17	3
Brunei	0	9	1
Cambodia	0	0	0
Laos	0	0	0
India	530	674	170
Nepal	0	6	0
Pakistan	10	0	0
Sri Lanka	0	0	0
Bengal	0	0	0
Bhutan	0	0	0
Australia	0	0	0
New Zealand	10	6	0
Total	96	53	9

### 1.3 Choice Factors in the Study Abroad Decision

There are two theories, push-pull theory and rational choice theory, which can provide explanations for students' decisions to study abroad, and therefore shed some light on what factors might be important to consider in order to understand their decision-making process.

Push-Pull theory offers a macro perspective, and takes into consideration political, economic, educational, social and cultural factors to explain students' study abroad decisions. These factors can be divided among two categories: push factors related to the home country which encourage students to leave for study abroad, and pull factors related to host country which attract students to study abroad there. Chang and Yu (1999) examined both push and pull factors. Factors related to the home country which promote study abroad include economic factors such as whether the host country has a higher GNP than the home country, and the exchange rate between two countries. Educational factors relate to whether the host country offers generous scholarships or grants and easy access to enrollment as well as a similar educational system to the home country). Political factors include the colonial and/or diplomatic relationship between the two countries. Finally, social and cultural factors pertain to whether the two countries share a similar or the same culture or language. The factors related to the host country's attraction for students include educational factors such as friendly policies and attitudes toward applications, scholarships and grants, the learning environment, and language enhancement., Environmental factors such as transportation, safety, living environment and the convenience of host country also play a role, as do, political factors such as political stability and diplomatic relations between the two countries. Historical and cultural factors relate to whether the host country shares a similar culture with the home country. According to

the Push-Pull theory, students' choice about where to study is influenced by all of these "push" and "pull" factors discussed above, and often their decision is made by maximizing utility.

The macro perspective of Push-Pull theory is one perspective that has guided previous research, and emphasizes the role of macro factors - political, educational, economic, and social/cultural - in shaping students' study abroad choices. Rational choice theory focuses on a micro, or individual perspective. It argues that individual decisions about studying abroad are driven by rational consideration and judgment. The factors affecting an individual's decision are not only those related to the macro perspective as discussed above, but also those related to the micro perspective such as students' personality traits, capabilities, motives, goals, and gender (Li & Bray, 2007). Students who are extroverted and enjoy adventures and challenges, for example, are more likely to choose to study abroad (Chen, 2006). The decision to study abroad is also related to individual goals, such as achieving class mobility (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In addition, an individual's decision will also be affected by personal preferences, such as those for a host country's climate and living environment, for example (Altbach & Knight, 2007). According to rational choice theory, individuals take all of the factors mentioned above into consideration when choosing to study abroad. Moreover, the human capital theory, another theory focusing on micro perspective, can be used to explain how students choose the host countries for studying abroad. According to the definition provided by OECD, human capital means "the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals or groups of individuals acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances" (OECD, 2007). In this regard, people view studying abroad as an investment for individual's human capital. However, Nguyen (2017) argued that people may be influenced by the interaction experience with others and the socio-political discourses in the society in shaping their decisions to invest in education, as well as choices of the destination for studying, which means that people's decisions in education and international study are not the objective consideration; instead, it would be the subjective decision which is influenced by different interaction experiences and relevant factors combining with the macro socio-political and micro individual issues.

Accordingly, this study combined the above theories and concepts from macro and micro systems and divided students' studying abroad choice factors into six categories. Academic factors include the academic aspects of universities and colleges in host countries such as academic reputation, sufficiency of resources, faculty structure, learning environment, difficulty of admission, and complexity of application procedure. Cultural factors include the host country's language and habits and customs. Political factors include the tenor of diplomatic relations between the host country and the home country. Economic factors relate to the relevant economic aspects of host countries such as university tuition and fees, cost of living, scholarship and grant opportunities, local social welfare support, and residency and employment opportunities. Social factors include the living quality, safety, geographic location, climate, and networks of friends or relatives already living or studying in the host country. Finally, personal factors are those that pertain to individual goals such as the potential for study abroad to advance one's career development, broaden one's horizon or add to one's personal experience in a meaningful way (Ma, 2000; Knight, 2006; Szelényi, 2006).

#### *1.4 Review of Literature on Choice Factors and the Study Abroad Experience*

We now explore some empirical studies regarding students' choice factors and study abroad experiences. It is worth noting that most relevant studies focus on the study abroad experience from "Global South to Global North," which means the main focus of the existing literature is on the experience of students from developing countries studying in developed countries. There are fewer relevant studies exploring the motivations of students from developed countries who study abroad in developing countries (MacGregor, 2016).

Only a few studies have focused on both the study abroad experiences and choice factors of Taiwanese students who study abroad in developing countries. The study conducted by Wu and Lan (2012) focusing on Taiwanese students who study abroad in China, identified three types of motivations for studying in China. First, degree-oriented study abroad is motivated simply by the expectation of earning a degree, or acquiring human capital. However, these students have no plan to work in China after graduation. Work-oriented study abroad is motivated by the expectation of staying in China to work after graduation. Moreover, these students expect to gain social and cultural capital through their study abroad experience, thereby increasing their competitiveness in the Chinese labor market. Family-oriented study abroad is motivated by the decision of parents or families instead of that of the student herself. Lin (2012) found that students engaged in family-oriented study abroad expected to obtain more opportunities to upgrade their social status by studying abroad in China.

#### *1.5 The Present Study*

While these studies provide insight into Taiwanese students' experiences studying abroad in China, this appears

to be the extent of the studies of Taiwanese students studying abroad in developing countries. To our knowledge, no studies have explored the study abroad experience and choice factors for Taiwanese students in developing countries other than China

Given the Taiwanese government's NSP, and the fact that in spite of this, the number of Taiwanese students who study abroad in NSPC remains quite low, this study aims to adopt mixed-method (i.e. a combination of questionnaire survey and interview) to explore the attitudes of Taiwanese students toward studying abroad in NSPC, as well as the main factors students consider in making their choices to study abroad in these countries. Based on the aforementioned theories and the results of relevant studies, we expect that there will be multiple factors considered by students for rationally making their choices to study abroad in NSPC, rather than one factor merely. We expect that the results of this study can be added to the relevant literature of both theoretical and empirical studies regarding the choice to study abroad from developed countries to developing countries, not only by showing the concrete choice factors in students' decision to study abroad in NSPC or not, but also by clarifying the complex, dynamic process behind their decision making.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

Participants were recruited for this study via convenience sampling and purposive sampling. To be eligible to participate, individuals had to be Taiwanese students who are studying in either Taiwanese colleges or universities (i.e. bachelor students, master students, doctoral students). The concurrent embedded design, proposed by Cresswell and Clark (2007), was the type of mixed methods design, adopted in this study. The qualitative data gathered can be used to explore the meaning behind the quantitative data, thereby adding benefit of overcoming problems of insufficient quantitative data (Sung & Pen, 2010). Therefore, the participants in study were divided into both quantitative and qualitative samples.

For the quantitative data, a total of 147 Taiwanese students participated in the survey and filled out an online questionnaire regarding the attitudes and choice factors of Taiwanese students toward studying abroad in NSPC. Of these questionnaires, 143 were valid and complete. In the sample of 143, there were 54 males and 89 females. There were 79 bachelor's students, 55 master's students, and 9 doctoral students. The age range was 18 to 55, and the average age was 24.07.

For the qualitative data, a total of 8 Taiwanese students were recruited and interviewed. Eleven interview transcripts were developed because 3 students were interviewed twice. Of these, 3 were males, and 5 were females, with 2 bachelor's students, 4 master's students, and 2 doctoral students. The age range was 27 to 32. The mean age was 28.75. 5 were from Northern, and 3 from Southern Taiwan.

### 2.2 Instrument

#### 2.2.1 Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire used in this study was developed with reference to questionnaires related to considering factors of studying abroad (Chen, 2011; Ma, 2014). After its initial development, two experts specializing in the study abroad research and psychometrics, as well as two Taiwanese students were invited to review and revise the survey and to confirm that the relevant choice factors regarding studying abroad were included. In this way, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part consists of one item for exploring students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC. It is scored on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from not willing (0) to very willing (9).

The second part consists of 23 items (i.e. 1 global item and 22 specific items) for exploring students' choice factors for studying abroad in NSPC. The global item is aimed to understand what factors are high priorities for students considering studying abroad in NSPC. The specific items explore the importance of different sub-factors of each of the five main factors: academic, cultural, political, economic, and personal. Like the first item, these are scored on a 10-point Likert Scales ranging from not willing (0) to very willing (9). Academic factors (5 items) include academic aspects of universities and colleges in NSPC such as academic reputation, sufficiency of resources, faculty structure, learning environment, etc. Cultural factors (3 items) include such aspects as language, habits and customs, life styles, etc. Political factors (1 items) include the tenor of relations between Taiwan and NSPC. Economic factors (6 items) refer to aspects as tuition and fees, cost of living, scholarship and grant opportunities, local social welfare supports, residency and employment opportunities, etc. Social factors (5 items) refer to things like living quality and function, safety, geographical location and climate, having friends or relatives who live or study in NSPC, etc. Finally, personal factors (2 items) refer to the extent



to which the study abroad experience promotes students' career development, broadens horizons, or constitutes a meaningful life experience.

The third part consists of an open question for collecting students' feedback or suggestions regarding the NSP.

The second part constitutes the main part of the questionnaire; therefore, a Rasch partial credit model (PCM) and ConQuest 2.0 software were adopted to assess the psychometric quality of this part in this study. The Rasch technique is appropriate because it can provide indices to assess an item's fit (Bond & Fox 2016). The results of the analysis of unidimensional Rasch PCM model showed that the infit MNSQ (mean square) indices for all items under these six main categories ranged from 0.67 to 1.40, which met the criterion set by Bond and Fox (2007), (i.e. 0.6 to 1.4). This means that the items, or sub-factors, included in the same factor category all measure the same construct. Second, the results of the analysis of multidimensional Rasch PCM model revealed that the infit MNSQ (mean square) indices for all items ranged from 0.60 to 1.39, which also met the criterion set by Bond and Fox (2007). This means the choice factors can be divided into these six categories. Moreover, the item separation reliability of the 22 items, or sub-factors, is 0.96, which means the logit value of these items can be effectively differentiated in terms of this sample (Linacre, 2006). To sum up, the second part of this questionnaire possessed positive reliability and validity.

### 2.2.2 Interview Outline

This study employed semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. This interview outline was based on the results from the quantitative data, and was aimed to further clarify the students' choice factors in studying abroad in NSPC.

First, we asked participants, "If you want to study abroad, will NSPC be your priority? Why or why not? Second, we shared with participants the results of the quantitative analysis, that what main factors are taken into consideration by Taiwanese students when they consider whether to study abroad in NSPC. We then asked participants the following questions:

1. In terms of the above factors, what factor(s) might motivate (or deter) you to study abroad in NSPC? Why?
2. Except for the above factors, would anything else have an impact on your willingness to study abroad in NSPC? Why?
3. Could you share with me your perspectives toward the new southbound policy? Do you have any suggestions for improving this policy?

## 2.3 Procedures and Data Analysis

### 2.3.1 Participants' Invitation for the Quantitative Part of This Study

Firstly, we posted relevant research information (e.g., the purposes, contents, rights of participants, and the website address of the questionnaire, etc.) to social websites (e.g., Facebook, BBS, etc.) and posted an invitation to potential participants to fill out the questionnaire. And then, we also asked them to promote this research to others.

### 2.3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

After inputting these collected quantitative data in text form, we began analysis. For the first part of the questionnaire, we used SPSS 21.0 to calculate the median value of the Taiwanese students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC via SPSS 21.0.

For the second part of the questionnaire, we counted the number of times each factor was chosen by participants. We then used SPSS 21.0 to perform a Chi-square goodness-of-fit test to clarify the most important category of choice factors for Taiwanese students in deciding to study abroad in NSPC.

After confirming what the most important choice factors are, we conducted further analysis to clarify the important sub-factors (e.g., faculty structure, curriculum, etc.) under these main categories (e.g., academic factors). For this, we adopted a Rasch PCM model to calculate the item difficulty values and the importance of these sub-factors. This study regarded the seventh Thurstone threshold of each of the items, or sub-factors, as the cutoff point to judge whether participants considered a particular sub-factor to be important.

### 2.3.3 Participants' Invitation for the Qualitative Part of This Study

After completing the analysis of the quantitative data, we adopted purposive sampling to extend invitations to potential participants in the interviews to further clarify the Taiwanese students' perspectives toward studying abroad in NSPC. First, we used part of the Delphi technique (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004) to set up a nominating

panel with which we identified and nominated potential research participants, or the ones who expressed a higher willingness to study abroad and to share their experience. After completing the nomination process, we contacted these potential participants by phone, explained the research information to them, and confirmed whether they were willing to participate in this study.

#### 2.3.4 Formal Interviews

Before conducting the formal interviews with these participants, we reminded them about the interview procedure and their rights in this study. We also requested permission to record the interviews using pen recorders. A total of 8 Taiwanese students participated in these interviews. The duration of each interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, with a mean duration of 68 minutes per interview.

### 2.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

#### 2.4.1 Data Analysis

We transcribed the audio data and the third part of the questionnaire into verbatim transcripts. All verbatim transcripts were coded by two coders. They discussed the codes and concepts at regular intervals (Silverman, 2015). The intercoder reliability of this study was 0.88, which means it is positive for coding consistency (Sim & Wright, 2005).

The qualitative data analysis method introduced by Wolcott (2008) was adopted in this study. First, we focused on reading the interview transcripts in order to thoroughly understanding their meaning and content. Second, we coded the important concepts in these transcripts, such as poor academic quality and insufficient resources. Third, we compared the data with these concepts, and classified the important concepts into categories. For instance, the concepts were classified into the category 'academic factor'; Fourth, the relationships among categories were established. Eventually, the researchers developed the conceptual framework to obtain deeper understanding toward the phenomenon. For example, the structure of considering factor was established, which meant three factors, such as academic factor, economic factor, and personal factor were included in.

#### 2.4.2 The Quality of Analysis

We adopted relevant approaches for ensuring the quality of the study in terms of its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the qualitative research (Merriam, 2002).

*Credibility.* We respected all perspectives and responses of the participants to make them feel comfortable and more willing to share their experiences during the interview process. Moreover, we discussed the results of the analysis with colleagues at regular intervals to increase our understanding of what participants were expressing.

*Transferability.* We depicted the results of this study as clearly as possible and appropriately quoted participants' interview excerpts.

*Dependability.* To collect dependable data, we recorded the interviews and then compared them with the verbatim transcripts to ensure that the transcripts were accurate before they were analyzed. Furthermore, we attached importance to the Audit trail, which means that the research methods, procedures, and processes of data analysis were clearly described in this study, thereby making the results transparent.

*Confirmability.* To ensure the confirmability of the results and to avoid any bias, the researchers adopted the following three techniques in this study: reflectivity, peer debriefing, and member checks. Reflectivity makes us aware any potential bias in the study. Peer debriefing exerts the peer-check effect by discussing the results of the analysis with colleagues. Member checks confirm whether the participants' perspectives could be fully represented by sending the initial analytic results to them.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Quantitative Data

Quantitative data analysis is divided into three parts. First, this study analyzed Taiwanese students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC. Second, we explored the important choice factors in the study abroad decision. Finally, we broke down the main factor categories into sub-factors, and explored the importance of these.

#### 3.1.1 Analysis of the Willingness to Study Abroad in NSPC

Descriptive statistical analysis indicated that the median of participants' willingness to study abroad in NSPC is 4, and the mean is 4.5. As 10 indicated the highest level of willingness, this indicates that Taiwanese students' willingness to study abroad in these countries is not high.

### 3.1.2 Analysis of the Main Choice Factors

The analysis of the results of the chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicates that there are significant differences in the importance of the main choice factors, with  $\chi^2 = 92.93, p < .001$ . Comparing the actual with expected numbers of these factors, we find that the most importance main factor category is that of academic factors, followed by the categories of economic factors and personal factors (Table 4).

Table 4. Main choice factors for considering studying abroad in NSPC

Factors	Actual numbers	Expected numbers
Academic factors	49	
Culture factors	9	
Political factors	4	23.8
Economic factors	40	
Social factors	2	
Personal factors	39	

### 3.1.3 Analysis of the Choice Sub-factors

As indicated above, the three main categories of factors that Taiwanese students consider when deciding whether to study abroad in NSPC are academic, economic, and personal. We further analyzed the importance of the sub-factors of these main categories.

After analysis, we found that the distribution of importance levels of the academic factors ( $M = 1.50, SD = .70$ ) appears to be broader than the distribution of the item difficulties ( $M = 0, SD = .13$ ), which means the academic factors is important to the participants. In this figure, the most important sub-factor (i.e. the lowest difficult item) is the programs in universities and colleges of NSPC (-.16 logits). The second to the fifth are the international and global extent of universities and colleges in NSPC (-.09 logits); the faculty structure of universities and colleges in NSPC (-.07 logits); the teaching equipment and learning environment of universities and colleges in NSPC (.03 logits); and the reputation of universities and colleges in NSPC (0.29 logits).

Moreover, the distribution of importance levels of economic factors ( $M = .72, SD = .49$ ) is broader than the distribution of the item difficulties ( $M = 0, SD = .23$ ), which means the economic factors is also important to the participants. Among these sub-factors, we find that the most important sub-factor is whether Taiwan’s government provides enough opportunities for scholarships for the students who want to study abroad in NSPC (-.42 logits). The second one is the tuition and fees of universities and colleges in NSPC (-.21 logits). The third one is the social security provided by NSPC’s governments for the students who want to study abroad in NSPC (-.05 logits). The fourth one is the possibility of living and working in NSPC after graduation (-.05 logits). The fifth one is whether NSPC’s governments provide enough opportunities for scholarships for the students who want to study abroad in NSPC (.26 logits). The last one is the extent of cost of living in NSPC (0.47 logits).

Furthermore, the distribution of importance levels of personal factors ( $M = .76, SD = .45$ ) is also broader than the distribution of the item difficulties ( $M = 0, SD = .34$ ), which means the personal factors is important to the participants. Notably, the most important sub-factor is whether one’s self-vision and experiences can be expanded by studying abroad in NSPC (-.19 logits). The second most important sub-factor is the contribution of the study abroad experience for my future career development (e.g., pursuing higher education and employment) (.19 logits).

In conclusion, the main category of academic factors is the most important choice factor for Taiwanese students when considering whether to study abroad in NSPC, followed by economics, then personal factors.

## 3.2 Qualitative Data

The qualitative results were drawn from interview data and an open question on the online questionnaire. It conformed with the above quantitative analysis results, thereby clearly showing the choice factors and attitudes of Taiwanese students toward studying abroad in NSPC. Three important choice factors are discussed.

### 3.2.1 Academic Factors

Most students considered the category of academic factors as the most important when deciding whether to study abroad in NSPC. For these students, they thought that, except for universities and colleges in some NSPC such

as Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand, the academic performance and resource investment of universities and colleges in most NSPC are generally not high in comparison to ones in the United States and European countries. For students whose goal of studying abroad is obtaining more opportunities to obtain a higher degree (e.g., doctoral degree) in the future, the academic reputation of universities and colleges in NSPC is of the utmost importance. They generally think that studying abroad in NSPC is not helpful for them to successfully apply for higher degrees in other countries. This is one of the reasons they are not willing to study abroad in NSPC. As Student D-072 expressed,

*If I want to earn a master degree or doctoral degree by studying abroad, I will be less likely to earn the degree from these NSPC. This is because the academic reputations of universities in these countries are not well in comparison to the ones in America and European countries. If I can earn my master degree in America or European countries, this will be helpful for me to apply for doctoral admission in other prominent universities around the world. Honestly, it is a practical consideration, and I have to make an appropriate plan for my future (sic).*

If the programs offered by universities and colleges of NSPC were more attractive to Taiwanese students, they would be more likely to study abroad there. Appealing programs include programs that are unique to these countries, programs which attract close government attention in these countries, and programs that can provide additional language learning opportunities such as in English or local languages. As the following students said:

*If I have to study abroad in NSPC under the circumstance of excluding some countries (i.e. Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand), the academic reputation of universities and colleges in these countries may not be the most important considering factor to me. Instead, I think something really attracts me is whether there are some featured programs in these countries. For example, the development of the audio-visual industry in Thailand is quite well. I think they successfully make their own style in the development of this industry, especially for creative advertisements. Therefore, the departments related to the audio-visual industry in Thailand are appealing for me, such as department of advertising or department of mass communication (sic). (F-077)*

*English education is great in the Philippines. For example, their textbooks are written by English. What the feature attracts me to study in NSPC is language. I will search for the programs with additional language learning opportunity there. This is because you not only can accumulate professional knowledge by these programs but also practice English in these programs (sic). (C-059)*

*Although I am unfamiliar with local languages of NSPC, I still believe that it will be an incentive for me to study abroad there if some courses with local languages can be provided there. After all, the talents related to these kinds of languages are still lacking in Taiwan such as Vietnamese, Phasa Thai, Bahasa Indonesia, etc. Moreover, one important academic factor to me is whether there is any appropriate English graduate program for me? Most Taiwanese students are not good at the local languages in these countries. I think English should be adopted in the process of learning, especially for the majors that we want to cultivate. After all, our abilities of local languages are not good enough to be used for learning these majors there (sic). (E-086)*

Moreover, some participants also stated that they would attach importance to the level of internationalization of universities in NSPC because they expected to obtain more educational or internship opportunities in universities or institutions in other countries (e.g., countries around the world or in the new southbound area). In this way, they hoped that studying abroad would help them to broaden their horizons and accumulate relevant experience. As Student C-024 mentioned:

*If a university can make collaboration with other universities around the world, this means that the internationalization level of this university is high that may be beneficial for me to study in there. You know...this collaboration means they have more resource exchange with other universities around the world (sic).*

To sum up, it is worth noting that many students have limited understanding of the academic aspects of universities or colleges in NSPC, such as their prominent majors and features. Therefore, they merely rely on their stereotypes to evaluate the academic performance of these universities or colleges. This may eliminate their willingness to study abroad in these countries.

### 3.2.2 Economic Factors

When it comes to economic factor, most students considered that, two sub-factors, whether enough opportunities of scholarship application can be provided and whether the tuition fee of universities or colleges in NSPC is



cheap, will be taking into consideration when considering whether to study abroad in NSPC. Firstly, they thought that, under the circumstance of promotion of new southbound policy, the Taiwanese students, who want to study abroad in NSPC, are more likely to obtain more opportunities of scholarship application not only from Taiwanese government but also from some non-governmental institutions. This will enhance Taiwanese students' willingness toward studying abroad in NSPC. As a student A-066 mentioned that: "*Obtaining enough grants means that you do not have to worry about any problem related to money, instead, you can concentrate on your learning in there.*" Moreover, most students have limited understanding of the local education system of these countries and relevant information cannot be found on internet easily, so they have no idea whether the tuition fee of universities or colleges in these countries will be the heavy burden to them. Therefore, they took this sub-factor into consideration. However, based on their impressions to NSPC, they generally thought that, tuition fee of universities or colleges in these countries may be cheaper than other countries such as England and the united stated, which are the preference of Taiwanese students. Hence, this sub-factor is appealing to them when considering whether to study abroad in these countries. As two students F-114 and D-048 both pointed out that:

*I think the tuition fee will be the important considering factor. However, I think these NSPC have great competitiveness as to this factor. You know...compared to the expensive tuition fee in England or America, I believe that the tuition fee in NSPC is not more expensive than ones in America and England. For instance, Vietnamese government developed a free graduate program before, right? This is really an incentive to me (sic). (F-114)*

*The economic factor is important to me. Except for some countries such as Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand, the tuition fee and cost of living in remaining NSPC are cheaper than ones in the united stated and European countries. It means that I not only can spend less money on studying abroad but also earn a degree (sic)! (D-048)*

It is worth noting that, some students also mentioned if governments of NSPC can make a guarantee that international students who graduated from local universities in NSPC have more opportunities of working in these countries, this may be the important considering sub-factor for them to study abroad in these countries. Especially, this sub-factor is more important to the students who want to search for jobs after graduation. Moreover, they emphasized that, if both salary and future development of these employments could be better than ones in Taiwan, this will enhance their willingness regarding studying abroad in these countries more. However, if there is no any guarantee for job opportunities, it may have impact on their willingness toward studying abroad in these countries. As two students D-033 and A-035 mentioned that:

*If I can find a job there successfully after my graduation, it will be the important factor for me to study abroad there. Especially, if its salary is twice than the one in Taiwan, I definitely will study abroad there. I remember an experience that, I was an international volunteer in a Malaysian elementary school two years ago. At that time, I taught the guidance curriculum there. After finishing my instruction, the school principal came to me and asked me that whether I am willing to work there after I earn my bachelor's degree because they did not have any professional to teach guidance there. More importantly, he was willing to give me a double salary for my work per month. This is really fascinating to me although I did not agree on it eventually (sic). (D-033)*

*It is a bad situation in Taiwan now because of low income problem. However, NSPC are developing. If they can guarantee that international students who study in there may obtain more employment opportunities and well compensation after graduation, this may be an incentive for us to study abroad in NSPC. (A-035)*

### 3.2.3 Personal Factors

Most students attached importance to whether their experiences can be broadened by studying abroad in NSPC. As Student F-072 pointed out:

*I definitely will take the factor into my consideration, namely whether this studying abroad experience can broaden my horizon. It is means that, through this experience, whether you can have more opportunities of experiencing local culture there, obtain more understanding of the academic development situation there, and even accumulate learning experience and knowledge there? If it is not, why you have to go studying abroad? (sic)*

Notably, most students had a positive perspective toward this sub-factor. They thought that no matter which host country they chose, the experience would be an important one. They thought that studying abroad would give them more opportunities to live and learn together with local and other international students. They saw these experiences as being quite different from their experiences in Taiwan. Therefore, they believed these experiences



would assist them to broaden their horizons. As Student A-092 stated:

*If I can possess the opportunity of studying abroad, I want to go there and observe how they cultivate their students. For me, I think their learning environment is good for them to cultivate various competencies. Take language learning as an example, they can speak not only their mother language well but also other languages. I want to experience and have a look to this environment. If I can interact with the local students there for a long time, I will obtain more understanding of their cultures and value systems. These all are helpful for broadening my horizon (sic).*

In addition, some students mentioned that an important consideration is whether studying abroad in NSPC would be beneficial for their future career development (i.e. employment). As Student E-094 said:

*If we want to study abroad, something definitely should be considered is whether earning the degree (i.e. diploma) is beneficial for your future career development? If you can obtain the same benefits by studying in Taiwan, why you have to study abroad in other countries? (sic)*

Notably, this sub-factor is more important for the students who want to search for jobs after graduation.

Given that Taiwan's government is promoting the NSP and NSPC are experiencing a period of strong economic development, if more students chose to study abroad in those countries, they could gain greater understanding of aspects such as culture, habits and customs, national development, educational policy, language usage, etc. This would be beneficial for students to obtain more future employment opportunities after graduation, whether in Taiwan or NSPC. Accordingly, they considered this a benefit of studying abroad in NSPC. As three students A-017 and H-077 shared:

*Currently, many countries around the world are investing in NSPC; therefore, not only the situations of economic development there are vigorous, but also talents around the world are gathering there. I think if I can study in these NSPC, perhaps I could establish my social networking there. More importantly, because I can learn these local languages and have well adaptation there during the process of studying abroad, I have an advantage over others who do not study abroad there. These may be helpful for me to find jobs after graduation, and I think it is a good decision for my future career development (sic). (A-017)*

*If I want to search for jobs after graduation directly, it will be important for me that whether this studying abroad experience is helpful for my career development. Currently, I consider that, although the academic aspects of universities in NSPC are not appealing to me, this is still important for me that you can obtain more understandings of these countries by studying abroad there, such as culture, policy, habits and customs, local language learning, etc. More importantly, you always can get ahead of the competition if you study in there. This may be helpful for my career development (sic). (H-077)*

According to the results in this study, the authors would like to note that there is no single factor which can fully influence the students' decisions for studying abroad in NSPC; however, all of the factors are interacting with each other. In this regard, students' decisions regarding studying abroad are based on the complementary considerations of macro and micro factors; moreover, the weighting of these issues may be varied by students' economic sources, language skills, levels of study, countries of origin, and so forth.

#### 3.2.4 Suggested Improvements in the NSP

Many students pointed out that Taiwanese society has some negative impressions, for example low economic development, low living standards, poor cultural and educational levels, etc.) about most NSPC, except for some countries at a higher level of economic development such as Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand. Therefore, these impressions may have a negative impact on students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC. As Student A-135 mentioned:

*In Taiwan, a lot of employees came from NSPC. However, we treat them in a negative attitude; for instance, most Taiwanese consider that, these NSPC need our help and we do not rely on them. I think this is a bias to these countries, and it may cause Taiwanese students to doubt why we have to study abroad in these countries with worse economic development. Moreover, I think our country also treats these employees of NSPC impolitely. We often provide them labor-consuming jobs and put them to a lower level. These may construct an impression to us that they are second class labors and even these NSPC are inferior." Therefore, I suggested that, Taiwanese government should assist public to establish positive images toward NSPC by some strategies such as promotions and multicultural education, thereby enhancing Taiwanese students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC (sic).*

Moreover, many Taiwanese students also thought that academic factors are important for them when it comes to

whether to study abroad in NSPC. However, they generally did not seem to understand relevant academic aspects of these countries, such as academic strengths, the status of universities and colleges, the amount of investment in education, etc. Notably, they are not capable of searching for relevant information related to academic status of these countries due to the inability to understand their languages. To sum up, the above may have a significant negative impact on their motivation toward studying abroad in NSPC. Therefore, to attract more Taiwanese students, many respondents suggested that the Taiwanese government could provide more information regarding the academic aspects of NSPC. For instance, the government could create websites presenting relevant academic information for Taiwanese students who are interested in studying abroad in NSPC. As two students, E-137 and B-122, mentioned:

*Notably, I think most students definitely consider what are the popular and prominent majors in these countries? However, just like what I told you that most students cannot find enough information through the internet in views of the situation that they are incapable of understanding the languages or words of these countries. Hence, I will suggest that, Taiwanese government should build an official website where some information regarding academic development of these countries could be provided such as the prominent or potential majors in these countries, the information regarding universities or colleges in these countries, the status of academic development of these countries, etc. This information will be beneficial for applying for studying abroad in there (sic). (E-137)*

*If I really want to study abroad in NSPC in view of the situation that they have limited understanding to them, I may suggest that Taiwanese government should inform me that what are the prominent or suggested majors (e.g., departments or programs) in these countries? And this question, what the benefits I will receive If I study in there, should be clarified. However, I have to say that, currently I cannot search for relevant information as I mentioned. It is pitiful to me. And I think our government should do something for what I said; otherwise I have no idea about why studying abroad in there (sic). (B-122)*

Some students also mentioned that to attract more Taiwanese students to study abroad in NSPC and thereby promote talent exchange between Taiwan and these countries, future employment security should be emphasized. Some students suggested that Taiwan's government could negotiate agreements or somehow cooperate with the NSPC around employment security, thereby guaranteeing that students could find jobs in these countries after graduation. The government could also provide employment opportunities to these students directly. For example, the government could collaborate with relevant private companies in Taiwan or set up positions in public administration to prioritize employment opportunities for the students who graduated from universities or colleges in NSPC. These could all increase students' willingness to study abroad in these countries. As one student explained:

*Many students have to find jobs after graduation from host countries; therefore, I suppose that, If Taiwanese government could provide more employment security and advantages to students who graduates from NSPC' universities or colleges, such as working in companies of NSPC. This will be an appealing factor for students to study abroad there. I also think that, because new southbound policy is just being implemented, the cooperation model between our country and these NSPC may be not developed yet. Hence, this may cause that students worry about their future employment security. However, if government could attach importance to this issue, this may attract students to study abroad there, thereby consolidating the talent exchange and talent cultivation (sic). (C-099)*

#### 4. Discussions and Conclusions

This study adopted a mixed methods approach to exploring Taiwanese students' attitudes and choice factors regarding studying abroad in NSPC. The results revealed that Taiwanese students generally have low willingness to study abroad in NSPC, except for Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Moreover, among six main categories of factors, three categories – academic, economic and personal - are more important to Taiwanese students than the other three factors – social, political and cultural – when considering whether to study abroad in NSPC.

As for the most important category, academic factors we found that Taiwanese students generally have not only limited understanding of the relevant academic aspects of universities and colleges in NSPC, but also consider the academic reputation or performance of these institutions to be sub-standard in comparison to universities and colleges in the United States and Europe. This has a negative impact on their willingness to study abroad in NSPC. However, the results of this study are different from those of a previous study conducted by Ma (2014). Ma found that academic factors are not important for students of developed countries who want to study abroad in developing countries. In this regard, we argued that, because Taiwan remains a diplomatism country (Liu,

2013), Taiwanese students still attach importance to academic aspects of the universities and colleges of host countries (e.g., academic reputation, academic performance, investment in education, the value of diploma, etc.)

We also found that the programs or courses offered by universities and colleges in NSPC are important choice factors. Taiwanese students attached importance to the provision of English courses and programs, which echoed with the result shown in a relevant study (Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010). It is because most Taiwanese students are not familiar with the local languages of NSPC, as opposed to English. If they want to study in these countries, improving their English language skills may be a way for them to learn something and to communicate with other international students more easily while studying abroad. Moreover, English is a universal language in the world; however, Taiwanese students' English language level is not high enough generally (Education First, 2017). If students can advance their English language level in the process of studying abroad or migration, their language capitals will be increased (Bauder, 2012), thereby enhancing their employment competitiveness and international mobility also (Karunaratne, 2014; Vu & Burns, 2014). Therefore, it is an important choice factor for Taiwanese students that whether the English programs or courses are offered by universities and colleges in NSPC. Although they expressed preferences for English courses, we also found that they also expected to learn local languages through courses provided in universities and colleges of NSPC. This is probably because NSPC are currently experiencing rapid economic growth. The World Economic Forum anticipates that collectively, ASEAN will become the fifth largest economy in the world by 2020 (Cheok, 2017; Tso & Jung, 2018). Therefore, if universities and colleges in NSPC provide some opportunities to learn local languages, Taiwanese students might be attracted to the opportunity to accumulate language and cultural capital in these NSPC, thereby enhancing their opportunities to remain in these high-growth countries after graduation (Xu & Xu, 2015).

The results of this study indicate that personal factors are also important for students' decisions to study abroad in NSPC. They generally expected that such a study abroad experience could broaden their horizons and expand their future career opportunities. In this regard, a previous study indicated that studying abroad could be helpful for students in accumulating cultural and social capital in host countries. (Jupiter et al., 2017). Therefore, this factor may be beneficial for students who want to study abroad in NSPC, especially for the students who want to search for jobs after graduation.

Moreover, the results of this study indicate that economic factors are also important for Taiwanese students' willingness to study abroad in NSPC. Whether or not they could receive enough scholarships or grants is an important consideration for their decisions. These results are consistent with those of a previous study conducted by Ma (2014). This study found that Taiwanese students also attached importance to whether their job prospects in NSPC were improved after graduation. The above factors tended to be given greater consideration if the Taiwanese government is to be successful in encouraging more Taiwanese students to study abroad in NSPC.

Compared to the above main factors, the following two factors were seldom mentioned by Taiwanese students when considering studying abroad in NSPC: social factor and political factor. Why are social factors not a high priority for Taiwanese students when considering studying abroad in NSPC? There are several possible explanations. First, Taiwan is not that far from most southbound countries. In addition, the climate conditions in these countries are like those in Taiwan. Hence, Taiwanese students may not consider these factors to be very influential in their decision about whether to study in these countries. Second, because the number of Taiwanese students who study abroad in NSPC is low, and even declining, Taiwanese students who study abroad in these countries cannot easily establish interpersonal networks. This reduces the impacts of reference groups, for example friends and older brothers or sisters who are studying in universities in NSPC, in attracting Taiwanese students to study there, as well (James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017). Therefore, they do not regard this sub-factor as important when considering studying abroad there.

There are also several possible explanations for why political factors do not play a significant role in students' decisions either. The status of diplomatic relations between home country and host country is the main sub-factor in the category of political factors. Although there are not formal diplomatic relations between Taiwan NSPC, people-to-people contact, economic relations and trade between Taiwan and NSPC are significant. The number of Taiwanese who travel to NSPC was 2.47 million in 2017, which accounted for 15.81% of the outbound travel of Taiwanese. Moreover, among the total number of inbound visitors, the number of tourists from NSPC accounted for 21.27% of tourists to Taiwan in 2017. Taiwan is the tenth largest export market and seventh largest import market for ASEAN (Jing, 2018). The movements of people, as well as goods and services indicate strong relations between Taiwan and NSPC. Therefore, the status of diplomatic relations is not a very important factor to Taiwanese students when considering studying abroad in NSPC.

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# “Resilient Young Smokers” - A Proposed Study in Determining Young Adult Smokers’ Responses Towards Anti-Smoking Initiatives in Australia

Liau Chee How<sup>1</sup>, Leanne White<sup>2</sup>, Keith Thomas<sup>2</sup> & Tan Seng Teck<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Marketing, Deakin Business School, Deakin University, Melbourne Burwood Campus, Australia

<sup>2</sup> College of Business, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Business, Communication and Law (FOBCAL) INTI International University, Malaysia

Correspondence: Liau Chee How, Deakin Business School, Deakin University, Melbourne Burwood Campus, Australia. E-mail: [alvin.liau@deakin.edu.au](mailto:alvin.liau@deakin.edu.au)

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## Abstract

Although cigarette smoking rate has declined consistently in the past four decades in Australia, the smoking habit remains popular among some groups. From a marketer’s vantage point, this slowed reduction portrays the less effective implementation of anti-smoking campaigns in Australia. Ideally, each anti-smoking intervention ought to break the chain of marginal utility and lead to a sharp or stepped decline of smoking prevalence. This paper explores the inadequacies of fear factored anti-smoking campaigns and some prevailing reasons why young adult smokers continue to smoke. This paper begins with a review and categorisation of the different reasons of why young adults continue to smoke. These reasons draw on addiction, stress, habit, social-economic factors, self-identity and peer pressure. The rationale for studying these anti-smoking initiatives is to evaluate if these initiatives address the issues of smoking amongst young adults. This paper is significant for formulating effective anti-smoking messages and policy developments in Australia.

## 1. Aims and Context of This Paper

Smoking prevalence has declined in many developed nations for a long time and Australia is one of the countries that accomplished such success (Winstanley, Woodward, & Walker, 1995). This change could be ascribed to the implementation of anti-smoking initiatives that caused smoking in Australia to drop from 34.5 per cent to 16.3 per cent in the past four decades (Wipfli, 2012).

Despite these positive trends, smoking remains prevalent and remained stable at 3.3 million since 2007 (Ferguson & Phau, 2013). In Australia, the smoking rate diminishes with increasing age. Specifically, young adults portray higher smoking prevalence compare to older age groups (Mannan et al., 2016). In many cases, young adult smokers were reported to be one of the highest nicotine dependent groups (Darville & Hahn, 2014). They are most likely to become long term and heavy smokers who have the least intention to quit (Nordstrom et al., 2000).

When young adult smokers (18 to 35 years old) continue to smoke, this subpopulation may have higher risk in developing lung diseases, cardiovascular diseases, asthma, shortness of breath, coughing, DNA damage, inflammation, oxidise stress and diminishing health compared to non-smokers (Gough et al., 2009). According to widespread medical consensus, the 1988 US Surgeon General’s report (Novello, 1990) confirms that young adults who are heavy smokers and smoke for many years have higher risks of mortality and diseases such as intense myeloid leukaemia, cervical cancer, kidney malignancy, lung cancer, pancreatic cancer and stomach cancer (Moodie, Daube, & Carnell, 2009; Pandeya et al., 2015).

Tobacco smoking is accountable for the greatest disease burden in Australia. The damage caused by tobacco smoking is estimated to bring about 19,000 deaths each year to the Australian community (Siahpush & Carlin, 2006). The Department of Health and Ageing has reported that tobacco use has caused 14,901 deaths for male and female where 14,790 comprised of heavy and long term smokers between 2004 and 2005 (Wipfli, 2012). In the context of Australian productivity and workforce, the smokers’ and ex-smokers’ absenteeism in the

workplace were found to be 1.4 and 1.3 times higher than those who never smoked respectively. Recent study reveals that Australian workers' absenteeism has cost \$388 billion in the total financial loss based on gross domestic product generated per worker in 2016 (Owen et al., 2018).

In response to these situations, more severe anti-smoking initiatives have been introduced. For example, cigarette packet health warnings (Brennan et al., 2011), the imposition of higher tobacco tax (Guillaumier, Bonevski & Paul, 2015), marching banned on small cigarette packs, advertising and sponsorships (Moodie, Daube & Carnell, 2009), mass reach anti-smoking campaigns (Germain et al., 2012), and implemented smoke-free workplaces and licensed venues (Cooper et al., 2010).

Despite numerous sustained anti-smoking initiatives that are focused to dissuade young adult smokers from continuing to smoke, the smoking prevalence among this group only declines slowly (Darville & Hahn, 2014; Docherty et al., 2014; Mathews, Hall, & Gartner, 2010; Moodie, Daube, & Carnell, 2009). From a marketer and the tobacco industry vantage point, this slowed reduction could be viewed as less effective (Becker & Murphy, 1988; de Meyrick, 2010; Lupton, 1995). Ideally each anti-smoking intervention ought to break the chain of marginal utility (e.g. the satisfying fulfilment of smoking) and lead to a sharp decline of smoking prevalence (Baker et al., 2004). Recent studies (Cooper et al., 2010; Wakefield et al., 2015; White et al., 2003) reported that young adults recognised and understood that continuous smoking is costly and bad for health, yet this smoking habit continues.

## **2. Tobacco Control Expenditure Between Australia and Other OECD Countries**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), Australia has adopted anti-smoking strategies that are similar to other OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (Who, 2013). However, compared to other OECD countries, Australia recorded major discrepancy on tobacco control spent per capita. For instance, compared to Canada, Australia spent more than double on its tobacco control expenditure per capita despite that Canada has a higher population than Australia. Similarly, the US spent less on tobacco control expenditure than Australia. Ironically, Canada and the US both recorded lower and almost identical levels of smoking prevalence compared to Australia (Who, 2013; Wipfli, 2012).

Economically, it could be argued that Australia's current tobacco smoking rate of decline does not justify the level of expenditure on tobacco control initiatives. It is fair to assume that the intention and motivation rose to discourage smoking by anti-smoking initiatives may not have reached to the optimal effect to dissuade young adult smokers from continuing to smoke. If we assume that the effect of anti-smoking efforts is to reduce continued smoking, then we would expect the prevalence of smoking to reduce fairly sharply (or at least a stepped decline) (Becker & Murphy, 1988; Keeler & Marciniak, 1999) and showing significant health behavioural change among young smokers in different intervention stages (Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 2013).

This paper explores the question whether the anti-smoking initiatives have addressed the reasons why young adult smokers continue to smoke. This paper begins with a review and categorisation of the different reasons why young adults continue to smoke. The reasons to smoke draw on addiction, stress, habit, social-economic factors, self-identity and peer pressure. This paper will then identify the anti-smoking initiatives, principally those employing the mass media trying to convince young adults to discontinue smoking. The rationale behind anti-smoking initiatives is compared to see if these initiatives address the issues of smoking amongst young adults. This paper adds value for formulating anti-smoking messages and policies development in Australia. The overarching research objectives of this paper aim to identify factors that influence smoking behavior amongst the young adults and as well as the effectiveness of anti-smoking initiatives in Australia.

## **3. Literature Review on the Effectiveness of Anti-Smoking Campaigns in Australia**

### **Anti-smoking Initiatives in Australia**

The scene of tobacco control has changed significantly in the past 40 years. As early as 1972, the very first national campaign on smoking was the National Warning against smoking campaign that used posters and slogans with anti-smoking messages requesting smokers not to smoke near each other. Due to lack of formal evaluation at that time, no information is available about its impact on smoking prevalence and the only information known is that the campaign cost \$1.5 million over three years (Winstanley, Woodward, & Walker, 1995).

Another significant anti smoking campaign was the National Campaign against Drug Abuse in 1985, which was later renamed as The National Drug Strategy by The Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS). Quit line

telephone support was established in conjunction with a media anti-smoking campaign (Germain et al., 2012). The campaign was launched with the main aim to target females and young adults. The very first smoking rates of 42 per cent and 30 per cent were recorded for male and female respectively.

Smoke free policies were then introduced in 1986 in federal workplaces and successfully reduced male smoking prevalence from 42 per cent to 37 per cent while females recorded a reduction from 30 per cent to 29 per cent. In 1987, smoking on domestic flights was banned. By 1989, tobacco advertising was prohibited in the print media. Smoking prevalence by males and females reduced a further to 31 per cent and 26 per cent respectively.

However, the negative perception on smoking and intention to quit stalled in the early 1990s. As a response to that situation, a \$9 million National Tobacco campaign was launched by the Australian Government to regain the tobacco control momentum (Winstanley, Woodward, & Walker, 1995).

The National Tobacco Campaign was particularly designed to encourage quitting in a more severe way. For instance, the increased from age of sale of cigarette 16 years to 18 years under the amended *Tobacco Act*, increased in Federal Excise Duty (FED) which is a tax on commercial cigarette that increased 18 per cent of the cigarette price. In-store advertising and point-of-sale displays were the only remaining conventional types of tobacco publicity at that time. These vigorous anti smoking programs and policies have led smoking prevalence to achieve the ever-low smoking rates for male and female of 24 per cent and 20 per cent respectively (Moodie, Daube, & Carnell, 2009; Winstanley, Woodward, & Walker, 1995).

In mid-February 2006, another significant tobacco control campaign was launched where the Australian Government committed \$25 million over four years on this new control. Specifically, mass media anti-smoking was employed to spread the negative impact of smoking. This mass anti-smoking campaign was divided into two stages where the first stage focused public attention on the release of graphic health warnings on tobacco product packaging. In particular, all tobacco products manufactured or imported into Australia were required to be printed with the new health warning images. However, some tobacco production countries such as Ukraine, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Cuba and Indonesia consider these actions unfair, judging from the actions to sue Australia for restrictions of trade in the world court - World Trade Organization (WTO) for the efforts to standardise cigarettes (Fooks & Gilmore, 2014; Frankel & Gervais, 2013; von Tigerstrom, 2013; Voon, 2015). After six years of bitter legal proceeding, the WTO panel has recently announced that Australia's plain packaging law has not infringed the trademark rights of tobacco companies (Newswire, 2018). However, the International Trademark Association (INTA) did not support this decision, claiming that WTO has set a dangerous backward precedent of Intelligence Property (IP) that could lead to the so-called 'domino effect' of plain packaging on other goods especially in the alcohol, pharmaceutical and fast food sectors.

The second stage of the new tobacco control was launched at the end of December 2006 which targeting young adults featuring television, cinema, magazines, radio and outdoor advertising, graphically depicted the range of toxic chemicals in cigarette smoke, as well as linking to graphic health warning. According to recent study (Brennan et al., 2011), the campaign has increased young adults' awareness of the health consequences of smoking and motivation to quit.

The most prominent substantial strategy to reduce smoking among the young smokers to date is the implementation of the plain packaging on cigarette (Clarke & Prentice, 2012). The *Tobacco Plain Packaging Bill 2011* was passed on 21 November 2011 and took effect on 1 December 2012 with the aim to replace the standard packaging by having graphic anti-smoking messages, drab dark brown plain package with little name of the product to discourage continue smoking especially the young adult smokers (Brennan et al., 2011; Moodie, AR, Daube & Carnell, 2009).

#### **4. Effectiveness of Anti-Smoking Initiatives in Australia**

Although smoking prevalence has reduced in the past 40 years, but many young adult smokers (defined between 18-35 years old by the United Nations) continue this habit at a relatively stable rate (Gough et al., 2009). More recently, the number of smokers in Australia has increased from 21,000 to 2.4 million for the ever first time despite the rigorous anti-smoking initiatives since 2013 (Adam, 2017; Colin, 2018). This is consistent to past studies (Daube et al., 2015; Moodie, AR, Daube, & Carnell, 2009; Van De Ven et al., 2010) indicating that Australia smoking rates have been declined slowly and the smoking prevalence of young smokers was still considered high.

Ironically, the expectation on anti-smoking initiatives to reduce smoking rate to drop sharply (or at least stepped decline) was not the case and does not align to the Theory of Rational Addiction (Becker & Murphy, 1988). According to the theory, even individuals who are dependent on addictive products such as cigarette can be

forward looking and utilise accessible information to contrast future advantages and unfavourable present worth. In other words, cigarette smoking can be quit 'in cold turkey' or 'all-in-a-sudden' when the future benefits of quit smoking (e.g. saving money, better health) outweigh the present discounted utility of smoking (e.g. socialising, looks youthful and 'cool'). In the lens of young adult smokers, the benefits of stopping are still far away and the cost of quitting at the present value is high (Sloan & Wang, 2008). Therefore, this group of young adult smokers who continue to smoke is arguably the result of the less effective anti-smoking initiatives and contribute to the slowed rate of smoking cessation. Ideally each anti-smoking intervention ought to break the chain of that marginal utility and lead to sharp or stepped decline of smoking prevalence (Keeler & Marciniak, 1999).

A few researchers have observed mass media based anti-smoking initiatives have had no distinguishable direct impact on smoking pervasiveness in young adult smokers (Bardsley & Olekalns, 1999; Gilbert, 2005; Pechmann & Reibling, 2000; Shevalier, 2000). Others viewed the campaigns in a more positive way, arguing that in spite of the effectiveness in the aspect to reduce the smoking rate, the anti-smoking initiatives had produced short-term positive outcomes. For examples, the development of awareness of health risks, motivation and intention to quit smoking, smoke less number of cigarettes per day (Brennan et al., 2011; Moodie et al., 2014; Neri et al., 2016; Tyrrell, 1998; Wakefield et al., 2015; White et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the anti smoking initiatives turn out to be far less encouraging, with significant evidence that the number of smokers in Australia has increased from 21,000 to 2.4 million for the ever first time despite the rigorous implementation of anti-smoking initiatives since 2013 (Adam, 2017; Colin, 2018).

This phenomenon perhaps can be clarified by the way the anti-smoking initiatives are developed (Gilbert, 2005). Indeed, the initiatives may not take into consideration for the circumstances, preferences and cultural conditions of the young smoking adults. For instance, the health risks will have less impact on those who view the anti-smoking is unrelated to their everyday life context (Shevalier, 2000). Young smoking adults simply do not 'listen' to the messages convey to them (Shevalier, 2000). Young adult smokers chose their own interpretations of smoking that suit their own ends.

The use of many health scare tactics, fear campaigns and anti-smoking advertisements seeking to shock young adult smokers into quitting (Ferguson & Phau, 2013) warrants little impact to discourage them to quit. Some other factors such as stress, peer pressure, habit, addiction to nicotine, disadvantages of socioeconomic condition, desire to attain social identity have been ignored. These bio-psychosocial dimensions are important factors to be considered while constructing the anti smoking programs and policies (Gilbert, 2005). In contrast, current anti smoking advertisements portray the use of medicine as the supreme power embedded with highest rationality to which young adult smokers should conform.

As young adult smokers do not pay much attention to anti-smoking advertisement that employs health risks factor to deterrent them from continue to smoke, the advertisement is perceived to be irrelevant (Lynch & Bonnie, 1994). It is because the health risks is not absolute (Petersen & Waddell, 1998) and has less ability to practically impact on their present lives. The knowledge about health risks is ambiguous and has not been experienced at the smoking juncture. Thus, the medical effects of smoking are not the priority in their knowledge hierarchy (Guillaumier, Bonevski, & Paul, 2015). Past study by Young and Banwell (1993) showed that young adult smokers usually chose smoking to attain their social identity that is more socially valued.

In view to the problems with the construction of anti-smoking initiatives and their less effectiveness of achievement for many young adult smokers, one could question whether the anti-smoking initiatives have addressed the reasons for young adult smokers continue to smoke? It is arguable that current anti-smoking initiatives continue to be used in favor to show the government is concerned about the general public health and those initiatives are effective to promote good health (Lupton, 1995).

However, the conflict is apparent, those anti-smoking initiatives are funded by the federal and state government to facilitate the objectives of the government and merely to maintain the status quo as "authoritative and active". The consistent to use health risks, fear appeal in anti smoking advertising is just to unable individuals to moderate their own behavior (Gilbert, 2005). In other words, the anti-smoking initiatives are to caution young adults of the adverse impacts of smoking and let them to take up the message for their own sake. The government is just 'releasing its duties in saving public health by finding the cause of ill-health at the level of individual responsibility'. Perhaps, the governmental sponsorship of anti smoking programs and policies may be covertly viewed to support another intention, that is – to continue to allow cigarettes selling while harvesting the taxes levied on the cigarettes sales (Geis, Cartwright, & Houston, 2003).

Therefore, it is necessary to reinvestigate different factors of why young adults continue to smoke. This next section of this paper shall identify the anti-smoking initiatives, principally those employing mass media trying to



convince young adults to discontinue smoking. The rationale behind anti-smoking initiatives is compared to see if these initiatives address the issues of smoking amongst young adults.

## 5. Factors That Influence Smoking Behavior in Young Adults

### (a) Construction of self-identity

In adolescence, young adults normally experience great changes to many aspects of their psychological, physical and social lives. During this time, they tend to search for a secure identity (Lucas & Lloyd, 1999) by imitating their role models (Scheffels & Schou, 2007). The feeling of being glamorous and cool is paramount (Distefan, Pierce, & Gilpin, 2004). For instance, Distefan, Pierce and Gilpin (2004) shows that when young adults expose to scenario such as watching movies where hero or heroine smoke cigarette on their victory against the enemy, it indirectly implies the hero or heroine possesses characteristics of success, courageous, matured, cool and attractive with many positive images associated to cigarette. Young adults also perceive cigarette smoking as they 'control their own life' and 'I am special' (Hamilton & Hassan, 2010). However, this result contradicts to some earlier studies (Denscombe, 2001; Lucas & Lloyd, 1999) where young adult smokers were perceived to portray negative attributes. For example, young adult smokers are viewed to be "laid back" and "lazy" (van den Putte et al., 2009). Nevertheless, smoking continues among young adult smokers despite those negative labelling (Guillaumier, Bonevski, & Paul, 2015).

### (b) Peer pressure

Another prevalence of tobacco consumption among the young adults is due to peer pressure which is quite influential and common during the vulnerable young adulthood (Wayne & Connolly 2002). If the peer exerts negative attitudes among young adults by challenging them to prove their maturity through performing some activities such as smoking and drinking, young adults would have high tendency to embrace such behavior because such behavior is the only way of assuring their acceptance. By doing so, they become accepted to the group (Lakon et al. 2015). However, study by Erlingsdottir et al. (2014) showed that young adults smoking behavior does not due solely to peer pressure but parental influence too. For instance, in some past experiments (Bandura 1977; Chartrand & Bargh 1999), young adults whose parents were smokers tend to follow the smoking habit without being urged to do so. This implies that passive parental influence would also support why young adults continue to smoke rather than mere peer pressure from the social group.

### (c) Social-economic condition

Young smokers who experience disadvantaged in socio-economic tend to smoke more cigarettes and showed little intention to change or cease smoking behaviour (Guillaumier, Bonevski, & Paul, 2015). The financial stress associates with their socio-economic position is viewed to be paramount that restrains the cessation attempts. Often, they use smoking as a medium to cope with stressors of personal circumstances and surrounding environment (Guillaumier, Bonevski, & Paul, 2015). Jones et al. (2009) found that young adult smokers tend to possess shorter planning horizons in cessation, more likely to be present-oriented and impulsive (incapability to resist indulgence) in smoking. These factors help to explain why socio-economic disadvantaged young smokers fail in smoking cessation and thus continue to smoke.

### (d) Coping with stress

As the young adults shift from adolescence to adulthood, it is quite common for some of them to experience stress due to new challenges and overwhelming responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, some will rely on some external supports to alleviate stress. A common remedy is the cigarette (Lawless et al., 2015). The smoking behavior among stressed young adult is supported by the self-medication theory where young adults tend to use cigarettes to improve stress or negative mood (Kumari & Postma, 2005). The properties of the nicotine have the function of altering negative mood to positive. Specifically, nicotine in the cigarette is known to activate human neuronal nicotinic receptors in the mesolimbic dopamine system (Dwoskin et al., 2009). The dopamine system in the human brain that is responsible for the sense of reward and pleasure (Weinberger & Sofuoglu, 2009; Weinstein & Mermelstein, 2013). When the dopamine system is activated, the person begins to feel relaxed and slightly euphoric. This rewarding feelings becomes very welcoming to many stressed young adults and therefore they tend to persist the smoking behavior (de la Peña et al., 2015).

### (e) Smoking as a habit

Normally, an individual who smokes cigarette would find it extremely hard to stop smoking. Despite being highly motivated to quit, the majority of young adult smokers find it almost impossible to maintain abstinence (Hitsman et al., 2010). In the long run, this continue of smoking behavior becomes a habitual act that must be performed daily by the young adult smokers. Everitt and Robbins (2005) defines habitual act to behaviors that



have been frequently performed in stable situations or contexts. For example, a smoker may always smoke a cigarette in the interim between leaving his office and getting into his car. A stable context is one in which the supporting features of the current environment are similar to those contexts in which the behavior was learned and practiced in the past. In other words, a habitual smoker finds the contexts is not novel in the sense that it does not present new goals or challenges and thus execute the practiced responses such as smoking.

(f) Smoking is addictive

Cigarette contains nicotine and nicotine is a substance that stimulates and creates arousal (e.g. feeling of euphoric) and relaxation (Hwang & Yun, 2015; Weinberger & Sofuoglu, 2009). When smoker inhale nicotine through the act of smoking, nicotine is rapidly absorbed by the body but also disappear rapidly, leading to a desire to consume more nicotine (Baker, Brandon, & Chassin, 2004). Baker, Timothy B. et al. (2004) evidenced that people tend to transform from light/ social smoking to heavy and long-term smoking that is due to nicotine addiction. This fosters young adult smokers continue to smoke and causes smoking cessation to be slowed.

## 6. Anti-smoking Initiatives on Smoking Behavior in Young Adults

(a) Pictorial health images and text warnings on cigarette packets

In Australia, the pictorial health images on the cigarette packet occupy 30% of the front and 90% of the back of the packet. They combine graphic warning images depicting the health effects of smoking with detailed explanatory messages and the number for the Quit line (Brennan et al., 2011). The government employs fear appeal advertising trying to dissuade young adult smokers from the smoking habit and opines that fear appeal advertising will 'terrify' young adult smokers to change their smoking attitude and behavior (Ferguson & Phau, 2013). However Ashok and Michael (2014) argue that anti-smoking advertisement (e.g. the combination of text and graphical images) fail to influence young adults. According to the Terror Management theory (Martin & Kamins, 2010), individuals use various mechanisms to protect themselves particularly when they experience stress or anxiety and not to aware of their own mortality. This behaviour allows individuals to protect and maintain their self-esteem. When this behaviour is placed in the context of smoking, young smokers who derived a strong sense of self-esteem from smoking tend to smoke more and ignore their own mortality (Ashok & Michael, 2014; de Meyrick, 2001; Martin & Kamins, 2010).

(b) Plain packaging on cigarette packets

The WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) outlined guidelines for cigarette package, recommending the use of plain (or standardised) packaging with the aims to: (a) reduce the appeal of tobacco products to consumers; and (b) increase the effectiveness of health warnings on the retail packaging of tobacco products; and (c) reduce the ability of the retail packaging of tobacco products to misled consumers about the harmful effects of smoking or using tobacco products (Roemer, Taylor, & Lariviere, 2005). Australia has responded to the signatory to the Convention and requires tobacco companies to adopt standardized brown packaging for cigarette, with large health warning and minimal brand identification to battle with the wrong perception about being 'cool' and glamorous of smoking among young adults. However, recent study Ashok and Michael (2014) reported that plain packaging has had least efficient on smoking prevalence, either among minors or adults. Arguably, the declining straight line of smoking prevalence in Australia is the result of a "pre-existing" continuous and uniform trend, regardless of its 'heavy anti-smoking measures'.

(c) Imposed of Smoke-free policies

In 1986, the Australian government implemented bans on indoor smoking following reports that passive smoking would impact health threats to the public (Cooper et al., 2010). Although many people accepted this anti-smoking legislation, however some strong industry consultants opposed these bans, argued that smokers would stop visiting some recreational venues such as the licensed and gambling venues and resulting financial lose to the small businesses. These bans also opined to encourage passive smoking to homes (Borland et al., 2006). However, research has demonstrated that these concerns were unwarranted (Scollo et al., 2003). Although many studies show that smoke-free bans would discourage and change smoking behavior, yet the association with quitting remains controversial, particularly to the young adult smokers (Caroline & Stanton, 2002). These young, bar and nightclub patron smokers reported to smoke more at outdoor despite the smoke-free bans (Edwards et al., 2008; Hyland et al., 2009).

(d) Imposed of Tax policy

Demand for cigarette can be reduced by tax increment. Past studies show that the higher the tax increased, the greater reduction in cigarette sales (Chaloupka et al., 2002; Hsieh & Lee, 2016). This works particularly well to many young adult smokers who are in a state of socio economic disadvantaged. They appear to be one of the

groups that possess the highest smoking prevalence in Australia (Dunlop, Perez, & Cotter, 2011). When the price of cigarette increases, young adult smoker is expected to reduce cigarette consumption, more motivated to quit smoking and have an increased likelihood of actual quitting (Ross et al., 2011). However, this ideal scenario is contrary to the reality. According to Becker and Murphy (1988) not all smokers would intend to quit, even at very high tobacco prices. The social, cultural context of smoking as well as individual factors play pivotal roles in keeping low socio economic disadvantaged young smokers from quitting. In reality, they use price minimisation strategies to cope with high priced of cigarette (Siahpush & Carlin, 2006). For instance, they switch to cheaper brands, products or sources (including illicit sources) of tobacco or purchase in bulk (for instance, the hand-rolled cigarette), less likely to spend money in restaurant and health insurance (Guillaumier, Bonevski, & Paul, 2015). They normally experience financial stress, less likely to make quit attempt and less likely to succeed in quitting (Siahpush & Carlin, 2006).

## 7. Conclusion

This paper proposes a novel concept. It is argued that using fear factor in advertising should not be the sole method to stop young adults from smoking. Rather, anti-smoking initiatives should be tailored to fit to different segments that have different needs and behaviours. Specifically, this paper attempts to fill a research gap of anti-smoking effectiveness between the smoking rates against the tobacco control spent per capita in Australia. By determining the selected factors of smoking, this paper is significant for formulating and developing anti-smoking messages and policies that are more effective and comprehensive.

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# The Inscribed Metal Pots in the West of the Arab Gulf (Mleiha and Al-Fueda), Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt: A Comparative Study

Waleed Mohamed Saffaie<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> History Division, Social Science Department, Faculty of Arts, Bahrain University, Bahrain

Correspondence: Waleed Mohamed Saffaie, History Division, Social Science Department, Faculty of Arts, Bahrain University, Bahrain. E-mail: sawaleed63@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The current study seeks to analyze some themes and ornaments that appeared on metal pots in the west of Arab Gulf (Mleiha in the United Arab Emirates and Al-Fueda in the Sultanate of Oman). The study also makes a comparison between the metal pots of previous regions and their counterparts in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. The Arab Gulf is of great importance because it represents an important center for commercial convoys and associates with ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt and other civilizations. The Arab Gulf produced a varied and splendid art with artistic output. On the other hand, Mesopotamia transferred the ancient Egyptian artistic influences to the Arab Gulf. The study highlights the two regions of Mleiha and Al-Fueda in the west of the Arab Gulf, Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. Also, it shows the artistic influences on these pots. To describe and analyze such metal pots, the study adopts the descriptive analytical approach. The researcher has faced several difficulties, which are: 1) Finding a few of inscribed metal pots led to the difficulty of the local comparison where some sites did not reveal a rich metal product. 2) The scarcity of references and books specialized in metal arts in the Arab library. 3) Numerous metal sculpture works have been lost due to re-using and re-shaping these metals again. The study has reached many conclusions, the most important of which are: 1) The pots and plates were decorated with splendid inscriptions and ornaments, and their themes were quoted from neighboring countries. 2) The Study has noted that some metal inscriptions represented the pure local environment of the art at the time. Also, some of them were affected by the arts of neighboring civilizations in Mesopotamia, Syria and ancient Egypt.

**Keywords:** metal pots, Mleiha, Al-Fueda, Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt

## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, the humanitarian use of metals is one of the major cultural revolutions in the history of the mankind, no less important than the revolution of the discovery of agriculture and writing in ancient times. Despite the great importance of the metals in human civilizations in general and in the ancient Near East in particular, it has not been given enough attention and study by the researchers of the history and civilization of the ancient Near East. The Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Gulf gained special importance as they are important centers for commercial convoys that have been stationed in several locations in the North, South, East and West. On the other hand, the civilization of Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt are of great importance as they are the oldest civilizations in the ancient Near East and they have commercial, political and military relations with the Arab Peninsula and the Arab Gulf over the ages. This was evident in the mixing of the arts in the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Gulf with the arts of Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt at the time, resulting in a varied and magnificent art. Due to the artistic outputs and products of this region, there was a dire need to study them and identify their artistic and impacts on neighboring civilizations.

Few metal were found in the Arab Peninsula and the Arab Gulf region. In contrast, many of various metal pots were found in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt during ancient times. This may be due to the natural conditions and geographical and climatic factors of the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Gulf, which made the metal monuments of both regions rare and few, especially, the factors of humidity and creeping the waters of the Gulf towards the old settlements. The Gulf region played a key role in forming the areas of settlement of ancient civilizations on the west coast of the Arab Gulf at the time.

There were several types of metal pots in the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Gulf. For example, there were

simple metal pots, which are circular pots with circular bases. They expand gradually towards edges. There were also engraved pots with ornaments of animals, plants and geometric forms. In addition, there were crushed pots and in poor state of preservation.

However, the study of the types and inscriptions showed that some of them represented the pure local environment of art at the time, and some others were affected by the arts of neighboring civilizations in Iran, the Indus Valley, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt in the West.

The mining industry moved to the service of the arts. Various bronze pots were manufactured by forging. Perhaps the use of decoration in the Arabian Peninsula had Eastern Hellenistic origins that were absorbed by the Roman culture afterwards.

There have been numerous and varied themes such as the scenes of animals, the ornaments of plants, the scenes of individuals and the scenes of combat and military wheels. Additionally, there have been scenes affected by the Aegean style, which depicts heroes struggling with mythical animals.

Accordingly, the study deals with the inscribed metal pots in the west of the Gulf region, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. The study also is an analytical study of the most important artistic themes that appeared on the pots. It is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the inscribed metal pots in the West of the Arab Gulf (at Mleiha region in United Arab Emirates and at Al- Fuaida in Oman Sultanate). The second addresses the inscribed metal pots in Mesopotamia. The third tackles the inscribed metal pots in ancient Egypt.

## 2- The Inscribed Metal Pots in the West of the Arab Gulf

### 2.1 Mleiha Area

#### 2.1.1 Remains of an Inscribed Bronze Pot

Remains of bronze pots were found at Mleiha area in the United Arab Emirates, dated to the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> century (B. C.) and the beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> century (the end of the first millennium B. C.), as shown in Figure 1.

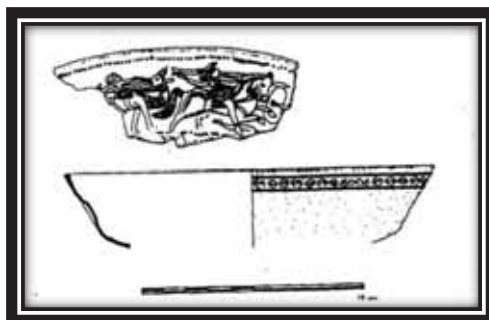


Figure 1. Inscribed Metal Pots at Mleiha Area

Source: Boucharlat, R., Jarczynske, P., "The Mleiha Area – An Archaeological Map", ASISE 4 (1988) p. 64; fig. 27 14, 15.

The first fragment represents small shapes and drawings at the upper edge of the pot, which depict a scene of a battle. These drawings depict two warriors dressed in war clothes, one of them was riding a horse and was holding a spear in his left hand, and the other was riding a camel and was holding a bayonet in his left hand, and the other was riding a camel and was holding a bayonet in his left hand. The two animals also were in a case of running (Boucharlat & Jarczynske, 1988). These landscapes spread in both Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. Smith sees that the fast-paced and jumping animal movement in the air is an Aegean artistic style. While Kantor believes that the style of portraying animals jumping in the air appeared first in the Egyptian art since the age of pre-families until the end of the middle state, and during the age of the modern state (Kontor, 1947).

The depiction of running animals on the pots in the Arabian Peninsula, as shown in the magnificent inscriptions on the pots of mleiha and Al- Fueda (Boucharlat, 1991) may have been affected by the same artistic style of Mesopotamia school. Such style may be reached to Mesopotamia by Egypt where the depiction of running animals in ancient Egyptian art has old roots.

#### 2.1.2 Remains of Inscribed Bronze Pot

A pot of bronze with animal, human and plant ornamental motifs were also found at Mleiha area, as shown in Figure 2. The middle of the pot was decorated by a flower, which was surrounded by three inscribed rows.



Figure 2. Incribed Metal Pots at Mleiha Area

Source: Mouton, M., & Boucharlat, R., & Jarczysnske, P., "Excavations at Mleiha, The Third Season", ASIE 5 (1989), pp. 44-45; fig. 23 3, 24 1,2

Keimer believes that the ornamentation of the flower and the various compositions, which are common in the ancient arts, is of Egyptian origin. Keimer does not favor that the Egyptians arts derived the ornamentation of the flower from Mesopotamia. Rather, Keimer emphasizes that it is of Egyptian origin. Furthermore, Keimer confirms also that different and very similar combinations emerged in the motifs of the modern state, and that the treatment and dealing with the theme of flower motif in other civilizations was different (Keimer, 1924).

For example, both Chrysanthemum and Rosetta flowers emerged in the ornamentations of the ancient state. Also, the types of the blooming flowers emerged on the pots extracted from Al- Fueda and Mleiha in the Arabian Peninsula (Mouton & Boucharlat, 1989). The flower of Rosetta is one the most important artistic elements that decorated the middle of the pots. This flower must have an origin in nature. The Egyptian artist put his touches and additions gradually on the flower of rosetta. Thus, the forms of this flower, which came to us, are closer to the geometric picture. It may be somewhat similar to margarita flower (Selim, 2001).

The first row surrounding by the flower contains landscape representing human forms or individual, who crawl on their stomachs in a sequential position. They are wearing a short apron, and they apparently were crawling around this flower. The second row represents a set of opposite wild animals. The third row also represents a set of opposite animals. There has been a palm which separates each group from another. There were three palms which may represent Enki god. They separate all groups. The legal of the palm is based on the borders of the first row. These scenes also appeared on a similar pot in the ancient Near East (Mouton & Boucharlat, 1989), especially in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt.

### 2.1.3 Remains of a Pot at Mleiha Area

The remains of inscribed pot on which remains of animal ornamental motifs were found at Mleiha area (Figure 3).

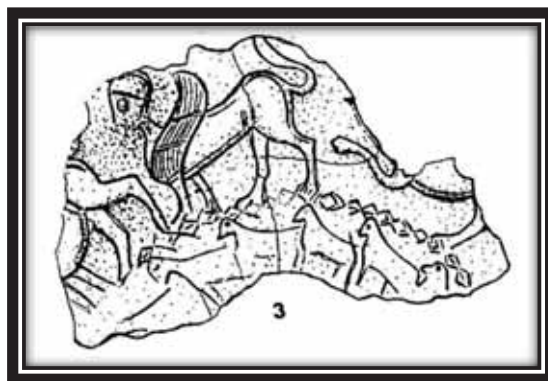


Figure 3.

The pot contains a scene of winged horses at the upper edge of the pot, while a scene of the herd of animals appears at the bottom of the pot. These scenes, which represent the forms of winged animals, spread in the countries of the ancient Near East. Boucharlat believes that some similar pots were found in Phoenicia. This pot

was dated to the end of the first millennium (B.C.) (Bourcharlat & Mouton, 1991). It is worth mentioning that the winged scenes had an Egyptian effect and some artistic additions at the time. Boucharlat thinks that there are winged forms in Phoenicia which are similar to the winged forms at Mleiha, dating to the end of the first millennium B. C. (Boucharlat & Mouton, 1991). However, the study sees that the scenes representing the winged forms had an Egyptian effect, and the countries of the ancient Near East provided some artistic additions at the time.

## 2.2 Al- Fueda Area

### 2.2.1 A Bronze Pot from Al- Fueda, The East of Oman Sultanate

An inscribed bronze pot was found at Al- Fueda, Oman Sultanate. The diameter of the pot is 10 cm (Figure 4).



Figure 4.

This pot shows three rows of human, animal and plant ornamental motifs. The middle of the pot was decorated by a flower. The first row was surrounded by this flower. The first row contains a set of animal ornamental motifs, which represent horses and camels in a state of walking (Paul & Charlotte, 2001). Keimer believes that the forms of flowers are of Egyptian origin, and Mesopotamia and Phoenicia derived these forms from Egypt afterwards (Keimer, 1924). The second row also consists of a set of animal ornamental motifs, which represent a set of horses, camels and caws. These animals also were in a state of working. The third row consists of animal and plant ornamental motifs also. This row also represents a set of animals in opposite position. Some of these animals have horns. The top and bottom of the pot was decorated by two palms. The two palms separate the animal and plant ornamental motifs. A person appears in front of the palm, and the palm here may refer to god Enzak, the son of god Enki. This scene depicts the person as if he was worshiping to god Enki.

## 3. The Inscribed Metal Pots in Mesopotamia

### 3.1 A Pot of Bronze

A large pot of bronze with a circular base raised from the middle of the pot was found in Nimrod (Figure 5).



Figure 5.



It is noticed that the shoulders of the pot seem to be rising outward. Accordingly, the handle in this pot has been fixed by two rings fixed with a brace by two screws from the outside of the rim in order to pass the ring handle inside the rings with all flexibility and ease. The pot lost some of its parts from the edge and sides. It is decorated with a variety of animal ornamental motifs. The center of the pot a blooming flower surrounded by three friezes, which have animal ornamental motifs representing diffused animals.

The middle frieze from the inside represents a set of winged calves, harts, deer and lions. A scene depicts one of these animals being attacked by lions. While the outer frieze depicts a group of calves in a state of successive walk. The inner frieze depicts a set of deer in a state of successive walk.

### 3.2 A Deep Pot of Bronze

A deep pot of bronze with a circular base and a gradually divergent edge from the outside. It is noted that some parts of edge and base have been lost. The middle of the pot was decorated with a blooming flower that surrounded by frieze of plant ornamental motifs representing the lotus flower. This frieze was surrounded by animal ornamental motifs representing eagles and animals, which are likely wild pigs (Figure 6).



Figure 6.

There are ornaments of a set of eagles around the upper edge from inside. There are five Semitic letters from the outside. Barnett believes that the floral ornaments that decorate this pot have a Syrian nature. The scenes of eagles were common in the ancient Near East where they were clearly shown through the Assyrian inscriptions and the ivory pots of Nimrod, dating back to the beginning of the first millennium B. C. (Curtis & Reade, 1995).

### 3.3 A Plate of Bronze

A plate of bronze was found in Nimrod, northern Iraq. The height of the plate is 2.55 cm. the diameter of the plate is 21.85 cm. it is currently preserved in the British Museum under the No. ME N 1, dating back to the beginning of the first millennium B. C. (Figure 7).

The plate has intricate inscriptions (Curtis & Reade, 1995) and is decorated with an geometric shape. It was designed in the form of high – relief sculpture or low relief sculpture from the base of the plate. The plate was decorated with various floral ornamental and silver (Reade, 1989). There was a star in the middle of the plate, which was surrounded by animal drawings such as goats (Barnett, 1965).



Figure 7.

### 3.4 A Pot of Bronze

A pot of bronze was found in Nimrod. The height of the pot is 2.85 cm and its diameter is 21.70 cm. It is now preserved in the British Museum under No. (N 9), dating back to the beginning of the first millennium BC. Reade believes that the pot has high-relief ornaments with Egyptian influences (Curtis & Reade, 1995). These ornaments are four pairs of winged falcons in the form of the Sphinx wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Such pots were found on the Assyrian inscriptions (Collon, 1995). There were pictures of the Assyrian Kings, who hold these pot. It is noted that every winged animal corresponds to the other animal. There are also two men lifting both hands, with a pole in the center, as if they are worshipping to the palm (Barnett, 1965). It is also noted that both opposite animals place one of their legs on the head of each man (Smith, 1928). The middle of the pot was decorated by a beautiful flower. It is likely that this pot reached Nimrod via one of the royal camps in the west, on the Phoenician coast (Figure 8) (Qates, 2001).



Figure 8.

### 3.5 A Plate of Copper

A plate of forged copper was found inside the Babylonian tombs, in Nippur. The height of the plate is 3.75 cm. the diameter of the plate is 19.5 cm. (Figure 9).

It was found under the surface by four meters. The plate was decorated with large circular motifs at the upper edge of the plate. There was a flower in the center of the plate. The flower was surrounded by several small circular shapes. There was a blooming flower like lotus flower which separates between each large circle at the edge (Peters, 1897).

Some believe that the artistic subjects, which emerged on some of the pots in Mesopotamia, were affected some of the Syrian art, while some other pots was affected by the Egyptian art. Curits thinks that animal ornamental motifs, which was found on the pot in figure 5 had a Syrian effect. However, the study sees that these motifs had

an Egyptian effect and they came to Syria afterwards. The pot dated back to the beginning of the first millennium B.C. (Curtis, 1995).



Figure 9.

#### 4. Inscribed Metal Pots in Ancient Egypt

##### 4.1 A Pot of Silver

A pot of silver found at Bubastis (Tell- Basta). The diameter of the pot is 20.5 cm. and its depth is 6.5. the pot is now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, under No. 07.228.20.233 (Figure 10), dating back to the era 19<sup>th</sup> family, a modern state. It contains ornaments on four contains two opposite rows of cattle and a man standing as a leader of horses, holding a rope in his hand and a crooked stick in his like bayonet in the his another hand (Al- Hawaily, 2006). The third scene contains two short palms and two large ones that were used as separations between the scenes.

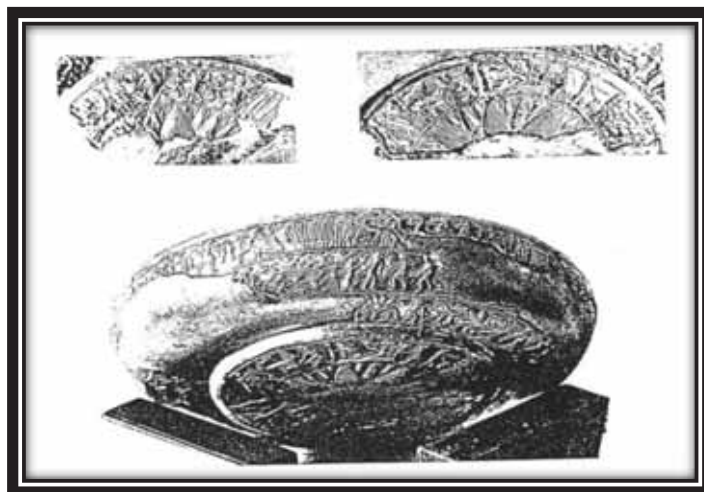


Figure 10.

##### 4.2 Plate of Leader Gehoti

This plate was found inside the Cemetery of Gehoti Hotep, No. 11 in Western Thebes. It is a pure gold. The diameter of the plate is 17.9 cm and its height is 2.2 cm. the weight of the plate is 371.5 grams. It is dated back to the era of King Thutmose III- modern state (Al- Hawaily, 2006). It is currently preserved in the Louvre Museum under No. 713. The plate has been granted to leader Gehoti by King Thutmose for his glorious military actions (Ziegler, 2002), (Figure 11).

It is noted that the center of the plate was decorated with rosetta flower. There were six tilapia fish swimming around the flower. This is one of the Egyptian influences that moved to Mesopotamia, and from there to the Arab Gulf. This scene may refer to a religious significance, which is re- birth and offspring. This may be consistent with the belief of the ancient Egyptian and his belief in the idea of resurrection and immortality, the continuation

of the life after death (Radwan, 1969).



Figure 11.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study sheds light on some of inscribed metal pots in the West of the Arab Gulf (Mleiha and Al-Fueda) and showing human, geometric, animal and floral ornaments that appeared on these pots. The study has compared the pots of Mleiha and Al-Fueda with the pots in civilization of both Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. The Egyptian influences on these pots were evident. The most prominent of these influences are circular flowers and plants. The study has showed that the origin of the ornament of flowers and plant structures, which spread in ancient civilizations were of ancient Egyptian origin. Some scholars opposed the idea that ancient Egypt derived these decorative elements from Mesopotamia. In fact, most of scientists confirmed that these ornaments have ancient Egyptian origins.

The flowers of Chrysanthemum and Rosetta and blooming flowers appeared in both Mleiha and Al-Fueda. Rosetta flower is one of the most important artistic elements that decorated the middle of the pots. The ancient Egyptian gradually developed these ornamental motifs of Rosetta flower, which became similar to margarita flower. The lotus flower was commonly used in ornamental of ancient Near East and was more common in Mesopotamia. The lotus flower in Assyria showed the greatness of its holder. But, this flower symbolized re-birth and life in ancient Egypt.

Furthermore, plant ornamental motifs, trees and palms, which emerged as line between plant and animal ornaments such as the emergence of a person before palm, may symbolize the picture of god. In particular, palm symbolized the picture of god. The Dilmuni artist derived this tree to give the spirit of the locality. The palm represents the tree of life in the arts of the ancient Near East. Also, it represents god Enzak, the son of god Enki, who was god in the Arab Gulf.

In addition, the winged shapes had a significant effect in the pots of Mleiha where some arts of ancient Near East, especially the arts of Mesopotamia and Syria, quoted from the Egyptian art the style of the winged shapes. Also, opinions about the style of jumping animals in the air, which escape from their attackers.

Also, depiction of animals walk was affected by the same artistic style of ancient Egyptian artistic school, which moved to the Arab Gulf via Mesopotamia. Additionally, the spread of drawings, which represent running animals as horses in the west of the Arab Gulf, were derived from the arts of Syria, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt.

Accordingly, the study has reached many conclusions, the most important of which are: 1) The study noted the appearance of inscribed pots in the west of the Arab Gulf, which have ornaments depicting the scenes of hunting, fighting, military wheels, warriors, opposite animal monsters and human, animal and floral ornamental motifs, which was derived from Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. 2) The study noted the prevalence of scenes that represent winged animals shapes, horses, camels and cows in the west of the Arab Gulf, which dating back to the millennium B.C. Similar pots were found in ancient Near East countries, especially Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt, which knew these subjects since the second millennium B.C. 3) The study showed that the appearance of the Rosetta flower on the pots was of Egyptian origin. 4) The pots and plates were decorated with splendid inscriptions and ornaments, and their themes were quoted from neighboring countries. 5) The study noted that some metal inscriptions represented the pure local environment of the art at the time. Also, some of them were

affected by the arts of neighboring civilizations in Mesopotamia, Syria and ancient Egypt. 6) The study noted opinions about the style of representing the jumping animals in the air to escape from their attackers were different. Some see that the style of the movement of rapid and jumping animals is the style of the Aegean art that began in pre- modern times. While Kantor thinks that the style of depicting animals jumping in the air appeared first in the Egyptian arts from the pre- family period until the end of the middle state, and during the era of the modern state.

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# Federalism and Contending Issues in Contemporary Nigeria: Mapping Alternative Perspectives for a Neo-Federalist Paradigm

Joseph Okwesili Nkwede<sup>1</sup>, Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda<sup>2</sup> & Olanrewaju A. Orija<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup> Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

Correspondance: Kazeem Oluwaseun Dauda. Tel: 234-80-5466-9156. E-mail: seundelaw@gmail.com

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## Abstract

Evidence abound that Nigeria's form of federal system has been grappling with serious working and institutional challenges. The paper interrogated contending issues ravaging Nigeria's federal polity with a clarion call for timely adoption of neo-federalism paradigm. It employed qualitative research method with classical model of federalism as framework of analysis. The paper established that Nigeria's federal republic is associated with over-concentration of governmental powers at the centre, sectional domination of powers and political leadership, inept and corrupt leadership/bad governance, socio-economic crisis, insecurity, corruption, favouritism and nepotism, problem of power sharing and poor implementation of federal character principle, which further heightened the delivery of socio-economic services and democratic dividends to the people. It concluded that for Nigeria's federation to stand the test of time and overcome myriad problems it is currently facing, embracing the neo-federalism paradigm is inevitable. Among recommendations proffered include devolution of powers, adequate provision of sustainable security, and election of dedicated, committed and visionary leadership at all levels of government with the ability to drive the economic blueprints of this nation towards greatness, provide essential needs for the citizenry and promote good governance.

**Keywords:** federalism, governance, insecurity, leadership, neo-federalism paradigm

## 1. Introduction

Consequent upon criticisms leveled against the 1922 Clifford's Constitution, Nigerian State wore a toga of federal-pattern style following the provisions for the Central Legislative Council and regional Legislative Councils in the Richard's Constitution (1946) based on Bourdillon's erstwhile recommendations, and progressive recognition of the Central and Regional governments in Macpherson's Constitution of 1951. The emergence of new government with new *grundnum*, that is, Lyttleton's Constitution (1954), paved way for the adoption of a true federal form of government, where distinct governmental powers are shared between the Central government and the Regional governments (Awofeso, 2014). In line with the federal philosophy, Nigerian State has evolved to be structured into Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja (centre), thirty-six (36) States clustered into six geo-political zones of the North-east, North-west, North-central, South-south, South-east and South-west, and divided into 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) as entrenched in the 1999 Constitution (as amended). It is evident, however, that the practice of federalism since independence in 1960 has been conflict-prone with incessant clamour for a 'true federalism'.

However, the last decade has witnessed renewed vigour towards clamouring for a restructured federation by some public affair analysts, politicians, and government functionaries, scholars of repute, legal professionals, religious leaders and notable Nigerians. These imply that the structural configuration of Nigeria needed urgent revisiting, renegotiation and restructuring. The structural imbalance of Nigerian federation is believed to have compounded the socio-economic development and governance crises limiting her potentiality of becoming one of the twenty emerging economies in the world by the year 2020. Consequently, socio-economic and political convulsion facing the polity in contemporary times have continued to threaten the actualization of true federalism as espoused by KC Wheare and subscribed to by founding fathers of Nigerian state in pre-independence period. This situation, without doubt begs for scholarly devotion and interrogation. The

objective of this paper therefore, is to unravel contending issues ravaging Nigerian federalism in contemporary period taking into cognizance the alternative perspectives for neo-federalism.

## 2. Conceptual Clarifications

There exist various conceptions on federalism in extant literature. We shall however consider few of these viewpoints here for our proper understanding. The term “federalism” connotes different thing to certain individuals. The concept, according to the father of federalism, KC Wheare (1963), is the method of dividing powers in so that the general and regional units are each within a sphere co-ordinate and independent. In the words of McLean and McMillan (2003: 195), “federalism suggests that everybody can be satisfied by nicely combining national and regional interests within a complex web of checks and balances between a national or federal government, on the one hand, and a multiplicity of regional government, on the other”. Similarly, Enu, Opoh and Bassey (2017: 73) describe federalism as a “system of government whereby governmental powers and economic structures of a country are shared between Central government and component federating units”.

Federation describes any country that embraces federal ideology. Dicey defined a federation as a political contrivance intended to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of state rights. To express it in the view of Wheare (1963), federation is the group of states or communities desire to be united, but not to be unitary. Kapur (2006) identifies basic features of a federation to include the desire for union, the will to lose sovereignty by the states involved as soon as a federation is formed, mechanism of two parts (Central and Regional governments), written and rigid constitution, supremacy of the constitution and permanency. To Kapur, a federal state or polity envisages a dual government of divided powers. In a nutshell, federalism implies a philosophy, methodology, principle or theory that describes how a plural state should be governed, governmental powers shared, and inter-governmental relationship among sovereign states maintained.

Following from the foregoing, it can be deduced that federalism is a distinct principle of governing a state hitherto with different governing style and administration. It represents a system of government that describes a method of arranging territorial government, and accommodating differing territorial interests that, at one and the same time, avoids perceived over-centralization of governmental powers at the centre. This is corroborated in Kincaid’s (1995) conception of federalism as the approach to governance that seeks to combine unity or shared rule with diversity or self-rule. Federalism, with its division of powers between the Central and federating units is, as Friedrich (1968: 216) says, “a mainstay of constitutional government.”

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on classical model of federalism. Classical model of federalism is associated with Kenneth Clinton Wheare (1907-1979). Wheare is often referred to as father and doyen of federal philosophy. K.C. Wheare argued that a system can only be said to be Federal if there is “a division of powers between one general and several regional governments, each of which, in its own sphere, is co-ordinate with the others; each government must act directly on the people; each must be limited to its own sphere of action; and each must within that sphere, be independent of the others” (Wheare, 1963, p. 11). Looking at Wheare’s classical idea of federation, it can be deduced that both the legal and institutional mechanisms must be put in place before a decision to federate. To achieve strict division of powers capable of ensuring total independence and coordination between the central and component units, written and rigid constitution must be in existence. As such, the Constitution is supreme in a federal polity. This is maintained by Kapur (2006: 403) that “unlike the unitary government, powers of the units in a federation are original and not derived. They are not the grant of the central government, but the gift of the Constitution and as such they are constitutionally protected.”

Flowing from the above argument is the fact that in a true federal system, both the central and regional governments are coordinate, independent authorities within their allotted sphere of jurisdiction. Neither one can encroach upon the powers of the other. If any change is desired to be made in the distribution of powers, it cannot be made by any one of the two sets of government alone. It must be made by amending the Constitution as prescribed by law. Also, it means equality of status between the two sets of government and this is one of the cardinal principles of a federal polity. Federalism also demands that each component units are free to run their own administration and participate in the federal government. Equally, a federation depends upon the consent of the people. This is where the concept democracy comes in, depicting that a federal state must be a democratic state.

As argued by Mackintosh (1962), the Nigerian federation has always had peculiar features; the most evident being that it was not created by the coming together of separate (confederal) states but was the subdivision of a country which had in theory been ruled as a single unit. Nigeria had at one time a “civilian federalism” and sometimes “military federalism”, and each has given Nigeria federalism different shapes and structures (Sagay,

2003). Without doubt, the incursions of the military juntas in Nigerian governance turned the whole idea of federalism to a “hard row to hoe”. Little wonder then did Muhammad (2007: 189) asserts that “Nigeria’s adoption of the federal system was not as a strategy to manage problems of pre-independence period but more importantly as an enduring strategy that would help detonate a major source of threat to the future political stability of an independent Nigeria.”

Since independence, Nigeria federation has been confronted with varied crises that have continued shaking the foundation of the country’s unity and corporate existence. The dimensions of these crises include electoral crisis, intra/inter-party crises, crisis over resource sharing/control, inter-ethnic struggles, boundary disputes, religious uprising/extremists’ deadly attacks, insurgency, and terrorism. Chiefly among these is governance crisis identified as the root of all evils associated with African states, Nigeria being inclusive. All these crises have culminated to be the major reasons of agitation for restructuring of Nigerian federation in the past years.

### 3. Methodology

The paper adopted qualitative research method. Qualitative research method, as argued by Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009), is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena aimed at helping us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are. This method is suitable for this paper because it enables readers to understand the current Nigerian situation through a holistic perspective. However, the paper which derived its argument from existing secondary sources of data including textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, government publications, constitutions, and Internet, is content, theoretically and discourse analyzed.

### 4. Federalism and the Nigerian State

Prior to the amalgamation of the Colony and Southern Protectorate with Northern Protectorate in 1914, the current geographical entity called “Nigeria” with geo-political zones and states were once conglomeration of “empires”, “emirates”, and “kingdoms”, that are previously autonomous political entities and sovereign within their spheres of jurisdiction in conformity with their socio-cultural, political and economic realities. These entities relate with one another diplomatically, economically, politically, socially, and culturally. They equally had their own unique ways of political administration, administration of justice, and conflict mediation, conciliation and resolution processes. In the words of Awofeso (2014: 16), “all the functions of modern day government were performed by some kind of rudimentary, non-differentiated and non-secularized structures which cut across different levels of administration. Laws were made, executed and adjudicated”. Decentralized, semi-centralised and centralised political administration could be identified within the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani political systems, respectively. This actually presents the ways and manners in which the pre-colonial Nigeria was administered.

Following the official conquest and annexation of Lagos in 1861, colonial rule was established in Nigeria. Since 1900 when the British government decided to take full charge of the administration of the entire country, the Colonial government had gradually embarked on progressive amalgamation policy in the country. Hence, the British government divided the entire country into three administrative units - the Northern Protectorate, the Southern Protectorate and the Lagos Colony in 1900, two administrative units - the Protectorate of the Southern Nigeria and the Colony, and the Northern Protectorate in 1906, and then into a single unit of administration in 1914 (Awofeso, 2014).

The amalgamation of 1914 brought with it new *grundnum* for which the exercise of powers are spelt out and entrenched, that is, the Lugard’s Constitution (1914). Despite the introduction of more sophisticated Constitution in 1922, it is imperative to note that not all regions were represented in the Legislative Council. The unnecessary exclusion, marginalization of certain sections of the country and Europeanization of the Order-in-Council, Legislative Council and Executive Council, led to bitter struggles, agitations and increase in tempo towards the formation of a new government. The new government headed by Sir Arthur Richardson came into existence with the Richard’s Constitution (1946) which provided for regionalism as against Unitarianism earlier adopted. The 1946 Constitution which aimed at promoting unity for the diverse elements made up the country provided the groundwork for eventual evolution of federalism in Nigeria. The Macpherson’s Constitution (1951) improved upon the Richard’s Constitution by introducing quasi-federalism. This implies that greater autonomy was given to the various regions.

The Lyttleton’s Constitution (1954) introduced true federalism in Nigeria. By this, greater autonomy was provided to various regions thus giving room for functional division of powers between the Central and Regional governments. Subsequent constitutions including the current 1999 Constitution (as amended) professed the ideals of federalism. For instance, section 2(2) and section 3 provide that Nigeria shall remain a federation

consisting of 36 States and a Federal Capital Territory. The Constitution also recognizes 774 Local Government Areas, and divides powers among these levels of government on the basis of Exclusive, Residual and Concurrent Lists. The Exclusive List is within the authority of the national government to carry out, e.g. foreign affairs, defense, etc. On the other hand, the Concurrent list is within the responsibility of the Federal and State government, while the Residual list is exclusively within the responsibility of the State government. But in a situation where there is a conflict between the state and that of the national government, the national power will always supersede the state power.

#### 4.1 *Contending Issues and Trends of Nigeria's Federal System of Governance*

Although federalism is reputed to be an effective political cum constitutional design for managing complex governmental problems usually associated with ethnic and cultural diversity (Ojo, 2002), it has been very vulnerable to wanton destruction of lives and property, breakdown of law and order, and instability/crisis in Nigeria. There are many unresolved issues associated with Nigeria federalism in contemporary time such include over-concentration of governmental powers at the centre, sectional domination of powers and political leadership, inept and corrupt leadership/bad governance, socio-economic crisis, insecurity, corruption, favouritism and nepotism, problem of power sharing, and poor implementation of federal character principle. These fundamental issues and trends of Nigeria's federal system in contemporary period, form the crux of this section.

##### 4.1.2 Over-concentration of Powers at the Centre

It is crystal clear that what currently practicable in Nigeria is over-concentration of powers at the Centre as against the philosophy of a true federalism. Federalism presupposes autonomy of each tier of government, which means that both the State and Local governments must be independent of the Central government in terms of powers (legislative and judicial), finance, appointment, etc. This essential element of a Federal state is found wanting in Nigeria. This challenge has been programmed to remain so as reflected in the Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. The submission made by Nkwede (2013: 76) is apt in this regard:

The components of the federation - the states today, depend almost entirely on the centre for security, finance, roads, schools, health facilities, power, employment, water, industries, etc. The situation is so pervasive such that if the centre delays in releasing funds due to the states to them, there is tension, chaos and doubt because the states cannot even pay salaries, let alone prosecuting their development programmes on their own.

Incontrovertibly, smaller units (States and Local) of government in the present Nigeria lack requisite power, geographic span of control, and knowledge of resources, to cope with inescapable issues related to economic stability and development, and are unable to assume satisfaction of basic needs and broadening wants, not to be neglected in the age of the common man. This is to the detriment of effective governance and development of these federating units. Corroborating this argument, Atiku cited in *Vanguard Editorial* (May 31, 2016) laments that the Federal government is too big and powerful relative to the federating units. An excessively powerful centre does not equate to national unity and integration. This situation needs to change.

##### 4.1.3 Sectional Domination of Powers

Sectional domination of powers and political leadership in Nigeria cannot be ruled out. It is vividly clear from available evidences that the motive behind the division and eventual amalgamation of the separate unit of ethnic groupings and political entities was not intended to serve the national interest; rather it was meant to nepotise sectional interest. This is elaborately pointed out in the observations made by Falola and Heaton (2008: 117), as thus:

The ostensible reason for amalgamating the Nigerian Protectorates was economic...the economy of the Northern Protectorate had floundered under indirect rule and had not become fully self-financing as of 1914. Taxation had not produced enough revenue to cover the administrative needs of the Protectorate, and commerce had not grown sufficiently to make the region profitable. To finance itself, the Northern Protectorate relied on annual subsidies from Southern Nigeria and an imperial grant-in-aid from the British government to the tune of approximately £300,000.

Fast forward to independence, the Northern hegemonic domination was argued to be responsible for the first military coup in Nigeria in 1966 (Bassey, 2012). It is unimaginable trend that out of fifty-seven (57) years of Nigeria's political independence, the North had ruled the country for over 35 years, while the South altogether had ruled only for about 22 years. Moreover, the North has 19 States, while the South possesses 17 States. In the distribution of head of ministries, security chiefs and so on, the North carry majority. The implication of this is that other ethnic groups and regions have been made subservient to the Northern region since inception till date.



Its consequent effect is the emergence of series of ethnic militants armed with the purpose of standing against the injustice for being short-changed in the distribution and allocation of powers and resources.

#### 4.1.4 Influence of Governing Elites/Cabals

The influence of governing elites/cabal on Nigerian government and politics is incontrovertible. Elites are those who wield political, economic, social and ethno-religious influence or other powers in a country (Dauda, 2017). This dominant class or powerful cabal or ruling elites, as observed by Therbon cited in Melendez (2016), not only install particular regime, they also influence state policies for their own benefits. These are who Prof. Pat Utomi in his article titled: "Healing a bleeding nation" (2017), describes as "club of capture". Utomi then grouped this club into three, namely: *modernizer wannabes* (those who the value system sabotaged their desire), *narcissistic influencers* (those who are consumed by their self-love; are contented with whoever is in power so far they can appoint the oil minister and others), and *entitlement-minded ones* (those who believe that Nigeria is their property and are entitled to the sharing of its resources) (Toluwani, 2017).

Utomi further attributed Nigeria's woes including underdevelopment and institutional failures to this set of people. This set of people who enjoy larger share of national cake, always do everything within their powers to ensure their hegemony within their respective occupied elective offices, which often results to do-or-die affairs with consequence on electoral outcome. Their mischievous acts have downplayed the achievement of good governance and development, and hinder true federalism to flourish. In tandem with the above assertion, Eze, Nkwede and Uwabunkonye (2012) argued that politics and power relation in Nigeria are always determined by few individuals among the Nigeria elites who belong to various regions, ethnic enclaves and sections. And that politics and power relation always directed towards overshadowing of the masses from the political economy of the nation.

#### 4.1.5 Inept/Corrupt Leadership and Bad Governance

Perhaps the most compounding woe betiding the Nigerian state since independence remains that of inept/corrupt leadership and bad governance. Both remain the bane of development and governance crisis in Nigeria. A government is elected to solve problems and improve the lives of its people, (Adenikinju, 2016) hence this seems inapplicable to Nigerian leaders. Various writers have emphasized on how Nigeria has been unlucky in having good, diligent and sincere leaders (Lawal & Dauda, 2016; Ali, 2013; Achebe, 1983). The resultant effects are failure to deliver good governance and securing welfare of the people. Hence, lack of effective and visionary leadership in Nigeria is the greatest cause of lack of direction, unity and cohesion required for democratic sustenance, good governance and national development (Akinola, Adebisi, & Oyewo, 2015).

#### 4.1.6 Socio-Economic Crisis

No doubt, Nigeria at the moment is in 'state of flux' where poverty rate is on the increase, unemployment level on the rise, and economy is in comatose, while hardship and rife in inflation have become a daunting challenge (Dauda, 2017). As of January 1, 2016, the population of Nigeria was estimated at 184.635 million. Out of this figure, about one hundred and ten million (110 million) people was said to be poor and about two-tenth are in extreme poverty (Adetayo, 2016), while 28.58 million (14.2%) people were unemployed as at December 2016 (*Vanguard Editorial*, June 6, 2017). The above figures seem appalling and awful of the nation blessed with abundant human and material resources. Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that the Nigerian economic growth rate may shrink further and that inflation remains a potential problem (Adenikinju, 2016). Undeniably, the nation's economic crisis has deepened.

#### 4.1.7 Insecurity and Political Instability

Without mincing word, insecurity and political instability have been the permanent features of Nigeria body-politic. Nigeria has been crisis-ridden since the attainment of political independence in 1960. From the first military coup in 1966 till their last interregnum in 1998, the Civil War of 1967-1970, various electoral violence, ethnic agitations for states creation and against marginalization, and ethno-religious crises. In the recent times, for instance, the waning insurgent attacks by boko haram sect in the North-east, Fulani-herdsmen conflicts in the North-central, bombing and militancy attacks in the South-south, kidnappings in the South-east, and ritual killings, cultism and recently kidnapping in the South-western region portend danger to the process of nation-building, political stability and national cohesion.

#### 4.1.8 Corruption, Favouritism and Nepotism

Corruption, favouritism and nepotism have remained cantankerous issues responsible for poor management and administration in Nigerian public and private sectors. Since the substantial portion of the national revenue is controlled from the top (i.e. federal/central government) and this exercise is often characterised by corruption,



while the award of contracts, appointments and promotions, as well as other benefits rather done in a transparent manner and follow due process, are often influenced by favouritism and nepotism. Corruption remains a major contributor to national disunity and instability in Nigeria. In this sense, Osuntokun (2016) points out that ethno-regional parochialism and over-centralised government is the root of public corruption in Nigeria. He states further that the abuse of office, favouritism and political nepotism have been part of government since independence.

#### 4.1.9 Resource Control and Sharing Formula Crisis

Crisis on resource control and sharing formula are another factors affecting the effective working of federalism in Nigeria. There has always been crisis in lieu of the control and management of resources from the jurisdictions of states or local governments such resources are extracted since independence till date. No doubt resource control has remained the most contentious issue among the three tiers of government. Nigeria operates a system in which the federal government harnesses the natural resources and shares revenue with the states and local governments, which is a departure from an ideal federal system, in which the regions or states as the federating units control resources located in their territories (Dickson & Asua, 2016; Agbaje, 2013). Adelegan (2009), while subscribing to the problem of sharing formula in Nigeria, argues that the unrests and widespread disturbances in many parts of the federation are attributable to issues of fiscal federalism which must be thoroughly and critically examined within the context of federalism. In a similar vein, Nkwede, Nwali and Orga (2013) stated that one of the greatest challenges of federalism in Nigeria is that of sharing formula as regards to the fiscal resources generated and jointly owned by the federating units.

#### 4.1.10 Poor Implementation of Federal Character Principle

Another disturbing issue is poor implementation of federal character principle in all ramifications. Federal character principle as a strategy adopted to allay the fears of domination and marginalization of some ethnic groups in Nigeria, has failed to prevent tribal or regional dominance of any government, its institutions and agencies. This is in concurrence with the report in *Sunday Tribune* (July 16, 1995: 5), that the principle “has been used to achieve unintended purposes of ethnic-cleansing sort-of”. In actual fact, federal character policy instead of promoting “fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country’s position of power, status and influence” (Government’s views and comments on the Findings and Recommendations of the Political Bureau (1987: 86), it rather engenders instability and national disintegration. Observing trend shows that appointments into key offices are not evenly distributed, as these are often dictated by the whims and caprices of the political elites.

From the foregoing, the fundamental issues analysed in this section depicts that the trend of Nigeria federal system is tilting towards destruction. With these disturbing trends, Nigeria may stand the risk of democratic recession, another civil war and probably division. It may be difficult for a country such as Nigeria to toe the path of integration or stability. It is imperative for all stakeholders to concentrate more on how to manage the present Nigeria’s federal structures towards ensuring national unity and integration, stability and development, rather than promoting superfluous division and disintegration.

### 4.2 *Managing Nigeria’s Federal Structures Towards Enhancing Good Governance, National Integration and Development: Mapping Out Alternative Perspectives*

No doubt, the philosophical foundation upon which federalism is laid has the tendency and serves as a viable option for national unity and integration, as well as platform for good governance. Federalism is considered an effective way of achieving and preserving both integration and stability in deeply divided societies. Duchacek (1977) argues that the dialectic and disparity between the geographic confines of territorial states on the one hand, and the boundaries of ethno-territorial communities on the other, seem to invite a federal solution. Similarly, Macmahon cited in Osaghae (1984) contends that, federalism is a means in countries where diversity is pronounced, and the consent of the governed are accommodated by the government.

However, Nigerian federalism in various writings has been described as “weak”, “fragile”, “convoluted” and sometime “failed”. Thus, managing Nigeria’s federalism has been a daunting challenge to post-independence governments. Quite a number of strategies put in place by successive governments to manage federal structural imbalance seemed to have yielded diminutive successes. Some of these efforts include the creation of states (36 States), adoption and establishment of National Youth Service Corps scheme (1973), introduction of a uniform local government system (1976), establishment of Federal Character Commission and adoption of federal character principle (1978). Others include the relocation of Federal Capital Territory to Abuja (1991), introduction of revenue sharing formula, creation of Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC) (2000), and establishment of Unity schools, among others. These measures, as argued by scholars and analysts, have not

worked adequately to promote Nigeria's national unity and integration (Enu, Opoh & Bassey, 2017; Atiku, 2016; Nkwede, 2013; Bassey, 2012; Ojo, 2009), hence, the proposition of the Neo-federalism paradigm as the solution to Nigeria's intimidating challenges.

The Neo-federalism paradigm is a model which prescribes a paradigm shift from what is currently obtained to a more desirable decentralization of political powers, allocation, transformation and utilization of resources, fiscal powers, development, laws and functions. It deals with "what it ought to be" as against "how it should be". The Neo-federalism model is a political philosophy of devolution, or the transfer of certain powers from the Central government back to the states. Exponentially, the paradigm involves repackaging, re-branding and restoration of federal ideology to a unique Wheare's philosophy and conditions for a true form of federal system, such that, each level of government are independent with distinct constitutional division of powers, financial autonomy for the levels of government, and that, none of the government will be seen as inferior. The practice of federal ideology in Nigeria, in contemporary time, is devoid of the above conditions and as such needs to be revisited.

In light of the above position, it is no longer news that the Nigerian Constitution recognizes three levels of government with the Central (federal) government at the apex followed by the State governments (36 in number) and then Local government (numbering 774). This shows that Nigeria is a federal state. However, the analysis of the issues in Nigerian federalism has shown that there is crisis with the practice of this form of government since 1960s. The paradigm suggests that there is need for restoration to the States, of some of the autonomy and powers, which they have lost to the Federal government as a consequence of military incursion into Nigerian politics. It further defines the devolution of powers through constitutional reform that is aimed at making each level of government independent. This means that the Federal government should not be so dominant in the decisions affecting the whole nation.

The above contention is in tandem with Vile's (1961: 197) position on federalism that, "in this system a balance is maintained such that neither level of government becomes dominant to the extent that it can dictate the decision of the other, but each can influence, bargain and persuade the other". In line with this perception, Falana cited in Oyetunji and Ramon (2017) avers that devolution of powers, in the Nigerian context, means that the Federal Government will be in charge of defence, foreign affairs, immigration, inter-state commerce, fiscal and monetary policy, etc, while the States will manage their own affairs and develop at their own pace. Devolution of powers and Local government autonomy remain important elements of a true federalism. Going by this argument and highlighting the relevance of devolution of powers to the constituent units, Okotie (2010: 15) asserts that:

Devolution is associated with local autonomy and with increase scope for popular participation in governmental activities. Under the devolution category, local governments are granted powers to source for their revenue control, their finances as well as recruit their own personnel. Devolution indicates status and policy making power. Devolution of power is also designed to create a political environment in which power to access political, economical and social resources is distributed between the central government and lower levels of government. State authority is divided among a wide range of actors, making politics less threatening and therefore encouraging joint problem solving. Devolution creates a fairer political ground, protects groups and individual human rights, establishes check and balances to central power and prevents political violence among rival groups.

The above remarks, nevertheless, point to the fact that what is required in lieu of the current crises roaring their ugly heads in the Nigerian state is simply and squarely devolution of powers from the Central government to the State and Local governments. This perception was captured in the statement made by Atiku Abubakar in *Vanguard Editorial* (May 31, 2016) while pointing out the significance of devolution of powers to nation's stability and development. Atiku notes that greater autonomy, power and resources for state and local authority provides the federation units with greater freedom and flexibility to address local issues for their priorities and peculiarities, reduce the premium placed on capturing power at the centre, reduce insecurity and promote healthy rivalry among the federating units.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has established that what distinguishes a unitary form of political administration from a federal polity is that no level of government in a federation is wholly or continuously subordinate to the other. This clearly shows that what obtains in Nigeria is contrary to the norms and principles of a true federal system thus making it prone to all sorts of crisis and instability. The crisis with Nigerian federalism is a man-made, and requires political will from political managers, as long as regional integration remains a stage where former independent entities have handed parts or all of their sovereignty over to a national body and integrated into a nation. The

paper therefore concludes that for Nigeria's federalism to stand the test of time and overcome myriad problems endangering her corporate existence and entity, embracing the neo-federalism paradigm is inevitable.

In view of the foregoing, this paper recommends that there is urgent need for accelerating the emergent nature of different militant groups with immediate adoption of neo-federalism paradigm or model (devolution of powers) where the different ethnic groups will be truly represented with a view to engendering national integration, peace and stability, as well as getting governance closer to the *hoi polloi*. To achieve this, the adoption and implementation of recommendations of the 2014 Confab report by the current administration, is imperative. Moreover, the attitudes of both the leaders and the led towards governance needs to change. Also, immediate attention should be summoned towards solving socio-economic problems affecting the polity. There is the need for adequate provision of sustainable security at all levels of governance. More importantly is the visionary, dedicated and committed leaderships at all levels of government, with the ability to rule with utmost command of respect and authority, and to drive the economic blueprints of this great country towards providing social and basic amenities cum infrastructural needs for the vulnerable citizens. Above all, both the Federal and State governments should be more responsive and responsible to the plights of their people rather than the pursuit and achievement of their political goals.

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