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## **The Civil Society Building Peace Amid War: A Conceptual Proposal**

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Through the analysis of the Colombian case (2012-2021), which includes mapping 211 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working for peace, we propose a mixed conceptual framework that allows for the conceptualization of CSOs based on fundamental and complementary attributes. As a result of the intersection of these attributes, we propose four ideal-typical forms: (1) CSOs for the culture of peace and democratic strengthening, (2) CSOs for democratic strengthening based on membership in a vulnerable group within the conflict context, (3) CSOs for comprehensive development as a means to pacify society, (4) CSOs for the development of a group and/or territory affected by the conflict, based on belonging to that group or area. Although as ideal abstractions overlapping is possible, the results show that 166 of the studied CSOs work around the democratic cause. Specifically, 97 of them related to culture of peace, and 69 based on belonging to vulnerable groups. On the other hand, 64 of the observed CSOs work for development. Here it is possible to distinguish between CSOs that emerge around the agenda (39 out of 64) and those that organize themselves around a sense of belonging or identity (25 out of 64).

**Keywords:** Colombia, armed conflict; ideal forms, peace; civil society.

Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Member States of the United Nations reaffirmed a global commitment to peace and justice in 2015. In this context, the importance of Civil Society (CS) participation is increasingly emphasized as a fundamental actor in the pursuit of peaceful conflict solutions, peacebuilding, and the defense of Human Rights (HR). Now, more than ever, CS is engaged on issues of public interest (ur Rahman, 2021) and exercise an active role, considered a prerequisite for good governance (Riaz & Pasha, 2011). One of the most relevant characteristics attributed to CS actors is their ability to organize pressure networks at the national and international levels for the defense and guarantee of HR in contexts of violence (Della Porta & Kriesi, 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 1999; Thörn, 2006; Lopez & Hincapie, 2015). Their growing prominence is evident in various sectors, including public advocacy, the demand for public policies, and support for victims (Strange, 2011; Lopez & Hincapie, 2015).

In this context, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) also play significant roles - and/or serve as strategic communicators - in generating, framing, and disseminating information (Fröhlich & Jungblut, 2016, 2018). One of the active roles in this sense is mobilizing citizens around the peace cause (Kali, 2022; Kim 2022). Thus, CS, as a social actor within the international system contributing to peacebuilding in conflict contexts, emerges as a fertile research space that allows for the bridging of different bodies of literature in the social sciences.

The functions of CS in peacebuilding can be situated within the analytical framework proposed by Paffenholz and Spurk (2006), which outlines seven functions: advocacy, protection, monitoring, socialization, social cohesion, intermediation, and services (in Marín Aranguren, 2017). In light of the case study, the cross-cutting nature of these functions within different expressions of CS in Colombia was observed. In other words, civil society organizations working on the issue of peace in Colombia may fulfil several of these functions over time or even engage simultaneously in multiple roles aligned with their goals or mission.

Although CS plays an important role in promoting the cessation of armed conflict, and constitutes a vital force in post-conflict recovery, also faces challenges and obstacles to build peace amidst conflict situations. First, war may have a significant impact on CS, because it is transformed as a result of resisting the pressures of war. The state, which frames CS functions within, may fully or partly break or could become more authoritarian. War divides people and erodes the social ties that bridge various groups (Harpviken & Kjellman, 2004). In that context, the relationship between civil society and peacebuilding is particularly complex, because war undermines CS (Harvey 1998).

For historical reasons related to the violence, CS was not, for a long time, a vibrant sphere in Colombia. Violence limited solidarity and organizational capacity and stigmatized it by associating it with the left and supporting the guerrillas. It had an impact in working methods and associative ties, undermining both, the strength of CS and its contribution to a sustainable peacebuilding process.

Second, CS is often excluded (or given a menial role) in peace processes/peacebuilding due to the standard state-centric approach and the monopoly of power held by state institutions and the established elites (Paffenholz, 2009). In fact, one explanation for the lack of CS impact is the absence of institutionalized and transparent relationships between society and the state (Gready, 2010). Furthermore, on several occasions there is limited citizen participation and diversity of citizens involved in CSOs, limiting their impact (Transparency International Rwanda, 2015).

Third, some CS peacebuilding initiatives have been lauded for their ability to promote conflict transformation, at least in the local communities in which they operate. When it comes to changing the broader conflict dynamics, however CSOs are generally considered relatively impotent, and their work must be complemented by middle and top-level actors and institutions (Fischer, 2010).

Fourth, national and local CSOs have sought, and continue, to play multiple roles to tackle challenges exacerbated by violence, including persistent conflict, widespread corruption, poor governance, and extreme poverty. However, there are doubts about the extent to which they have been able to, or can, influence elite level politics and achieve impact beyond local-level improvements in peacebuilding amidst conflict (Mutasa & Virk, 2017).

Finally, the role of CS promoting peace amid war could show a pattern, with an initial flurry of engagement and activities, but declining over time and being overly dependent on international funding (Öjendal, Leonardsson & Lundqvist, 2017).

That said, there is a broad elasticity and a vague conception of the concept of CS, resulting in analyses that are disconnected from contexts (Bhattacharyya, 2021; Edwards, 2011, 2014; Marchetti & Tocci, 2009; Theros, 2019; Waters, 2015). Theoretical developments on this

topic have primarily taken into account Western, peaceful, and democratic contexts, while there is still a need to expand and qualify studies on CSOs operating in areas affected by armed conflicts and/or violence (Lemaitre & Sandvik, 2015; Marchetti & Tocci, 2009; Theros, 2019).

In fact, the limited understanding and often abstract conceptions of CS and its organizations have led to a reduced awareness of their real or potential role on the local and international stage, especially when it comes to violence-affected or internally conflicted areas. Addressing this theoretical-conceptual challenge is a fundamental task, as Sartori (1970) suggests that concepts form the foundation of the analytical and interpretive process, and dedicated and profound reflection on them can guide a true understanding of the constantly changing social reality.

In Colombia, armed conflict has been a constant since the 1960s. Paradigmatically, the Colombian government achieved a peace agreement with the FARC-EP guerrillas in 2016 and is currently engaged in negotiations with the ELN guerrillas. In a country marked by violence, where armed conflict persists due to the state not having a monopoly on weapons, CS has made a commitment to peace and peaceful conflict resolution, despite stigmatization and violence it has faced.

Colombian CS has not only been crucial in identifying the needs of vulnerable population groups such as indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, women, displaced individuals, and conflict victims, but it has also played a key role in monitoring public policies, transparency, and the administration of justice, among other functions (Sánchez-Garzoli, 2016).

On the other hand, in Colombia, it is challenging to map CS, both due to the volatility of the entities and the diversity of criteria used by sources to register them (Appe, 2011). Therefore, one of the significant contributions of this research lies precisely in mapping 211 CSOs working for peace in the midst of an armed conflict context, allowing for the classification of their different members and agendas (Gómez-Quintero, 2014).

Although in Colombia, peace negotiations with insurgent groups during the 1980s and 1990s, and even with paramilitary groups in the early 2000s, did not involve actors like CSOs or the international community, this landscape changed with the agreement with the FARC-EP. In this process, CS participated in commissions, workshops, colloquia, and committees and is currently a relevant actor in dialogues with the ELN (Valencia-Agudelo & Villarreal-Miranda, 2020).

Recognizing the need to address the gap in the literature regarding the contribution of CSOs to peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict contexts (Ishkanian, Manusyan, Khalatyan & Margaryan, 2023; Nilsson, 2018), this work, based on the analysis of the Colombian case from 2012 (start of the exploratory stage with the FARC-EP) to 2021 (the first five years of peace agreement implementation), seeks to provide theoretical and conceptual tools to understand who CSOs are and the themes around which they organize. It also highlights the relevance of CSOs not only for the associative activities they undertake but also for their ability to promote and achieve better policy outcomes (Rincón Gabourel, 2018).

### **Method**

For this research, a mapping of 211 CSOs in Colombia working on peace-related issues amidst the armed conflict was conducted, documenting their diversity in members and agendas. The "Memories in Times of War: Repertoire of Initiatives" report by the National Center for Historical Memory (2009) served as the starting point for tracking CSOs in the country. The collection of information was expanded using data from Government's freely accessible database, "Open Data" (Government of Colombia, 2020).

Three criteria were used for the selection of CSOs: (1) that their mission explicitly expressed a commitment to conflict transformation and/or peacebuilding and/or included a line/area of work dedicated to conflict transformation or peacebuilding; (2) that they were formally constituted with registration in the Chamber of Commerce and/or had a formal organizational structure that allowed for their continuity over time (Magatti, 2003); (3) that their data/information were available and accessible. In other words, they had a website, their data could be found in institutional reports, they had a presence on social media profiles, or other platforms.

The constructed database compiles information on nine elements: (1) the name of the CSO; (2) date of formation and justification; (3) the conflict/peace axis it focuses on; (4) scope of action (national or regional); (5) city and/or region where it operates; (6) members (classified into two categories: individuals or groups of individuals and networks of local CSOs, with 35 subcategories accounting for elements such as whether they are victims of the armed conflict, women, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, LGBTQ+ population, geographical origin, among others); (7) agenda; (8) cause (the thematic focus of the CSO's action, including three categories: security, democracy and governance, and sustainable socio-economic development); (9) functions (including protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialization, community building/social cohesion, intermediation between citizens and the State, and services).

Once the database was constructed, invitations for semi-structured interviews were sent to representatives of all CSOs via email or social media. The questions in the instrument were validated by two expert academics, and 38 representatives accepted the invitation and responded to the interview questions in person or virtually between January and June 2021. Specifically, the interviews aimed to understand how participants defined the CSO they represented, its members, its mission, and its work in the context of peacebuilding.

At this point, it is necessary to include a methodological consideration regarding possible limitations and/or biases in the construction of the database. Specifically, the information available on the Internet tends to over-represent successful cases. In this regard, direct contact with field actors during the interviews was crucial to verify the data. The field research phase was a fruitful period that enabled direct contact with CSOs, promoting a deeper understanding of the context and the actors involved.

Based on the data obtained and drawing from the research by Barrenechea and Castillo (2019), which argues that the conceptual category of CS can be studied by combining 'necessary and sufficient' attributes ('fundamental') and 'complementary' attributes (determined by the context), Fundamental Attributes (FAs) and Complementary Attributes (CAs) were constructed for the Colombian case.

The FAs resulted from a deductive process and were obtained through a review of specialized literature. The procedure involved documentary analysis, where, through the review



of literature, recurring themes and characteristics used to define the concept of CS were identified, and those on which there is a certain consensus in the literature. In this way, four FAs were identified: (1) non-governmental nature; (2) independence; (3) motivation; and (4) structure and interaction. These attributes serve to define what is understood by CS in this research and to locate the groups that comprise it.

In contrast, the CAs resulted from an inductive process and are linked to the characteristics of the studied context. The procedure in this case was based on empirical observation. For the CAs, a matrix was proposed containing seven elements divided into four categories related to their members and three categories related to the cause. Regarding their members, we identified: (1) autonomous and independent citizens; (2) citizens organized based on territorial criteria; (3) citizens organized based on identification with a group or sector of society; and (4) networks of social organizations. Regarding the cause, we identified: (1) democracy and governance, (2) sustainable socio-economic development, and (3) security.

The intersection between the FAs and CAs led to the formulation of ideal types under the label 'Forms of Civil Society' (FCS), determined by the combination of two elements: the motivation towards peacebuilding, including democracy and governance and sustainable socio-economic development, and the factors that drove the organization of individuals, which encompass the agenda and identity.

Before continuing with the conceptualization of CS in conflict zones, it is important to recognize the limitations of the research findings for other regions or conflicts beyond the Colombian case. However, two elements should not be lost sight of. First, the relevance of the case addressed, derived from the uniqueness of Colombia, where post-conflict coexists with armed conflict. Although the Havana agreements signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrillas marked a period of peacebuilding, the International Red Cross points out that at least six internal armed conflicts persist in the country (Inguanzo & Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2023). Second, the proposed approach has the potential to travel beyond the Colombian case because it promotes a better understanding of the concept of CS in conflict zones based on the observation and analysis of the attributes (fundamental and complementary) that characterize CSOs in such contexts. This mixed conceptual formulation, has allowed us to generate ideal types of organizational forms of CSOs that serve as an analytical and conceptual tool that can be used in future research on CS in conflict contexts.

### **Conceptualizing CS in Conflict Zones**

When considering a more comprehensive understanding of CS engaged in peacebuilding within conflict zones, the researchers propose an approach that combines fundamental attributes (those necessary and sufficient to delineate the CS sphere) with complementary attributes specific to the context. They adopt a conceptual formulation strategy that amalgamates the significant contributions of the classic structure advocated by Sartori (1970) with the more recent Family Resemblance (FR) approach (Collier & Mahon, 1993; Goertz, 2006; Wittgenstein, 1968), known as the Mixed Conceptual Structure (MCS) (Barrenechea & Castillo, 2019). According to Barrenechea and Castillo, the MCS offers an advantage over the FR approach in that "the use of at least one necessary attribute in this structure provides a more solid anchor of belonging than is found in pure family resemblance structures" (2019, 112).

According to Sartori (1970, 1971), the task (and challenge) for those involved in scientific conceptual formation is to create concepts that are "capable of traveling" (also known as general concepts) without falling into the trap of "concept stretching." Sartori's proposal

places concepts within a taxonomic hierarchy, where "each category has clear boundaries and defining properties shared by all members that serve to place it in the hierarchy" (Collier & Mahon 1993, 845). However, it is now clear that many categories do not possess these attributes (Collier & Mahon 1993), and the concept of CS is a clear example of this.

At this point, it is pertinent to mention that this article does not aim to provide a universalist view of the concept in question; on the contrary, it questions both the utility and the possibility of limiting itself to such an exercise. As Jensen (2006) observes, "the uses of this term [CS] can only be understood within the theoretical, practical, and historical contexts in which they originated" (p. 39).

### **Procedure: Formulation of FAs and CAs**

#### **FAs**

Based on the previous observations and considering the main approaches in the literature, four fundamental attributes emerge to initially define the space or sphere of CS: (1) non-governmental character; (2) independence; (3) motivation; (4) structure and interaction (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Fundamental Attributes of Civil Society*

AF1: Non-Governmental Character	It is a sphere composed of associative networks of citizens who come together freely and voluntarily (see Cesareo 2003; Cohen & Arato 1997; Edwards 2014; Putnam 1993).
AF2: Independence	This refers to both its position in the social space, as a sphere distinct (but not separate) from the State, family, and the market (Donati, 2002), and to the autonomy of proposal and action that characterizes these groups (directing their activities, defining and modifying their mission and/or organizational structure, and selecting their members and officials (Villar 2001).
AF3: Motivation	The motivation guiding the organization arises from the recognition of elements of common interest (Frisanco 2008, 7), which are not oriented toward obtaining political gains (political power, see Olvera 2004) or economic gains (income profits, see Anheier 2005).
AF4: Structure and Interaction	This refers, on the one hand, to the relative permanence of the members who make up these groups in more or less formal structures (Cesareo 2003, Magatti 2003) with the ability to interact with other actors and operate in the independent public sphere (Anheier & Themudo 2002; Kaldor 2003; Villar 2001) and takes place in the public sphere (Habermas 1984, 1996; Spini 2006).

Source: own elaboration.

Instead of asserting that CS has an opposing or contrasting role to the State, it is more useful for us to start from the observation that CS is an independent sphere, distinct from the State, as having an opposing or proactive function towards the State is an attribute strongly determined by the context. Thus, being an independent sphere situated between the State,

family, and the market is a fundamental characteristic for delineating the space of contemporary CS.

In contrast, its orientation or function concerning these spheres is a complementary characteristic, observable and interpretable only considering other factors such as context or the historical roles of CS in specific realities. The same applies to issues like the place of conflict in the practices of the third sector (Busso & Gargiulo, 2017) or the relationships between CS, civilized society, and violence (Marchetti & Tocci, 2009). As Busso and Gargiulo point out, it is necessary to "distinguish general reflections on the category from the forms that individual experiences can take" (2017, 151).

In this regard, the attributes presented in Table 1 represent the substantive basis for constructing the conceptual proposal of CS and for locating the organizations that comprise it. However, at this level, there is still a high level of conceptual abstraction. Here lies both the importance and originality of a mixed conceptual formulation that includes distinctions between fundamental and complementary attributes. In this way, we formulate a proposal that, using the terminology of Magatti (2003, 43), aims to be seen as "an attempt to move away from generality."

**CAs in Light of the Colombian Case**

As mentioned earlier, the conflict, its dynamics, and consequences have greatly influenced the actions and operations of Colombian CSOs, which have demonstrated a high degree of adaptability and autonomy in the face of armed actors (Rettberg & Quishpe, 2017). According to reports by Apaz et al., (2019) and Rettberg and Quishpe (2017), the dynamics of the conflict and the widespread diversification of violence in Colombia have given rise to a variety of civil society initiatives working for the defense of HR and peacebuilding at the local and regional levels. These initiatives have been grouped into four categories in relation to their members and three categories in relation to the cause (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Complementary attributes.*

In relation to members / Composed of:	In relation to the cause / Work for:
AC1: Autonomous and independent citizens who organize themselves with the purpose of contributing to a cause related to the transformation of conflict and peacebuilding.	AC5: Democracy and governance
AC2: Citizens organized based on territorial criteria.	AC6: Sustainable socio-economic development
AC3: Citizens organized based on identification with a group or sector of society (e.g., women, victims, peasants, etc.).	AC7: Security
AC4: Networks of local organizations.	

Source: own elaboration based on available empirical data.

Regarding the members, there are groups of citizens who organize with the aim of contributing to the transformation of the conflict and peacebuilding in general (AC1). These groups come together or are formed by the individual interest in contributing, through social and collective organization, to the pacification of the country; therefore, they do not indicate possessing a distinctive identity criterion among their members. Thus, it is common to find among the observed CSOs groups composed of the general civilian population who do not belong to the same group or community.

The second attribute in relation to their members is territoriality (AC2). Particularly in the areas most affected by the armed conflict, the territorial aspect is of vital importance when analyzing the organization processes of CS because the conflict did not have the same consequences throughout the national territory. For these groups, the issue of violence and the consequences of the conflict must be addressed from a territorial approach and through initiatives that arise from the needs and realities of the population in these areas. In this way, we observe organizations that were born as an initiative of the residents of a particularly violence-affected area or region, such as the Montes de María.

There are also groups composed of citizens who identify themselves as belonging to a specific group or sector of society (AC3). Here, members primarily organize around group identity rather than territory to contribute to a cause within the context of the conflict. This is the case, for example, with women's organizations, victims' groups, indigenous and/or Afro-Colombian populations, entrepreneurs, former combatants, among others.

The fourth complementary attribute related to members (AC4) refers to networking, which means initiatives that are, in turn, composed of other local CSOs; in many cases, there is also the presence of international CSOs. The latter tend to be larger CSOs that work at the national level with greater visibility and impact. In their internal structure, they have a group of people working on the development of their mission and coordination among the CSOs that make it up.

Regarding the causes, the issues that mobilize the work of CSOs in terms of cooperation for peacebuilding can be mainly grouped into two agendas: democracy (AC5) and development (AC6). The orientation towards one or the other thematic line is related to each organization's understanding of the conflict itself, the causes that led to it, and possible solutions. On the other hand, the "security" attribute (AC7), which in theory is considered, along with democracy and development, one of the dimensions of peacebuilding (Castañeda, 2014), appears as a transversal attribute in the demands of most groups, being a key factor for their survival. However, based on the empirical data from this research, it does not seem to be a cause or agenda that specifically drives the formal organization and/or mobilization of CSOs, as is the case with the aforementioned dimensions of democracy and development.

In this way, while the FAs could be considered relatively constant, the CAs can overlap in multiple ways, giving rise to a multitude of expressions of CSOs organized in conflict zones.

## **Results and Discussion**

The typological construction is a way to address the conceptual stretching challenge posed by Sartori (1970); it is an alternative that allows for "productively organizing thought" (Collier et al., 2012). Throughout this article, an attempt has been made to confront the extensive theoretical debate surrounding the concept of CS with a focus on conflict-affected contexts. However, a fundamental question arises in its definition, which is the impossibility of establishing absolute polarity. The concept of CS goes beyond any kind of systematization. Precisely for this reason, we use FAs and CAs as a basis for the development of ideal types conceived as a form of empirical abstraction.

The case study shows that the members of the analysed CSOs organize themselves because they are motivated by an agenda related to the transformation of the conflict or because they identify themselves as belonging to a territory or a group or sector of society affected by the war (identity). Furthermore, it is observed that the cause or purpose they pursue falls into two broad categories: democracy and development. Based on this, it is possible to create four ideal abstractions conceived as the forms of civil society that build peace in conflict zones: (1)

CSOs for the culture of peace and democratic strengthening, (2) CSOs for democratic strengthening based on belonging to a vulnerable group in the context of the conflict, (3) CSOs for integral development as a means to pacify society, (4) CSOs for the development of a group and/or territory affected by the conflict, based on belonging to that group or area.

As ideal types, they are rarely limited to a specific form. For example, a CSO could contribute to different causes simultaneously or change its focus over time in response to contextual factors such as the level of conflict intensity or local and international incentives. Thus, the first forms of civil society correspond to CSOs for the culture of peace and democratic strengthening (FSC1) and CSOs for democratic strengthening based on belonging to a vulnerable group in the context of the conflict (FSC2). Both types are expressions of civil society that focus on the issues of democracy and governance as the main goal and an indispensable condition for regulating and transforming the conflict. At this point, it is important to underline that a vibrant CS is fundamental to strengthening democracy (Durrani & Alam, 2020).

**Table 3**  
*Forms of Civil Society Engaged in Peacebuilding in Armed Conflict Contexts (FSC).*

		Motivation towards Peacebuilding	
		Democracy and Governance	Sustainable Socioeconomic Development
Factor Driving Individual Organization	Agenda	Civil Society Organizations for Peace Culture and Democratic Strengthening. (Democracy cause-based CSO).	Civil Society Organizations for Integral Development as a Means to Pacify Society (FSC3). (Development cause-based CSO).
	Identity	Civil Society Organizations for Democratic Strengthening, based on Belonging to a Vulnerable Group in the Context of Conflict (FSC2). (Democracy group-based CSO).	Civil Society Organizations for the Development of a Group and/or Territory Affected by Conflict, based on Belonging to that Group or Area (FSC4). (Development Group-based CSO).

Source: own elaboration.

From the collected data, it appears that 166 of the studied CSOs work around the democratic cause. However, as ideal abstractions, some of them may also incorporate causes related to development. When they are formed by autonomous and independent individuals who organize themselves to contribute to this cause as a means of pacifying society, the CSOs correspond to the first type (FSC1). They are often larger and more structured organizations that manage to have a national impact, making their cause more visible. A particular case within this ideal type is that of organizations that originated from the initiative of churches/religious groups, as well as groups of professionals (e.g., lawyers, journalists, professionals from various sectors).

In these cases, despite the CSO's origin in a specific group, the observation shows that their motivations are primarily oriented by the cause and not by group identity. In other words, it is observed that in the Colombian case, most CSOs driven by churches and groups of

professionals are oriented by the cause, which in this case is democracy, as a vehicle for peace. These organizations initially emerge from a group or sector (e.g., Catholics, Protestants, lawyers, journalists, etc.) but are not oriented to defend the interests of that specific group. Instead, their mission is aimed at promoting rights and democratic governance in general.

On the other hand, the second type of CSOs that organize around the democratic agenda emphasizes the membership of its members in a minority, group, or territory whose rights have been violated in the context of the conflict (FSC2). Therefore, their actions for democracy and governance are particularly motivated by belonging to identity groups (e.g., women, LGTB, victims, Afro-descendant population, peasants, indigenous communities). Within this type, two categories are of particular relevance: women's CSOs and territorial CSOs.

On one hand, groups organized through women's initiatives for the defense of their rights have a significant presence both in terms of quantity (26 out of 66 records belonging to FSC2) and in results. A common aspect among women's CSOs in the Colombian case is the recognition of the vulnerability of women victims in the context of the conflict and the lack of women's participation and representation at the political level in seeking a negotiated resolution to the conflict. In fact, as emerged from the interviews conducted, these CSOs have successfully proposed the adoption of a gender differential approach in the Peace Agreements. As a result of the participation of 18 women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations in the working groups in Havana, the Final Agreement contains more than 100 gender-related measures.

On the other hand, the territorial dimension prevails, especially in areas most affected by the conflict. In this case, CSOs start from the awareness that the conflict would have affected all territories in the same way, so responses to its structural causes, including the democratic deficit, must be addressed from a territorial approach.

On the contrary, the third and fourth ideal types (FSC3 and FSC4) are linked to the dimension of development as a fundamental condition for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. From empirical observation, 64 of the observed CSOs work for development in this context. These, like the previous typologies, distinguish between CSOs that emerge around the agenda (39 out of 64) and those that organize themselves around a sense of belonging or identity (25 out of 64). CSOs that organize around the agenda of integral development to pacify society (FSC3) are expressions of CS composed of citizens in general who see the socio-economic development of the country as the main goal that would allow progress toward addressing the structural causes of the conflict.

Given the multidimensional nature of development, these organizations tend to cover multiple topics in the political, social, environmental, and economic spheres, so they may be the least thematically defined. They have broad geographic coverage and generally tend to work in networks. It should be clarified that this is not an exclusive characteristic of CSOs of this type but is present to a greater or lesser extent in most of the observed groups. On the other hand, the fourth and final form (FSC4) shares characteristics related to the broad thematic scope of development but is limited by criteria of identity. Therefore, their actions are aimed at addressing the structural causes of violence by promoting the comprehensive development of a specific sector, group, or territory. In this type, CSOs favour development with a local and/or group focus, and in some cases, these are CSOs that work for the development of both a group and a specific territory. An example would be organizations working for the development of women in a specific region or organizations focusing on the comprehensive rural development of peasant families in western Colombia.

### **Conclusion**

Colombian CSOs represent a heterogeneous universe, whose original nature is delimited by the four fundamental attributes: they are non-governmental organizations, independent, with a motivation, a more or less formal structure, and interaction in the public sphere. Regarding the complementary attributes identified in the case study, the first observation to be made is that in a context of marked violence against the civilian population, the agendas that motivate the work of most Colombian CSOs (democracy and development) coincide with the historical grievances that have been considered as structural causes of the Colombian conflict, namely, exclusion at the political, economic, and social levels.

Regarding the composition of these groups (their members), given the marked consequences of violence in terms of rights violations, exclusion, and poverty, it is found that people decide to organize because they want to support the pacification of the country in general or because they identify as belonging to a group, territory, or sector that has been especially vulnerable within the context of the conflict. Thus, the causes of strengthening democracy and comprehensive development intersect with the motivations (agenda and identity) that drive members to organize or join an existing CSO. In this way, four ideal types are conceived under the conceptual label "forms of civil society."

The broader forms are those oriented by the agenda (FSC1 and FSC3), and in them, there is no distinctive criterion of identity (group or territorial). On the contrary, the factor that drives individuals' organization and guides their work is linked to the individual interest in contributing to the pacification of the country in general. These forms tend to manifest in groups with broader agendas due to the greater diversity among their members and a more diversified operational coverage, often based in the capital, Bogotá, and extending throughout the country.

The main difference between them lies in the way they conceive peacebuilding: peace built based on strengthening democracy, participation, and the defense of rights (FSC1), or peace based on comprehensive, human, and sustainable development (FSC3). On the other hand, the forms that are based on criteria of identity for their organization and operation (FSC2 and FSC4) are more restricted groups, both in terms of their members and the agendas they advocate for. These groups organize around a territory, usually rural, or a specific group of society (women, victims, LGBTQ+ population, among others), and base their work on recognizing the differentiated consequences that the conflict has had on that part of the Colombian population.

Thus, the four forms resulting from the constructed typology are intended to be an analytical-conceptual tool that can be used in future research on the topic. The main contribution in this regard is the generation of an analytical tool that can be adapted to different contexts without stretching the conceptual framework. For example, future research could use the constructed types as lenses of analysis to understand the similarities and differences observed in peacebuilding processes based on the different forms that civil society takes, or to study the outcomes they achieve according to the agenda (democracy or development). Additionally, the process of conceptual construction from a mixed structure could be used to study CS (or other concepts) with an emphasis on different contexts considering a greater number of variables. Besides to the above, some suggestions for future research include exploring the long-term trajectories of the proposed four ideal-typical forms and understanding factors (fundamental and contextual) influencing their evolution. It would also be interesting to advance, considering the proposed forms, in the comparison of the dynamics of CSOs working for peace in other areas or regions with armed conflict, in order to identify other configurations and agendas.

Finally, in addition to academia, this study also has the potential to be utilized in the practical field. From a political perspective, decision and policymakers could gain greater ownership and understanding of the interest groups working on peace-related issues to address proposals that are more grounded and relevant to the requests and demands of societal groups. From the perspective of CSOs, this ideal-typical classification could also be useful for establishing alliances and synergies with peers.

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## **Face-to-face Vs. Online Learning: Differences and Challenges in Communication**

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The current study attempts to investigate perceptions of EFL learners towards face-to-face vs. online learning focusing on differences and challenges in communication. The study used a mixed-method design to explain and thoroughly explore the issue. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed in the first phase, and qualitative data were collected and analyzed in the second phase. Quantitative findings reveal that most of the participants think that it is easier to communicate in a face-to-face learning class as opposed to an online learning mode. In all four variables—time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology, the mean score for face-to-face learning is higher than for online learning. Though qualitative findings exhibit that the participants perceive both modes of learning as challenging, most of them think that communication in online learning has more challenges than in face-to-face mode of learning. The participants also proclaim that the low quality of the internet and little interaction are two significant issues in online communication which, they think, have no solutions. The study concludes that learners are satisfied with face-to-face learning as communication can be accomplished with little or no interruption. The findings of the current study suggest important implications for future research .

**Keywords:** Face-to-face learning; online learning; communication; challenges

The educational sector has recently experienced a notable shift due to the rise of online learning as an alternative to traditional in-person teaching methods. This shift has been further accelerated by the unprecedented challenges brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic, prompting educators and students alike to swiftly adapt to virtual learning environments (Sa'diah, Mujahidin, & Hartono, 2020). Online learning is a form of distance education that offers the courses synchronously, i.e., in live sessions, or asynchronously, i.e., students access the online material in their own time (Chisadza, Clance, Mthembu, Nicholls, & Yitbarek, 2021).

The change from face-to-face to online learning brought many challenges with it. Time management, motivation, the ability to use technology, availability of the internet, and quality of the internet service are some of the important factors to consider. However, for some students, this change might have brought some positive aspects, too. For example, saving commuting time, having flexible schedules, working at your own pace, and feeling confident being alone may be seen by some as positive aspects of online learning. Therefore, the need to examine the dynamics between face-to-face and online learning has become increasingly apparent, necessitating a thorough investigation of their strengths, challenges, and implications across various educational contexts.

Recent research underscores the growing importance of online learning, as technology offers flexibility and accessibility to learners (A. Ali, Khan, & Alouraini, 2023) who may be less satisfied in traditional classroom settings (Chisadza et al., 2021; Sa'diah et al., 2020). However, while online learning shows potential as a versatile educational tool, its effectiveness and suitability compared to face-to-face instruction require careful consideration, especially within the realm of language education.

Within the context of EFL, the distinction between face-to-face and online learning assumes particular significance, given the unique communicative demands and pedagogical objectives inherent in language learning. Despite the widespread availability of online courses, there remains a dearth of research focusing on the perceptions and views of English majors, particularly within the educational landscape of Pakistan.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions of Pakistani EFL learners regarding face-to-face and online learning, with a specific emphasis on communication nuances. Through the utilization of an explanatory sequential design, this research seeks to delve deeper into the multifaceted aspects of learning modalities and their implications for language acquisition and pedagogy.

### **The study has two main objectives:**

1. To investigate English majors' perceptions of face-to-face and online learning regarding time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology.
2. To explore the challenges in communication encountered by English majors in face-to-face and online learning environments.

### **Research Questions**

1. What do English majors think about face-to-face and online learning in terms of time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology?
2. What challenges do English majors face in communication in face-to-face and online learning settings?

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Vs. Face-To-Face Learning**

Online learning has appeared as a substitute for face-to-face learning. Tang and Lim (2013) claim that learners prefer online learning as opposed to face-to-face learning instructions because they are competent and confident in using technological tools and can learn independently. Other researchers have mentioned different reasons for choosing online learning. For example, Croxton (2014), Serttaş and Kasabalı (2020), and Wright (2017) consider the flexibility of time and place as an essential feature of online learning. However, both modes of learning can pose different challenges to students in different contexts.

Time management is a significant aspect of face-to-face and online learning. While some learners believe that online classes save time, others think it is difficult to manage time in online classes. Serttaş and Kasabalı (2020) found that managing time is a challenge for learners in online learning as they can easily get distracted by instant messaging and browsing the internet. This has been observed by many other researchers, too. For example, Yeboah and Smith (2016) discovered that participants in their study had issues with time management in online learning. Therefore, the learners' choice, their willingness to participate, and their past experiences are some of the aspects that should be considered in studying the two modes of learning.

Learners' choice is very important in teaching-learning processes as some of the learners may feel more comfortable in one mode of learning than the other. Generally, it is observed that shy learners participate more in online classes than in traditional classrooms. Therefore, Alammary (2022) opines that a harmonious balance between face-to-face and online learning may increase student engagement. Proponents of this idea present different arguments in support of their claim. For example, Wright (2017) asserts that shy learners may not ask for an explanation in a face-to-face class because of the presence of their classmates; therefore, online classes give them a chance to become independent learners.

Motivation is another crucial factor in language learning. It gives learners a drive to get involved in a task or an activity (Ishtiaq, Hussain, & Ahmed, 2020). Scholars argue that allowing students autonomy can promote their motivation in an online learning environment (Abuhassna et al., 2020; Alzahrani, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, all learners may not be equally comfortable with online learning. Yeboah and Smith (2016) suggest that new generations expect their instructors to mix online learning management systems into face-to-face classes. This might cater to the needs of both types of learners—those who feel motivated in online classes and those who feel comfortable in face-to-face classes.

Though online learning is considered easy and flexible, some learners may be reluctant to choose it for different reasons. One cause of reluctance may be the negative experience that learners or their peers may have had in an online course (Jaggars, 2014). These negative experiences might be different for different learners. For example, learners may not be proficient with the use of technology or they may not have a good internet facility. A bad connection might cause a lack of motivation among learners. Cigdem and Ozturk (2016) argue that the quality of internet service is very important in online classes as a server breakdown may negatively affect learners' participation and motivation.

Online medium changes the nature of student-student and student-teacher relationships (Arias, Swinton, & Anderson, 2018). The use of online material, in addition to the classwork, may supplement learners' understanding of the subject. Coates and Humphreys (2001) believe that the availability of online material is useful, but students should utilize it by actively engaging in it (as cited in Arias et al., 2018). In other words, technology is seen as something that learners can interact with. Shahid and Shaikh (2019) conclude that WhatsApp is a valuable tool for enhancing students' cognitive skills and fostering interpersonal connections between teachers and students. Thus, technology may serve as a facilitator in student-student and student-teacher relationships if learners can utilize it.

### **The Role of Communication in Learning**

Communication is considered the soul of language learning. Abdul, Mahmud, Wello, and Dollah (2020) argue that it is one of the most important aspects that plays a crucial role in successful language learning. It is not only an exchange of ideas but also the exchange of meaning and understanding between teachers and students. It is a vent that lets the speaker and the listener transmit their feelings, emotions, gestures, and opinions. Communication is a dynamic process in

which the speaker and the listener are actively involved, and their relationship in communication continuously grows and develops. Ibsen-Jensen, Tkadlec, Chatterjee, and Nowak (2018) assert that the role of communication in language acquisition is undeniable.

Communication involves interaction between the speaker and the listener. It is a process of sending and receiving information and producing a suitable response (Mohammed, 2021). In other words, it does not just involve the meaning-making of the spoken words between teachers and learners and learners but is an exchange of gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Thus, for effective communication to occur, both the speaker and the listener must play their roles. However, with the advent of online learning, the dimensions of communication have also changed a lot. Sa'diah et al., (2020) argue that communication among parents, teachers, and learners becomes more important during online learning.

### **Previous Studies on Face-to-Face and Online Learning**

Since the commencement of the online learning mode, a considerable amount of literature has been published on online learning and teaching. Al-Khresheh (2021) explored Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of online teaching, Jaggars (2014) compared face-to-face vs. online courses in a qualitative study. Driscoll, Jicha, Hunt, Tichavsky, and Thompson (2012) employed sociology students while Tratnik, Urh, and Jereb (2019) recruited business English students to compare their satisfaction in online vs. face-to-face classes. However, all these studies met conflicting results. Therefore, regional and demographic dynamics should also be considered while studying the two modes of learning.

The studies conducted in Pakistan also met mixed findings. Abbasi, Ayoob, Malik, and Memon (2020) and Shahzad and Aurangzeb (2021) found that students have negative perceptions about online learning. On the contrary, Z. Ali (2014) observed that students have positive perceptions about using the Internet for assignments and academic instruction-related information. The author discovered that female students were more positive about online learning as compared to male students. However, all these studies, just mentioned, have employed students of different majors, and it seems that students majoring in English have been ignored.

More recent studies have tried to study English majors' perceptions of face-to-face and online learning. Saputra, Saputra, Handrianto, and Agustinos (2022) investigated EFL students' perceptions of online learning in Indonesia. The study uncovered that students had positive perceptions of online learning. In a similar vein, Al-Mutairi and Elsayy (2022) studied the English Department's students and faculty members' perceptions in a university in Saudi Arabia. The authors unveiled that both the students and the faculty members were satisfied with the online mode of learning.

The literature review shows that extensive research has been carried out on online vs. face-to-face learning. However, no single study deals with the topic in greater depth. The vast majority of studies on online learning are either quantitative or qualitative. To date, no study has given a detailed account of the issue. Moreover, none of the studies mentioned above investigated English majors' perceptions of the two modes of learning in Pakistan.

This study makes a major contribution to face-to-face and online learning research in two ways. First, it employs an explanatory sequential design to study the issue in greater depth. Secondly, it attempts to uncover EFL students' perceptions of face-to-face and online learning in a Pakistani university.

## Methods

### Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method using an explanatory sequential design. The data were collected in two phases—quantitative data were collected and analyzed in the first phase, and qualitative data were collected and analyzed in the second phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Ninety-five students participated in the questionnaire survey and sixteen students volunteered to be interviewed. Open-ended interviews were conducted in the second phase. Due to the complete lockdown during COVID-19, the questionnaires were administered online, and the interviews were conducted in written form using Google Docs.

### Participants

The study took place at a private university in Lahore, Pakistan. The participants were undergraduates and postgraduates pursuing their bachelor's, master's, and MPhil degrees in English. All the participants were Pakistani nationals. Participation was voluntary, and the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. It was made clear from the very beginning of the study that the participants could withdraw at any time.

### Data Collection and Analysis

A 24-item questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data in the first phase. Later, an open-ended interview was conducted to collect the qualitative data. The questionnaire and the interview were sent to five professors to check the validity of the instruments. Three professors responded with some recommendations. Most of these recommendations were about the number of statements in the questionnaire and wordings in both the questionnaire and the interview. Their recommendations were considered, and the required changes were made in the questionnaire and the interview. The questionnaire was piloted on ten students, and the interview was piloted on three students. Cronbach's Alpha was used to find the reliability of the questionnaire ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ). The questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive analysis, and the interview was analyzed using thematic analysis.

### Phase I: Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was split into two sections—demographic analysis and survey findings. The descriptive analysis of the closed-ended questionnaire items is presented first, followed by the explanation of the main findings. The results of each questionnaire item are displayed in the following tables. Table 1 shows a demographic analysis of the current study.

**Table 1**

*Demographics*

Total Participants	Gender	Age	Qualification
95	Males	52.1 %	Above 23
	Females	47.9 %	21-23
			18-20
			51.1 %
			30.9 %
			18.1 %
			61.7 %
			26.6 %
			11.7 %

As shown in Table 1, males accounted for 52.1 percent, while females accounted for 47.9 percent of the study participants. The statistics reveal that the participation of both genders is almost equal. The majority of the participants were above the age of 23, accounting for 51.1 % of all the participants. The participants between the ages of 21 and 23 were 30.9 %, while 18.1 % fell in the 18 to 20 years of age category. Regarding qualification, 61.7% have completed a master's degree, 26.6% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, and 11.7% have a secondary school certificate.



**Phase II: Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic data analysis. The interviews included six (6) open-ended questions to supplement the quantitative findings. Sixteen respondents were asked to provide their views on online and face-to-face learning challenges in the first two open-ended questions. In the third question, they were asked to share their thoughts on how time management can be difficult in online or face-to-face learning. Similarly, the fourth question sought students' opinions on demotivating factors in the two modes of learning. In question 5, they were asked to explain the difficulties in communication in both modes of learning, and question 6 sought their opinions about the major challenges in using technology.

Six-phase model of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze the qualitative data. The model includes these phases: familiarizing with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Atlas ti 9 was used to analyze the data. Open coding and in vivo coding were used. Earlier forty-seven codes and five themes were generated. The themes were reviewed and merged into more relevant themes, thus creating two main themes and six sub-themes at the end.

**Results**

**Survey Results**

Research Question 1: What do English majors think about face-to-face and online communication in terms of time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology?

The second part of the questionnaire was divided into four sections: 'time management; 'motivation'; 'ease and flexibility; and 'use of technology.' Six questionnaire items (three for face-to-face and three for online learning) were created for each area to investigate the students' perceptions towards face-to-face and online communication. Table 2 shows an analysis of the first section—time management.

**Table 2**  
*Analysis of the first section—Time Management.*

<b>Face-to-Face Learning</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>mean</b>
I think face-to-face communication saves time because it has little or no interruption.	95	1	5	3.96
I like face-to-face communication because repetition wastes time in online classes.	95	1	5	3.86
In my opinion, face-to-face communication saves time as it allows avoiding conflicts and misunderstandings.	95	1	5	3.85
Overall mean	95			3.89
<b>Online Learning Learning</b>				
I like online classes because commuting to the university every day wastes time.	95	1	5	2.73
I like online communication because it is easier to manage time for it.	95	1	5	2.88
I like online communication because instant messaging saves time.	95	1	5	2.94
Overall mean	95			2.85

Table 2 shows the result of the statements concerning participants' perceptions of time management in face-to-face Vs—online learning. According to the data, most participants believe

that the face-to-face mode of learning saves time (3.96) since communication is generally not interrupted in this mode. The statement achieved the lowest mean score (2.73) that commuting to the university wastes time. Overall, the mean score for face-to-face learning (3.89) is higher than the online learning score (2.85). Most participants think that time management is easier in face-to-face learning compared to online learning.

**Table 3**

*Analysis of the second section — Motivation.*

<b>Face-to-Face Learning</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>mean</b>
I like face-to-face communication because teachers' presence motivates me to participate	95	1	5	4.06
I like face-to-face communication because my peers' presence motivates me to join the conversation.	95	1	5	3.92
I like face-to-face communication because I feel active and energetic.	95	1	5	3.95
Overall mean	95			3.98
<b>Online Learning</b>				
I like online communication because I feel that I am not being judged.	95	1	5	2.73
I like online communication because I feel confident being alone.	95	1	5	2.64
I like online communication because this experience is more enjoyable for me.	95	1	5	2.74
Overall mean	95			2.70

Table 3 shows the findings related to the participants' perceptions of the preference for face-to-face or online learning. As shown in the table, most participants (4.06) like face-to-face communication because their teachers' presence motivates them. The lowest score (2.64) was attained by the statement that says that participants feel confident in online communication when alone. Overall, the participants think they feel more motivated in face-to-face communication (3.98) compared to online communication (2.70).

**Table 4**

*Analysis of the third section—Ease and Flexibility.*

<b>Face-to-face Learning</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>mean</b>
I like face-to-face classes because I can easily communicate with my teachers and classmates.	95	1	5	3.91
I can improve my communication skills better in face-to-face classes.	95	1	5	3.95
I like face-to-face communication because body language helps a lot in learning/and understanding.	95	1	5	4.01
Overall mean	95			3.96
<b>Online Learning</b>				
I like online classes because recorded videos can be seen many times.	95	1	5	3.47
I like online communication because it gives me an additional option of texting.	95	1	5	3.08
I like online communication because I can talk to a larger class without talking too loud.	95	1	5	3.04
Overall mean	95			3.20

Table 4 demonstrates participants' preferences for face-to-face vs. online communication. A vast majority of the participants (4.01) think that body language helps them learn and understand during a conversation. The statement that participants can talk to larger classes in online communication reached the lowest mean (3.04). Overall, the participants perceive that they are more at ease with face-to-face communication (3.96) than online communication (3.20).

**Table 5**

*Analysis of the fourth section—Use of Technology.*

<b>Face-to-Face Learning</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>mean</b>
I like face-to-face communication as I don't particularly appreciate using technology to learn a language.	95	1	5	3.19
I like face-to-face communication because I am not very good at using technology.	95	1	5	2.95
I like face-to-face communication because I can't focus on online communication due to the excessive use of Google and YouTube.	95	1	5	3.37
Overall mean	95			3.17
<b>Online Learning</b>				
I like online communication because I have the knowledge and skills to manage different learning management systems.	95	1	5	3.11
I like online communication because I can gather more information about a subject with online support.	95	1	5	3.00
I like online communication because technology has made it more accessible.	95	1	5	3.11
Overall mean	95			3.07

Table 5 illustrates whether the use of technology has any role in communication. Composite scores have been attained in this section. The statement achieves the highest score (3.37) that participants cannot focus on online communication due to excessive use of Google and YouTube. The participants gave the lowest score (2.95) to the statement that they are not good at using technology. Technology does not significantly differ between face-to-face (3.17) and online communication (3.07).

**Interview Results**

Research Question 2: What challenges do English majors face in communication in face-to-face and online learning settings?

Following are the themes and the sub-themes that emerged from the data:

**1. Challenges in Online Learning**

*i. Slow Internet in Online Learning*

The first open-ended question concerned students' perceptions of significant challenges encountered during online communication. Respondents raised several concerns about internet problems. Due to poor audio quality, students regard internet issues as a barrier to comprehension. A student noted, "In online learning, sometimes I cannot comprehend some sentences owing to voice problems...I believe the main issue is audio". "There are various online obstructions such as internet issues and audio issues when sound breaks due to signal troubles," another student noted. One student sees the internet as the only barrier to online communication. Her response to the question about online communication challenges, "Just nothing but the issue of the internet signals," demonstrates this challenge's intensity, which outweighs the challenges learners often experience during online communication.

The participants also proposed several ideas to deal with this issue. A student proposed that giving the lecture in written form may assist in overcoming such issues. He said, "To handle this problem, mentors should write whatever they say." Another participant suggested repeating and guessing the meaning as possible solutions to the issue. It was stated that "it is difficult to handle everything at once, so I repeat the same sentence or words or guess the meanings." Some students suggested that more money be invested in solving the problem. Comments such as "we try to get maximum speed by paying more cost" and "by reserving maximum budget to buy technology for online communication" indicate that purchasing higher quality internet packages is seen as beneficial by students to address poor internet connection during online learning. Furthermore, despite their best efforts, most participants proclaimed they see no solutions and cannot deal with these difficulties.

### ***ii. Little Interaction in Online Learning***

The respondents' second major problem in online learning was a 'lack of communication.' The absence of communication is closely related to the above-mentioned poor internet connection. The following is a participant's remark about the difficulty of maintaining smooth communication while communicating online: "One of the most significant issues is that the majority of online learning is one-way communication, with little interaction between learner and teacher." Similarly, students' responses to online communication challenges such as "can't raise the question during lecture ambiguities,"; "lack of interaction,"; "we have no gesture,"; and "cannot interpret facial expressions" clearly reflect that lack of communication is a significant challenge that students face in online contact.

The absence of mutual communication and other students' attitudes toward online learning were the most demotivating aspects of online learning. Following are some of the participants' notable remarks about demotivating aspects of online communication: 'don't comprehend some points and can't ask questions because of time constraints, 'simply sitting and listening, no opportunity to ask questions and eliminate ambiguities,' 'lack of facial expressions in online ....', 'can't sense attitude and body language in online...', 'can't always listen correctly in online....' According to the findings, a key element contributing to students' demotivation in online learning is the lack of communication.

### ***iii. Load Shedding in Online Learning***

Another significant challenge that interrupts communication in online learning is electricity load shedding. Respondents think that they "cannot concentrate" and their time is wasted in online learning because of electricity load shedding. Students' responses such as "poor net and load shedding distract learning in online communication" and "electricity issue interferes with communication" indicate that slow internet and load shedding make communication challenging for students in the online mode of learning.

### ***iv. Irregular Schedules in Online Learning***

The second issue was irregular scheduling in online learning. Due to the irregular schedule of online classes, students are sometimes required to attend classes beyond business hours. This makes time management challenging for some learners, as mentioned by respondents in the present study, for example, "attention diverts to home issues in online ....", "difficult to be a student at home," and "inconsistent timetable in online classes." These responses reveal that dealing with irregular or inconsistent schedules in online learning makes time management difficult for learners.

## 2. Challenges in Face-to-Face Learning

### i. *Lack of Confidence in Face-To-Face Learning*

In response to the question about the main problems during face-to-face communication, students highlighted lack of confidence as the sole but significant issue. Due to hesitancy, a student finds it challenging to negotiate learning topics during the learning process. He stated, "Hesitation makes the selection of words and the agenda of the discussion very difficult to negotiate." Similarly, a student had a "feeling of hesitation in speaking and lack of confidence" during face-to-face communication. Another student commented, "English is predominantly instructors' medium of instructions, and since students are unable to speak English well, they do not ask them for clarification," this indicates that students lack confidence in speaking English, which prevents them from participating actively in in-class activities and leave their lessons full of ambiguities.

Lack of confidence was identified as the most demotivating factor. Due to a lack of confidence in face-to-face communication, students find it frightening and demotivating. One respondent stated that "other students' reactions" cause demotivation during face-to-face communication. One more respondent echoed this sentiment: "When I don't know anything in face-to-face learning, I feel insulted and demotivated." The findings imply that students' lack of confidence and the courage to seek clarification of their questions leads to demotivation in this learning mode.

Furthermore, when asked how they deal with the issue of lack of confidence in face-to-face learning, the participants responded that they used strategies such as "questioning through written text," "watching YouTube motivational videos," and "self-practice" to boost their confidence. Still, they think that these strategies rarely work.

### ii. *Time Management in Face-to-Face Learning*

The participants perceive that time management is challenging in face-to-face learning. Home affairs and emergencies were the main challenges that make time management difficult in face-to-face classes. A student remarked on the causes of time management challenges in face-to-face learning, saying, "Time management is tough in face-to-face learning owing to emergencies at home." Another commented, "It is tough to be a student at home," which implies that students are occupied with their household tasks, making time management difficult for them in face-to-face classes.

## Discussion

The quantitative results show that most participants prefer face-to-face learning to online learning in terms of time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology. In all four variables—time management, motivation, ease and flexibility, and use of technology, the mean score for face-to-face learning is higher than for online learning. Especially in the first two variables—time management and motivation, the difference in mean scores is much higher for face-to-face learning than online learning. This means that participants are more motivated and can manage time easily in face-to-face classrooms. Moreover, participants prefer face-to-face communication to online communication because they think that body language helps much in learning and understanding. Though most participants believe they are good at technology, they prefer face-to-face learning settings because they can't concentrate in online learning due to excessive use of Google and YouTube.

The qualitative findings reveal similar results. Most of the participants perceive that face-to-face learning has fewer challenges. They proclaim that low quality of internet and little interaction are two significant issues in online learning which, they think, have no solutions. One of the participants even went on to say that online communication is one-way communication with

little interaction between learners and teachers. Moreover, respondents perceive that load shedding and irregular schedules also pose challenges in online learning. Though participants think that both modes of learning have some challenges, they believe that face-to-face learning is less challenging than the online mode of learning. They pointed out only two challenges in face-to-face learning and they are a lack of confidence and time management.

These findings are in line with those achieved by Wright (2017). In Wright's (2017) study most of the students preferred face-to-face grammar lessons compared to online mode of learning. The study also concluded that the participants were more motivated in face-to-face classes than in online ones. Students think that traditional in-class learning experience gives them a better understanding, more interaction, and more enjoyment (Wright, 2017). In the current study, too, the participants believe that communication in face-to-face learning is uninterrupted and does not depend on electricity or technology. Furthermore, they think there is a 'lack of interaction' and they 'cannot interpret facial expressions' in online communication.

These results are also consistent with those reached by Arias et al. (2018), Abbasi et al. (2020), Chisadza et al. (2021), Shahzad and Aurangzeb (2021), and Spencer and Temple (2021). Arias et al. (2018) concluded that the face-to-face class performed significantly better than the online class regarding the exam average and improved post-test instructor questions. However, there was no statistical evidence for a difference in improvement in total post-test questions. Abbasi et al. (2020) and Shahzad and Aurangzeb (2021) discovered that students are not satisfied with online learning. Similarly, Chisadza et al. (2021) and Spencer and Temple (2021) observed that learners preferred face-to-face learning to online learning.

The findings also support the work of some recent researchers on face-to-face and online learning. Lewohl (2023) and Pleša Puljić and Ribić (2023) recently discovered that learners consider face-to-face classes more beneficial for learning compared to online classes. In a similar vein, Sun (2023) revealed that participants' scores on face-to-face learning were higher than online learning. The author concludes that learners need more physical contact and student-student and student-teacher interaction.

The current study's results contrast with those reached by Shahid and Shaikh (2019) and Alzahrani (2022). The authors observed that the students were more confident and performed better in online learning as compared to the traditional method of learning. Nasim, AlTameemy, Ali, and Sultana (2022) met similar results. The authors concluded that learners performed better using technological tools as compared to the traditional method of teaching.

A possible explanation of the findings is that the students' perceptions are conditioned by the advancement in technology, especially in developing countries. As Saputra et al. (2022) argue online learning relies on the provision of technology, good quality of the internet, and better electronic devices. Pakistan is one such example where online learning should be studied keeping in mind these technological and economic factors. Slow internet connection and old technological devices may affect learners' communication during the lectures which in turn affects the participants' choices. Asgari, Gupta, Titiloye, and Jin (2022) also contend that students' socioeconomic background and lack of technological framework affect their communication with instructors and classmates and consequently affect their performance.

One of the more significant findings from this study is that the participants think they lack confidence in face-to-face learning. On the contrary, they did not consider it as a challenge in online classes. In general, a lack of confidence is considered one of the many challenges that EFL learners face (Mohammed, 2021). Therefore, a blend of face-to-face and online teaching can satisfy learners of different learning styles, improve their confidence, and enhance their proficiency in the use of technology.

### Conclusion

The present study was designed to thoroughly investigate English majors' perceptions of the two learning modes—face-to-face vs. online, using an explanatory sequential design. The most prominent finding from the current study is the participants' perception that both learning modes have some challenges. However, most participants believe that they cannot communicate well in online learning due to internet issues. They believe that low-quality internet and poor electricity supply are two main reasons for the lack of interaction in online communication.

The study has also found that lack of support in online classes is a reason behind the participants' preference for face-to-face learning. Unlike face-to-face classes, students are expected to work independently in online classes, which might need more motivation. Moreover, gestures, body language, and audible cues play an important role in enhancing classroom communication and determining the classroom pace of face-to-face classes. However, if students are provided with enough support, motivation, and encouragement, they may consider communication in online classes as less challenging.

The current study had some limitations. The study was conducted in the Department of English at a private university. Students of different fields of study may have different perceptions about the two learning modes. Therefore, the study should be repeated in other fields to provide more definitive evidence.

### Recommendations

In light of the research findings, it is recommended that universities should ensure the availability of good internet connections to their faculty for online classes. Moreover, continuous training sessions for online teaching and learning should be arranged. In addition to this, a blend of face-to-face and online classes should be conducted in different fields of study to cater to students of different learning styles. Furthermore, the provision of large classes on the part of the institutions and managing high tuition fees for face-to-face classes for the learners have remained two important considerations. Online classes may prove to be an affordable alternative. Therefore, future researchers may conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies in larger classes to ascertain the efficacy of online learning.

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## Thanks to Social Media, Now We Can Waste Our Time More Efficiently: Use of Social Media and Employees' Productivity

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Previous literature presents a gap to study the mediating mechanism in the relationship between use of social media to perform a job and employees' productivity. Based on the transactional stress and coping model, we conducted the present research to assess the serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance for this relationship. Using adapted research questionnaires, we used an online data collection technique to collect data from a sample of 232 employees working with Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Results obtained through structural equation modeling, indicate significant serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance in the relationship between use of social media and overall employees' productivity. We also found that use of social media is positively related to information overload and ambiguity intolerance and negatively related to employees' overall productivity. The study has contributed to the literature by identifying situational, psychological, and behavioral consequences of use of social media at work. Research has discussed several implications for organizations and researchers.

**Keywords:** Use of social media, information overload, ambiguity intolerance, overall employee productivity, transactional model of stress, indecisiveness

Social media is the most efficient and common source of communication and information these days that has developed strong bonding among people and communities by reducing the physical distance (Zhu & Chen, 2015). It is rapidly replacing the conventional print and electronic media and the information is spread across the globe in no time. Despite being a strong, efficient and the newest medium of information spread, people know very less about its constructive usage (Demircioglu & Chen, 2019). Social media also has the potential to ruin lives of people with disinformation it spreads without proper scrutiny (Benson et al., 2019). Majority of the previous research (Borah et al., 2022; Pekkala & van Zoonen, 2022; Tandon et al., 2022) revolves around the benefits of using social media especially, to get positive outcomes in the job like quick access to the latest developments in the field (Tajpour et al., 2022), remain up to date on surroundings (Carlson, 2018) and competitors (Wu et al., 2023). However, very little is known about its negative effects on people working in any organization, especially in the context of developing countries with limited social media literacy. Majority of research that discussed its negative outcomes, considered the hedonic use of social media at workplace and reported negative outcomes (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Sledgianowski & Kuliwat, 2009), however, compulsive official use of social media has not been explored for its situational, psychological and behavioral outcomes (Talwar et al., 2019). Therefore,

it is important to identify relationship between use of social media information on employees' productivity especially in developing countries.

Shokouhyar et al., (2018) conducted a study on some of the psychological effects of using social media for a longer time and reported that information overload can lead to fatigues, exhaustion, stress and depression. Consequently, there is a chance that the performance of such employees may also get affected directly or indirectly however, it has to be explored, especially in the post COVID-19 era. These outcomes also signal to negative performance. In similar research by Sharif and Yeoh (2018) negative social impacts of social media usage were identified such as addiction of using social networking sites, materialistic mindset due to online shopping and advertisements. However, none of these studies considered ambiguity intolerance and productivity related outcomes of social media usage. It's a common perception that well informed individual are efficient workers, however it is not true in all circumstances (Ecker et al., 2022). Information overload can create ambiguity and misleading results (Vismara et al., 2022). The present study is designed to identify negative effects of use of social media, information overload and ambiguity intolerance on employees' productivity. For this purpose, we used the case of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) that uses Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media networks in their routine business, especially in sales and marketing departments ([www.piac.com](http://www.piac.com)). Researchers (Agnihotri, 2020; Chou & Ramser, 2023; Santini et al., 2020) have confirmed that contemporary airlines rely on social media as a low cost tool to build an online community with customers. Therefore, acknowledging the significance of rapidly emerging social media needs PIA have developed a specialized cell for social media management ([www.piac.com](http://www.piac.com)). However, we have not been able to find out the frequency of usage and its impact on employees' productivity in PIA. Therefore, in addition to the literature gap, the present study is also important to fill this contextual gap. We adopted a survey technique using questionnaires to test hypotheses developed for the present research on relationships among use of social media, information overload, ambiguity intolerance and overall productivity of employees.

### **Literature Review**

Researchers (like Cao & Yu, 2019; Taborosi et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2018) have acknowledged several positive effects of using social media at the workplace including improved working and problem-solving strategies, improved knowledge and communication skills leading to better performance. In addition to these, they also pointed out several drawbacks of over reliance on social media for making work related decisions. These include among others, information overload conditions, techno-stress, work family conflict, emotional exhaustion and wellbeing issues. However, they also indicated that technological and informational overload can be controlled by introducing problem focused and emotional focused strategies at organizational level (Yu et al, 2018).

Social media is a new form of media that enables its users to socialize with others through interactive technologies, facilitating them to create, share and aggregate contents, ideas and interests through virtual communities and networks. These include WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and similar other virtual platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Obar & Wildman, 2015). These platforms have actually made the world a global village where information and knowledge is shared in no time from one part of the world to the other. However, its excessive use may create several complications for individuals. Zhang et al., (2022) define excessive use as uncontrolled use of technology and social media networks at the office, ignoring the harmful individual and organizational consequences. This also includes the excessive use of social media networking websites and technology to gain understanding, solving problem or socializing at the workplace (Voss et al., 2003).

Similarly, information overload pertains to a situation in which an individual has access to a large amount of information that s/he cannot handle, process and utilize effectively, and creates ambiguity especially for making critical decisions (Yu et al., 2018). Ambiguity intolerance is defined by researchers as predisposition of an individual to avoid and dislike ambiguous situations and consider them threatening. It is a cognitive vulnerability, and can lead to several stressful events and behaviors (Budner, 1962; Khodabakhsh, 2022). It can be psychological, physical or both and cause serious damage to employees' wellbeing by creating stress and negative emotion. On the other hand, productivity is defined by Yu et al., (2018) as the degree to which an employee achieves its job-related goals and objectives. It is measured in terms of quality as well as the quantity of tasks performed by the employee keeping in view the challenges they face at the job.

#### *Social Media Usage, Information overload and Ambiguity Tolerance*

Despite being a necessity, use of these networks can lead to several direct and indirect negative consequences on job like work life balance, indecisiveness due to information overload, technological addiction, over reliance on the internet for petty issues, ambiguity and emotional exhaustion (Benson et al., 2019; Sharif et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2018). On the other hand, some researchers like Demircioglu and Chen (2019) provide evidence of positive effects of using social media on employees' satisfaction subject to availability of open government initiatives. In other words, the satisfaction of these employees is conditioned to availability of chance to think and decide independently that itself has repercussions.

Some other scholars (Brooks, 2015; Malak et al., 2022; Pang, 2021) have also reported that use of social media push people into a storm of relevant, somewhat relevant and irrelevant information and therefore sets the stage for wasting time in sifting the required information. This information overload creates ambiguity and reduces individual tolerance to ambiguity in decision making. We use transactional theory of stress and coping to explain the link between use of social media and employee productivity. Researchers (Dhir et al., 2019; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) have applied this model to explain the stress related to technology or information overload at the workplace. Dewe (2004) explains that stimulus and reaction both are dependent on the surrounding environment to create psychological-physical processes. Stress occurs when work demands exceed the individual's capacity and available resources to perform. In case of using social media at the workplace, individual's capacity to handle the amount of information is challenged with information overload that creates stress and ambiguity. According to Keenan and McBain (1979) excessive amount of stress and ambiguity leads to intolerance to handle the situation and therefore, they fail to achieve their job requirements effectively (Gmelch & Chan, 1992). As indicated by Shokouhyar et al., (2018), information overload creates frustration, confusion leading to indecisiveness, ability to perform, and other negative consequences. Based on the above literature, we put the following assumptions for testing:

H1: Use of social media has positive impact on information overload

H2: Information overload is positively related with ambiguity intolerance

H3: Use of social media is positively related with ambiguity intolerance.

H4: Information overload mediates the relationship between use of social media and ambiguity intolerance.

#### *Information overload, ambiguity intolerance and employees' productivity*

Use of social media provides various perspectives of required information and therefore lead to an information overload situation (Shi et al., 2020). When multiple options or solutions are available for a problem, employees face difficulty in sifting the correct option and may make a choice. This stressful confusing situation make them intolerant for ambiguity (Cao & Sun, 2018).

Therefore, researchers (Brown-Liburd et al., 2015; Lane & Klenke, 2004) have found that information overload can lead to ambiguity intolerance which is a dangerous condition for an employee and organization simultaneously. Casigliani et al., (2020) report that such employees are poor decision makers and are exposed to wrong decision choices leading to consequences for the individuals and the organization.

According to transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) continuous stress and ambiguity bring about psychological issues among individuals (like intolerance, uncertainty avoidance etc.) and their capability to make efficient and timely decision is challenged. Researchers (like Katsaros et al., 2014; Sumathi et al., 2023) report positive effect of ambiguity tolerance on organizational performance and sustainability. On the other hand, it was also reported that ambiguity intolerance can be a theoretically promising moderator for stressor-performance relationship among employees (Breugh & Colihan, 1994; De Simone & Ruggeri, 2022; Frone, 1990), however specific relationship between ambiguity intolerance and employee productivity was not assessed which is the literature gap for the present study. Using the same premise, we assume that information overload is a stressful situational factor that leads to psychological issues like intolerance to ambiguity leading to behavioral consequences like diminishing productivity. We therefore propose the following hypotheses for testing:

H5: Ambiguity intolerance is negatively related with employee productivity.

H6: Information overload is negatively related with employee productivity.

H7: Ambiguity intolerance mediates the relationship between information overload and employee productivity.

#### *Use of social media and employee productivity*

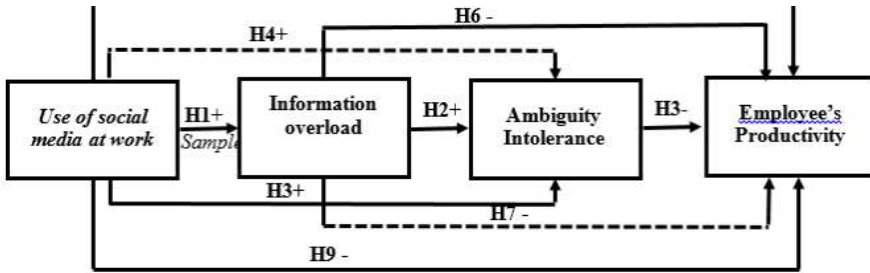
Previously researchers had mixed opinion about the relationship between use of social media and employee productivity. Celebi and Terkan (2020) stated that use of social media at workplace enhances employee-employee communication, work efficiency and productivity. Some other researcher (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017; Robertson & Kee, 2017; Tajudeen et al., 2018; Tulu, 2017; van Zoonen et al., 2016) also found positive relationship between social media usage and workplace performance. However, it depends on type of social media they are using. Personal social media usage increases the tendency of procrastination at work (Tandon et al., 2022) while official use of social media networks leads to information overload (Doost & Zhang, 2023; Fu et al., 2020; Matthes et al., 2020; Osatuyi, & Turel, 2019) and indecisiveness (Brown-Liburd et al., 2015) along with several wellbeing issues related to stress and strain (Munene & Nyaribo, 2013; Wang et al., 2021). However, none of these studies have considered the mediation of ambiguity intolerance to establish the path between information overload and employee productivity.

Therefore, we set the following propositions for the present study:

H8: Use of social media is negatively related with employees' productivity.

H9: Information overload, and ambiguity intolerance mediate the relationship between use of social media and employees' productivity.

Figure 1 - Research framework



## Method

### Population and Sample

Based on positivism research philosophy, we adopted deductive approach, and survey technique in this research. As indicated by Saunders (2009), survey using questionnaire is the best strategy to test research hypotheses or revalidate the existing theory in a new context. We adopted quantitative research approach to find out the serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance in relationship between use of social media at work and overall employee productivity. The cross sectional data was collected through a research questionnaire, adapted from various studies as shown in Table-1. The population of the study was comprised of 8156 regular employees (The News, January 11, 2022) working with Pakistan International Airline. We used purposive sampling technique to collect the data from 232 respondents who had been involved in ground services and used social media especially for sales and marketing jobs. To check the sampling adequacy, we used Kaiser Meyer Oklin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy in SPSS (V25). The value (0.911) falls in marvelous range and confirms the adequacy of sample for the current study.

### Data collection

We contacted the Manager Human Resource of PIA for consent, cooperation and contact information about their flight management employees working on ground in various cities of Pakistan. This was important to reach to the employees through email. In compliance with ethical considerations given in declaration of World Medical Association (2001), we attached a comprehensive cover letter with each questionnaire wherein respondents were requested to volunteer for the survey and respond to the questionnaire subject to their open consent. They were allowed to leave any question unanswered if they didn't want to reply due to any reason or refuse to complete the questionnaire at any stage. We also ensured them of confidentiality of their responses and for their comfort the questionnaire was kept anonymous. The letter also informed them that the research was purely academic in nature and the questionnaire will take only 15-20 minutes to respond. Initially, the instruments were pilot tested on 20 employees from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, to ensure the reliability of scales in a new context. Results of Cronbach's Alpha, as shown in Table-1 were satisfactory ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ) and therefore we continued with these instruments for further online data collection (Hair et al., 2010). Initially online questionnaire links were sent to 400 employees through emails, however we received only 239 responses after two months' repeated reminders and phone calls, indicating a response rate of 60%. After sifting the incomplete responses, we found 232 useable responses for final analysis.

### Sample description/demographics

The research sample included 43% female and 57% male employees. Average age of respondents was 33 years with minimum 26 to maximum 48 years and average work experience

was 12.5 years with minimum 3 to maximum 19 years. Respondents belonged to sales and marketing (48%), central reservation control (35%), human resource (8%) and other (9%) departments.

**Table 1**  
*Instruments*

S/No	Variable Name	Instrument	No. of items	Cornbach's Alpha (Pilot test)	Reference item	Scale
1	Use of Social Media Use for Work (USM)	Leftheriotis & Giannakos, (2014)	5+3=8	0.78	Using social media networks is necessary for me	4-Heavy use, 1 no use
2	Information overload (IO)	Karr-Wisniewski & Lu (2010)	3	0.81	I often have the feeling that I get too much information on my mobile phone to make a good decision	1- Strongly Disagree; 9- Strongly Agree
3	Ambiguity Intolerance (AI)	Pedovic et al. (2022)	7	0.75	I dislike questions which could be answered correctly in many different ways.	1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree
4	Overall Employee Productivity (OEP)	Staples et al. (1999)	5	0.80	My manager believes I am an efficient worker	1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree, scale

### Measurement Model

As recommended by Braun et al., (2019), all adapted questionnaires should be tested for internal consistency to ascertain the reliability of the instrument in a different study context. Therefore, we used Cronbach's Alpha statistics in SPSS (V25), which were found in excellent range ( $> 0.90$ ) for all items (Table-2). Since multiple scaling patterns were used for each variable, therefore, we used standardized measures for further analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique was used to assess the validity of instruments using AMOS (V24). Results indicate excellent ranges of all fit indices as shown in Table 3 (CMIN/df: $<3$ ; SRMR: $<0.06$ ; CFI, TLI, IFI $>0.95$ ; RMSEA:  $<0.08$ ). To check the concurrent and discriminant validity of instruments, these were tested for Composite Reliability (CR), Average variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Reliability of Highest Order (MaxR(H), and Highest Factor Loading (shown in diagonal in bold). Results established that instruments have no concurrent (CR $>0.8$ ; AVE $>0.5$ ; MaxR(H) $> 0.8$ ) and discriminant (MSV $<$ AVE; Highest factor loading in diagonal  $>$  corresponding correlations) validity concerns (Anli, 2019). Moreover, none of the correlation is greater than 0.8, therefore the data is safe from multicollinearity. Moreover, as indicated by PodesKoff (2003) cross sectional data is exposed to common method bias (CMB), therefore we tested presence of CMB in SPSS using Harman's single factor test for un-rotated solutions. Results indicated that the variance explained by single factor is 32% and therefore is less than the threshold value (50%) for CMB (Fuller et al., 2016). Therefore, the doubt of CMB is found limited in the data.



**Table 2**  
*Descriptive, Correlation & Reliability*

		Threshold	USM	IO	AI	OEP
<b>Correlation</b>	<b>USM</b>		<b>0.905</b>			
	<b>IO</b>		0.234***	<b>0.866</b>		
	<b>AI</b>		0.236***	0.394***	<b>0.783</b>	
	<b>OEP</b>		-0.179*	-0.271***	-0.165*	<b>0.867</b>
<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Mean</b>		2.8	7.38	3.24	3.85
	<b>SD</b>		1.21	0.99	1.12	0.89
<b>Internal Consistency</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	(>0.7)	0.928	0.889	0.940	0.937
<b>Convergent validity</b>	<b>CR</b>	(>0.80)	0.978	0.899	0.915	0.938
	<b>AVE</b>	(>0.5 & < CR)	0.820	0.750	0.614	0.751
<b>Discriminant Validity</b>	<b>MSV</b>	(< AVE)	0.056	0.153	0.155	0.073
	<b>MaxR(H)</b>	(> 0.80)	0.992	0.962	0.986	0.939

**Notes:**

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

N: 232

USM: Use of Social Media Usage, IO: Information Overload, AI: Ambiguity Intolerance, OEP: Overall Employee Productivity, SD: Standard Deviation, CR: Composite Reliability, AVE: Average variance Extracted, MSV: Maximum Shared Variance, MaxR(H): Maximum Reliability of Highest Order

**Table 3**  
*Model Fit Indices*

Model	Threshold	CMIN/df	SRMR	CFI	IFI	TLI	RSMEA
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Between 1 and 3</b>	<b>&lt;0.06</b>	<b>&gt;0.95</b>	<b>&gt;0.95</b>	<b>&gt;0.95</b>	<0.06
	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Between 3 and 5</b>	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<b>&lt;0.08</b>
<b>CFA</b>		2.484	.0446	0.962	.962	.952	.080
<b>SEM</b>		2.338	0.039	0.964	.965	.957	0.078

**Notes**

CMIN: Chi-square, df: degree of freedom, SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, CFI: Confirmatory Fit Index, IFI: Incremental Fit Index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis Fit Index, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis, SEM: Structural Equation Modelling

### Structural Model

The research involved serial mediation of information overload (IO) and ambiguity intolerance (AI) in relationship between use of social media and overall employee productivity (OEP). For this purpose, we developed nine propositions including six impact assessment models, two mediation models and one serial mediation model. We used structural equation modelling technique (SEM) in AMOS (V24) to test these hypotheses. Results indicated that use of social media is positively related with information overload and ambiguity intolerance while negatively related with overall productivity of employees. Since these values are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), we accept H1, H3 and H8 as true (Table 4 & 5; Figure-2). Similarly, information overload is also positively related with ambiguity intolerance and negatively related with overall productivity. Both

of these relationships are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), therefore we also accept H2 and H6 as true. The relationship between ambiguity intolerance and overall productivity is also negative but not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) and therefore we reject H5.

Similarly, results of mediation analysis indicate that information overload significantly mediates the relationship between use of social media and ambiguity intolerance (indirect effect .110,  $p < 0.05$ ), however the same is insignificant for mediation of ambiguity intolerance in relationship between information overload and overall employee productivity (indirect effect - 0.031,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, we accept H4 and reject H7. Additionally, results also establish significant serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance in relationship between use of social media and overall productivity (indirect effect -.070,  $p < 0.050$ ). Therefore, we accept H9 as true. Overall, seven hypotheses are accepted and two are rejected.

**Table 4**  
*Mediation Analysis*

Model	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
USM --> IO	0.236**		
USM --> AI	0.289**	0.180**	.110**
USM --> OEP	-0.187**	-0.118	-0.070**
IO --> AI	0.465**		
IO --> OEP	-0.245**	-0.218**	-0.031
AI --> OEP	-0.066	-0.066	

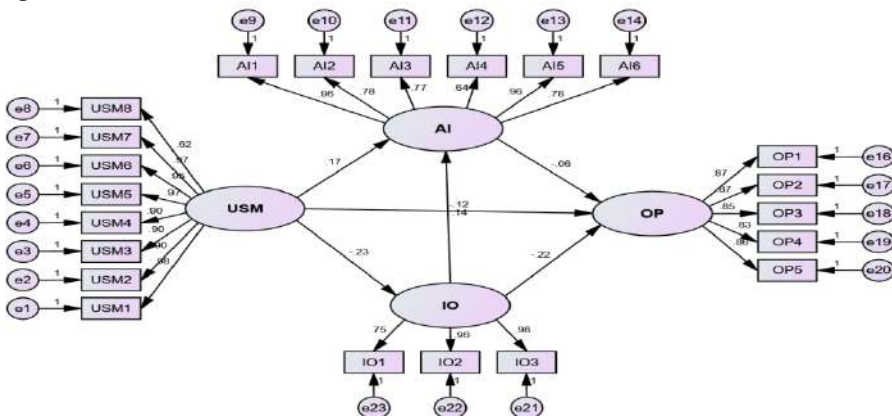
**Notes**

N: 232

\*\* P < 0.01

USM: Use of Social Media, IO: Information Overload, AI: Ambiguity Intolerance, OEP: Overall Employee Productivity

*Figure 2 - Mediation model*



USM: Use of Social Media, IO: Information Overload, AI: Ambiguity Intolerance, OEP: Overall Employee Productivity

**Table 5**  
*Final status of Hypotheses*

Hypotheses	Total & indirect values	Hypothesis status
H1: Significantly positive relationship between USM & IO	0.236**	Accepted
H2: Significantly positive relationship between IO & AI	0.465**	Accepted
H3: Significantly positive relationship between USM & AI	0.289**	Accepted
H4: Significant mediation of IO in relationship between EUSM & AI	0.110**	Accepted
H5: Significantly negative relationship between AI & OEP	-0.066 (NS)	Rejected
H6: Significantly negative relationship between IO & OEP	-0.245**	Accepted
H7: Significant mediation of AI in relationship between IO & OEP	-0.031 (NS)	Rejected
H8: Significantly negative relationship between USM & OEP	-0.187**	Accepted
H9: Significant mediation of IO & AI in relationship between USM & OEP	-0.070**	Accepted

**Notes:**

\*\* p < 0.01

NS: Not significant

USM: Use of Social Media, IO: Information Overload, AI: Ambiguity Intolerance, OEP: Overall Productivity

## Discussion

Results of the current study endorsed that reliance on these social media networks leads to information overload, which creates ambiguity intolerance leading to diminishing productivity. This is important to note that we focused only on compulsory use of social media at work, which is considered important to increase employee efficiency. Results found that use of social media is positively related with information overload and ambiguity intolerance and negatively related with overall employee productivity. These results are in line with previous research by Okan (2021) wherein it was found that uncontrolled use of social media creates confusion leading to negative effects on decision making and performance of employees. It increases the decision time and reduces the efficiency and performance (Yu et al., 2018; Zhu & Bao, 2018). However, previous research has not considered productivity as a measure of employee performance which is linked with efficient achievement of job-related goals. Especially in airline business, where quick and effective decisions are required on hourly basis and employees are required to achieve their set targets in specified time and manner, there is no room for ambiguity.

Our study was not able to find significant relationship between ambiguity intolerance and overall employee productivity, though it was negative as perceived. Similarly, the mediation of ambiguity intolerance was also not significant as proposed. These results create doubts on role of ambiguity intolerance in different ways. Gunessee and Subramanian, (2020) indicated that under certain circumstances an ambiguity intolerant managers can still perform by avoiding the ambiguous situations and working to reduce the uncertainties. Therefore, the situation affects them less negatively, however, it varies from individual to individual (Shokouhyar, et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2018).

The transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) assumes that individuals face challenges and problems due to their interactions with people and environment. They call these challenges and problems as stressors. In the current study scenario, the information overload due to use of social media is a stressor. However, the strategies to deal with these stressors vary from person to person depending upon the resource availability and cognitive abilities of individual to handle the situation that can create ambiguity and uncertainty. Therefore, the effect of these stressors is dependent on stress coping strategies adopted by individuals. Overall the serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance explains the process through which the use of social media can affect the overall employee productivity. These results fill the literature gap indicated by previous research (Ecker et al., 2022; Sharif et al., 2018; Shokouhyar et al., 2018; Vismara et al., 2022) and provide empirical evidence of negative effects of reliance on social media to perform a job at the workplace.

### **Implications**

Our research has several implications for various stakeholders. Since the study sample was comprised of employees from Pakistan International Airline, we recommend them to monitor controlled use of social media at workplace as it may create situation of information overload leading to ambiguity intolerance among employees. As shown in the study, these situations are harmful for employee productivity. Additionally, it is also recommended that trainings to effectively handle the technology, social networks, stress and ambiguity linked with it may be made a regular part of the system. Employees should be trained to handle the information flow and sift the desired information effectively and efficiently. Although social media is an important source of latest news and information, it is equally important to be able to segregate information from disinformation. This situation not only create stress also lead to negative consequences in terms of wrong or poor decision making. In this regard, employees should be given regular refresher courses to keep them updated on latest developments. Additionally, frequent job rotations, shortened working hours, frequent gaps during the job to relax and other physical activities help reducing the stress and improving the productivity (Murphy et al., 2018). Therefore, such high-performance work practices should be introduced to enhance overall employee productivity.

In addition to above, this study has several implications for future researchers. Our research model contributes to the body of literature by testing the serial mediation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance in relationship between use of social media and employee productivity. Previous research studied the effect of social media on performance as a whole, while productivity is more goal and task-oriented approach and therefore needs more focus. Additionally, the role of ambiguity intolerance is a new contribution that explains the process through which excessive use of social media can diminish the employee productivity.

Despite these contributions our research has certain limitations which can be resolved in the future research. Firstly, we used cross sectional data in our study which is exposed to method bias. Future research can use experimental research design and check the type of social media usage having more negative consequences. Secondly, moderating effects of job rotation, working hours and various trainings can also be checked to ascertain the effectiveness of these interventions. Thirdly, we found the negative impact of social media usage on employee's productivity through information overload and ambiguity intolerance, still it was not clear that productivity decreases due to indecisiveness or any other factor. Studying the role of these variables on decision making under different situations can help further identifying the underlying process. Fourthly, the transactional stress theory and coping provides evidence that stress is the natural outcome of use of social media at work, which has not been considered in this study. Future research should investigate the mediating mechanism of stress in relationship between information overload and

ambiguity intolerance leading to poor quality decision making or inefficiency at the workplace. Previous research has also studied the role of locus of control in creating ambiguity intolerance. We also recommend that the moderating role of this variable may be studied as we assume that people with high locus of control tend to tolerate the ambiguity more effectively. Another limitation of this research is the use of purposive or non-random sampling strategy that has limited generalizability. Therefore, we recommend employing random sampling technique in future studies and also use the results of this study with caution.

### Conclusion

We conducted the study to find the serial mediating of information overload and ambiguity intolerance to understand the behavioral consequences of excessive use of social media at workplace. We found that the excessive use of social media creates a situation of information overload and ambiguity intolerance among employees and resultantly their productivity diminishes. Overall the study has significantly contributed in the theory by explaining the situational, psychological and behavioral consequences of excessive use of social media at workplace, using the lens of transactional stress and coping model.

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**Appendix I- Survey items**Use of Social Media

Using social media (e.g. facebook, linkedin, twitter, blogs) for your work is:

Effective  
 Helpful  
 Functional  
 Necessary  
 Practical

I often use social media to obtain work related information and knowledge

I regularly use social media to maintain and strengthen communication with colleges in my work

What is your frequency of usage of social media at work?

Information overload

I often have the feeling that I get too much information on my mobile phone to make a good decision.

I find that I am overwhelmed by the amount of information I have to process on my mobile phone on a daily basis.

I am often distracted by the excessive amount of information available to me due to my mobile phone

Ambiguity Intolerance

I dislike questions which could be answered correctly in many different ways.

Poems with contradictions are annoying.

I like stories that have consistent characters.

Vague and impressionistic pictures really have little appeal for me.

I don't like to work on a problem unless there's a possibility of coming out with a clear cut answer.

It's annoying to listen to someone who cannot seem to make up his or her mind.

I hate it when you can't solve a problem right away.

Overall Productivity

I believe I am an effective employee. Among my work group,

I would rate my performance in the top quarter.

I am happy with the quality of my work output.

I work very efficiently. I am a highly productive employee.

My manager believes I am an efficient worker.

**Appendix 2 – List of abbreviations**

S/N	Abbreviation	Explanation
1.	AI	Ambiguity Intolerance
2.	AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
3.	AVE	Average variance Extracted
4.	CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
5.	CFI	Confirmatory Fit Index
6.	CMIN	Chi-square
7.	CR	Composite Reliability
8.	df	degree of freedom
9.	USM	Use of Social Media
10.	IFI	Incremental Fit Index
11.	IO	Information Overload
12.	KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy
13.	MaxR(H)	Maximum Reliability of Highest Order
14.	MSV	Maximum Shared Variance
15.	OEP	Overall Employee Productivity
16.	PIA	Pakistan International Airlines
17.	RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
18.	SD	Standard Deviation
19.	SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
20.	SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
21.	SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
22.	SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
23.	TLI	Tucker-Lewis Fit Index

## **Tribalism: A Thorny Concern in Nigerian Politics—A Discursive Review and Appraisal**

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This paper conducts a review and appraisal of discourse surrounding tribalism, which is deeply entrenched in Nigerian politics at different levels of government as the polity of the country has often experienced significant tension along tribal/ethnic lines. Using digital media data, with specific focus on discourses produced during the 2023 general elections in the country, this study reviews and analyses the discourse of tribalism in Nigerian political communication. In an election heavily contested by the All Progressives Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP), with candidates representing three major ethnic groups in Nigeria involving Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo respectively, the entrenched nature of the tribalism mindset in the country was fully exposed. Although tribalism in Nigerian politics has been in existence for a long time, it was only recently witnessed on a large scale on social media given that it is the first time that three popular presidential candidates have emerged from the country's three most popular ethnic groups. Through a multimodal discourse analysis, the study reveals instances of tribalist discourse in the country *vis-à-vis* the social context and implications for the democracy, national cohesion, and the development of the country .

**Keywords:** tribalism; Nigeria; online media; political discourse; ethnicity

Globally, political discourse is fraught with intentional use of language (Oparinde, et al., 2021). Rooted in the discursive devices used for political purposes are elements of persuasion, manipulation, misrepresentation, derogation, and promise. More dangerous are the instances of hate preaching discourse, such as those hinged around tribalism, ethnocentrism, and racism. In fact, it is the view of Kashif and Nusraf (2023) that political communications are often intricate, featuring double meanings, implicit structures, and elusive connotations. One of the thriving concerns in political matters is how disparities and differences are often exploited for political purposes in a manner that aggrandises stereotypes, hate, and disunity. In many instances political interactions are filled with societal tension springing up from unguarded political views and utterances often resulting in an ethnically divided nation, as in the case of Nigeria. Ethnic and tribal tensions have existed for a long time in Nigeria and politics is constantly used to reinvigorate existing tensions in unhealthy ways. A point conceded by Adenuga (2022) is that there exists a mismanagement of the ethnic diversity in Nigeria which has culminated in a spate of ethnoreligious conflicts in the nation.

Adenuga (2022) establishes a strong connection between the mismanagement of the nation's ethnic diversity and bad governance since politicians have often resorted to ethnicity as a tool for economic and political manipulation to cover up for their failures and, in turn, gain legitimacy with members of their own ethnic groups. The deployment of tribalistic language in political campaigns has exacerbated social division in the country, with several issues now being perceived as having ethnic undertones and, therefore, viewed through ethnic lenses. With over 300 tribal/ethnic groups, Nigeria is considered a hugely diverse country with many cultures and languages. Although this is one of the nation's unique strengths, the diverse nature of the country is

also one of its nightmares when interethnic or intertribal issues degenerate to hate or intolerance for other tribes. Recognising that tribal and ethnic tensions are a reality in Nigeria, politicians have often weaponised the situation as a way of satisfying their political interests and desires.

It is the argument of Tawiah *et al.*, (2021) that the tribal factor is one of the principal variables that often defines political contestations in Nigeria. The authors further claim that this is a common phenomenon in Africa and that even in the current era of democracy, many African countries have reverted to their tribal identities as a foundation for political competition. Hence the significance of tribal connections cannot be underrated, especially in the political environment of most African countries. In the current dispensation, tribalism can hardly be separated from Nigerian politics. To fully grasp the intertwined nature of tribalism and politics in Nigeria, recourse must be given to supporting the foundations of Nigerian political development, which many scholars link to colonialism. Akin to this line of thought, Chimee and Ojiakor (2021) opine that the material and ideological impact of colonialism serves as a springboard for the consequent emergence of ethnicity/tribalism in the political centre-stage of Nigeria. As a result, the elites see the powers inherent in the divide-and-rule mechanism of ethnicity, as implored by the colonialists in dealing with the indigenous groups in Nigeria, and quickly revert to same tactics in the aftermath of colonial rule.

Since the ethnic division mentality was already utilised by the colonial government, the formations of political parties in Nigeria were immediately entrenched in the tribalistic/ethnocentric framework already existent in the country. One common feature that cuts across the later-day parties in Nigeria at this time was their covert ethnocentric inclinations, with none of the political parties formed at the time holding pan-Nigerian sentiments and none holding widespread appeal or coverage across the nation, nor did any accommodate people from other ethnic groups at the time of their inception (Chimee and Ojiakor, 2021). This situation has laid the foundation for ethnocentric politics to spread its roots in Nigerian politics, so much so that decades after colonialism the country's political anatomy is still deeply rooted in tribalistic and ethnocentric outlooks, which has no doubt distorted the country's unity. This is a point further echoed by Chimee and Ojiakor (2021) who claim that the Nigerian political class pre- and post-independence distorted the political terrain using ethnicity and primordial mobilisation which occasioned deep-seated disharmony in the country; leading to 'we and they' syndrome and mutual discontent among various ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria.

Titus and Ogundiya (2023) also contend that the issue today is highly volatile and threatens the corporate existence and national unity of the country. They admit that one of the major social and political quagmires which has remained a thorn in the flesh of Nigeria's journey to nationhood, economic prosperity, and social cohesion is the ethnic conundrum which has continued to negatively influence development in Nigeria. As a result, this conundrum not only affects Nigerian national integration but also the level of harmony, patriotism, and loyalty to the legitimacy of the Nigerian state. Digging into the focus of this study, the sociopolitical narratives of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria gravitated heavily towards tribal and ethnic sentiments in manners that threatened the social cohesion and development of the country. In a way that has never been felt before, the proliferation of digital media exposed all the masked and disguised varieties of tribalism in Nigeria. Online media platforms were not only deployed for the purpose of political campaigns, but also for the spreading of tribalistic and ethnocentric sentiments, which have now become the thrust of this study.

The use of tribal and ethnic sentiments in Nigerian politics became fully-fledged, mainly due to the demographics of the leading presidential candidates in that supporters of certain candidates were instantly perceived as tribalistic, bigoted, or ethnocentric. In fact, the politicians as

well as several of their supporters demonstrated tribal views in a brazen and unapologetic manner, as observed from digital media posts which have now motivated the current study. Even more concerning is that these tribal messages that were disseminated were dangerously close to hate speeches, Nigerians must be vigilant to avoid the risks of the violent repercussions. It is within this context that this study intends to multimodally analyse tribalistic and ethnocentric discourse in Nigerian politics.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Inclinations**

This study is theoretically underpinned by the notion of multimodality. O'Halloran *et al.*, (2018) argue that multimodality has become a grand theory of all forms of communication. Therefore, the term 'multimodality' in this study is deployed to involve all online media meaning-making attempts motivated by tribalism. For O'Halloran *et al.*, (2018), the aim of multimodal analysis is, therefore, to develop abstractions which describe the underlying organisation of semiotic resources, the processes through which meaning is made through the interaction of semiotic choices, the unfolding of those semiotic interactions throughout the whole text in relation to the context, and changes in those configurations over time. As such, multimodal discourse analysts are typically interested in the text itself (however 'text' is defined) and the recontextualisations of that text.

Kress (2000) brings to fore the concern that there is a revolution in the landscape of communication which is drastically changing its configuration. Kress (2000) notes that it is now impossible to make sense of text, even their linguistic parts alone, without having a clear idea of what other features might be contributing to the meaning of a text. In so doing, it would be impossible to understand language and its uses without understanding the effect of all the modes of communication that are concurrently present in any text. This notion motivates the need for multimodality, which is an approach that caters for the analysis of discourse through the examination of multiple modes. In essence, since communication is achieved using multiple modes, the analysis of discourses produced in the process should also be done multimodally.

Conceptually, the study draws from the notions of tribalism and its related nuances. Given the complexity of identities in Nigeria, being a multicultural, multireligious, multilingual country, other nuances become intertwined with tribalism, which include religion, ethnocentrism nepotism, partisanship, cronyism, among others. While some of these nuances are not particularly the focus of this study, their interconnected nature with the concepts of tribalism and ethnocentrism brings them into this discussion. Tikumah (2023) posits that tribalism has often been conceived as the biggest obstacle to peace and progress in Africa. This is more prominent since tribalism is considered to have damaging outcomes when it is utilised to exclude people or groups or to take away their privileges, independence, and status (Abdelrahim, 2023). Abdelrahim (2023) empirically connects tribalism to oppression and corruption, thus, advocating for the urgent need to educate and enlighten Africans on the dangers of tribalism, and in fact, ethnocentrism. It is worth noting that the earlier definitions of tribalism do not instantly suggest negative connotations. For instance, Waruta (1992:120) perceives the term 'tribe' as a social organisation or division comprising several local villages, bands, or lineages, or other groups sharing a common ancestry, language, culture, or name.

However, Dami (2022) admits that some of the assumptions that frame the phenomenon of tribalism in the past have not only changed, but the context in which tribalism arises in contemporary Africa and the framework within which it is perceived has acquired different facets. As of today, the practice of tribalism, especially in the political context of Nigeria, has grown to connote negative implications. Nwaigbo (2005) sees tribalism as involving tribal consciousness, character, and allegiance, particularly to one's tribe or a social group. Following on from here, one can argue that issues of allegiance in tribalism are sensitive and can easily be met with

overzealousness. Hence, Nwaigbo (2005) conceives that Africans now admit that the dynamics of their society have been dominated by the phenomenon of tribes/tribalism.

The multifaceted dimension of tribalism makes multimodality the suitable theory for the purpose of this study. This study aligns with Jewitt and Kress's (2010) proposition that multimodality focuses on the processes of making meaning through situated practices and interpretations, the design (selection, adaptation, transformation) of multiple modes, and the representational feature available through social actors in the environments and their daily lives. A multimodal approach, as in the case of this study where the researcher examines tribalism in the context of political discourse, investigates how the sociocultural world is realised through material representations in different modes and occasions of communication. For Jewitt and Kress, this is where the essential links between social conditions and the ways they are modally instantiated are created. This study is conceived with the notion that tribalism as a sociocultural issue has found a near dangerous place in politics, realised through discursive practices. Thus, using multimodality as a theory, this study conducts a review and appraisal of the discourse of tribalism in Nigerian politics.

### Method

This is a qualitative study which deploys the techniques of inductive analysis in analysing multimodal tribalistic data in Nigerian political discourse. The data for this study were collected from digital media as this platform has generally become an open source of public information that can reveal people's views and perspectives. Online media is defined as web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organisations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build a community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible (McCay-Peet & QuanHaase, 2017). Toivonen *et al.*, (2019) state that online content and metadata contain useful information for understanding human nature and interactions in space and time. Specifically, data were collected from Twitter and Facebook which are the most popular social media platforms in Nigeria especially for political conversations.

The web scraping acquisition method, according to Toivonen *et al.*, (2019), was used in gathering the relevant information for this study where the researcher extracted data through the human copy-and-paste technique. Data were purposely collected from digital media platforms and then manually entered from these platforms to Microsoft Word for analysis. The suitability of the data was determined by whether it possessed tribalistic views regarding the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The text content and image content elements of the data, according to Toivonen *et al.*, (2019), were considered before their selection. Data involving short messages, captions, hashtags, memes, as well as images in relation to the objectives of the study were preferred as they gained wider circulation. Then, suitable data for this study were purposively selected and multimodally analysed in line with the propositions of Jewitt and Kress (2010) which allowed for a deep comprehension of the data beyond the surface level. This study focuses mainly on viral online tribal content and avoided revealing the identity of individual contributors of tribalistic content. The analysed data revealed a concerning discourse of tribalism in Nigeria which requires urgent attention.

## Results and Discussion

### A Multimodal Analysis of Tribalistic Discourse in Nigerian Politics

The intricate dynamics of Nigerian society have often been marked by the existence of identity divisions defined by the multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious nature of the country. These divisions of identity have also become a tool for politicians to achieve their selfish political objectives. As earlier established, a united Nigerian country does not benefit the manipulative and controlling techniques that several politicians revert to for electoral purposes. It is within this context that the researcher analyses political discourse in Nigeria which has been used to fuel and trigger tribal divisions for the sole purpose of political interest. The discussion around this concern specifically refers to the situations leading up to and after the 2023 presidential general elections.

Perhaps the most arguably popular tribal sentiment online during this period was the slogan *emi lo kan* (singular form referring to the actual speaker) or *awa lo kan* (plural form referring to the tribe/ethnic group of the speaker). The slogan was popular on both Twitter and Facebook. To interpret, the former means 'it is my turn' ('my' referring to the speaker) while the latter means 'it is our turn' ('our' referring to Yoruba people). An extension of this phrase in Nigerian political discourse also produced the saying *Yoruba lo kan* which is translated as 'it is Yoruba's turn'. The statement, which is credited the Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was the APC Presidential Candidate, was meant to imply that after he has sacrificed for other politicians in the past, it is now his turn to become the president of Nigeria, and by extension, the turn of the Yoruba people to produce the president of the country. Since the presidential candidate made the statement at a political event during his campaign, the saying became widely accepted by several Yoruba people who agreed that it is the turn of Yoruba people to produce a president, since the last time a Yoruba man was a president was in 2007 when President Olusegun Obasanjo handed over to a northerner, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The rhetorical power of slogans in political and social campaigns cannot be undermined.

From time immemorial, slogans have been used for several purposes, among which include social movements, political campaigns, wartime propaganda, advertising purposes, among other. Like in many parts of the world, the use of slogans has a long history in Nigerian political expressions. In essence, slogans have become important aesthetic components in political campaigns in Nigeria. From emotive words/phrases to appealing appellations, Nigerian politicians are fond of using popular slogans that elicit reactions and support from the electorate. One such slogan is *emi lo kan* and its variants. Ogunjobi *et al.*, (2021) admit that the frequent use of slogans in the political sphere all over the world has become a pervasive exercise whereby most political aspirants employ the use of slogans as being representative of an alluring ideology to articulate their ideological standpoint and persuade their audience as well as drive a political action. Thus, this study argues that to create a political brand in Nigeria today, slogans have become a necessary ingredient in Nigerian politics. Ogunjobi *et al.*, (2021), however, also establishes that slogans can bring about positive or negative connotations depending on the usage. For this study, when slogans are employed to serve tribal sentiments, they are often for negative purposes, as is the case of *Yoruba lo kan*, with the sole purpose of garnering support from Yoruba people who equally believe that it is the time for a Yoruba presidency.

From a multimodal perspective, *emi lo kan*, *awa lo kan*, and *Yoruba lo kan* are all divisive and disharmonious sentiments. Notwithstanding that the slogans are fraught with a sense of entitlement for the speaker, and by extension the Yoruba people, the slogans quickly became popular nationwide and went viral amongst the supporters of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who positively welcomed the slogan with supporting views, especially on online media platforms. This is however not entirely surprising since Mbembe (1992; 2002) already perceived African politics as a form of mutual zombification, which refers to the impotence or powerlessness of the ruler and the ruled,

each of which having robbed the other of vitality, leaving both impotent. Mbembe's portrayal of African politics involves his depictions of presidential grandiosity, political sycophancy, tenacious corruption, flamboyant violence, and coercive ceremonialism. One can argue that Mbembe's views on political sycophancy and coercive ceremonialism are illustrated in the above slogans, where slogans tied to tribal sentiments became popular and are celebrated by many Nigerians. Such political slogans are devoid of rational arguments, thus, do not foster unity among diverse groups. A concerning fact in Nigerian politics is that tribal/ethnic-based slogans have completely eclipsed development-based and policy-based ones. This situation has continued to undermine the national cohesion of the country since tribal sentiments have become determining factors in selecting and supporting presidential candidates. Instances of such tribal sentiments are found almost daily in digital content, where users tend to approve or condemn issues based on ethnic consciousness.

Also arising out of the *emi lo kan* slogan is the inherent but inexplicit message of corruption which Wrong and Williams (2009) encapsulated in their book *It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistleblower*. In the book, Wrong and Williams (2009) outline the greed and corruption in governance where political leaders relegate national interest completely in favour of personal gain, which they have already made evident in their slogans. Judging by this, one can argue that the *emi lo kan* rhetoric was a statement against what is unsaid. The inexplicit content of the message easily refers to the fact that it is now the speaker's turn to eat from the national cake, just as *awa lo kan* would imply that it is now the Yoruba's turn to get closer to federal power and consume their portion of the national cake. Michaela Wrong (2009) aptly captures the danger of tribal sentiments in Nigerian politics stating that:

In Africa, one's entire life's chances are based on which ethnic group one belongs to. And there is the mentality that once your tribe gets into power, then state assets are yours to do with as you wish. And since the previous tenant had the same approach, then of course you are completely justified to be very greedy to compensate for how your group was treated in the past. So, "it is our turn to eat" really means, "it's our community's turn at the trough.

Another tribal expression arising from Nigerian politics emerged when a popular associate of the APC candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who is a Yoruba, popularly known as M.C. Oluomo, was caught on video threatening the Igbos ahead of the 2023 governorship elections in Lagos State. M.C. Oluomo, who is the chairman of the Lagos State Parks Management Committee, was quoted saying "we have begged them. If they don't want to vote for us, it is not a fight. Tell them, Mama Chukwudi, if you don't want to vote for us, sit down at home. Sit down at home" (Adeuyi, 2023). Chukwudi is a popular Igbo name. As such, any reference to the name Chukwudi only points towards the Igbo people. Although winning in many other states, the supposed Yoruba candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, lost the presidential election in his own Lagos State, which is also considered to belong to the Yorubas. Since Lagos is cosmopolitan, it was perceived that the large population of Igbos in the state dominated the Yorubas, thus resulting in Peter Obi (an Igbo candidate from Labour Party) winning in the state of Lagos ahead of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who is a Yoruba man. The common notion among many ethnocentric minded Nigerians at the time was that an Igbo person should not be defeating a Yoruba person in a state that ancestrally belongs to the Yoruba people.

Although the presidential election had been lost in Lagos by the APC candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the state governorship elections were scheduled for a few weeks after. This engineered all sorts of resistance by many Yoruba people in Lagos on several social media platforms as they feared that the presidential results repeating themselves in the gubernatorial

elections since the Labour Party chapter of the state has also presented a candidate many Yoruba people believed appealed more to the Igbo people. With their lesson learnt from the presidential elections, the available option was to disenfranchise the Igbo people, which in their thinking would help avoid losing the state to the Igbo people. It is for this reason that M.C. Oluomo, who is known to control most of the political touts in Lagos, made the threatening statement suggesting that any Igbo person who is unwilling to vote for the perceived Yoruba candidate should not appear at the polling booths for voting purposes during the governorship elections. A point which was taken seriously by many political thugs who eventually prevented Igbo people or perceived Igbo-looking people from voting on the election day in Lagos State. Not only was the election process marred with disenfranchisement, but it was also equally fraught with physical violence, often meted against those intend to vote against the Yoruba candidate.

The statement made by M.C. Oluomo, coupled with other tribal expressions such as: (i) *my Lagos not your Lagos, you are here because of business*; (ii) *Go back to your own states*; and (iii) *Lagos belongs to the Yorubas*, among others, saw the election period revolve solely around ethnicity more than the development of Lagos. These messages were all multimodally communicated through online media, posters, placards, and so forth. Evidently, political contestations have heightened ethnic sentiments in Nigeria by polarising the polity. As such, rather than champion causes that would advance peace and unity, the political class, because of the perquisite of office, reverted to ethnic appeal, incitement, or mobilisation (Chimee & Ojiakor, 2021). The ethnic factor in the 2023 presidential elections was extremely obvious. According to Titus and Ogundiya (2023), since the three leading presidential candidates represented the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, where they each anticipated to perform better than the other parties, the opposition party's members were subject to repression from both state and non-state actors.

A social media post by one of Nigeria's leading television states credited a statement to Atiku Abubakar suggesting that he deserved the votes of the northern people because he belongs to their ethnic group. In an interactive session where Atiku Abubakar was addressing mostly northerners, he was quoted saying "Northerners need someone from North, not Igbo or Yoruba" (Egobiambu, 2022). In what Egobiambu considered to be an 'inflammable rhetoric', it was clear that the statement was merely used to appeal to the ethnic sentiments of the northern people who are, in fact, the largest ethnic group in Nigeria, the Hausa. Prior to the statement, Atiku Abubakar has always been portrayed by members of his political party (PDP) as the perfect nationalists with no ethnocentric behaviours. In fact, his supporters have often described him as the 'unifier', insinuating that he is the only leader who can create a sense of unity among the three major tribes in Nigeria. However, this does not appear to be the case. The statement made by Abubakar Atiku could be traced to one of the defining issues of the presidential elections, where many Nigerians believed that the presidency needed to shift from northern to southern Nigeria, which housed perhaps Atiku's biggest nemesis. Having had a northern president for eight years, many Nigerians expected a southern presidency as a form of rotational balance. Since Atiku is the only northerner of the three leading candidates, while the other two are southerners, this was clearly a threat to his candidacy.

Closely related to the issue of tribalism is also the religious factor. Since Nigeria is multi-religious and multi-ethnic, certain religions tend to be more dominant within certain tribes/ethnic groups. As such, there is a continuous interplay between the tribes and the dominant religion in each ethnic group. For instance, Islam is the dominant religion in the northern part of Nigeria. The southern part of the country, especially the south-eastern part where the leading presidential candidate from the LP, Peter Obi, comes from, is dominated by Christians. The implication of this is that to support a tribe is also to indirectly support the dominant religion from the tribe. It is within this context that Peter Obi seemed to appeal to the emotions of Christians in the country. Although



he was not directly quoted for making tribal remarks, he made a religious remark that shared affinity with his ethnic group. Although Peter Obi himself denied the statement, the leaked viral audio recording published by a media outlet known as Peoples Gazette revealed Peter Obi purportedly begging a popular Pastor in Nigeria to convince the church members to vote for him as it is time for a religious battle (Olupohunda, 2023). In the leaked audio, Peter Obi was quoted saying “Thank you, Daddy. Daddy, I need you to speak to your people in the Southwest and Kwara. The Christians in the Southwest and Kwara. This is a religious war.” While this statement does not explicitly refer to a tribe, it represents Peter Obi’s religion, which is also the dominant religion in his ethnic group. Being the only Christian among the three leading candidates, support for Peter Obi is consequentially support for his ethnic group.

The tribalisation of the 2023 general elections has further driven Nigeria into inter-tribal tensions. Although not new to the Nigerian political space, the 2023 general elections further pronounced the tribal sentiments in Nigeria and confirmed what is already known to be a plague in the Nigerian political setting. Before now, Ebegbulem (2011) had already established that politicised ethnicity has been detrimental to national unity and socio-economic wellbeing since ethnic politics undermines the selection of responsible and responsive national leadership. The tension, according to Ebegbulem (2011), is further exacerbated by economic underdevelopment, marginalisation, and the struggle for resource control. Benibo *et al.*, (2021) similarly note that ethnicity and the crisis arising from it has been an object of political manipulation to achieve desired economic advantages and political objectives. A point also stressed by Omotosho *et al.*, (2020) is that there is a high level of competitive ethnocentrism in Nigeria which has discouraged the peaceful co-existence of the various cultural and ethnic groups in the country as some ethnic groups see themselves as superior to others. Thus, they recommend that every politically elected position and appointment should be based on meritocracy rather than ethnic considerations or a demeaning quota system which has created a lot of loopholes in the nation’s polity and undermined its national economic growth and development.

In their view, this will provide room for every tribe to have a taste of the dividends of good governance and reduce unhealthy competition that could result in ethnic tension or social conflict, especially when some tribes keep dominating strategic or key positions of authority. Benibo *et al.*, (2021) submit that the inability of the government to accommodate the diverse differences within and between the ethnic groups as well as the stakes and status of the elites and citizens has, in very many ways, impinged the historical process of ethnic formation and nation building. Indeed, recent political expressions from the 2023 general elections leaning heavily toward tribal sentiments are only confirmation that the country is riddled with interethnic tensions, which is unlikely to be dispelled anytime soon. Thus, to suppress this concerning challenge from a discursive perspective, Nigerian political messages, rhetoric, expressions, and all other politically motivated discourses must be entirely transformed. The dense reliance on intangible phenomenon in Nigerian politics that is reproduced through discourse is dangerous for national development and unity.

As such, Nigerian political discourse must begin to shift its attention to impact-based and policy-based slogans, rhetoric, and expressions without recourse against tribes, ethnicities, and religions. The current dominant discourse in Nigerian politics puts emphasis on representation at either an individual or group level, thus, ignoring issues of societal impact, unity, and development. Since politicians constantly exploit the differences amongst Nigerians, public discourse has also been centred around the politicians’ gimmicks. As such, since tribal consciousness is integral to the politicians’ messages, public discourse is also rooted in tribal consciousness and not progressive matters. To ensure national unity and development, public discourse in Nigerian politics must shift completely to conversations that reflect societal growth.

### Conclusion

The study has demonstrated the prevalence of tribalism in Nigeria's political landscape. The use of tribal elements to strengthen political support is popular in Nigerian political discourse. This article is provoked by the need to examine the social implications of tribalism in Nigerian politics. To fully understand tribalist discourse in Nigerian politics, data were retrieved from digital media and multimodally analysed. Such an approach to the investigation of tribalism allowed for a nuanced understanding of the concept within the sociocultural contexts of its usages. The findings of the study not only revealed the instances of tribalism discourse in Nigerian political discourse, but also underscored the effects of tribalist discourse in national development, cohesion, and unity. The analysis of the data, coupled with the review of existing literature, revealed the need to shun tribalistic discourse in Nigeria for the country to achieve national development. What is further important is the need to avoid unguarded statements that can trigger tribal or ethnic tensions amongst Nigerians.

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## **Lecturers' Adoption of E-Learning from the TAM Perspective: Transitioning from Lecture Halls to Virtual Classrooms**

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Considering the post-COVID-19 pandemic, this study investigates how faculty members in higher education in Somalia are handling the shift from traditional classroom instruction to e-learning. *The* study looks at how factors like perceived usefulness (PU), attitude (ATT), behavioural intention (BI), and actual usage (AU) impact lecturers' acceptance of e-learning through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). A descriptive and cross-sectional design was used in the investigation. The information was gathered by surveying three hundred and seventy-five (375) lecturers from seven different Mogadishu universities. The study used a non-random, purposive sample. The results of the study showed that most of the factors influencing lecturers' adaptation to e-learning were significant, except for three exogenous variables: Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy (PTSE), institutional support for lecturers (ISL), and digital tool access (DTA). These variables did not significantly impact perceived usefulness (PU), as their p-values were higher than 0.05. On the other hand, all the other hypotheses had p-values lower than 0.05, which means that the lecturers in the Benadir region, Somalia, were satisfied with the e-learning adaptation. To investigate the hypotheses of e-learning and digital resource adoption, the study used SPSS 26.0 and SmartPLS-4's Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Based on the findings, the researchers advised instructors to receive technology and pedagogy training and institutions to fund infrastructure development

**Keywords:** Adaptation, Digital Education, E-Learning, Teaching and Learning,

E-learning, which refers to using electronic technologies and media to support learning, has grown in popularity and availability in recent years, but the pandemic has accelerated its adoption and innovation (Lytras et al., 2022). As a form of ICT-based education, E-learning has also become increasingly popular among lecturers and students in higher education institutions (Alenezi et al., 2023). The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has transformed the traditional mode of teaching and learning into a more flexible and interactive one.

Digital transformation in higher education institutions, as defined by Shaw and Rawlinson (2022), is the implementation of all digital processes necessary to simplify the transformation process and improve digital technology utilization. The official adoption of most African higher education institutions relied on face-to-face teaching methods (Mospan & Sysoieva, 2022). In Somalia, higher education institutions face limited access to learning facilities, such as limited access to computers and smartphones, the inability to use search engines and ICT software, and limited data provision and internet access. The level of preparedness and readiness

of lecturers for e-learning varies depending on their access to technology and training (Anh et al., 2023).

Despite their challenges, some higher education institutions in Somalia have shown endurance and innovation by adopting digital learning environments. However, the pandemic may have also created some resistance among teachers to embrace online classrooms. After COVID-19, lecturers could evaluate their use of technology and how to improve their e-learning system in the event of the abrupt closure of academic institutions. This experience may have changed their perceptions of e-learning and increased their willingness to use it in future teaching plans (Farhan et al., 2019).

The study used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which assumes that technology adoption depends on two personal beliefs: "perceived usefulness" and "perceived ease of use", to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of online education (Patil & Undale, 2023; Dassanayaka et al., 2022).

This research investigates the views of university lecturers in Somalia regarding their readiness and motivation to continue using online platforms for teaching after the COVID-19 situation. The Technology. Insufficient studies about higher education lecturers' adaptation to e-learning were conducted. This study examined lecturers' readiness to shift from traditional lecture hall teaching to more sophisticated use of technology in teaching and learning by adapting virtual learning.

### **Literature Review**

Various studies conducted by Al-Khresheh et al., (2022), Biberman-Shalev et al. (2023), and Cabero-Almenara et al., (2022) examined the impact and utilization of e-learning on lecturers' attitudes and intentions. According to Muhamad Don et al., (2022), after the COVID-19 epidemic, lecturers were more inclined to employ e-learning approaches, and their average score (3.8) indicated that they were better equipped for e-learning than traditional classroom teaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition to online e-learning in the higher education sector. According to Haider and Al-Salman (2020), this profoundly affected educational institutions worldwide, prompting a swift transition to emergency remote instruction. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) might be a helpful resource to evaluate whether lecturers are prepared to embrace new technologies. Many scholars have utilized this model to examine the processes of technology adoption and utilization (Mohammadi, 2015). The model illustrates the relationship between lecturers' expectations of technology's usefulness in the classroom and their likelihood of adopting it. Researchers in information systems frequently use the TAM to comprehend better and predict the spread of various technologies (Dassanayaka et al., 2022). The TAM states that the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology are the most essential aspects in determining a person's intent to use it (Farhan et al., 2019). These considerations influence their actual patterns of use. It was initially envisaged that the TAM constructs and external factors would be related to the TAM scales. The ease of use of technology in intelligent classrooms and its connection to lecturers' comfort with technology are also investigated. There are instances where TAM is used productively in online education (Alismaiel et al., 2022). This research investigates the connections between TAM variables and lecturers' determination to use e-learning tools.

The study hypothesizes that teacher preparedness towards e-learning teaching is determined by some essential factors: Lecturers' institutional support, lecturer adaptation, Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy, digital tool access, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness,

attitude towards using digital tools, behavioural intention to use digital tools and actual use of digital tools for teaching and learning. The study also used structural equation modelling to look at the interconnections between these elements, and the diagram is shown at the end of this section.

### **Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy (PTSE)**

The role of technology in education is increasing, and teachers need to be confident in their ability to use it effectively. An educator's "ICT self-efficacy" is confidence in their abilities to effectively incorporate technology into their lessons (Mlambo et al., 2020). Teachers who use high-tech tools in their teaching tend to achieve better academic outcomes. Therefore, researchers are interested in exploring the factors influencing teachers' ICT self-efficacy (Alt, 2018). One of the domains where technology plays a significant role is e-learning, which offers many benefits such as flexibility, affordability, and personalization. E-learning instructors' self-efficacy can affect their performance and students' satisfaction. External variables, such as self-efficacy, can also shape the lecturers' perceptions of the ease of use and usefulness of e-learning platforms (Castro & Tumibay, 2021). Previous studies have shown that instructors who are confident in their ability to teach with and learn from ICT are likelier to adopt and implement e-learning in their courses (Ha & Lee, 2019).

Moreover, self-efficacy and perceived ease of use were predictors of instructors' intention to use e-learning. ICT instructors' self-efficacy also influenced their actual use of ICT in education. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy can significantly impact their attitudes and behaviours toward technology in Education. Following this evaluation of the relevant literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

According to Hypothesis 1 (H1). PTSE and PEU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 2 (H2),. PTSE and PU are significantly related.

### **Institutional Support for Lecturers in the Use of E-learning Systems (ISL)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted numerous educational institutions to speed up their transition to online education. However, lecturers need institutional backing for technology use in higher education. Access to more technological tools has increased lecturers' attitudes towards e-learning instruction (Schoonenboom, 2014). No matter how mandatory or elective the use of technology may be, lecturers might benefit from institutional support to better incorporate it into their lessons (Lee & Jung, 2021). Therefore, these results suggest that institutions might encourage the use of technology in the classroom by providing instructors with training and resources on new technologies and by researching to comprehend the acceptance and utilization of technology by both lecturers and students (Granić & Marangunić, 2019). Another study examined how lecturers felt about e-learning and online courses (Haider & Al-Salman, 2020). Access to computers and other technology infrastructure inside the educational setting was crucial to making e-learning possible. In addition, the spread and adoption of e-learning education among faculty depended on factors such as institutional support, training methodologies, faculty workload, aims, and technology-related skills. Following this analysis, the following speculations were developed:

According to Hypothesis 3 (H3),. ISL and PEU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 4 (H4),. ISL and PU are significantly related.

### **Lecturer Adaptation in the Use of E-learning System (LA)**

The COVID-19 epidemic has prompted universities to implement cutting-edge safety measures. As a result, many educators have shifted their focus to accommodate the rise of online education. Lecturers use online tools like Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas, and Blackboard to design and implement curriculum, professional development, and skill-building programs (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Schools and students should continue using digital resources

to their advantage even after the COVID-19 pandemic. 94% of students and millions of lecturers worldwide will use online courses by 2020 (Vergara-Rodríguez et al., 2022). The new course design has helped lecturers rediscover the merits of online education and make the necessary pedagogical adjustments. After a pandemic, instructors and students with special needs may benefit from training via online learning platforms (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). Because of the situation, many Somali universities have adopted new forms of technology and boosted faculty involvement. There is a consensus that technology has improved and democratized higher education. The lecturer's modification may have something to do with the availability of technological resources. Lecturers are efficient, flexible, persistent, teachable, and deeply invested in their students' development. These speculations are based on the findings of this study.

According to Hypothesis 5 (H5), LA and PEU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 6 (H6), LA and PU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 7 (H7), LA and DTA are significantly related.

### **Digital Tools Access (DTA)**

The epidemic has hastened the transition to online learning resources. With the help of e-learning, lecturers can use available digital tools to provide their students with an excellent education. Lecturers will still benefit from accessing and using digital resources, even after the pandemic (Gonzalez et al., 2022). Some lecturers have adjusted their teaching methods to accommodate the widespread adoption of digital tools in the classroom. Lecturers in today's digital classrooms must be creative to fulfil the requirements of students who grew up with the Internet. E-learning resources and innovative methods of digital instruction have flourished due to the digital age (Mospan & Sysoieva, 2022). E-learning platforms allow for distance education. There was less disruption at universities that had adopted online education. ICT resources, such as synchronous and asynchronous videos, online exams, collaborative learning tools, student monitoring systems, and family communication, have been encouraged by many educators to be used in innovative ways (Nuere & de Miguel, 2021). If all lecturers and students have access to and can afford digital tools, they can improve the teaching and learning environment. The study led to the following hypotheses:

According to Hypothesis 8 (H8), DTA and PEU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 9 (H9), DTA and PU are significantly related.

### **Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)**

The term "perceived ease of use" (PEU) assumes a given technology or system would be simple and straightforward. The usefulness and appeal of digital resources are influenced by lecturers' and students' perceptions of how simple they are to use (Binyamin et al., 2019; Alismaiel et al., 2022). Furthermore, the perceived ease of use influences the intention to use e-learning instructional approaches. PEU and PU can also be influenced by extraneous variables like access to necessary resources (Khong et al., 2022). A technical system or gadget's perceived ease and usefulness greatly influence the user's propensity to adopt and utilize it (Esteban-Millat et al., 2018). As a result, a cheerful disposition towards technology adoption follows from an individual's assessment of its user-friendliness. This suggests that having a favourable opinion of people's willingness to adopt and use technology can boost one's mood. The success of online courses depends on the instructors' familiarity with and comfort with technology. These are the conjectures that can be drawn from this study's data.

According to Hypothesis 10 (H10), PEU and PU are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 11 (H11), PEU and ATUD are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 12 (H12), PEU and BIUD are significantly related.

### **Perceived Usefulness (PU)**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) introduces the concept of perceived usefulness, which is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system can improve his job performance (Wang et al., 2023). It reflects people's hopes that technology will make them more productive at work. Teachers who see the upsides of ICT are more likely to use it in the classroom. Students' beliefs about technology's usefulness impact their attitudes towards and plans for using it in the classroom (Alismaiel et al., 2022). In TAM, perceived usefulness influences behavioural intentions and technological attitudes (Saputra et al., 2023). The value that professors attribute to online education is a significant predictor of their views on and plans to implement it. According to Napitupulu et al. (2017), one's initial assessment of a technical advance is a significant factor in shaping one's attitude and behaviour toward accepting that innovation. We make the following assumptions based on this:

According to Hypothesis 13 (H13), PU and ATUD are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 14 (H14), PU and BIUD are significantly related.

### **Attitude toward Using Digital Tools for Teaching and Learning (ATUD)**

According to Wang et al. (2023), in the TAM model, users' attitudes towards activities are essentially their assessments of how much they want to utilize the system. Lecturers' openness to incorporating technology tactics into their lessons is frequently influenced by their personal feelings about the usefulness of such technologies. According to studies conducted by Bajaj et al. (2021), a person's attitude significantly impacts their propensity to act. Numerous studies have found that an individual's outlook is a significant predictor of their conduct when adopting technological aids in the classroom (Tosuntaş et al., 2015). This model postulates that positive mental frames about technology lead to increased interest in and eventual adoption of that technology. As a result, the TAM is a helpful model for explaining how technologies in education spread among college lecturers. The authors of this study are also particularly interested in lecturers' attitudes towards using digital resources in the classroom. The following hypotheses are drawn from this study:

According to Hypothesis 15 (H15), ATUD and BIUD are significantly related.

According to Hypothesis 16 (H16), ATUD and AUDT are significantly related.

### **Behavioural Intention to Use Digital Tools for Teaching and Learning (BIUD)**

Behavioural intention is the outcome of actions that an individual performs based on the individual's prior experience (Prasetyo et al., 2021). A person's level of behavioural intention indicates how likely they are to perform the conduct in question. In accepted technology acceptance and use models, which attempt to capture acceptance-like processes (Mailizar et al., 2021), it is a mediator between individual or contextual factors and actual use. Tsourela and Nerantzaki (2020) argue that behavioural intention (BI) is similarly crucial in foreseeing uptake. Those who score higher on the intelligence scale are more willing to embrace new technologies. We base the following hypotheses on this analysis:

According to Hypothesis 17 (H17), BIUD and AUDT are significantly related.

### **Actual Use of Digital Tools for Teaching and Learning (AUDT)**

The TAM technique yields two categories of results: intent-to-use and actual use. Emergency remote teaching (ERT) is the rapid substitution of online learning for traditional classroom instruction (Tsang et al., 2021). Lecturers and students at today's universities have been much better at using technology and understanding its implications over the past several years (Timothy Teo, 2020). It has been suggested that students' ability to adapt to new learning environments and work at their own pace can be enhanced using digital technologies in online learning (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2010). Online education is becoming more popular among



university lecturers because of its adaptability and convenience. If university lecturers start using technology in the classroom, it is typically because they think it will help their pupils. Digital learning students tended to turn in research projects on time (Likhachev et al., 2020). Teachers use technological elements in their lessons to pique students' interests, boost their enthusiasm, and better prepare them for work in today's information age. The theoretical basis of the research is depicted in the following diagram:

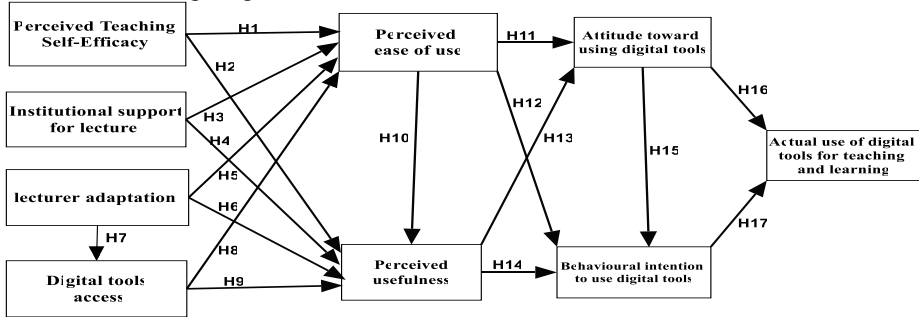


Diagram 1. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

## Method

### Research Design

A theoretical framework connecting external and internal influences is proposed in this paper (see diagram 1). The primary goal of this article is to assess the Transition to E-Learning: Lecturers' Adoption from the TAM Perspective of Somali Higher Education. This descriptive study used a cross-sectional survey (Almogren, 2022). The purpose of a descriptive study is to give reliable, empirical information in response to questions regarding measurable quantities.

The researchers used a purposive sampling strategy, with the sample chosen according to "Patton's (1990)—sampling principle criterion." (Aslam et al., 2023).

### Participants

The participants in the research were staff members from one public and six private universities in the Benadir region of Mogadishu, Somalia, who made up the study's sample population. The universities were chosen for their recognition and prestige. Regarding academic rank, faculty members have held positions such as lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and professor. Valid replies from the sample population totalled 375 for the study. The survey results indicate that out of the respondents, 319 (85.1%) were male, and 56 (14.9%) were female. In total, for this analysis (N = 375).

### Instruments

The questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather data for this study. Participants were invited over WhatsApp after receiving approval from their department heads. We surveyed faculty members using a five-point Likert scale to gauge their satisfaction with their e-learning experiences. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Part one collected demographic information about the lecturers, including their age, gender, educational level, and Academic ranking. The second section, which consists of 28 items, was modified from the original versions of the TAM (PEU, PU, AT, BI, and AU), and four external variables [Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy (PTSE), Lecturer Adaptation (LA), Institutional Support (IS), and Digital Tools Access (DTA)].

### Data Collection and Analysis

An online questionnaire aligned with TAM components was used to gather data. To verify our hypotheses, we used structural equation modelling (SEM). The analysis was well suited for partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). (Mailizar et al., 2021). Hypothesis testing was performed with Smart PLS 4.0, and respondent profiles were analyzed with SPSS 26.0. This SEM strategy evaluated the external (measurement) and internal (structural) models. The outer model, or the measurement model, puts the connections between indicators and constructs to the test. Indicator testing was used to assess the model for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

### Table

*The components of the factors in the TAM model*

Perceived Ease of Use	
1	There is clarity and understanding in my interaction with the e-learning system.
2	The e-learning system is easy to use for me.
3	Interacting with the e-learning system does not require a lot of mental effort.
Perceived usefulness	
4	My productivity is elevated through the utilization of e-learning in my study.
5	Using the e-learning system enhances my learning effectiveness.
6	I find the e-learning system to be useful in my learning.
Attitude towards use	
7	I feel positive regarding the utilization of the e-learning system.
8	In general, I admire the utilization of e-learning systems.
9	The e-learning system provides an attractive learning environment.
Behavioural intention to use	
10	I will make regular use of the e-learning system in the future.
11	I will give out my recommendation to others to use the e-learning system.
12	I will use the e-learning system regularly in the future.
Actual use	
13	I frequently use e-learning tools to collaborate with peers and Students.
14	I regularly utilize e-learning platforms and tools for course delivery.
15	E-learning has become an essential part of my higher education experience.
Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy	
16	I feel confident in the utilization of an e-learning system even when no one is there for assistance.
17	I have sufficient skills to use the e-learning system.
18	I have the necessary skills and knowledge to assess student e-learning systems effectively.
Lecturer Adaptation for E-learning System	
19	I have successfully adapted my teaching methods for e-learning system delivery.
20	I regularly update my knowledge and skills in using e-learning systems for teaching.
21	I have modified my course content and assessments to suit the e-learning system environment.
Institutional Support for	

**the lecturer**

- 22 My institution has provided adequate support and resources for transitioning to an e-learning system after COVID-19.
- 23 My institution offers training and professional development opportunities to help faculty adapt to e-learning system methods.
- 24 My institution has implemented policies and guidelines to facilitate an effective e-learning system.
- 25 My institution encourages and recognizes the efforts of lecturers in adapting to the e-learning system.

**Digital Tools Access**

- 26 I have access to reliable internet connectivity for the e-learning system.
- 27 I can quickly obtain the digital tools needed for teaching and learning online.
- 28 I have access to technical support to address an issue with the e-learning system.

**Ethical considerations**

Before collecting the data, the researchers obtained ethical approval from the faculty leaders of the higher education institutions. They also built a trusting and respectful relationship with the participants to ensure their comfort. The participants were selected through WhatsApp after receiving permission from their department heads.

**Findings****Demographics**

Demographic Participants of the Survey as descriptive were illustrated in Table 1 below. Gender, Age, Educational level, and Academic ranking were presented. According to the survey, Among the respondents, 319 (85.1%) were male and 56 (14.9%) were female. Furthermore, 37 (9.9%) were below 30 years old, 254 (67.7%) were 30 but below 40 years old, and 84 (22.4%) were 40 and above years old. With regards to educational level, 47 (12.5%) had bachelor's degrees, 293 (78.1%) had master's degrees, and 35 (9.3%) had PhDs. Finally, regarding academic ranking, 122 (32.5%) were lecturers, 177 (47.2%) were senior lecturers, 54 (14.4%) were associate professors, and 22 (5.9%) were professors.

**Table 1***Participants' description (n = 375)*

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	319	85.1
	Female	56	14.9
	Total	375	100
Age	Below 30	37	9.9
	30 but below 40	254	67.7
	40 and above	84	22.4
	Total	375	100
Educational level	Bachelor	47	12.5
	Master	293	78.1
	PHD	35	9.3
	Total	375	100
Academic ranking	Lecturer	122	32.5
	Senior lecturer	177	47.2
	Associate professor	54	14.4
	Professor	22	5.9
	Total	375	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

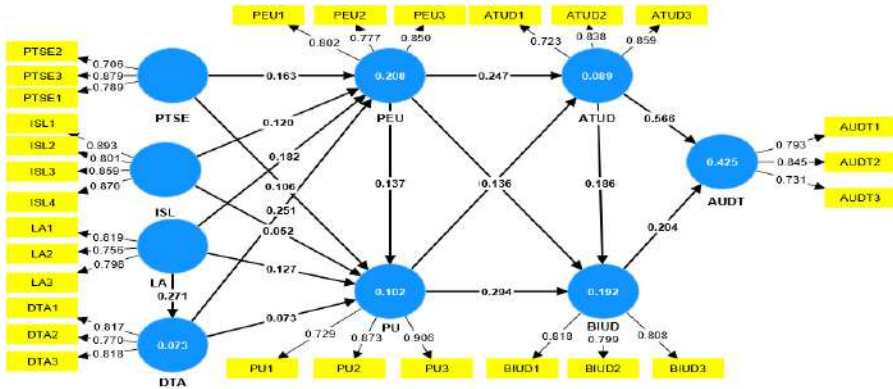


Figure 1. Measurement Model

## Results

In this study, the proposed model was evaluated using PLS-SEM. The SEM methodology is becoming increasingly popular and is widely acknowledged in tourism and education research (Wang et al., (2023). The study used the SmartPLS-4 program with a two-stage procedure involving estimating the measurement model and testing the structural model.

### Measurement Model Evaluation

There are two kinds of validity that we used to evaluate the measurement model, and they are convergent validity and discriminant validity. First, we analyzed the outer loadings of indicators, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), which were analyzed for convergent validity. According to the research (Patil & Undale, 2023), optimal values for factor loadings, composite reliability, and AVE are above 0.7 and 0.5, respectively. The item loading weights are also recommended to be greater than or equal to 0.5 for the corresponding latent variables (Likhachev et al., 2020). One PTSE item, PEU item, and ATUD item were also removed due to their low loading factors (Qureshi et al., 2021). Information regarding convergent validity can be found in Table 2. Results showed that item loadings were statistically significant above the recommended level. The average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability (CR) scores exceeded the statistical significance thresholds.

**Table 2**  
*Convergent validity and composite reliability*

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude toward Using Digital	ATUD1	0.723	0.736	0.734	0.655
	ATUD2	0.838			
	ATUD3	0.859			
Actual Use of Digital Tools	AUDT1	0.793	0.706	0.737	0.626
	AUDT2	0.845			
	AUDT3	0.731			
Behavioral Intention to Use Digital	BIUD1	0.818	0.735	0.735	0.653
	BIUD2	0.799			
Digital Tools Access	DTA1	0.817	0.722	0.723	0.643
	DTA2	0.77			
	DTA3	0.818			
Institutional Support for Lecturers	ISL1	0.893	0.879	0.882	0.733
	ISL2	0.801			
	ISL3	0.859			
	ISL4	0.87			
lecturer adaptation	LA1	0.819	0.701	0.704	0.626
	LA2	0.756			
	LA3	0.798			
Perceived Ease of Use	PEU1	0.802	0.738	0.738	0.657
	PEU2	0.777			
	PEU3	0.85			
Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy	PTSE1	0.789	0.712	0.775	0.631
	PTSE2	0.706			
	PTSE3	0.879			
Perceived Usefulness	PU1	0.729	0.792	0.84	0.705
	PU2	0.873			
	PU3	0.906			

The second sort of validity, known as discriminant validity (Patil & Undale, 2023), evaluates the degree to which one concept differs from all other constructs in the research model. The Fornell-Larcker criterion (i.e., the square root of AVE), cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) are used to evaluate discriminant validity. According to Table 3, the current study satisfies the first condition for discriminant validity, which requires that the square root of the AVE (diagonal value) for each construct in the correlation matrix be larger than the correlations between the latent constructs. Each item should have a more extensive loading than its related variable, a second criterion for discriminant validity, as stated in (Alammary et al., 2022). as shown in Table 4. Third, the HTMT values must be under 0.85 for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is confirmed since Table 5 shows this condition is also met.

**Table 3**  
*Discriminant validity (Fornell-Lacker Criterion)*

	ATUD	AUDT	BIUD	DTA	ISL	LA	PEU	PTSE	PU
ATUD	<b>0.809</b>								
AUDT	0.622	<b>0.791</b>							
BIUD	0.275	0.36	<b>0.808</b>						
DTA	0.231	0.338	0.243	<b>0.802</b>					
ISL	0.175	0.095	0.147	0.039	<b>0.856</b>				
LA	0.301	0.289	0.29	0.271	0.048	<b>0.791</b>			
PEU	0.276	0.297	0.258	0.351	0.142	0.305	<b>0.81</b>		
PTSE	0.218	0.276	0.241	0.278	0.024	0.302	0.29	<b>0.794</b>	
PU	0.177	0.208	0.36	0.188	0.084	0.224	0.24	0.206	<b>0.84</b>

Note: PTSE= Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy, LA = Lecturer Adaptation, IS = Institutional Support, DTA = Digital Tools Access, PEOU = Perceived ease of use, PU= Perceived usefulness, BIUD = Behavioral Intention to Use Digital, ATUD= Attitude toward Using Digital and AUDT = Actual Use of Digital Tools.

**Table 4**  
*Discriminant validity (cross-loading criterion)*

	ATUD	AUDT	BIUD	DTA	ISL	LA	PEU	PTSE	PU
ATUD1	0.723	0.652	0.15	0.132	0.102	0.149	0.155	0.09	0.059
ATUD2	0.838	0.344	0.211	0.15	0.143	0.244	0.22	0.167	0.163
ATUD3	0.859	0.451	0.303	0.269	0.178	0.339	0.292	0.271	0.215
AUDT1	0.438	0.793	0.291	0.281	0.111	0.243	0.191	0.231	0.145
AUDT2	0.631	0.845	0.251	0.259	0.074	0.24	0.256	0.16	0.13
AUDT3	0.357	0.731	0.336	0.274	0.039	0.201	0.261	0.298	0.243
BIUD1	0.23	0.293	0.818	0.211	0.147	0.202	0.195	0.192	0.29
BIUD2	0.232	0.284	0.799	0.175	0.092	0.255	0.211	0.157	0.29
BIUD3	0.206	0.296	0.808	0.202	0.117	0.246	0.219	0.235	0.291
DTA1	0.235	0.304	0.198	0.817	0.056	0.232	0.298	0.228	0.134
DTA2	0.119	0.213	0.213	0.77	0.001	0.181	0.272	0.186	0.207
DTA3	0.2	0.296	0.173	0.818	0.037	0.237	0.271	0.254	0.11
ISL1	0.165	0.084	0.12	0.009	0.893	0.043	0.119	0.034	0.06
ISL2	0.12	0.039	0.162	0.046	0.801	0.052	0.137	-0.032	0.08
ISL3	0.136	0.137	0.106	0.008	0.859	0.027	0.123	0.034	0.076
ISL4	0.184	0.066	0.107	0.075	0.87	0.042	0.101	0.058	0.066
LA1	0.29	0.282	0.322	0.216	0.005	0.819	0.251	0.284	0.204
LA2	0.224	0.235	0.215	0.211	0.09	0.756	0.222	0.192	0.182
LA3	0.198	0.164	0.144	0.215	0.022	0.798	0.25	0.237	0.143
PEU1	0.201	0.225	0.264	0.287	0.089	0.225	0.802	0.247	0.227

PEU2	0.256	0.24	0.175	0.279	0.103	0.27	0.777	0.249	0.132
PEU3	0.215	0.257	0.183	0.286	0.154	0.247	0.85	0.209	0.221
PTSE1	0.206	0.193	0.184	0.21	0.018	0.244	0.149	0.789	0.178
PTSE2	0.169	0.225	0.154	0.174	0.03	0.237	0.224	0.706	0.084
PTSE3	0.16	0.239	0.226	0.264	0.014	0.246	0.293	0.879	0.211
PU1	0.06	0.111	0.245	0.165	0.026	0.091	0.159	0.067	0.729
PU2	0.154	0.174	0.326	0.128	0.096	0.207	0.216	0.194	0.873
PU3	0.203	0.219	0.325	0.186	0.076	0.235	0.222	0.224	0.906

Note: PTSE= Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy, LA = Lecturer Adaptation, IS = Institutional Support, DTA = Digital Tools Access, PEOU = Perceived ease of use, PU= Perceived usefulness, BIUD = Behavioral Intention to Use Digital, ATUD= Attitude toward Using Digital and AUDT = Actual Use of Digital Tools.

**Table 5***Discriminant validity (HTMT)*

	ATUD	AUDT	BIUD	DTA	ISL	LA	PEU	PTSE	PU
ATUD									
AUDT	0.8								
BIUD	0.372	0.512							
DTA	0.31	0.478	0.333						
ISL	0.22	0.119	0.18	0.066					
LA	0.418	0.406	0.4	0.38	0.066				
PEU	0.374	0.412	0.348	0.48	0.175	0.424			
PTSE	0.309	0.407	0.326	0.378	0.058	0.429	0.384		
PU	0.231	0.281	0.466	0.251	0.099	0.283	0.308	0.264	

Note: PTSE= Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy, LA = Lecturer Adaptation, IS = Institutional Support, DTA = Digital Tools Access, PEOU = Perceived ease of use, PU= Perceived usefulness, BIUD = Behavioral Intention to Use Digital, ATUD= Attitude toward Using Digital and AUDT = Actual Use of Digital Tools.

### Structural Model

A structural model evaluation was used to test the suggested conceptual framework by examining the connections between the concepts. A preliminary evaluation (Purnama et al., 2021), they confirmed that the model was valid and reliable. This study utilised PLS estimation to investigate the relationships between constructs further and estimate the inner model. 500 bootstrapped samples were used to run the data from 375 occurrences. Then, we utilized SMART PLS 4's bootstrapping function to determine t-values for each path and determine whether they were statistically significant. The findings of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 6. Each hypothesis was tested with a two-tailed test to see if they differed significantly from zero (0.000). There is a robust association between the variables; this is indicated by a high route coefficient value estimate (= t-value>1.645). Therefore, they were statistically significant if the p-value was less than 0.05. Figure 2 depicts this phenomenon.

Hypothesis	Effects	Beta	T values	P values	Study results
H1	PTSE -> PEU	0.163	3.176	0.002	Supported
H2	PTSE -> PU	0.106	1.767	0.077	Not Supported
H3	ISL -> PEU	0.12	2.716	0.007	Supported
H4	ISL -> PU	0.052	1.029	0.304	Not Supported

H5	LA -> PEU	0.182	3.641	0	Supported
H6	LA -> PU	0.127	2.35	0.019	Supported
H7	LA -> DTA	0.271	5.08	0	Supported
H8	DTA -> PEU	0.251	4.876	0	Supported
H9	DTA -> PU	0.073	1.369	0.171	Not Supported
H10	PEU -> PU	0.137	2.208	0.027	Supported
H11	PEU -> ATUD	0.247	4.877	0	Supported
H12	PEU -> BIUD	0.136	2.727	0.006	Supported
H13	PU -> ATUD	0.118	2.32	0.02	Supported
H14	PU -> BIUD	0.294	5.593	0	Supported
H15	ATUD -> BIUD	0.186	3.416	0.001	Supported
H16	ATUD -> AUDT	0.566	14.111	0	Supported
H17	BIUD -> AUDT	0.204	4.459	0	Supported

**Factor analysis**

Five internal TAM constructs models (PEU, PU, AT, BI, and AU) and four external variables (PTSE, ISL, LA, and DTA) were analyzed using a factor analysis to determine their relative importance. The outcomes of applying the proposed research model to the hypotheses are shown in Figure 3 and Table 6. Out of the seventeen hypotheses, fourteen were confirmed, and three were rejected on PU. The results supported H1 by showing that PTSE significantly influenced PEU ( $T = 3.176, = 0.163, p 0.05$ ).  $T = 1.767$  shows that PTSE did not significantly affect PU ( $\beta = 0.0106, p > 0.05$ ), supporting H2.  $T = 2.716, p 0.05, = 0.12$ , all favouring H3: ISL positively and substantially affects PEU. On the other hand, the results supported H4 in that ISL had a negative and negligible effect on PU ( $T = 1.029, = 0.052, p > 0.05$ ).  $T = 3.641$  and  $T = 2.35$  for PEU and PU, respectively, showing that LA substantially affected both variables, verifying hypotheses 5 and 6.

Results show that LA influences DTA in a significant way ( $T = 5.08, = 0.271, p 0.05$ ), therefore supporting H7. The PEU is likewise significantly affected by DTA ( $\beta = 0.251, p 0.05, T = 4.876$ ), proving the null hypothesis H8. However, a T value of 1.369 indicates that the effect of DTA on the BU is not statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.073, p > 0.05$ ), supporting hypothesis H9. Supporting hypotheses (H)10, (H)11, and (H)12, the data show that PEU significantly affects the PU ( $\beta = 0.137, p 0.05$ ), the ATUD ( $\beta = 0.247, p 0.05$ ), and the BIUD ( $\beta = 0.136, p 0.05$ ) with a T value of 2.208, 4.877, and 2.727, respectively. Consistent with predictions H13 and H14, the data demonstrate that PU significantly affects the ATUD ( $\beta = 0.118, p 0.05$ ) and the BIUD ( $\beta = 0.294, p 0.05$ ) with T values of 2.32 and 5.593, respectively. Validating hypotheses H15 and H16, we find that ATUD has a substantial effect on the BIUD ( $\beta = 0.186, p 0.05$ ) and the AUDT ( $\beta = 0.566, p 0.05$ ), with a T value of 3.416 and 14.111, respectively. The study concludes that BIUD significantly affects AUD ( $\beta = 0.204, p 0.05$ ), with a T value 4.459, confirming hypothesis H17.

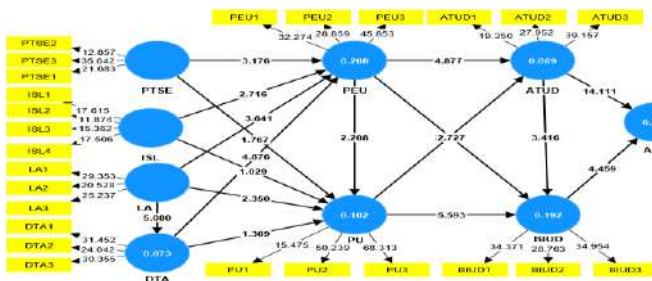


Figure 2. Results of Structural model and path coefficients.

## **Discussion**

This study uses the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework to assess how lecturers adjust to online education, including perceived usefulness and ease of use. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used in an experiment to determine lecturers' e-learning readiness (Mohammadi, 2015). Five internal and four external variables related to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) elements were used to create 17 hypotheses. The confirmatory analysis examined these hypotheses.

The research found that three external variable hypotheses (H2, H4, and H9) did not support the perceived usefulness (PU) construct. We expected PTSE Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy (H2) to predict perceived usefulness. Unfortunately, the evidence did not support our findings. However, the literature on PTSE and e-learning usefulness is mixed. A study conducted by Abdullah et al. (2016) revealed that there was no correlation. On the other hand, Al-Mushasha (2013) found that there is a positive correlation. Table 6 shows that PTSE does not affect university lecturers' views on classroom technology.

Our findings show that institutional support for lecturers (ISL) did not affect perceived usefulness, contrary to our hypothesis (H4). Research has indicated that perceived usefulness is significantly impacted by (ISL). Tanduklangi (2017) says sufficient technical and management resources boost technology adoption. This indicates that the findings are dissimilar. However, our research shows that organizational support negatively impacts e-learning uptake. This implies that seven university instructors in Benadir, Mogadishu, do not value organizational aid in adopting and using e-learning. However, lecturers find e-learning user-friendly.

We found no significant effect of digital tool access (DTA) on the perceived usefulness (PU) of ICT readiness adoption in virtual classrooms, contradicting our third hypothesis (H9). This indicates that lecturers' impressions of ICT's benefits in digital transformation are not improved by its availability and accessibility. DTA and user support degrade PU. A study by Tick (2019) showed that DTA affected PU negatively. Our TAM model found that only lecturers' adaptation (LA) improved perceived usefulness. LA and DTA are positively correlated, showing that educators who like technology are more likely to use their academic institutions' digital resources (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The extensive use of technology has transformed higher education. Thus, teachers' attitudes and behaviours may affect their adoption of e-learning. The data supported our hypothesis (H7) that lecturers were efficient, flexible, persistent, and receptive. The success of DTA will help professors adjust to e-learning.

The TAM model (PEOU→PU →ATT→BI →AU) yielded substantial results. This shows that the initial TAM components accurately predicted the utilisation of lecturers' classroom digital tools. Lecturers' digital attitudes and intentions affected their teaching and learning use. These findings supported expanding the TAM to include teachers' technology use in the classroom (Lazar et al., 2020). This implies they liked online learning resources and planned to use them after COVID-19. Lecturers appreciate easy-to-use technology. Many studies have shown that digital tools' perceived simplicity and usefulness affect their adoption in educational institutions (Bajaj et al., 2021). When professors favour online instruction, they can better assess its potential for their domain. Somali universities can expedite e-learning integration with more interest and exposure. However, universities should invest in new technology and infrastructure to boost uptake and satisfy staff and students.



### **Pedagogical Implications**

The study anticipates encouraging lecturers to engage in e-learning by examining its usefulness and ease of use. This will help foster a positive attitude towards technology, create a supportive environment, and provide the necessary training and resources for integrating technology into teaching. The research also predicts that providing lecturers with the necessary skills to utilize e-learning will promote technology adoption and enhance student performance.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

This study's limitations must be acknowledged. The study focused mainly on lecturers in the Benadir Region of Mogadishu, Somalia, and studied e-learning instruction at higher education institutions. Second, the article only assessed instructors' perceptions; student and administrative perspectives may be more helpful. More views would help the research understand Somali higher education e-learning readiness. These limitations should be addressed to improve higher education teacher e-learning research.

This paper suggests several E-learning improvements for Somalia—first, provide training for teachers in technology and pedagogy. Second, motivate and inform Somali teachers by sharing best practices of e-learning. The institutions should cooperate to foster e-learning and support infrastructure development. Monitor teacher readiness and e-learning effectiveness over time, implementing improvements.

### **Conclusion**

This study employed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to measure lecturers' online teaching adaptation, including perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The poll found Benadir lecturers satisfied with e-learning. This model was confirmed using PLS-SEM.

The study found that most factors affecting lecturers' e-learning adoption were statistically significant, except for three external variables: Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy (PTSE), institutional support for lecturers (ISL), and digital tool access. The variables' p-values were above 0.05; hence, they did not affect perceived usefulness (PU). All other hypotheses had p-values below 0.05, indicating that Somali lecturers in Benadir were satisfied with e-learning. Research indicates that PEOU-PU-ATT-BI promotes instructors' usage of digital tools and e-learning post-COVID-19. This research improves Somali higher education e-learning pedagogy, notably post-COVID-19.

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## Political Polarization in Thailand: Urban vs. Rural Dynamics

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This study aims to achieve two research objectives: (1) to examine the disparities in democratic attitudes and political participation between urban and rural areas in Thailand, and (2) to formulate policy recommendations aimed at mitigating political polarization between urban and rural areas in the country. It utilized a survey methodology, drawing data from the 7th World Values Survey, with a representative sample of Thai citizens from both urban and rural regions. The study analyzed four independent variables—place of residence, gender, socioeconomic status, and education level—alongside two categories of dependent variables, namely democratic attitudes and political participation. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, encompassing a range of descriptive statistics as well as hierarchical linear and logistic regression analyses. The findings indicate that rural residents in Thailand tend to exhibit stronger democratic values than their urban counterparts. However, they also display lower levels of political participation. To enhance democracy in Thailand, it is imperative to create an environment conducive to political engagement, particularly in rural communities that often feel marginalized and resentful due to policies that appear to favor urban elites. Addressing this divide is crucial for the stability and development of Thailand's democratic system.

**Keywords:** urban-rural political divide, political participation, democratic attitudes

The issue of political polarization in Thailand and its impact on the advancement of democracy has been recognized by both local and foreign experts in political science (e.g., Kongkirati, 2019; Meesuwan, 2022; Repucci & Slipowitz, 2021; Somer & McCoy, 2018). One of the differences frequently highlighted is that between the political ideologies of urban versus rural populations in Thailand. The “two democracies” theory, proposed by Laothamatas (1996), identifies two distinct social and political divides in the country: *nakhon* (city) and *chonnabot* (countryside). Urban populations have rapid economic growth, access to advanced education and technological development, and stronger links to the global community; therefore, urban populations are characterized by higher levels of political participation and competition. In contrast, *chonnabot*'s population has limited access to educational opportunities and technology and fewer ties to the international community; consequently, it is marked by far lower political engagement and competition. Despite this difference in ideology between the two areas, *chonnabot* still holds significant voting power during Thai elections due to its large population. Conversely, urban areas with smaller populations must resort to alternative means, such as protests or alliances with elite figures, to gain more political influence.

Despite its age, Anek's theory remains highly applicable and is frequently employed to understand contemporary political divisions, particularly in the aftermath of the 2006 and 2014 coups in Thailand. His explanation sheds light on the origins of the yellow shirt and red shirt movements, which symbolized the urban middle class and rural lower class, respectively (Seo, 2019).

The yellow shirts, led by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), comprised a diverse coalition of civil society, business, elite, and royalist groups. Their opposition centered on the parliamentary power of Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai Party. Identifying themselves with the color yellow, symbolizing support for the monarchy, the yellow shirts staged extensive demonstrations starting in February 2006. Although the PAD disbanded temporarily after the 2006 coup, it regrouped in 2008 to protest the pro-Thaksin government. However, the movement subsequently fragmented into multiple factions promoting ultraroyalism, ultranationalism, and opposition to Thaksin (Hewison, 2014).

In contrast, the red shirts aligned themselves with the United Democratic Front against Dictatorship (UDD), which supported Thaksin Shinawatra. The red shirts emerged in response to the 2006 coup, initially opposing the military and advocating for elections. It represented the interests of the rural lower class. The red-shirt rebellions of 2009 and 2010, which challenged the Democrat Party-led government backed by the royalists and military, were met with military force resulting in significant loss of life (Hewison, 2014).

In summary, the yellow shirt and red shirt movements in Thailand represented different segments of society, with the yellow shirts serving as a symbol of urban middle-class discontent and the red shirts representing the rural lower class. These movements played significant roles in the political landscape of Thailand during a period marked by social and political upheaval. The political schism between urban and rural Thais has grown in recent years, for no obvious reason. One proposed explanation is the difference in political ideology between these two populations; however, it is difficult to quantify the political attitudes about democracy and forms of participation among rural and urban Thai people based on existing research. Thus, more effort is needed to obtain a better understanding of these dynamics, particularly in identifying the key drivers of discord between the two groups.

### **Research Objectives**

Due to Thailand's unique circumstances, global research on the urban-rural political divide and its impact on democratic attitudes may have limited relevance to Thailand. The present study aims to not only establish the existence of the urban-rural political divide in Thailand but also analyze the link between residential location and democratic attitudes. By connecting research on Thailand as a representative of a society undergoing political and economic transformation with research in both developed and developing countries, this study seeks to enrich comparative research on the topic.

All in all, this study seeks to achieve two principal objectives: (1) to ascertain the disparities in political ideologies and political participation within urban and rural areas of Thailand; and (2) to proffer policy recommendations aimed at mitigating political polarization between these urban and rural locales in the country. To achieve these goals, a rigorous survey methodology based on established social science research protocols is employed, utilizing a representative sample of Thai citizens in both urban and rural areas. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing knowledge on the political division between urban and rural populations in Thailand, which in turn will aid in the assessment of the current state of democracy and the development of effective strategies to address pertinent issues.

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

The conventional approach to delineating urban and rural areas has relied on factors such as geographic location and population density, as well as distinctive lifestyles, social dynamics, and political affiliations. However, rapid technological change and the global trend toward urbanization have profoundly impacted the boundaries and differences between urban and rural societies (Labiso, 2021, Merga, 2022). Therefore, defining urban and rural societies has become increasingly intricate and multifaceted. Contemporary society is characterized by unprecedented levels of connectivity and interdependence, facilitated by advances in information technology. Consequently, perceptions and values are no longer solely based on face-to-face interactions, as they were in the past (Scott et al., 2007).

The modern conception of an urban area is densely populated, with a high degree of individual agency and economic development and a diverse array of commercial and service-oriented amenities. Additionally, such urban areas are typified by cultural features that are less dependent on interpersonal relations, with an increased recognition of individual rights. Conversely, rural areas are marked by low population density, horizontally organized land use, rudimentary economic activities, and a pronounced emphasis on community self-sufficiency. In rural settings, cultural norms emphasize the primacy of personal relationships (Scott et al., 2007).

The study of the urban–rural divide can be traced to Lipton’s seminal work (Smith, 2019), which uncovered a fierce competition for resources between urban and rural populations, leading to the decline of their relationship. Lipton’s theoretical framework was subsequently extended to accommodate the phenomenon prevalent in developing countries, in which urban residents advocate for the prioritization of their locales in the distribution of developmental resources, perpetuating a deep-seated bias and division between urban and rural inhabitants.

Territorial political polarization, as argued by Rodden (2019), is not a new phenomenon but has historical roots in the early-20th-century United States. During this period, the Democratic Party attracted urban laborers, while the Republican Party found support among rural-dwelling Christians and conservatives. Rodden emphasized that the political polarization within urban and rural territories has deepened over time due to divergent economic pursuits, resulting in the evolution of distinct political preferences. This historical context sets the stage for understanding the impact of the contemporary rural–urban divide on American democracy.

In line with Rodden’s analysis, Mettler and Brown (2022) highlighted the ongoing threat to American democracy posed by the rural–urban divide. They identified that the divide endangers democracy through several mechanisms: the influence of political institutions that disproportionately favor sparsely populated regions, a transformed party system in which one party dominates rural areas, a growing social divergence that fuels an “us versus them” mindset, economic changes that make rural areas susceptible to grievance politics, and party leaders willing to exploit these divisions for their own gain. Mettler and Brown’s findings align with Rodden’s historical analysis, demonstrating the continued relevance and potential consequences of the rural–urban divide in contemporary American politics.

Similarly, Lago (2022) discovered a strong connection between residing in urban or rural locales and satisfaction with democratic systems in 27 European nations. Specifically, citizens residing in rural areas are less satisfied with democratic procedures and outcomes, especially in countries undergoing a rapid decline in their rural population, giving rise to a phenomenon called the “geography of discontent.” Lago’s hypothesis is founded on the assumption that rural populations, being farther from urban centers, receive less public service from the government.

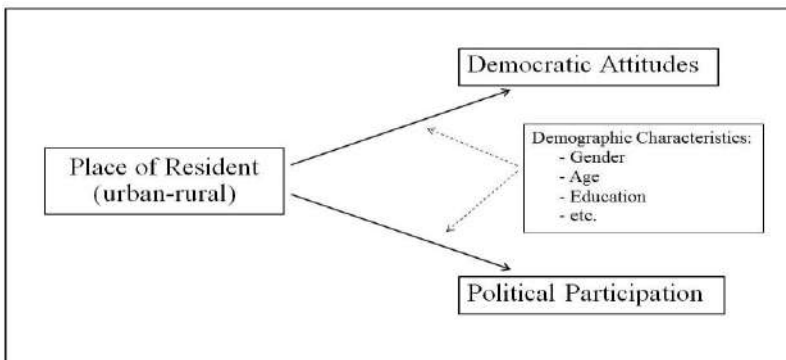
This causes them to increasingly rely on community-based welfare systems, thereby engendering dissatisfaction with democratic systems.

Lago's findings contradict the research conducted by McKay et al., (2023), who uncovered a positive correlation between rural residency and heightened levels of trust, contrary to the prevalent notion that trust levels are lower in urban areas. Börzel and Risse's (2015) work explained this outcome, suggesting that individuals residing in locations situated far from the center of state power tend to have lower expectations of their government compared to their urban counterparts. With increasing distance from urban centers, there is a decline in access to public services and engagement with government institutions, leading to reduced expectations of government services. They attribute the lack of correlation between dissatisfaction with public services and satisfaction with government performance in the rural population to the fact that rural residents do not perceive basic services as entitlements provided by the state. Instead, their attitudes reflect a reliance on themselves and their local communities.

The findings of Brinkerhoff et al., (2018) are highly consistent with those of Börzel and Risse (2015), establishing that rural populations have restricted access to basic services and receive inferior public services compared to their urban counterparts. However, their research in the African context did not reveal any negative relationships between rural populations and the democratic government in terms of dissatisfaction with basic services. The high levels of trust in government and positive perception of local and national officials among rural inhabitants contradict Lago's conclusions.

Empirical research in both developed and developing countries reveals the existence of a broad urban–rural divide among populations. However, how this divide affects democratic attitudes varies considerably between developed and developing countries. In developed countries, there is a noticeable trend of urban inhabitants being more inclined to hold democratic attitudes than rural residents. Conversely, research conducted in developing countries has documented higher levels of democratic attitudes among rural populations (Huijsmans et al., 2021).

Research on Thailand as a country in the midst of political and economic transformation, characterized by a mid-to-low-income level, is a unique context for the urban–rural political divide in comparison to other countries. The resulting rural political mobilization seeks to negotiate power with urban areas to enhance the distribution of political power and resources from central to local levels (Satayanuruk, 2015). This, in turn, contributes to a more intense urban–rural political divide in Thailand relative to other countries.



**Figure 1.** Rural-urban disparities and political engagement dynamics

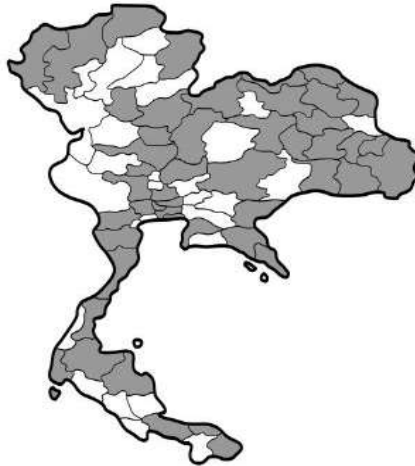


Derived from a comprehensive literature review, the study establishes a conceptual framework, visually depicted in Figure 1. Succinctly, rural-urban disparities, while considering demographic controls, significantly impact variations in democratic attitudes and political participation. The emergence of the “geography of discontent” is evident as rural residents, positioned geographically distant from urban centers, demonstrate distinct levels of democratic attitudes and political engagement. These circumstances highlight that obstacles to public service access and reliance on local communal structures in rural settings restrict avenues for political involvement among rural constituents.

## Method

### Data

This study utilized data from the 7th World Values Survey, focusing on Thai individuals aged 18 and over, with a sample size of 1,500. The dataset was selected primarily for its robust sample design, which ensures the representation of both rural and urban segments of the Thai population. Among Thailand’s 77 provinces, 49 were subject to randomization, as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Provinces selected in five regions of Thailand

*Amphoe* (districts) in each province were randomly chosen based on regional population proportions. Subsequently, *tambol* (subdistricts) within these districts were sampled in proportion to their population size. Proportionality was further maintained through random selection of *mubans* (villages) within subdistricts. In the pivotal fourth stage, individuals were categorized based on village counts per region, followed by systematic sampling with a skip number to ensure equitable respondent selection within villages (EVS/WVS, 2022). This methodological rigor guaranteed comprehensive analysis across diverse geographic contexts, encompassing both urban and rural populations.

### Variables

Our study measured four independent variables (place of living, gender, socioeconomic status, and education level) and two categories of dependent variables (democratic attitudes and political participation).

**Table 1***Variables and items used in the study*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Items</b>
Democratic attitudes	Q234: How important would you say having honest elections is for you? Q235: Is having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections a good or bad way of governing this country? Q236: Is having experts and not the government make decisions according to what they think is best for the country a good way of governing this country? Q237: Is having the army rule a good way of governing this country? Q238: Is having a democratic political system a good way of governing this country? Q253: How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in this country?
Political participation	Q209: Signing a petition Q211: Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations Q212: Joining unofficial strikes Q214: Contacting a government official

We operationalized democratic attitudes using Salinas and Booth's (2011) framework, emphasizing citizen engagement within a democratic milieu, including the ability to elect leaders, engage in political processes, critique governance, and support challengers to incumbents. These attitudes either shape democratic principles through elite and mass behavior or are bolstered by democratic governance, highlighting their interdependence. Survey participants, as illustrated in Table 1, could choose from four responses: (1) very much; (2) fairly much; (3) fairly bad; (4) very bad, to questions tailored to Thailand's political culture.

In measuring political participation, we adhered to Verba et al., (1995) comprehensive definition, encompassing actions influencing government actions, impacting policy formulation, or indirectly affecting policymaker selection. The 7th World Values Survey assessed respondents' political participation in Q209, Q211, Q212, and Q214 across "have done," "might do," and "would never do" categories, subsequently recoded into two groups: "have done/might do" and "would never do" to delineate levels of political engagement.

### **Hypotheses**

From our research question, we developed two hypotheses as follows:

***H*<sub>1</sub>**: Place of residence (urban/rural) does not affect democratic attitudes after controlling for gender, education level, and socioeconomic status.

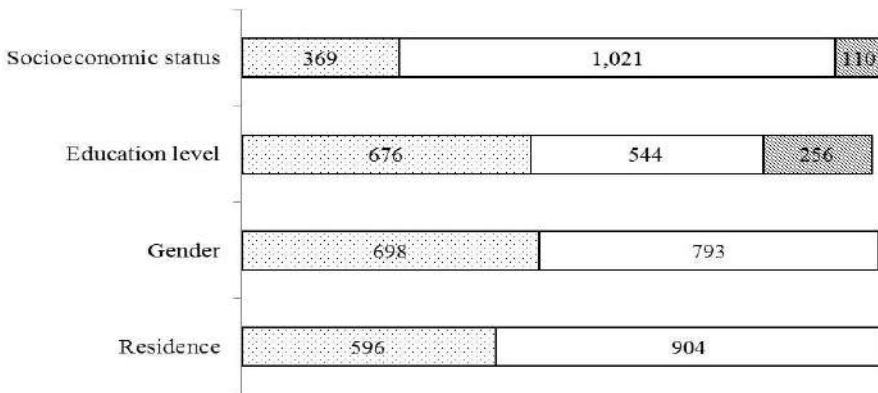
***H*<sub>2</sub>**: Place of residence (urban/rural) does not affect political participation after controlling for gender, education level, and socioeconomic status.

The data analysis was conducted using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22). Descriptive statistics—specifically frequency, percentage, and means—were employed to elucidate the fundamental attributes of independent, dependent, and control variables. Subsequently, hierarchical linear and logistic regression analyses were executed to ascertain the intricate interplay between independent variables, dependent variables, and control variables, thereby unraveling the relationships underpinning the research framework.

## Results

In the initial segment of our analysis, we explain the descriptive statistics characterizing our dataset. As shown in Figure 3, in terms of urban–rural distribution, 596 respondents (39.73%) were from urban locales, while 904 respondents (60.27%) were from rural areas. Of the total 1,491 respondents, 698 (46.81%) identified as males, while 793 (53.19%) identified as females.

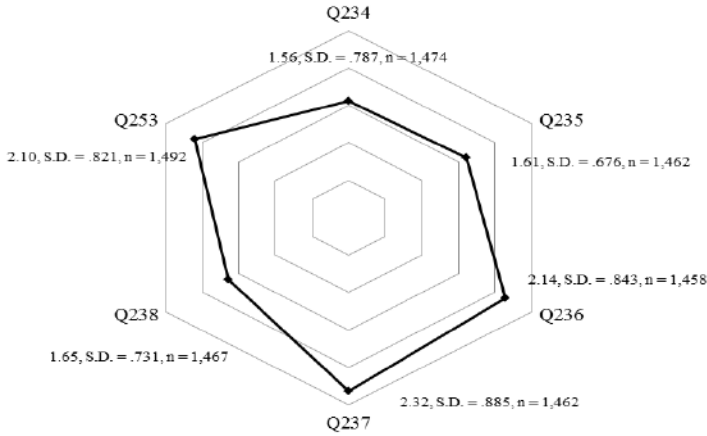
In terms of education level, respondents were categorized into three groups: 676 individuals (45.80%) had 0–6 years of formal education, 544 (36.86%) received 7–12 years of schooling, and 256 (17.34%) had over 12 years of education. Regarding socioeconomic status, 369 respondents (24.60%) reported they were in a low-income bracket, 1,021 (68.07%) reported a middle-income range, and just 110 respondents (7.33%) reported a high family income.



**Figure 3.** Descriptive statistics of independent and control variables

As an indicator of democratic attitudes illustrated in Figure 4, the mean score for Q234 was 1.56 (S.D. = 0.787) among the 1,474 respondents, signifying a prevalent strong agreement with the statement that honest elections significantly impact their lives. Similarly, the mean score for Q235 was 1.61 (S.D. = 0.676) among 1,462 respondents, demonstrating a prevailing strong agreement with the notion that a potent leader, unburdened by parliamentary and electoral concerns, is advantageous. For Q236, the mean was 2.14 (S.D. = 0.843) among 1,458 respondents, reflecting a somewhat favorable attitude toward governance by experts rather than the government, in terms of their perception of what is best for Thailand.

For Q237, the mean was 2.32 (S.D. = 0.885) among 1,462 respondents, indicating a partial concurrence with the notion that military rule is a viable mode of governance for Thailand. For Q238, the mean was 1.65 (S.D. = 0.731) for the sample of 1,467 respondents, reflecting robust support for a democratic political system as an effective mode of governance in the country. Lastly, for Q253, the mean was 2.10 (S.D. = 0.821) among 1,492 respondents, revealing moderate agreement regarding the current state of respect for individual human rights in Thailand.



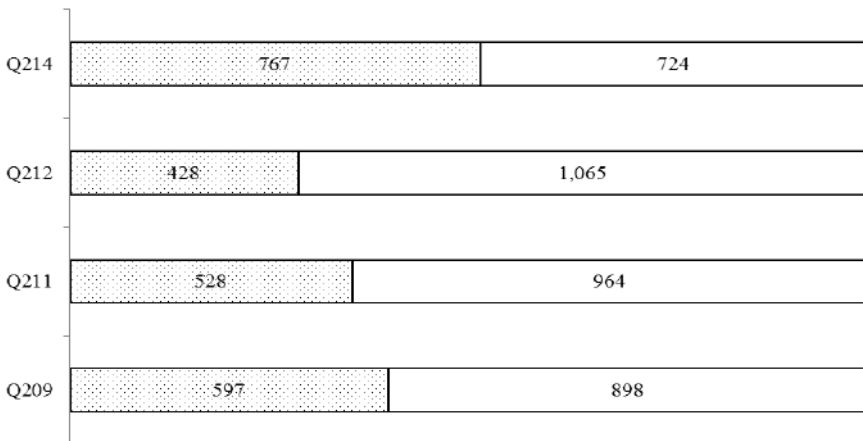
**Figure 4.** Descriptive statistics of democratic attitude

In Figure 5, when queried about their participation in or contemplation of signing petitions, a total of 597 respondents (39.93% of the sample), affirmed their engagement in this civic action, while 898 respondents (60.07%) said they had not participated in this activity.

Inquiring about attendance at or consideration of peaceful demonstrations, 528 individuals (35.39% of the surveyed population) said they had participated, while 964 respondents (64.61%) indicated they had not.

With respect to involvement in or contemplation of joining strikes, 428 respondents (28.66%) declared their openness to this form of political expression, while 1,065 respondents (71.34%) said they would not participate.

Regarding interactions with government officials, 767 respondents (51.44%) acknowledged having contacted or considering contacting a government official, while 724 respondents (48.56%) had not



**Figure 5.** Descriptive statistics of political participation

To empirically scrutinize  $H_1$ , a hierarchical linear regression analysis was deployed, with the goal of determining whether democratic attitudes could be predicted based on residence type

(urban or rural). Importantly, the analysis was conducted with careful consideration of the potential confounding influences of covariates, namely gender, education level, and socioeconomic status.

The resulting regression equation, which encapsulates the intricate interplay between the dependent variable and the independent variables, is as follows:

*Model 1:* Democratic Attitudes =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Education Level}) + \beta_3(\text{Socioeconomic Status}) + \varepsilon$

*Model 2:* Democratic Attitudes =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Place of Residence}) + \beta_2(\text{Gender}) + \beta_3(\text{Education Level}) + \beta_4(\text{Socioeconomic Status}) + \varepsilon$

In Model 1, we included sex, economic status, and education level as predictors for all six democratic values. Subsequently, in Model 2, we introduced the predictor of place of residence. Among the six dependent variables, Q235, Q236, Q238, and Q253 exhibited predictability based on place of residence. In the case of Q235, adding place of residence increased the  $R^2$  from 2% to 2.7%, and the second model was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). After controlling for sex, economic level, and education level, the regression coefficient ( $\beta_1 = .129$ , 95% C.I.,  $p < .01$ ) indicated that rural residents were less likely to endorse the idea of a powerful leader unencumbered by parliamentary and electoral constraints than their urban counterparts.

**Table 2**  
Residential impact on democratic attitudes after controlling gender, education, and socioeconomic status

Independent variables	Q235		Q236		Q238		Q253	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Gender (0, male; 1, female)	-.079	-.084	-.070	-.080	-.067	-.071	-.023	-.012
Education level (0, 0–6 years; 1, 7–12 years; 2, more than 12 years)	-.078**	-.052*	-.107***	-.057	-.057**	-.034	.069*	.018
Socioeconomic status (0, low; 1, middle; 3 high)	.146***	.163***	.030	.061	.058	.074*	.055	.021
Residence (0, urban; 1, rural)		.129**		.249***		.118**		-.261***
Constant	1.584	1.475	2.231	2.022	1.674	1.575	2.021	2.239
$R^2$	0.020	0.027	.010	.028	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.27
F	9.705	10.094	4.854	10.359	2.967	4.182	3.085	10.273

Note:  $\beta$  = Unstandardized Coefficients, \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Similarly, for Q236, the  $R^2$  increased from 1% to 2.8%, and the second model was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). After adjusting for covariates, the regression coefficient ( $\beta_1 = .249$ , 95% C.I.,  $p < .001$ ) suggested that individuals residing in rural areas were less inclined to favor governance by experts than the government, in contrast to those living in urban areas.

In Q238, Table 2 indicates an increase in the  $R^2$  from 6% to 12%. The regression coefficient in Model 2 for place of residence ( $\beta_1 = .118$ , 95% C.I.,  $p < .01$ ) implies that rural residents were less likely to agree that a democratic system was beneficial for the country compared to their urban counterparts.

Conversely, in Q253, the  $R^2$  coefficient soared from a modest 6% in Model 1 to a substantial 27% in Model 2. Employing meticulous control over the covariates (gender, socioeconomic standing, and education level), the regression coefficient ( $\beta_1 = -.261$ , 95% C.I.,  $p < .001$ ), indicates that rural-dwelling respondents are more likely to believe that the Thai government upholds the tenets of human rights than their urban counterparts.

**Table 3**

*Residential impact on political participation after controlling gender, education, and socioeconomic status*

Variables	Coefficient B (S.E.)					
	Q209; Yes = 0		Q211; Yes = 0		Q214; Yes = 0	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Control						
Gender (0, male)	-.270* (.108)	-.259* (.108)	-.333** (.111)	-.319** (.111)	-.128 (.106)	-.097 (.108)
Education Level (0, 0–6 years)						
7–12 years	.606*** (.154)	.482** (.162)	.518** (.157)	.362* (.165)	.592*** (.154)	.239 (.164)
over 12 years	.353* (.156)	.266 (.161)	.376* (.159)	.265 (.164)	.441** (.157)	.192 (.164)
Socioeconomic status (0, low)						
middle	-.936*** (.244)	-1.004*** (.246)	-.766** (.243)	-.852** (.246)	-.256 (.223)	-.462* (.229)
high	-.595** (.226)	-.619** (.226)	-.311 (.225)	-.342 (.226)	-.234 (.203)	-.310 (.208)
Predictor						
Residence (0, urban)		-.291* (.119)		-.366** (.122)		-.850*** (.119)
Constant	.771 (.244)	1.004 (.263)	.794 (.244)	1.089 (.264)	-.214 (.226)	.456 (.248)
% correct prediction	60.8	61	64.5	65.4	54.2	60
Model-chi square (df)	34.9226(5)	40.915(6)	31.912(5)	40.952(6)	18.005(5)	70.490(6)
-2 Log likelihood	1938.379	1932.390	1871.044	1862.004	2007.547	1955.061
Nagelkerke R square	.032	.037	.030	.038	.016	.063

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p < .001$

To test the impact of residential location on political participation, a hierarchical logistic regression analysis was performed. The estimation equation, while controlling for gender, education, and socioeconomic status, is expressed as follows:

*Model 1:*  $\log(\text{odds of political participation}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Education Level}) + \beta_3(\text{Socioeconomic Status})$

*Model 2:*  $\log(\text{odds of political participation}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Place of Residence}) + \beta_2(\text{Gender}) + \beta_3(\text{Education Level}) + \beta_4(\text{Socioeconomic Status})$

Table 3 demonstrates the persistent association between signing petitions and place of residence even after controlling for gender, education level, and family income (constant = 1.004,  $\beta_1 = -.291$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .037$ ). Additionally, place of residence can be utilized to predict the likelihood of respondents participating in peaceful demonstrations, while accounting for demographic variables (constant = 1.089,  $\beta_1 = -.366$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .038$ ). Notably, the last form of political participation that remained statistically correlated with residence, even after controlling for other variables, was contacting a government official (constant = .456,  $\beta_1 = -.850$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .063$ ).

The standard errors for the variables included in the analysis were all below 2.0, indicating an absence of evidence for multicollinearity, suggesting that the independent variables are unlikely to be correlated. Furthermore, the probability of the block chi-square in Model 2 of all tested variables was below 0.05, indicating no significant differences between Models 1 and 2. This leads to the conclusion that there is a hierarchical relationship between political participation and place of residence. Notably, the  $R^2$  value increased from Model 1 to Model 2 after the inclusion of control variables, supporting the hypothesis that adding place of residence to the model significantly improved its predictive power.

### Discussion

The study's findings underscore the salience of urban or rural residence in shaping political orientations, with the rural–urban political divide exemplified by a significant divergence in political ideologies. The results show that individuals residing in rural areas are more likely to embrace democratic inclinations than urban residents. This divergence is underscored by rural inhabitants' discernible resistance to the governance paradigm rooted in technocracy, as well as their disinclination toward a centralized executive branch devoid of robust governmental oversight.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to highlight a critical observation regarding the applicability of democracy as a governing framework in Thailand: the results show that rural denizens have a significantly less favorable view of democracy than their urban counterparts. This discrepancy must be interpreted carefully, contingent upon a nuanced understanding of Thailand's intricate political milieu. Since the transformative shift toward a constitutional monarchy in 1932, Thailand has followed a complex path marked by ostensible democratic proclamations. However, it is imperative to exercise caution when ascribing the label of “democracy” to the prevailing political order, given that this assertion often belies a more complex reality.

In the parlance of political science, Thailand's political landscape has oscillated between periods of semi-democratic governance, wherein democratic institutions coexist with significant limitations and constraints, and instances of overt military dictatorship (see Croissant, 2007; Pongsudhirak, 2003). The chimeric nature of Thailand's political system has engendered discernible discord in public opinion, with rural inhabitants harboring a heightened skepticism toward the authenticity of proclaimed democratic ideals.

Additionally, the process of socialization, as facilitated through the dissemination of knowledge via social science and civil society textbooks, has indelibly etched in the collective memory of the Thai populace the notion that Thailand's governmental system adheres to democratic principles (Musikawong, 2006; Riddle & Apple, 2019). Even during the period when the 7th World Values Survey was conducted, Thailand was under the sway of a military administration led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha. This era, characterized by an ostensibly electoral process that was marred by allegations of impropriety, witnessed the ascent of General Chan-o-cha to the position of Prime Minister (Freedom House, 2019).

Hence, it is essential to contextualize the responses of rural inhabitants regarding their support for democratic governance within this intricate backdrop. The concept of democracy, as envisioned by many in Thailand, often encompasses a unique, domestically tailored variant that may not conform to international democratic norms.

A parallel can be drawn with urban populations, whose support for democracy also often alludes to a distinctly Thai-style democratic framework (Ferrara, 2015; Marshall, 2015). These findings dovetail with prior research, which has identified a predilection among urban middle-

class residents to endorse governance structures that either involve military authorities or cede power to economic elites (see Albritton & Bureekul, 2008; Baker, 2016; Sombatpoonsiri, 2020). This inclination is rooted in the tangible benefits gained by urbanites through mechanisms embedded in the Thai democratic system, which tend to favor the upper and middle classes in urban areas (Kongkirati, 2019; McCargo, 2009; Pongsudhirak, 2012).

Conversely, examining the dynamics of political participation between urban and rural demographics reveals that rural constituents display significantly lower levels of political engagement compared to their urban counterparts. This recurring pattern aligns with prior research emphasizing the formidable impediments confronting rural populations due to their geographical remoteness from urban centers. These geographical disparities pose substantial barriers to their involvement in various political activities (see Kaufman, 2019; Lin & Lunz Trujillo, 2023; Mettler & Brown, 2022).

The physical separation from urban centers imposes daunting challenges on rural residents seeking to participate in the political process. Activities like signing petitions, participating in peaceful protests, or even communicating with public officials require more extensive resource allocation and time commitment in rural areas. In addition, transportation infrastructure in rural areas often lags behind that of urban centers, further hindering participation. Moreover, the scarcity of accessible information technology infrastructure and diversified communication channels in rural areas compounds the challenges faced by these communities in seeking political engagement.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, two primary points arise from this research.

- (1) Rural Inclination Towards Democratic Values:

The study's findings indicate that rural residents in Thailand exhibit a greater inclination toward democratic values than their urban counterparts. However, rural communities exhibit a lower level of political participation. These observations resonate with Anek's theory, which described the role of rural people in shaping the executive and legislative branches of Thailand, while the continued stability of such systems is contingent upon urban dwellers.

- (2) Challenges in Rural Political Participation:

Residing in rural areas exposes individuals to the direct negative ramifications of government policies that often favor urban elites. Consequently, rural inhabitants tend to adopt a stance of resistance against centralized government practices that seem to benefit specific interest groups. For them, the most accessible avenue for political participation is typically through electoral processes. However, once elections conclude, the geographical remoteness of rural living hampers their easy access to political engagement.

### **Policy Recommendation**

The escalating disparity faced by rural populations, coupled with their marginalization in the policy formulation process and condescension from urban elites, has precipitated profound resentment and frustration within Thailand's rural communities. Fostering the development of democracy in Thailand necessitates the enhancement of conditions conducive to political engagement, particularly on the national stage.

Adjustments must be made to address the persistent economic marginalization experienced by both rural and urban constituencies. Addressing these disparities is vital not only for social equity but also to bolster the democratic fabric of the nation. In doing so, Thailand can



aspire to rectify the deeply rooted grievances harbored by its rural populace, thereby mitigating the anger and frustration that has permeated these communities.

### DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset utilized in this research is readily accessible and openly accessible on the World Values Survey Association Website, accessible via the following DOI link: <https://doi.org/10.14281/18241.21>.

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## **Arab EFL Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Errors in Mechanics in Second Language Paragraph Writing**

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English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face various challenges when writing, including mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If the mechanics are incorrect, understanding a text can be difficult, and the meaning can be distorted. Moreover, understanding how EFL students and instructors perceive these errors is vital for enhancing language instruction and providing targeted feedback. This study explored the perceptions of EFL students and instructors regarding mechanical errors in paragraph writing employing a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative surveys. According to the findings, instructors and students had different opinions about mechanical errors. Male and female EFL learners also differed in their perceptions. Their perspectives on spelling and punctuation diverged. Students thought their spelling issues were the most severe, but their instructors believed that punctuation was the biggest problem, including commas and full stops. Furthermore, EFL instructors provided potential reasons and suggested strategies to address these issues. The results offer practical implications for curriculum development, instructional design, and instructor training in EFL contexts .

**Keywords:** errors of mechanics, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, perceptions, EFL students and instructors

Bacon (1597) famously said, 'Writing makes an exact man,' highlighting the significance of meticulousness and precision in written communication. This quote emphasizes the importance of correctness, accuracy, and completeness in thought and communication. In line with this, Kessler (2021) suggests that effective communication of ideas in writing requires adhering to the rules of grammar, coherence, vocabulary, and mechanics. Moreover, writing in a second language presents additional challenges, necessitating proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Hinkel, 2015; Ahmed, 2018). By paying attention to micro-level details in writing, writers can ensure that their ideas are conveyed with clarity and accuracy, enabling readers to fully understand the intended message. Therefore, writing should not only be grammatically correct but also meaningful and capable of expressing ideas unambiguously.

The mechanics of writing (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) play an essential role in academic and professional settings, facilitating effective communication and conveying ideas with precision. Crossley et al. (2014) found a strong correlation between writing quality and mechanics. Harmer (2023) similarly posits that using mechanics correctly and in the right places can improve a text and give a good impression of the author. On the other hand, Husna and Multazim (2019) asserted that the erroneous use of mechanics can lead to confusion regarding the intended meaning. Similarly, Yuliawati (2021) remarked that while these mechanics errors may not wholly affect the overall comprehension of paragraphs, they influence the quality of write-ups. An

improper use of mechanics can result in misunderstandings, create a negative impression, and undermine the author's credibility and effectiveness as a communicator (Abbas & Asy'ari, 2019). It is, therefore, essential to pay close attention to mechanics and ensure that they are used appropriately to achieve the desired outcome.

Previous studies have shown that EFL learners face many difficulties and constantly make errors in mechanics (Shanorra et al., 2021) due to a lack of understanding of mechanics (Abbas & Herdi, 2018). Arabic-speaking students, in particular, tend to make more mistakes in mechanics than non-Arabic-speaking students (Alhaisoni et al., 2015; Al-Sobhi et al., 2017; Nisa et al., 2023). These errors often manifest in spelling, capitalization, and comma usage. Although some scholars, researchers, and research associations (Norman et al., 2014; Salamin et al., 2016; Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016; Nazim & Mohammad, 2022) attempted to illustrate the significance along with other aspects of writing, an exclusive study in relation to Arab EFL learners is still required.

Recent educational research claims that understanding student and instructor perceptions of course content is essential for effective teaching and learning (Chavan et al., 2021). Aligning students' and instructors' perceptions of learning leads to optimal learning and teaching processes, resulting in maximized learning outcomes (Könings et al., 2014). Correspondingly, Ahmad et al. (2021), Başar (2020), Borg (2018), and Setoodeh et al., (2020) affirm that language instructors' pedagogical belief systems affect classroom practices. In the same vein, Williams and Burden (2015) also emphasize the significance of learners' perceptions and interpretations in influencing their achievement in language learning. Therefore, understanding student-instructor perspectives on errors in mechanics in paragraphs written by Arab EFL learners can provide valuable insights into effective strategies for classroom practices.

It is worth noting that no previous study has explored the gender-based perception of mechanical errors among Arab EFL learners, triangulating their instructors' beliefs and possible solutions. There is a need to acknowledge the existence of these two distinct categories and worldviews, namely Arab male EFL learners and Arab female EFL learners. Thus, this research investigates the perceptions of EFL students and instructors about errors in mechanics. The findings can improve instructional practices, promote effective communication, and enhance language learning experiences. This study sets out to investigate these research objectives:

### **Research Objectives**

- RO1:** To identify and analyze the common mechanical errors that students perceive they struggle with in their writing.
- RO2:** To investigate any gender differences in the types of mechanical errors students make.
- RO3:** To understand how instructors perceive and prioritize mechanical errors in students' writing.
- RO4:** To explore the potential causes or reasons behind mechanical errors in students' writing.
- RO5:** To analyze the strategies writing instructors use to address and correct mechanical errors in the classroom.

Based on the objectives, this study will answer the following research questions:

### **Research Questions**

- RQ1:** What are the common mechanical errors that students perceive they struggle with in their writing?
- RQ2:** Are there gender differences in the types of mechanical errors students make?
- RQ3:** How do instructors perceive and prioritize mechanical errors in students' writing?
- RQ4:** What are the potential causes or reasons behind mechanical errors in students' writing?
- RQ5:** What strategies do writing instructors use to address and correct mechanical errors in the classroom?

## Hypotheses

In the light of RO 2 and RQ 2, the researchers postulated hypotheses as follows:

**H0:** There are no significant gender differences in the types of mechanical errors students make.

**Ha:** There are significant gender differences in the types of mechanical errors students make.

## Literature Review and Theoretical Background

### Why study the perceptions of students and instructors?

In an educational setting, four key themes—the learner, the instructor, the task, and the learning context—are interrelated and impact the teaching-learning process. By understanding how these variables interact with each other, educators can gain a better understanding of the educational process and design effective instructional practices.

One perspective is to explore and compare the perceptions of both instructors and students regarding what engages learners in the context of errors. Conscious perception, according to Schmidt (1990), is a crucial factor in the process of turning language input into intake. He argues that being consciously aware of language input is necessary and sufficient for language learners to internalize and incorporate it into their linguistic systems. By incorporating learners' perspectives into instructional practices, instructors can create an effective and engaging learning environment that caters to learners' individual needs and promotes better achievement outcomes. Correspondingly, knowledge derived from research on student thinking is valuable for instructors when designing and executing instructional plans (Hill & Chin, 2018). Therefore, educators should actively explore and address learners' beliefs, perceptions, and interpretations, as Williams and Burden (2015) suggested. By doing so, instructors can design personalized and effective instructional practices and promote better language acquisition outcomes.

In addition to learners, instructors are crucial stakeholders whose 'opinions and views are critical contributors to educational progress' (Ramazani, 2013; Khan et al., 2020). Their perspectives and insights, shaped by individual qualities, experiences, social factors, and professional growth that influence decision-making and instructional practices (Borg, 2013), play a central role in various classroom activities and interactions. Understanding instructors' views provides vital insights into their decision-making processes and helps identify areas for improvement in classroom teaching (Srakang, 2013). They serve as an invaluable source of information for reflection, discussion, and advancement in the field of teaching and learning (Zeichner & Liston, 2014; Ramazani, 2013), including understanding and addressing their learners' errors. Similarly, Nasim et al., (2024) stated that instructors' perspectives affect learning, development, and implementation. Therefore, considering instructors' perspectives and incorporating their input is essential for enhancing the overall teaching and learning experience.

Könings et al., (2014) highlighted the potential for disparities between the views of learners and instructors, which can negatively impact classroom dynamics, instruction, and students' learning and thinking skills, implying incongruent behaviors and goals negatively impacting. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate further the intersection of instructors' and students' perceptions. By gaining a deeper understanding of these perceptions, valuable insights can be obtained to inform and improve classroom practices. Addressing these mismatches and disparities can lead to a more productive and harmonious classroom environment and, ultimately, better language acquisition outcomes.

### Previous Studies on Errors in Mechanics in L2 Writing

According to Nasim et al., (2023), English language teachers have consistently prioritized the improvement of their students' linguistic skills. Nonetheless, errors in a language class are inevitable (Raja et al., 2016). However, they are now seen as 'symptoms of recovery' in the learning process instead of the traditional perspective as negative and undesirable indications of a

lack of knowledge or incompetence (Kelechi Nzerem & Bob, 2021). Researchers approached the mechanics of errors from different perspectives. For example, Khudhair (2020) described various difficulties L2 learners encounter in their academic writing, including writing mechanics, while AlYousef (2019) focused on finding the impact of applying dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF) on Arab EFL learners' writing accuracy, especially organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Khudhair (2020) did not delve deeper into mechanics, whereas AlYousef (2019) did not investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes toward mechanics.

Mechanical conventions are often considered low-level skills (Mamad & Vigh, 2023) and, at the most, writing sub-skills (Norman et al., 2014; Tamer et al., 2021). These could be the potential reasons for the comparatively lower research output in mechanics compared to other main language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing, within the context of EFL instruction. However, there is a growing recognition of exploring various aspects of mechanics, such as identifying, evaluating, and classifying errors, understanding why they occur, proposing possible solutions, or analyzing their frequency and impact. For example, Saad (2020), Shanorra et al., (2021), and Ahmed (2021) investigated different components of EFL writing skills, such as organization, vocabulary, content, word choice, language use, and mechanics. Saad (2020) found 13.2% errors in mechanics in students' writing pre-tests, where mistakes of commas were the most serious and full stops were the least serious. Shanorra et al., (2021) found that only 4.3% of difficulties were with their students. Ahmed (2021) noticed 33% of mechanical errors in the pilot test of the study.

Yuliawati (2021) and Darmawan (2023) exclusively studied mechanical errors in detail in their studies. Yuliawati (2021) reported that after analyzing 65 writing assignments from three non-writing courses, participants' mistakes were the most in punctuation and the least in numbering. Likewise, Darmawan (2023) reported that in the abstracts of academic writing, 16 mechanical errors were found. Among them, punctuation was the most misused.

While previous studies have provided valuable insights into mechanics errors in EFL writing, further research is still needed to fully understand these errors' complexity and develop effective strategies for addressing them, particularly in the context of Arab EFL learners. A study specifically exploring the perceptions of EFL students and instructors regarding mechanics errors in Arab EFL learners' writing will help fill this gap in the literature and provide practical insights for instructional approaches.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform instructional practices and contribute to the overall improvement of language learning experiences. By understanding the common mechanical errors students and instructors perceive, educators can design targeted interventions to address these specific areas of difficulty. Additionally, exploring gender differences in mechanics errors can provide valuable insights into the unique challenges male and female students face in writing. Instructors' perceptions and prioritization of mechanical errors can inform classroom practices and help instructors allocate instructional time effectively. Understanding the causes and reasons behind mechanical errors can guide the development of more tailored and effective instructional strategies. Lastly, identifying instructors' strategies to address and correct mechanics errors can offer practical insights for other educators in similar contexts.

## Method

### Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the perspectives of Arab EFL learners and their instructors regarding errors of mechanics in paragraph writing. The data collection tools were a closed-ended questionnaire survey for students collected through convenience sampling. These responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent sample t-test. Instructors' responses were collected using a rating scale and an open-ended questionnaire via a purposive sampling technique to ensure a cross-section of instructors. Data from the open-ended questionnaire was subjected to thematic analysis, and rating scale responses were coded. The mixed-methods research design let the researchers combine data from several sources (Creswell & Poth, 2023) to get a full picture of the mechanics mistakes that Arab EFL students make when they write.

### Data Collection Tools

The closed-ended questionnaire to gather students' opinions consisted of 7 items on a 3-point Likert scale, with a demographic section asking for information about participants' age and gender. The tool was translated into Arabic to ensure students had a better understanding. A group of bilingual English language professionals and researchers validated and localized the tool, providing feedback that helped the researchers revise and finalize it. This survey aimed to explore not only the attitudes of participants but also the frequency of errors in mechanics and its components while writing paragraphs in their second language. The survey had three options on a Likert scale of 0 to 2: (0=never, 1=sometimes, and 2=always). Participants were asked to indicate how often they made errors in mechanics and its components. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was 0.70.

The rating scale (1 being the least severe and 5 being the most severe) consisted of six questions for EFL instructors to record their opinions for their students on the severity of mechanics and its components. At the same time, the open-ended questionnaire had two questions asking about the difficulties, causes, and suggestions to overcome those mistakes. This was a self-prepared data collection tool based on the researchers' experience teaching English to Arab EFL students for more than ten years. However, it underwent a validation check by two experienced EFL instructor-researchers who had extensive experience teaching and researching EFL learners in different settings in Saudi Arabia and other countries. A few changes were made based on their suggestions.

### Participants and Procedure

The participants of this study were first-year EFL students between the ages of 17 and 26 studying writing. They were in their first semester studying Q: Skills for Success, Special Edition, Level 2 Reading and Writing. They were selected through a convenience sampling technique and were all native speakers of Arabic, making them representative of their population. The closed-ended questionnaire asking about EFL learners' difficulties using mechanics was administered among the EFL students studying at the college through their instructors. A sample of 33 students (18 males and 15 females) recorded their responses to seven items regarding their use of mechanics and its components while writing a short essay in English. A test of normality was performed on the sample. The Shapiro-Wilk value (as the  $n \leq 50$ ) for the male participants was 0.618; for the female participants, it was 0.167; and the total was 0.201, indicating that the data was normally distributed.

For instructors to record their views on the errors of mechanics in the writings of EFL Arab learners, a rating scale and an open-ended questionnaire were distributed using the purposive sampling technique. The sample of EFL instructors was selected to include both native and non-native speakers of English. Fifteen male and 15 female instructors teaching Saudi EFL students at

the Deanship were part of the sample. By selecting a cross-section of participants from different backgrounds and experiences, the study aimed to generate more comprehensive and diverse findings. However, only 23 EFL instructors (3 native and 20 non-native) and 10 male and 13 female instructors responded. Their responses were coded and analyzed to obtain the themes.

Based on descriptive and inferential statistics, i.e., frequency distribution, percentage, and t-test for the survey findings, data analysis was made. Two items, 6 and 7, were re-coded to align with the other items as they suggest positive meanings. A mean closer to 2 will mean that students face more problems with that item. The mean and SDs will be interpreted on three levels of difficulty: low (0 to 0.67), moderate (0.68 to 1.33), and high (1.34 to 2). This classification will help understand the levels of challenges Arab EFL learners face in English writing mechanics and its components. The findings were used to compare the other data in the study.

## Results

The findings of the study are presented below:

**RQ1:** What are the common types of mechanical errors that students perceive they struggle with in their writing?

Table 1 displays that Arab EFL learners reported that they faced many problems with mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) when writing, with a high difficulty score of 1.42. They held the view that more mistakes were in spelling ( $M = 1.18$ ), punctuation ( $M = 1.12$ ), and capitalization ( $M = 1.06$ ), which belong to the moderate levels.

Table 1 also shows the average number of learners' mistakes in punctuation and its components. They made more mistakes with commas ( $M = 1.03$ ) and full stops ( $M = 0.55$ ) in comparison to question marks. They reported that they knew the use of question marks better than other punctuation marks ( $M = 0.21$ ). Except for the mistakes of commas, full stops, and question marks, they belong to the low-level difficulties.

**Table 1**  
*Errors in Mechanics as Perceived by Arab EFL Learners*

Items	Mean	SD	Difficulty level
1. I face problems using mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) when I write a paragraph in English.	1.42	.90	high
2. I face problems using punctuation when I write a paragraph in English.	1.12	0.96	moderate
3. I face problems using a comma (,) when I write a paragraph in English.	1.03	0.92	moderate
4. I have problems using a question mark (?) when I write a paragraph in English.	0.21	0.60	low
5. I have problems using a full stop (.) when I write a paragraph in English.	0.55	0.87	low
6. I know the rules of capitalization in English (such as starting a sentence with a capital letter).	1.06	0.66	moderate
7. I know the rules of spelling in English (such as "two" is correct, but "tow" is incorrect for 2; "table" is correct, but "tabl" is incorrect).	1.18	0.46	moderate

**RQ2:** Are there any gender differences in the types of mechanical errors made by students?

A comparison of the participants' perceptions on a gender basis was also made in the study. The results of the mean differences between male and female participants in the types of mechanical errors are shown in Tables 3 and 4.



**Tables 2**

*Gender-wise Mean Scores of Errors in Mechanics as Perceived by Arab EFL Learners*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Q1	Male	18	1.83	0.51	0.12
	Female	15	0.93	1.03	0.27
Q2	Male	18	1.56	0.78	0.18
	Female	15	0.6	0.91	0.24
Q3	Male	18	1.28	0.83	0.19
	Female	15	0.73	0.96	0.25
Q4	Male	18	0.39	0.78	0.18
	Female	15	0	0	0
Q5	Male	18	0.72	0.96	0.23
	Female	15	0.33	0.72	0.19
Q6	Male	18	0.78	0.55	0.13
	Female	15	1.4	0.63	0.16
Q7	Male	18	1.17	0.51	0.12
	Female	15	1.2	0.41	0.11

The Levene's test scores for items 1 (I face problems using mechanics: punctuation, capitalization, and spelling when I write a paragraph in English) and 4 (I have problems using a question mark (?) when I write a paragraph in English) were  $\alpha = 0.000 \leq 0.05$  each, which means equal variances were not assumed. The results,  $t = 3.072$ ,  $df = 19.696$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.006 \leq 0.05$  for item 1 and  $t = 2.122$ ,  $df = 17$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.049 \leq 0.05$  for item 4, showed a statistically significant difference between male and female participants facing problems in mechanics in general and using the question mark (?) when they write a paragraph in English. However, for items 2 (I face problems using punctuation when I write a paragraph in English) and 6 (I know the rules of capitalization in English (such as starting a sentence with a capital letter), Levene's test scores were  $\alpha = 0.270 \geq 0.05$  and  $\alpha = 0.220 \geq 0.05$ , signaling equal variances assumed. The results of the independent samples,  $t = 3.241$ ,  $df = 31$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.003 \leq 0.05$  for the item, and  $t = -3.028$ ,  $df = 31$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.005 \leq 0.05$  for item 6, showed a statistically significant difference between female and male participants facing the problems of punctuation and capitalization. Therefore, for items 1, 2, 4, and 6,  $H_0$  will be rejected, and  $H_1$  will be accepted.

**Table 3**

*Independent Sample Test Scores of Errors in Mechanics as Perceived by Arab EFL Learners*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Conf Interval of the Difference	
		f	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	S.D	Lower	Upper
Q1	Equal variances assumed	41.532	0.000	3.251	31.000	0.003	0.900	0.277	0.335	1.465
	Equal variances not assumed			3.072	19.696	<b>0.006</b>	0.900	0.293	0.288	1.512
Q2	Equal variances assumed	1.260	0.270	3.241	31.000	0.003	0.956	0.295	0.354	1.557
	Equal variances not assumed			3.196	27.880	<b>0.003</b>	0.956	0.299	0.343	1.568
Q3	Equal variances assumed	1.784	0.191	1.750	31.000	0.090	0.544	0.311	-0.090	1.179
	Equal variances not assumed			1.726	27.857	0.095	0.544	0.315	-0.102	1.191
Q4	Equal variances assumed	25.149	0.000	1.932	31.000	0.063	0.389	0.201	-0.022	0.799
	Equal variances not assumed			2.122	17.000	<b>0.049</b>	0.389	0.183	0.002	0.776
Q5	Equal variances assumed	6.655	0.015	1.293	31.000	0.206	0.389	0.301	-0.225	1.002
	Equal variances not assumed			1.327	30.746	0.194	0.389	0.293	-0.209	0.987
Q6	Equal variances assumed	1.568	0.220	-3.028	31.000	0.005	-0.622	0.206	-1.041	-0.203
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.988	27.988	<b>0.006</b>	-0.622	0.208	-1.049	-0.196
Q7	Equal variances assumed	0.222	0.641	-0.202	31.000	0.841	-0.033	0.165	-0.370	0.303
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.206	30.974	0.838	-0.033	0.162	-0.363	0.296

For item 5 (I have problems using full stops when I write a paragraph in English.), Levene's test score is  $\alpha = 0.015 \leq 0.05$ , meaning equal variances were not assumed, and the results t

= 1.327,  $df=30746$ ,  $\alpha= 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.194 \geq 0.05$  showed no statistically significant difference between male and female participants using full stops. Moreover, for item no. 3 (I face problems using a comma (.) when I write a paragraph in English.), Leven's test value is  $\alpha = 0.191 \geq 0.05$ , indicating equal variances. The results were  $t = 1.750$ ,  $df = 31$ ,  $\alpha= 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.090 \geq 0.05$ , showing no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male and female participants using a comma. Furthermore, Leven's test value is  $\alpha = 0.641 \geq 0.05$ , indicating equal variances, and the results were  $t = -0.202$ ,  $df = 31$ ,  $\alpha= 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.841 \geq 0.05$  for item 7 (I know the rules of spelling in English (such as "two" is correct, but "tow" is incorrect for 2; "table" is correct, but "tabl" is incorrect), but no statistically significant difference between male and female participants facing problems of spelling was found. Thus, for items 5, 3, and 7,  $H_0$  will be retained, and  $H_1$  will be rejected.

**RQ3:** How do instructors perceive the severity of mechanical errors in students' writing?

When the instructors were asked about the severity of mechanics and its components on a scale of 1–5 (1 being the least severe and 5 being the most severe), 23 instructors expressed their opinions. They recorded that punctuation mistakes were the most severe, with 74% of participants choosing them as the most serious mistake, followed by spelling mistakes with 57%, and the least serious were capitalization mistakes, with 21% of instructors choosing them on the rating scale with points 4 and 5 combined. In other words, capitalization was not as severe as punctuation and spelling mistakes. Twenty-two percent of instructors rated it less severe and rated it 1 and 2. The results are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Instructors' Beliefs about the Severity of Mistakes in Mechanics on a Rating Scale of 5*

Mistake (Type)	1	2	3	4	5	Total Frequency
Punctuation	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	2 (9%)	14 (61%)	3 (13%)	23
Spelling	1 (4%)	6 (26%)	3 (13%)	5 (22%)	8 (35%)	23
Capitalization	5 (22%)	4 (17%)	9 (39%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	23

As far as instructors' opinions on the seriousness of other constituents are concerned, commas were found to be the most serious, as 78% of instructors rated them 4 or 5. Mistakes of full stops and question marks were reported to be less serious among the EFL learners, as only 22% and 17% of instructors rated them with 4 and 5, respectively, on the rating scale of 5. However, a good number of instructors (39% for full stops and 70% for question marks) agreed that their students' mistakes in full stops and question marks were moderate and rated them as 3. Therefore, these two types of mistakes should also be taken seriously. This is displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Instructors' Beliefs about the Severity of Mistakes in Punctuation on a Rating Scale of 5*

Mistake (Type)	1	2	3	4	5	Total Frequency
Commas	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	2 (9%)	11 (48%)	7 (30%)	23
Full Stops	1 (4%)	8 (35%)	9 (39%)	3 (13%)	2 (9%)	23
Question Marks	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	16 (70%)	3 (13%)	1 (4%)	23

**RQ4:** What are the potential causes or reasons behind mechanical errors in student writing?

An analysis of the responses to open-ended questions received from 13 instructors highlighted some reasons why Arab EL learners commit mistakes in mechanics and its components while writing essays in the English language. In addition, they suggested some solutions to minimize these errors.

According to these instructors, Arab EFL learners made these mistakes in mechanics and its components for many reasons. The instructors provided the following explanation for the incorrect use of mechanics:

Errors in full stops are due to the following reasons:

“...it could be their native language influencing their sentence length and lack of full stops in English. Many of the students are very active on social media as well, so that informal style of communication may also be affecting how they view sentence length.”

A reason for errors in capitalization is put forward as follows:

“For capitalization, Arabic does not have lowercase and uppercase forms, so it’s an unfamiliar language feature for many of them, and it can be challenging to acquire the skill to differentiate proper nouns from common nouns.”

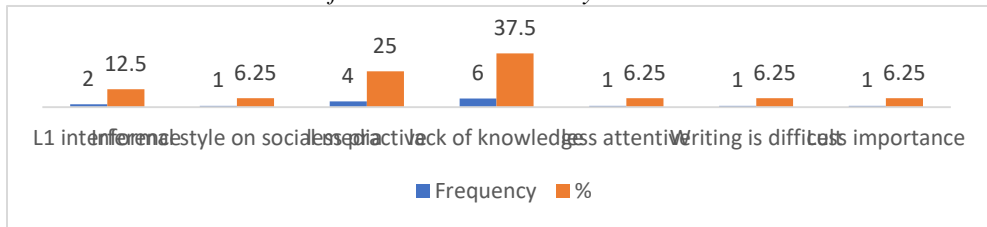
One instructor gave the reason for the wrong spellings as follows:

“For spelling, English, of course, does not have a very strong connection between its written representation and the actual sound of the language, so spelling is going to be difficult for any student, especially students who come from a language background that is more phonetically and graphically linked.”

All other reasons mainly include L1 interference, washback of informal style on social media, less practice of mechanics, lack of knowledge of the rules of mechanics, being less attentive towards mechanics and its components, the difficulty of writing as a skill, and less importance attached to it in the classroom in comparison to other skills.

**Figure 1**

*Instructors’ Reasons for Errors Committed by the Learners*



The lack of knowledge of mechanics rules was the most frequently cited reason by the instructors (37.5%), and the washback of informal social media style and being less attentive to mechanics and its components (6.25% each) had the least impact on students' EFL writings.

**RQ5:** What strategies do instructors use to address and correct mechanical errors in the classroom?

These instructors also suggested some solutions as to how their mistakes may be reduced. One instructor suggested:

“Allocate more time for proofreading in class (example: proofreading drills: students are shown a paragraph with many mistakes, and they need to add the proofreading marks to identify each mistake, and then they should rewrite the paragraph while correcting the identified mistakes).”

Similarly, another instructor recommended the following:

“Perhaps the addition of writing labs outside of classes where the focus is on students’ mechanics would be beneficial. They could bring their paragraphs and sit with an instructor to identify errors and be guided step-by-step through the revision process.”

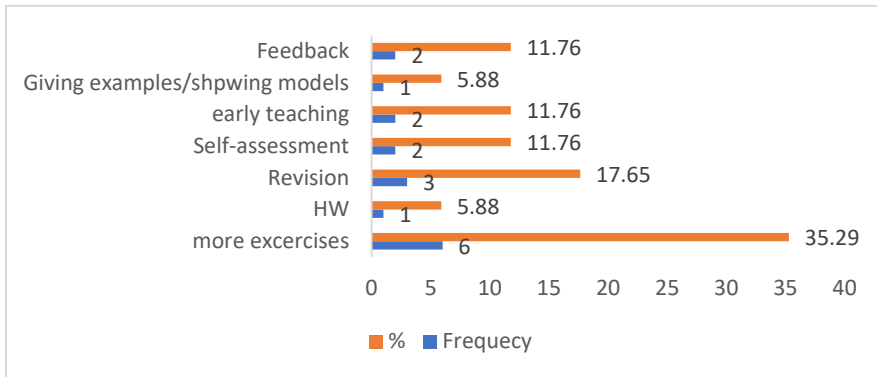
To reduce spelling mistakes, one instructor suggested:

“Expose students to more reading material and encourage them to read while listening to audiobooks so they can connect the sound of the words with the graphical representation of the words.”

Giving students more exercises to practice was the most common (35.29%) and effective solution, according to these instructors. Revising the drafts was also a common suggestion (17.65%). Among other suggestions were providing feedback to students on their mistakes (11.76%), early teaching about the rules of mechanics (11.76%), and asking them to self-assess their write-ups (11.76%). A few instructors suggested assigning more HW to the students (5.88%) as well as giving them examples or models of good mechanics (5.88%).

**Figure 2**

*Instructors' Solutions for Reducing the Errors Committed by the Learners*



## Discussion

Indeed, one of the most disheartening aspects of being a second language (L2) instructor is the task of correcting errors, particularly when they persistently recur in students' language production (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Hyland & Anan, 2006). However, errors are important in their own right and serve as a tool for learners to acquire language (Corder, 1967). They offer insights into learners' knowledge of a second language (Selinker, 1972) and allow instructors to tailor their instruction to address these specific areas of difficulty and provide targeted feedback and remediation. At the same time, understanding students' perspectives on their errors can be as influential in guiding instructional decision-making as understanding their thinking in specific content areas (Lannin et al., 2007). For effective error management and language learning, understanding learners' perceptions and interpretations is crucial.

This study explored the perceptions of EFL learners and instructors regarding the difficulty of using mechanics. Both parties disagreed on their views on using punctuation and spelling. Students believed that they had more problems with spelling. This is supported by Almukhaizeem (2013), who identified spelling as the most common type of error among students, as evidenced in the present study. However, instructors ranked spelling mistakes second and punctuation errors first. According to them, their students lacked punctuation skills the most. Errors in capitalization had the fewest occurrences and were ranked at number three by students as well as instructors. This corresponds to the research by Sandrawati and Jurianto (2021), Nurwahyuni (2017), and Manzolim and Gumpal (2015).

This mismatch between students' and instructors' perceptions needs attention, as this difference creates two focal points for mechanics. Instructors might continue to believe that learners need more practice with other components of mechanics, not spelling. However, the case is otherwise; their learners need more focus on spelling, as suggested by previous studies by Alharbi (2019) and Alzamil (2020). Alshraah et al., (2023) also established that spelling errors and EFL learners' low achievement were correlated.

The perceptions of EFL instructors and students were found to be the same when asked about their problems using other components of mechanics. In other words, both instructors and students agreed that there were problems with punctuation and its constituents. They also ranked them the same in terms of difficulty. Students mentioned using commas was the most difficult, followed by full stops and question marks. Their instructors also agreed with these beliefs. Nazim and Mohammad (2022), Sandrawati and Jurianto (2021), and Yuliawati (2021) also discovered that the highest number of punctuation mistakes made by EFL learners were related to the use of commas and the absence of periods in their writings.

An agreement of beliefs creates a cohesive learning environment, enhances communication and feedback, and empowers students to take ownership of their writing development. This ultimately leads to improved learning outcomes and increased proficiency in writing skills.

Apart from the instructor-student standpoint, the difference in perception between genders is also noteworthy, which was almost negligible in previous studies on the same topic. The perceptions of male and female learners were found to be significantly different in using punctuation, capitalization, question marks, and overall mechanics, indicating that males need more attention than females, except for capitalization, where females were found to make more mistakes than males. Tesfaye's (2004) findings support the result that male students made more errors in punctuation. In contrast to the results of this study, Abdullah (2020) and Tesfaye (2004) mentioned that female learners were better than male learners at capitalization. In addition, Muhammad and Nair (2017) found that female students made more errors in mechanics. Nonetheless, this study showed that female students were better at using punctuation and its components.

However, the difference between male and female perceptions of errors in using commas, full stops, and spellings is statistically non-significant, which means that male and female learners are equally proficient in using them. However, this does not mean they do not have difficulties using question marks and spelling. It only indicates their similar but insignificant level of mistakes. Therefore, attention should still be paid to these aspects, but the severity of making mistakes is not as serious as with other components of mechanics. Moreover, Alhaisoni et al. (2015) suggested that female learners should pay more attention to spelling errors than male learners.

EFL/ESL students' errors can be traced to two general sources: interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Alenazi et al., (2021) and Al-Sobhi et al., (2017) discovered that the highest percentage of spelling errors among Arab students was due to the anomalous nature of the English spelling system, a lack of awareness of English spelling rules, and L1 interference. Interlingual and intralingual factors are the primary causes of these errors. Altamimi and Rashid (2019) attributed spelling errors to the negative impacts of the education system and syllabus, which do not prioritize teaching spelling rules and techniques, and the interference between the English and Arabic languages. Moreover, Alsaawi (2015) identified consonant doubling, silent letters, the final [e], and vowels as the most common spelling errors.

Overall, it is crucial for instructors to understand and address students' perceptions of errors, as well as consider any differences based on gender. This knowledge can inform instructional practices, provide targeted feedback, and foster a supportive learning environment, ultimately enhancing students' language learning outcomes.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

All stakeholders should emphasize the causes that lead learners to commit those errors and work out solutions provided by the instructors, as they can tailor their instruction and provide targeted feedback that addresses specific areas of difficulty for students. According to Harmoush (2000), the English spelling system has caused many difficulties for Arab students, so it is important to address the differences between their first language and English as well as intralingual errors to solve the spelling problems. Arabic sentences tend to be longer and may lack proper punctuation, which can transfer to their English writing. The absence of rules for uppercase and lowercase forms, as well as for proper nouns and common nouns, might have led students to make mistakes in capitalization.

Koch (1983) claims that Arabic does not use the same punctuation rules as English. Students are sometimes confused by the differences between the Arabic and English systems of punctuation. When they fail to select the proper punctuation, they will have difficulty communicating their ideas. Before students write sentences, instructors should address these issues (Almukhaizeem, 2013). Spelling errors may be improved after giving students feedback (Nair & Hui, 2018). Nisa et al. (2023) and Alzamil (2020) recommended adding more exercises focused on spelling and punctuation to the course outline.

Just as instructors gain insights into students' understanding through their thinking processes, understanding how students view their errors provides valuable information for guiding instruction. By analyzing students' perceptions of errors, instructors can identify misconceptions, tailor feedback, differentiate instruction, and promote metacognition. This knowledge helps instructors provide targeted support, personalized feedback, and growth opportunities, ultimately fostering a positive learning environment and deepening students' understanding of the subject matter. Understanding learners' perceptions and interpretations aligns with the learner-centered approach, which focuses on the individual learner's needs, beliefs, and motivations. Recognizing errors will foster diagnostic competence in students and instructors, as suggested by Heinrichs and Kaiser (2018).

The findings from this study have important implications for teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Firstly, instructors should be aware of any specific types of mechanical errors that learners tend to make and provide targeted instruction to help learners improve in these areas. Secondly, instructors should also address learners' misconceptions and beliefs about the types of errors they make to help them better understand their areas of weakness. Finally, instructors should consider the severity of errors and prioritize teaching and correcting the most serious ones to ensure learners can communicate effectively in written English.

### **Limitations**

The study's focus solely on Saudi EFL learners may limit the generalizability of the findings, as socio-cultural and educational variations could influence the results. To enhance the study's validity and applicability, it is recommended to include participants from different universities and regions to capture a more diverse range of perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, expanding the sample size, particularly in terms of the number of instructors involved,

can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. A larger sample size allows for more robust data analysis and strengthens the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

Regarding the instruments used in the study, it is important to pilot-test them before implementing them in the research. Piloting the instruments helps identify potential issues or limitations, allows for refinement and adjustment, and ultimately enhances the reliability and validity of the collected data. Additionally, using standardized and validated data collection tools in future studies can further improve the reliability and comparability of the findings across different research contexts.

Furthermore, the study only focused on mechanical errors in writing, neglecting other aspects of writing such as organization, coherence, and cohesion. Future research could explore these aspects to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Arab EFL learners' writing skills. By addressing these limitations, future studies can provide more comprehensive and reliable insights into the perceptions of EFL learners and instructors regarding mechanics errors, thereby advancing knowledge in the field.

### **Conclusion**

Using correct mechanics in writing is crucial for effective communication, as it can increase comprehension and leave a positive impression on the reader. This study confirms the challenges Arab EFL learners face when using proper mechanics in their writing. The results also revealed a discrepancy between students' and instructors' perceptions of errors in mechanics made by Arab EFL learners. While the instructors believed that punctuation errors were the most frequent, followed by spelling and capitalization errors, the students opined that spelling errors were the most common. This was followed by punctuation and capitalization errors. This discrepancy highlights the importance of instructors' awareness of their students' actual writing skills and the need for them to provide appropriate feedback and instruction to improve their writing performance (Rostami et al., 2021).

Overall, this study suggests that Arab EFL learners need more support in developing their writing mechanics skills. This is mainly in the areas of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Instructors can help by providing focused instruction on these areas and giving feedback that highlights the severity of mistakes and provides guidance on correcting them. Educators and researchers need to adopt a constructive approach to errors by providing meaningful feedback and creating a supportive learning environment. By recognizing errors as part of the learning process, learners can feel more comfortable taking risks and experimenting with the language. This leads to greater linguistic development over time.

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## **Enhancing professional development with Lesson study training for Lecturers at Higher education institution in Lao PDR**

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This research used to action research that result from the implementation of a training course to promote the lesson study process for lecturers at the higher education in the Lao PDR. This study aimed to evaluate cognitive effectiveness, ability in lesson plan design, and skills in lesson study in lecturers' professional development at Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR. This paper focuses on the relevancy assessment, implementation, and evaluation of the lesson study skills in lecturers' professional development as the subsequent study. The researchers employed action research, a three-step process adopted for lesson study, encompassing planning, four days of training, implementing teaching and observation in the classroom, and finally evaluating its effectiveness as a reflection of lesson study skills, which was a portion of lecturers' professional development. 56 lecturers from six faculties were used as a sample for training, and 10 lecturers who voluntarily participated were used in the application. Testing, an assessment form for the ability to design lesson plans, a lesson study skills assessment form, and the teaching record book were research tools. The mean, standard deviation, and t-test were applied to statistical analysis. The findings were: 1) the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process was significantly improved over criteria on a double percentage at a level of .05; 2) the design ability of the lesson plan was at a high level; and 3) the lesson study skills for the lecturers' professional development results were at good levels. This is the first application of the lesson study process in the context of higher education in Laos. Lesson study was an approach that assisted lecturers to increase professional competency to be true "teacher professionals" in the future .

**Keywords:** Training, Lesson Study, Professional Development.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, Lao citizens must have equal and equitable access to quality education so that they can develop themselves into good citizens of the nation, qualified, healthy, knowledgeable, and competent. Professionalism to develop a sustainable country can help it compete regionally and globally, particularly in human resource development and educational quality. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) has set a vision for cultural-social development until 2030 as follows: "Human resources are developed to a level close to the local and international level; a strong productive force responds to the needs of more national socio-economic development; the level of general education of Lao citizens is at the end of high school; people enjoy universal access to quality

health care services and an average life expectancy of more than 75 years". Therefore, the government has established a comprehensive direction for the socio-economic development strategy to 2025, in which the government has made cultural-social development a priority of the development strategy by emphasizing improving the quality of life of the people step by step, solving poverty, developing the field of education, developing culture, developing labor skills, and controlling both quantity and quality (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). It shows that the vision, strategy, and policies that focus on the development of education are very important, and that the government regards education as a guideline or an important tool to drive policies that are implemented in various forms in line with the changes in current social conditions.

The Department of Teacher Education (DTE) in the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOEs) has played a direct role in producing teachers and improving the quality of education. They are aware of teacher professional development that links the quality of teaching of teachers to education management for self-improvement and education for learners' outcomes. Operations in this section are considered an important drive according to the strategy. Policy for the development of teachers and educational personnel can push higher education institutions to become learning centers and serve society and communities in all regions. Collaboration is required from all sectors, including learners, teachers, parents, and stakeholders, in education management. This is a collaboration to solve educational problems through innovation development and classroom development across all regions of Lao PDR (Department of Teacher Education, 2020). In order to improve the quality of education, Lao PDR has a clear approach to developing and modifying the teaching methods of teachers and lecturers, focusing on continuous professional development of teachers, and building capacity for teachers, lecturers, and educational personnel to improve their quality. It also focuses on teacher development and teacher professional networks to cooperate in improving teaching and learning quality, especially the exchange of lessons between teachers, to push and promote the teacher production system and stationed teachers through the process of continuous professional development of teachers, and to raise teachers' educational qualifications to meet the standards of teaching professional competence within the scope of national education qualifications (Department of Personnel Affairs, MOEs, 2020).

The most vital person in developing education quality is the teacher (Suwannoi, 2012). Buasangthong and Phanhthavong (2016) stated, "Teachers play a crucial part in the educational system by ensuring that all students receive high-quality instruction in order to achieve desired learning outcomes. In this regard, it is essential that instructors are provided with the necessary pedagogical and subject-matter training and placed where they are most needed." This also corresponds to Wongyai (2020), who said that a successful school is one that has excellent teachers, engages students effectively, emphasizes student learning, and offers instruction that emphasizes a diversity of direct experiences, shifts the paradigm of instruction, and incorporates novel activities that are appropriate for the subjects they teach. At every stage, students are given the chance to decide and take part in the decision-making process. Parents and managers are motivators, cheerful students who are willing to attend classes and provide good support. The teaching profession is one that calls for ongoing improvement. Teachers should never stop learning. Numerous new technologies have been created as a result of changes in the economic and social climate of the world. To stay up with these changes and to become informed, capable, and situationally aware, teachers must study and adapt and improve their ability to carry out their own responsibilities well (UNICEF, 2019; Government of Lao PDR, 2015).

Souphanouvong University (SU) was established by the Prime Minister's Decree No. 169/PM.LA; dated November 4, 2003. SU officially held an inauguration ceremony on November 5, 2003. According to the Decree on Organization and Activities of SU No. 099/PM dated April 3,

2009, SU is a public higher education institution, a national education and cultural center supervised by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) with a focus on serving higher education in the eight provinces in the northern part of Lao PDR. Its role is to conduct educational activities to produce academics, researchers, and scientists in various fields, conduct scientific research, preserve and promote the fine art and culture of the nation and Lao multi-ethnic people, and provide academic services to society. SU will develop by realizing its vision of Specialization, as the best university; Localization, striving for community members' wellbeing; and Globalization, aiming at international standards. This has been the mission statement to produce academics and administrators who work more effectively in society and develop human resources in scientific research that produce new knowledge; provide good quality academic service to the community; provide a quality labor force; preserve and enhance local culture in keeping with national traditions and adopt best cultural practices, and make the university a source of information, science, and technology. SU is driving the objective of educating and forming specialists-holders of bachelor's degrees with good quality in terms of knowledge, skills, morals and values, health, and physical and spiritual civilization to be centers of excellence in education in the north provinces (Souphanouvong University, 2016).

For the last two decades, based on the empirical data of teacher professional development with an emphasis on teachers' potential in Lao PDR, it has been found that the teachers' specific capabilities are not comprehensive and progressively due to many factors and reasoning of training, most teachers in Laos even the colleges or University Lecturers are lacking of the opportunity to access the professional training. It was mentioned that the goal to improve the teaching quality of teachers has not been achieved as planned, which is inconsistent with improving student learning outcomes and has had a poor impact on student learning outcomes overall (Inclusive Education Center, MOEs, 2015). This corresponds to the results on the development of teaching and learning quality problems across the country from 2016 to 2020 by the National Institute of Educational Sciences Research, which found that overall student performance across the country was still at a relatively low level. At the same time, many teachers' ethics and responsibilities are still at the basic level, teaching knowledge and skills are still at the minimum assessment criteria level, and the methods for assessing teacher learning are inefficient and are not operating normally; and thus the discrete teaching quality of teachers in educational institutions does not achieve the national criteria (National Institute of Educational Sciences Research, MOEs, 2020). In the 2019 academic year summary report of the Academic Affairs Office of SU, it was found that each year SU has improved and developed the quality of lecturers' instruction capabilities through training for enhancing the knowledge, skills, performance, processes and teaching methods for lecturers. However, the instruction quality has not achieved the target every time due to many factors, such as lecturers lacking skills and various teaching methods, lack of cooperation and lack of team work in instruction capability. These all affect the academic achievement of the students as a whole. The goal has not yet been achieved with a cumulative grade point average in the academic years 2017, 2018 and 2019 at the level of 72.75, 85.56 and 71.25, respectively, with the goal of student achievement of not less than 90 percent in each academic year (Academic Affairs Office, SU, 2020).

With the phenomena and conditions mentioned above, it is necessary to find a solution to the problem, and the most appropriate and widely used method of teaching and learning management in the world is lesson study. According to a review of relevant documents and research, as well as empirical data and the researcher's experience as a university lecturer for more than 15 years, the lesson study process is perceived as one way to improve teachers' teaching-learning potential. The process of studying the lesson or studying the classroom is part of a professional development system that uses the school as the place where teachers should develop from the beginning of their teaching career. An important process is that groups of teachers meet

regularly to collectively develop a lesson management plan, create teaching innovations, experiment in the real classroom, and improve learning management plans together. The basic concept of this approach is that the most effective method for improving and developing teaching in the classroom is the development and improvement of lessons in the context of the actual classroom (Inprasitha, 2007). Research on lesson study has also revealed that teachers can jointly develop the teaching and learning process as well as contribute to the development of students' advanced thinking skills, which enables students to gradually develop the learning skills and innovations of the 21st century. In addition, it helps in the design of teaching and learning management, strengthens problem-solving skills in classrooms, and fosters creativity and innovation skills (Inprasitha, 2009; Inthawongsa, 2017; Saosing, 2014; Bayram & Bikmaz, 2018; Shingphachanh, 2020).

For lesson study to be effective, it is important to use professional development to increase the potential of teaching and learning management. Such lesson study can help the participants develop knowledge, expertise, and positive attitudes toward the content delivered. This will enable them to learn or change their behavior effectively and efficiently in accordance with the objectives of instruction capability. It also helps to enhance positive behavior, actions, and expression, which enables people to think and do what is right and good to encourage people to live together in society peacefully. Lesson study as an approach to professional development for teachers or lecturers has been recognized as causing many positive changes in teachers or lecturers, especially in their teaching. However, lesson study is a complex innovation because it has a socio-cultural context involved, due to it being an innovation from Japan. Here, the owner of the innovation has used it for hundreds of years until it has become a normal part of work culture. The institutions that will be using this innovation require the cooperation of everyone in the organization to unanimously change the organizational culture, the culture of thinking, beliefs, and attitudes to help this innovation stay in the organization successfully (Inprasitha, 2012; Inprasitha, Isoda, Wang-Iverson & Yeap, 2015).

Furthermore, an approach that will increase the potential of professional development is training. It can help the participants develop knowledge, expertise, and positive attitudes toward the content delivered. This will enable the trainees to learn or change their behavior effectively and efficiently in accordance with the objectives of training. It also helps to enhance positive behavior, actions, and expression, which enables people to think and do what is right and good to encourage people to live together in society peacefully (Sanrattana, 2011). Therefore, training is a process that will enhance trainees' knowledge, understanding, skills, and positive attitudes towards a subject or change behavior according to the objective of the training. Hence, in order to develop training courses to match the current situation at Souphanouvong University, assessing training needs is a necessary process in order to analyze the exact needs and priorities of training requirements (Chintatiyo et al., 2017).

According to the aforementioned rationale, the researchers are interested in the application of the lesson study process to enhance lecturers' professional development at Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR. It is also the beginning of a change in the cultural teaching context at the university that will lead to the development of sustainable instructional capabilities in the future.

### **Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To evaluate the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process of lecturers at Souphanouvong University;
- To assess ability in lesson plan design for the lecturers' professional development;

- To evaluate skills in the lesson study process for the lecturers' professional development at Souphanouvong University.

### **Literature review**

This section summarizes research literature relevant to the objectives of this paper; in particular, it is a review of training, professional development and the lesson study process.

The first relevant literature review is related to training. Griffin (2002) defines training as a guide for practice, so most policies are in the form of a standing plan established for conducting a certain activity. Therefore, training will bring knowledge, understanding, ability, and a good attitude, which will affect a person's ability to perform assigned tasks according to the standards of the workplace. Quality organizations will recognize the importance of training in order to reduce various problems in their operation and development. They appreciate the potential of human resources, adjust the attitudes of employees to develop training habits, and take an interest in and support training. This can cause the behavior of people in the organization to change and create a new vision for the organization. Charmine et al., (2007) state that training is an indispensable tool to help organizations bridge the gap between actual performance and desired performance in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities to encourage employee engagement in ongoing organizational development.

Lewis, Goodman, and Fandt (2011) have concluded that training is essential for human resource development. The success of an organization is very important because it is related to many human resource management activities, including personnel planning, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, and employee motivation. Included in the human resource development policy of an agency, training will help create clarity and be able to communicate to personnel in the organization an awareness of attitudes and various behaviors that will support the business's success in terms of training and development. At the same time, Nuambounlue (2010) said that training is aimed at pursuing specific skills or assigning practices, exercises, etc., in order to lead to desirable conditions or guidance training. Training is the process of developing an organization through systematic, procedural, well-planned and continuous action. There is a need for everyone to strive for more knowledge in a timely manner. Changing circumstances requires work to be more effective, and enhancing skills enables staff to adjust by changing their attitudes and behaviors in an appropriate and acceptable way (D'Elia, Mazzeo & Raiola, 2018).

In summary, training is the process of developing personnel in an organization to have knowledge, understanding, new ideas, skills and a good work attitude. It also increases the efficiency of their work. It is therefore necessary for the organization to provide training for personnel on a continuous basis.

The next section discusses the teaching profession, which is one that requires constant development. Teachers must always be learners. Due to changes in the world's economic and social conditions, the progress of science and technology has resulted in many new technologies. Teachers need to learn and adapt to keep pace with such changes, and to become knowledgeable, capable, aware of various situations, and undertake the performance of their own duties effectively. In Lao PDR, the term "teacher" is defined in Article 2 of the Government Teacher Act as a person who performs teaching, and trains in schools and institutions, including public and private educational centers. This act divided teachers into two groups according to their roles, duties, and educational levels: Teachers were the groups who taught from the basic education level to the vocational level, while lecturers were at the higher education level and served to teach at the university level (Government of Lao PDR, 2015).



Therefore, this research specifically addressed lecturers' professional development. Lecturers' professional development sets a framework for teaching performance standards, requiring teachers to have knowledge and understanding of the components of professional competence, which are related to knowledge, competence, and competencies that are consistent with the mission of lecturers in Lao higher education, who serve in teaching, research, and academic service with the preservation of arts and culture.

This is consistent with Sinlarat (2009), Boonterm (2012), Ketchatturat (2020), who indicated that professional development in higher education should be as follows: Firstly, lecturers must thoroughly study and research the science that is the basis of all knowledge, the essence of knowledge, a truth that can be sprouted into lots of other knowledge, describing the mechanism of existence and the dynamics of nature and humans, which are the basic sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Secondly, the lecturers have to study the history, experience, and skills of solving difficult and complex problems that occur in nature and in humans. It must also be an education that exercises the skills and strategies of problem-solving through a systematic study and research process. There are methodologies that have been tested and practiced well. And it is a rational analytical thinking process; there is academic and professional evidence, not random guesses or trial and error. Thirdly, higher education professional development is a place for accumulating and transferring new knowledge and technology to open the door to new ways of living and social development in the framework of good morals and culture; that is to say, it is a source of academic and professional leaders, a pioneer of new paths, and the production of knowledgeable people for society. Finally, higher education is a source of profound martial learning, elaborate specialized arts, and high intelligence and skills, which is a science that is difficult to imitate in the profession. That is why it is a study to create and uphold the identity of a person of knowledge, knowledge that contributes to the prosperity and culture that are the pride of the community, society, nation, and world community (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020).

In summary, lecturers' professional development involves the development of their professional competencies as follows: First, they have deep knowledge and can apply it to learners effectively; they have an understanding of the nature of the curriculum, the essence of the curriculum and the subjects; and, finally, there is also a standard framework for teaching and learning. Second, understanding learners and the learning methods or learning processes mentioned above will enable all learners to have the opportunity to learn according to their aptitudes, abilities, interests, and potential development. This includes having a true understanding of the learning theory underlying the learning process, intending to develop knowledge and morality, and having a good knowledge of the philosophies, theories, principles, methods, and techniques of various teaching methods. Third, planning teaching and learning management with appropriate activities for learners who understand the system of teaching and learning and its implementation, knowing how to choose teaching methods that will be used appropriately and in a variety of formats, as well as practicing writing a lesson plan that will be appropriately applied in practice, are also important. Fourth, they need skills in measuring and evaluating the learning progress of learners in terms of both quantity and quality. Finally, a lecturer's professional development involves self-development for professional advancement which understanding the subject of professional development, being able to apply research principles to professional development and using the research results to develop the learning of the learners, including in arts and culture, through knowing teaching and learning activities and offering extra-curricular activities. Accordingly, the lecturers' professional development is a process involving lesson study.

Finally, this section summarizes the research literature related to lesson study. Academics have used different words to describe this concept. Inprasitha, the initiator of lesson study in Thailand, uses the term "class education" (Inprasitha, 2009), while Thongsaeen (2010)

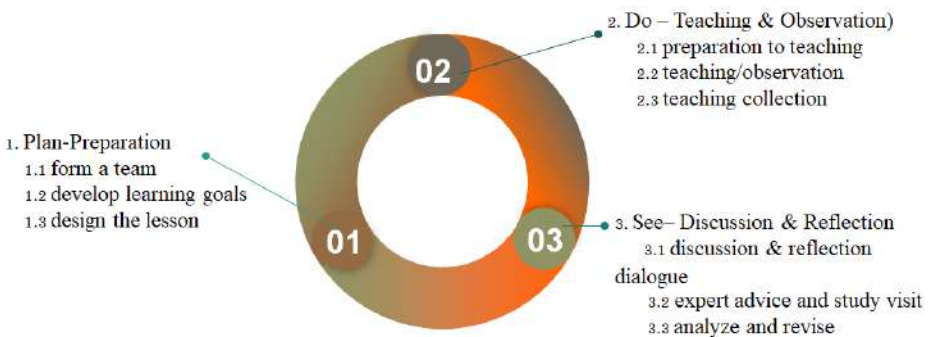
mentions that some people may use terms for lesson study such as research study, professional learning process, learning lessons, learning and lesson development, or lesson education.

Lesson study is the main model of teacher professional development created in Japan. It has been used there for about 130 years and is recognized as an effective method. The right to improve and develop mathematics teaching is a method that makes teaching better and more sustainable (Shimizu, 2006). In Thailand, lesson study was first introduced in the academic year 2003 by Inprasitha and the members of the Faculty of Education at Khon Kaen University. They used it to study the change in the worldview of students practicing mathematics. It is a way for teachers to drive improvement in teaching with a primary focus on students. It enabled teachers to develop good cooperation with each other and gave them the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn about teaching (Inprasitha, 2009).

Saosing (2014) discusses three types of lesson education models: school-based lesson study, district-wide lesson study, and cross-district lesson study. Thongsaeen (2010) states that lesson study is an uncomplicated process consisting of four steps: setting goals (creating a teaching plan together), implementing the plan (observing teaching), discussing results (discussing the lessons), and conclusions (making quality lessons). Countries in which lesson study has been implemented include the United States, Germany, Singapore, Australia, Chile, Vietnam, and Thailand.

Lao PDR has been using lesson study since 2005. This process of teaching and learning was initiated and adopted concretely in 2015, and the term "pedagogical education" was used in the process of training, operating, and vocational development networks. A persistent teacher focus on school training with a teaching education model is being undertaken as an academic collaboration between the Department of Teacher Creation, the National Institute of Educational Science Research, and eight teacher colleges across the country. It is supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the Lao PDR and aims to develop the process and quality of teaching and learning management for teachers in government schools and teacher colleges to be better and create a professional teaching profession (Department of Higher Education, 2015).

To conclude, the lesson study process consists of 3 steps, namely: plan-preparation, do-teaching & observation, and see-discussion & reflection, that was applied to the training process of this research as shown in Figure 1



**Figure 1** The Lesson Study Process (compiled by author based on literature reviews)

As seen in Figure 1, Teachers work through the steps listed above; lesson study is a form of classroom inquiry in which several teachers collaborate in three steps, namely: plan-preparation, do-teaching and observation, and share the results of see-discussion and reflection in a single class lesson.

### Method

This study used action research methodology with an adapted lesson study process. The results are discussed on the basis of interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The population of this study consisted of lecturers from the six faculties of Souphanouvong University in the academic year 2022. The sample was divided into two groups. Group 1 was the Training group, comprising 56 lecturers selected to participate in training. They were specified by using Krejcie & Morgan with convenience random sampling. Group 2 was the Applications group, consisting of 10 lecturers who voluntarily participated in the adoption and passed the training (Isaac & Michael, 1982; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, cited in Srisa-Art, 2010; Ketchatturat, 2020).

#### Instruments Used

Research instruments consisted of the lesson study training course, a cognitive test, an assessment form for the ability to design lesson plans, a lesson study skills assessment form, and the teaching record book. The researchers improved the research instruments based on the evaluation results of the index of item objective congruence (IOC) and suitability from five experts, namely: curriculum and teaching experts, education measurement and evaluation experts, lesson study specialists, and experts involved in the development of the training process.

For the cognitive test, an assessment form for the ability to design lesson plans and a lesson study skills assessment form has been applied with 30 lecturers from each faculty of Souphanouvong University who had characteristics similar to those of true samples for finding out item difficulty, item discrimination, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability.

1) The lesson study training course consisted of eight components: background, principles, goals, objectives, activities, contents' structure, visual aid, measurement, and evaluation. The item's objective congruence index was 0.97 (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1991). Suitability indicated an overall mean of 4.50, rated at the highest levels.

2) The cognitive test was developed; it was a multiple-choice answer with 4 options, with the scoring criterion of an incorrect answer given a score of 0 and a correct answer given a score of 1. The IOC showed that the suitability was 0.96 and overall mean was 4.62, as the highest level. Meanwhile, the item difficulty was between 0.20 and 0.93, the item discrimination was between 0.20 and 0.47, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.821 (Soonthornthai, 2014; Janjai, 2014).

3) Both an assessment form for the ability to design lesson plans and a lesson study skills assessment form were utilized with 5-point Likert scales, ranking values for ability and skills as follows: 5 = highest or very good, 4 = high or good, 3 = moderate or fair, 2 = weak, and 1 = poor. The criteria for interpreting the results of the data analysis are as follows: the means between 4.50 – 5.00 = highest or very good, 3.50 – 4.49 = high or good, 2.50 – 3.49 = moderate or fair, 1.50 – 2.49 = weak and 1.00 – 1.49 = poor (Best & Kahn, 1993; Srisa-art, 2010; Wongwanit, 2012; Phanakij & Nillapun, 2016; Tanthawanich & Jindasri, 2018).

3.1) the quality of the assessment form for the ability to design lesson plans with the IOC showed that the overall mean was 0.850 and suitability was 4.71 as the highest level. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.919 that assessed six aspects: determining the desired outcome; the design of teaching and learning; the determination of

components of the lesson plan; the formulation of evaluation evidence; the identification of measurement and evaluation approaches, and teaching aids or media.

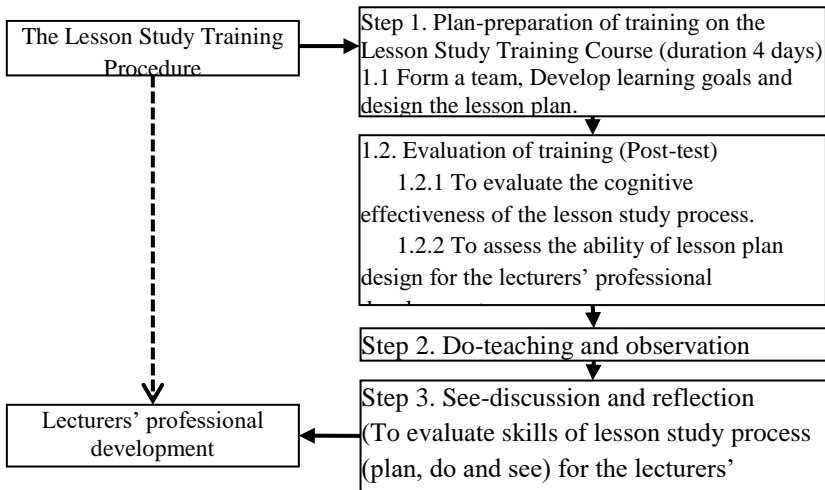
3.2) the quality of the lesson study skills assessment form with the IOC showed that the overall mean was 0.96 and suitability was 4.64 as the highest level. Meanwhile, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient was 0.823.

**Data Collection**

After the training course, improvements were verified by the expert and tried out. The research was carried out between October 2022 and December 2022, and the researchers requested that the President of Souphanouvong University and the deans of all six faculties of Souphanouvong University collect data from the sample. The research procedure used the three steps of the lesson study process. First was Plan preparation: the training course was ready to be implemented with the target group. The Lesson Study training course was conducted for 56 lecturers from all faculties of Souphanouvong University using the lesson study approach for a total of 24 hours in consecutive four-day training. One of the researchers was the trainer for the four-day training, while the other two researchers were the assessors to ensure the trainer was following the training course requirements closely. A one-shot case study as pre-experimental to the post-test only research design was used in this step to measure the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study, and the ability to design lesson plans. Second was Do-teaching and observation, and finally, See-discussion and reflection. A lesson study skills assessment form and the teaching record book were used as instruments in the second and third steps. The target participants for these steps were 10 lecturers who attended the four-day training in step one and voluntarily participated in the application in the classroom. Approximately 4 weeks were appropriated for steps 2 and 3 after step 1, as shown in the research procedure in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

Training Procedure (compiled by the author based on Figure 1)



**Statistical Techniques Used**

The statistical analyses used was designed as a post-test, a quasi-experimental research design to test the cognitive effectiveness. To achieve the objectives of the research, which were to assess the ability to design lesson plans and evaluate lesson study skills, the researchers used the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation (S.D.), descriptive statistics, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to

calculate the reliability coefficient, one sample t-test, and the teaching record book data analyzed using content analysis. To process the data and obtain accurate results, SPSS version 25 was used.

## Results

The results of this study are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study, as indicated above. The initial results were obtained from the post-test and assessed the ability to design lesson plans for training. The modified Lesson Study training course was conducted for 56 lecturers from six faculties of Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR, over four days, for a total of 24 hours. Then, there was follow up with the 10 lecturers for teaching and observation on step 2, and finally, an evaluation was conducted to measure the performance of lesson study skills in lecturers' professional development, as shown below.

Data regarding the results of evaluating the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process indicate an average score of 25.26 as compared to the criteria of 80 percent (or 22.40 points from a full score of 28), where there is a significant difference ( $t = 10.25$ ,  $\text{sig} = 0.000 < p\text{-value}$ ) in the post-test. These findings, which proved the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process, showed improvement greater than the criteria with significant statistical significance. These are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The results of evaluating the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process*

Item	Sample	$\bar{x}$ (Full score 28 points)	S.D	Degree of freedom (df)	t(55)	Sig.
Post-test	56	25.26	2.09	55	10.25	.000
Criteria (80%)		22.40				

According to these results that ensured cognitive effectiveness, there were 46 participants (82.14%) who passed the criteria of 80 percent (or 22.40 points), while 5 participants (17.86%) did not pass the criteria, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*The sample passing based on the criteria*

Item	Criteria	Sample	Percentage
Passed	The scores $\geq 22.40$ points (80%)	46	82.14
Not passed	The scores $< 22.40$ points (80%)	10	17.86
	Total	56	100.00

The results of the assessment of the ability to design lesson plans in the lesson study process showed that the overall mean was 4.39 with a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ,  $S.D = 0.37$ ); each item was in the range between 4.26 and 4.46. Among the ranked items, it was found that the first was the ability to determine the desired outcome ( $\bar{x} = 4.46$ ,  $S.D = 0.47$ ), followed by the design of teaching and learning activities ( $\bar{x} = 4.45$ ,  $S.D = 0.45$ ); the determination of components of the lesson plan ( $\bar{x} = 4.42$ ,  $S.D = 0.48$ ); the formulation of evaluation evidence ( $\bar{x} = 4.40$ ,  $S.D = 0.46$ ); the identification of measurement and evaluation approaches ( $\bar{x} = 4.34$ ,  $S.D = 0.53$ ); and teaching aids or media ( $\bar{x} = 4.26$ ,  $S.D = 0.44$ ), respectively. The results are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3***The results of the ability to design lesson plans assessment*

Item	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Ability Interpretation
1. Determine the desired outcome	4.46	0.47	High
2. The formulation of evaluation evidence	4.40	0.46	High
3. Teaching and learning activities	4.45	0.45	High
4. Teaching aids or media	4.26	0.44	High
5. Identification of measurement and evaluation approaches	4.34	0.53	High
6. The determination of components of the lesson plan	4.42	0.48	High
Overall mean	4.46	0.47	High

Moreover, the participants' lesson study skills for the lecturers' professional development at Souphanouvong University showed that the overall mean was 4.38 with a good level ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$ , S.D = 0.55); each item was in the range between 3.85 and 4.57. On the ranking items, it was found that plan-preparation was the first item at the very good level ( $\bar{x} = 4.57$ , S.D = 0.22), followed by teaching and observation, also at the very good level ( $\bar{x} = 4.50$ , S.D = 0.40). At that time, discussion and reflection were at a good level ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ , S.D = 0.50), as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4***The results of lesson study skills for the lecturers' professional development*

Item	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Lesson Study Skills Interpretation
1. Plan-Preparation	4.57	0.22	Very good
2. Do – Teaching & Observation	4.50	0.40	Very good
3. See – Discussion & Reflection	3.85	0.50	Good
Overall mean	4.38	0.55	Good

In addition, the data from the teaching record book concluded as follows:

- 1) Plan-preparation: This is a goal-setting and teaching-learning plan that is carried out among teachers, peers, experts, and administrators, including research teams that collaborate on setting goals, designing teaching plans, and how to assess learners together.
- 2) Do-teaching and observation: This is the process of implementing a teaching plan by teaching, where two instructors in a group use the plan while other instructors, experts, and administrators observe the teaching, including recording the teaching observations. They also focus on students to collect information about thinking processes and processes, student learning, student participation in activities, or learning behaviors. including all events that happened in the classroom.
- 3) See – reflection: This is an exchange of experience and analysis of information by groups of professors, experts, and administrators. Together, they consider the evidence that students have achieved their goals, whether or not they have developed, and how, with the first teacher reflecting on or discussing the results, then the others doing so. They try to answer the questions: What lessons can be removed by teachers, what problems and obstacles arise during the study of lessons, and what issues lead to improvements in teaching and learning plans? Student information and notes after teaching are used to reflect what the teacher has learned, as well as collect other evidence about what the students have learned.

## Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate cognitive effectiveness, ability in lesson plan design, and skills in lesson study in lecturers' professional development which it focuses on the relevancy assessment, implementation, and evaluation of the lesson study skills in lecturers' professional development as the subsequent study, training is the process of developing personnel in an organization to have knowledge, understanding, new ideas, skills and a good work attitude.

Therefore, this section discusses the research results and findings. The data analysis suggests a strong positive relationship between the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process of lecturers, their ability in lesson plan design, and the skills of the lesson study process for the lecturers' professional development at Souphanouvong University. The research objectives are well served, namely:

The cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process passed the criteria (25.56 points from 28 points), and 46 participants passed the criteria (82.14%). In addition, the cognitive effectiveness of the lesson study process passed on the double percentage in both the mean scores and the amount of sample. Furthermore, the results of their ability to design lesson plans in the lesson study process were at a high level, through which most teachers were able to set clear teaching goals and set evidence consistent with activities. These results matched with Masaengsom (2018), who studied and developed a training curriculum on mixed-level learning management for teachers in small schools. It was found that teachers' cognitive abilities in mixed-level learning management after training were higher than before and that they were satisfied with the training curriculum at a high level. Siriwattanathakul (2019), who studied the development of a training curriculum for enhancing learning management competency for Thai language primary school teachers to improve students' reading and writing achievements, found that: 1) knowledge and understanding of learning management after training were higher than before training; 2) ability in learning management was at the highest level; 3) students' achievement in reading and writing the Thai language after training was significantly higher than before at 0.05; and 4) the training curriculum developed was a curriculum that was in line with the needs of teachers. This actually develops teachers' skills in teaching reading and writing Thai. Sopon et al., (2020) conducted a study to develop a training curriculum and create an electronic book for teachers at Ban Muang Wittaya School under the office of Sakonkakhon Primary Educational Service Area 1. It was found that their knowledge and understanding after learning were significantly higher than before learning at the 0.01 level. The e-book creation skills of teachers were at a very good level, and teachers' satisfaction with the e-book creation training course was at the highest level. Finally, some outcomes of this research are consistent with the findings of Sarnkhaowkhom and Suwathanpornkul (2022), who did research on designing and implementing a learning management process for enhancing health literacy among nursing students (an application of design-based research), which found that health literacy scores of nursing students in the experimental group on the post-test after manipulation were significantly higher than for the control group at 0.05. This is a part for guarantee that the post-tests are always more effective than before.

Even though the skills of the lesson study process for the lecturers' professional development results were at good levels, both the plan-preparation and teaching and observation were at the highest level because the lecturers were enthusiastic about the planning and designing of lesson plans for various subjects in collaboration with other lecturers. The process started with the study of policies or curriculum to set goals, directions, and practices for developing learning outcomes and anticipating problems, difficulties, and concepts of learners, including planning and designing lessons in line with the goals of teaching. The next step was Do – teaching & observation, including methods for collecting information on the teaching operations of instructors

and the learning outcomes of learners by themselves. Next was collaboration with other teachers to observe the problems, difficulties, and ideas of the students, and opening class to other teachers or stakeholders to observe the teaching-learning behavior of the students. Finally was See – discussion & reflection of the lecturer, who encouraged their colleagues to investigate teaching performance as well as to get students to reflect on their ideas about teaching and learning management, including open classes, namely, classes open for other teachers to observe the teaching and learning management.

In addition, the results of this investigation are consistent with those of previous studies. Pattanachak, Inprasitha, and Inprasitha (2011) undertook research on a study of students' mathematical communication in teacher professional development through the lesson study process. The research results found that teachers implement the lesson study process to greatly improve students' ability to communicate in mathematics. Compared with general classes, the emotional aspects of mathematical communication of students have created an emotional experience for students to communicate in every teaching phase, enabling students to have the most confidence in learning. In addition, Saosing (2014) reported on the development of mathematics curriculum to promote learning and innovation skills in the 21st century through the application of lesson study. The results showed that teachers can collaborate to develop a mathematics curriculum using the lesson study process, in which students gradually acquire the learning and innovation skills of the 21st century. The most cooperative skills that develop into communication skills eventually develop into critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity and innovation skills. Furthermore, Leavy & Hourigan (2016) studied the use of lesson education to support teacher initial knowledge development. The results showed that classroom teaching reflection can help facilitate improvements across the room by sub-units of knowledge and effectiveness in an understanding of integrated teaching. It is also conveyed outside the context of education. The development of content knowledge will lead to effective activities by summarizing and identifying the characteristics of the lesson study, and helping to improve the teaching performance of highly effective teachers. Schipper, Goei, Vries, & Veen (2017) and Coenders and Verhoef (2019) point out studies on similar issues that reported a consistent conclusion that the development of self-efficacy, teaching behavior, and adaptation of teachers through the lesson study process showed that a professional development approach through lesson study enables teachers to meet student needs in a variety of ways, although it may not always be necessary to have the ability or skill to meet these expectations. Participation in lesson study influenced teachers' beliefs on self-efficacy and teaching behavior because it focused on responding to the learning process and learning outcomes of learners effectively.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

After the research, we have found the conclusion about the enhancing professional development with lesson study training for Lecturers at Higher education institution indicated the high level of efficiency; most participants can develop their high level for the ability on lesson plan design; and the participants gaining very good skill on lesson study process

The findings of this research can be helpful for teachers, lecturers, educators, and administrators in Lao PDR who is working on educational development. The results of this study confirmed that a lesson study is an excellent approach for teachers' and lecturers' professional development, both in terms of activities to raise cognitive and skill effectiveness and competencies that are essential and important to the profession. In higher education, lecturers' professional development is a lifelong task because lecturers' professional development will help improve the quality and methods of teaching; save time and reduce wastage; help them to design the lesson plan, teach, observe, and reflect efficiently; and make them always keep pace with new changes, especially in today's rapidly changing learning society. Moreover, this result contains best



practices and lessons learnt, which can serve as a reference in policy formulation, development, and implementation of activities related to lecturers' professional development.

Particularly, these study suggests that the higher education institutions in Lao PDR should be using these results as the basis for policy formulation or relevant work plans in the process of continuous systematic exchange of knowledge between lecturers, in order to create an identity of teaching and learning management with lesson study as professional development in the context of Lao PDR. There should be follow-up and evaluation of the impact of learners' outcomes arising from the results of using the research in the classroom due to this research having a limitation on its duration. The lesson study process from this research can be used to expand the research results by integrating the principles and concepts of lesson study with the professional learning communities in order to further develop the teaching profession.

### **Ethical consideration**

This article is part of a Ph.D. thesis in the development of a training course to promote a lesson study process for lecturers of Souphanouvong University, Lao People's Democratic Republic. The thesis was undertaken through the Curriculum and Instruction Program, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University. This research was approved by the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee in Human Research of University (No.: HE653026; IRB00012791; and FWA00003418).

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## **Impact of Financial Knowledge and Investor's Personality Traits on Investment Intention: Role of Attitude and Financial Self Efficacy**

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In recent years, there has been an upsurge in stock market investment intentions. Researchers are therefore becoming more and more eager to look into the factors that influence investors in general, and individual investors in particular to engage in stock market activities. Under the assumption of the theory of planned behavior this study looked at investor's intentions to invest in the stock market. The study primarily focusses on the impact of financial knowledge, personality traits, subjective norms, attitude, and financial self-efficacy on the stock market investment intentions of individual investors. To gather information from individual investors, the study used a cross-sectional research approach, on the population sample of 298 individuals. The data is collected from the Pakistani investors, from three big cities, i.e. Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, also considered as business centers of the country. The respondents include both the salaried workers and business owners. The findings indicate that attitude and financial self-efficacy were significant mediators for investors' investment decisions. The results imply that people with a favorable outlook on investing in the stock market, risk-taking and innovative personalities, and financial expertise are more likely make investments. Those who have a mindset towards investing and financial self-efficacy also have more intentions .

**Keywords:** stock market, attitude, financial self-efficacy, financial knowledge,

Despite the enormous research the theoretical and empirical evidence is equivocal about the relationship between the determinants of intention to invest in stock exchange. It has focused on various aspect such as, the extent to which individuals have intention to invest in stock market (Akhtar & Das, 2020). Therefore, the literature into this stream of research has grown substantially. It is inevitable that the financial system, which includes the banks and financial markets, play an important role in the economic development of a country (Khan *et al.*, 2023; Libich & Lenten, 2022; Khan, 2022; Khan, Bashir & Islam, 2021). Many researchers have focused on the relationship between deferent antecedents of investment intention in financial markets, particularly the stock market (Yang, *et al.*, 2021; Hamid, Mardhiah, & Midesia, 2019). Investors are no longer bound by national borders due to the expansion of economic markets and globalization. Financial securities and instruments are two areas where investors can be benefiting from this.

A wide range of financial products are available to investors, including stocks, bonds, commodities, real estate investments, and various sorts of derivative instruments. Investors can select from a wide variety of investment options that are compatible with their investment

objectives. A country's stock exchange reflects the state of its economy and forecast its future performance. The existing empirical literature provides a linkage between the performance of financial markets and economic activities (Khan, 2022; Chowdhury, Khan & Dhar, 2021; Al-Mutairi, Naser, & Saeid, 2018). The role of financial markets has always remained important for individual as well as institutional investor in contemporary economy. In particular, investments in stock market has remained a focal area of interest. Several studies focus on the institutional investors, but recently the role of individual investors' in the financial markets has gain considerable attentions. It is observed that individual investors' participation in financial markets has significantly increased, and existing literature highlights several reasons for this increase (Calvet *et al.*, 2016). For instance, financial markets are considered as in important mean of "making money" and are providing reasonable returns from the capital investment (Akhtar & Das, 2020). In addition, financial markets are flexible intruments that can be liquidate quickly, thereby provides the investors an opportunity to get the benefit from the investment as needed. Also, financial markets provide the opportunity to the individual investors to fund assets that fits their investment objective from the large number of available financial assets.

In the existing literature, couple of studies like, Khawar and Sarwar (2021); Awais *et al.*, (2015) examined the role of financial literacy on investment decisions. But no study as per authors' knowledge has explored the role of financial knowledge and personality traits of investors in their investment decision in the context of Pakistan. Hence, to contribute to the existing gap, this study examines the role of investors financial knowledge and personality traits to make investment decision. It further uses the mediating role of investors' attitudes and financial position on their investment decisions. Individual's behavior and attitude plays an important role in investment decision, which is the center of behavioral sciences studies. It is assumed that the findings of the study contribute to the body of knowledge by providing the policy recommendations that could enhance the investors knowledge and encourage them to invest in the PSX.

### **Background of Pakistani Stock Markets**

The largest, most active, and oldest stock exchange in Pakistan is the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), which was founded on September 18, 1947. On March 10, 1949, it was formally established as a company limited by guarantee under the name "Karachi Stock Exchange." In October 1970, Lahore stock exchange was opened. In order to assist investors in the nation's northern regions, the Islamabad Stock Exchange was established in October 1989. The Pakistani government finally consolidated the operations of three exchanges on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2016 to Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX). As of April 28, 2015, there were 854 companies listed on the Karachi Stock Exchange, with a market value of RS 10.807 billion. (KSE). The KSE-100, the most well-known index, serves as a standard for measuring market activity, that includes the performance of top 100 companies with largest market capitalization. The KSE-100 index closed at 41,472 points on May 16, 2023 According to this scenario, the stock market in Pakistan is highly unpredictable. Therefore, due to the importance of the PSX as a key market for the economy, this research scrutinized the factors that could assist to predict the investment intentions of the investors in the market.

### **Literature review**

#### **Behavioral Planning Theory**

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) refers to a person's assessment of the availability or absence of necessary opportunities or resources required to carry out a specific behavior. These opportunities or resources are required to engage in the behavior in question (Ajzen &

Madden, 1986). Hence, behavioral intention, functions as a mediator in the TPB between the effects that three different factors have on performance as a whole. These three distal ideas also mediate the effects of three conceptually distinct sets of beliefs, for a total of five. People's beliefs about their own behavioral control act as a mediating factor between the effects of control belief and perceived facilitation. Control belief, like self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), is the ability to perform. Nevertheless, "perceived facilitation" refers to a person's assessment of how useful those tools were in actually attaining their objectives. The relationship between self-efficacy and control beliefs has been the subject of extensive study and writing by researchers (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

Ajzen (2006) proposed a theory in the TPB that perceived behavioral control influences behavior both directly (by actual behavior) and indirectly (via behavioral intention). It is assumed that one's actual behavioral control corresponds to the straight line connecting the impression of their own behavioral control and their actual behavior. People's intentions to engage in the behavior, for example, may be low even if they have a positive outlook and/or subjective norms regarding its performance if they feel they have little control over engaging in it because they lack the necessary skills, knowledge of hardware or software, funds, time, documentation, data, and human assistance required to use an information system (Mathieson, Peacock, & Chin, 2001). However, upbeat and positive they may seem, is still true (Ajzen, 2006). Dari Ajzen created the concept of planned behavior in 1991. It builds on the work done by Ajzen and Fishbein, who introduced the idea of reasoned action in 1969, (Southey, 2011). This theory provides a model that analyses an individual's intentions to predict their behavior. Intention, is defined as a person's estimation of the likelihood that they will engage in a certain behavior (Gopi & Ramayah, 2007).

The three factors that come before purpose are attitudes, arbitrary standards, and the sense of one's own behavioral control. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) defined attitude as the intensity of one's feelings towards a specific psychological item as either positive or negative. Subjective norms are a person's opinion of the likelihood that a group or other people will agree with or disapprove of a specific conduct that they intend to engage in. Finally, the idea that a person has faith in their capacity to control their conduct can be used to characterize perceived control behavior (Gopi & Ramayah, 2007).

### **Stock Market**

The stock market and its performance is a primary component in the market economy, because it helps to accumulate the domestic resources and convert these resources into productive investment. Hence, it has a significant and relevant association with the economic activities. In general, one can have one of the two perspectives regarding the connection. The first relationship examines the stock market through the lens of a leading indicator of economic activity in the nation. Whereas, the second observes the potential impact that the stock market may have on aggregate demand, in particular through aggregate consumption and investment. Both analyses are based on the idea that the stock market is a leading indicator of economic activity in the economy. Or it can be examined that whether changes in the stock market cause changes in macroeconomic variables, such as shifts in consumption and investment spending, GDP, the index of industrial production (IIP), and so forth.

### **Intention towards Investment in Stock Market**

Bird (1988) defined intention as "a state of mind that focuses a person's attention (and, consequently, experience and action) towards a particular object (goal) or a path in order to accomplish something (means)." Reilly and Brown (2006) defined investment as "the commitment of funds for a specified time horizon in the hope of generating a rate of return that would compensate the investor for the time the funds are invested for, for the anticipated rate of

inflation during the investment horizon, and for the uncertainty that is involved." Some researchers proposed that we can understand people's actions through the prism of their intentions (Ajzen, 1991). So it can be observed that investor may invest or his/her behavior may change in the future depending on their intentions. As a result, a person's intentions, such as the intention to invest, might predict that how their behavior may change in the future.

Similarly, Bird (1988) argued that the motivations of the business's founder or owner shape the enterprise's early decisions and shape its first structure. The term "intentions" was defined in a variety of ways in the existing literature. In most contexts, it is referred to an individual's signal of their intended behavior in the future. The wish or plan of an individual to carry out the anticipated action at a later time is referred to as their intention. Because people's intentions provide an intelligent account of the directions they will take in the future. Additionally, attitudes, beliefs, and intentions typically coincide with one another.

### **Financial Knowledge**

As per Bowen (2002) financial knowledge /literacy refers to a person's comprehension of the fundamental financial ideas and terminology that are necessary for investors to comprehend in order to make wise investment decisions. It is also considered as one of the most important factors in determining appropriate financial behavior, (See. Mountain *et al.*, 2021). According to Robb *et al.*, (2015) a higher level of financial literacy enables individuals to apply their knowledge and reach on an appropriate decision for the effective management of their financial resources and investments.

### **Personality Traits**

Conventional theories of finance make the assumptions that investors are logical people who base their investing decisions on relevant information. But Ritter (2003) concluded that in reality, when faced with uncertainty, investors typically choose their investments using investment heuristics. However, contrary to the argument of investors as logical individuals, existing studies such as, Ackert, (2014); Bloomfield, (2010); highlighted that investors are viewed as normal in traditional finance, whereas traditional finance views investors as rational in their decisions.

### **Subjective Norms**

According to Ajzen (1986), subjective norms "refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior." The subjective norm concept in the financial literature in relation to investment was initially articulated by East (1993), stating that as per theory of reason action, subjective norm is one of the two determinants of the intention that relates to investors' behavior. Afterwards, various studies looked into the connection between investing in the stock market and subjective norms. Such as, Tokuoka (2017); Alqasa *et al.*, (2014) discovered that people's intentions to buy stock can be influenced by subjective norms, and association between investors' attitude and subjective norms.

### **Attitude of individual Investor**

Ajzen (2011) has defined attitude into two broader categories. The first dimension defines, attitude as an instrument that indicates that a behavior is crucial, destructive, and important, whereas the second dimension considers attitude as a pleasurable and enjoyable state. Therefore, when people have positive attitude regarding a specific behavior, it is more likely that they will have favorable intention to exhibit that particular behavior (Wijekoon & Sabri, 2021). As per Trabucchi, *et al.*, (2020) and Jothilingam and Kannan (2013), investment attitude, is referred to individual investors' attitude that can reflect a behavior about their interest in

investments. Similarly, Norouzi *et al.*, (2022), stated that individuals develop their attitude about investment based on their particular circumstances and past experiences.

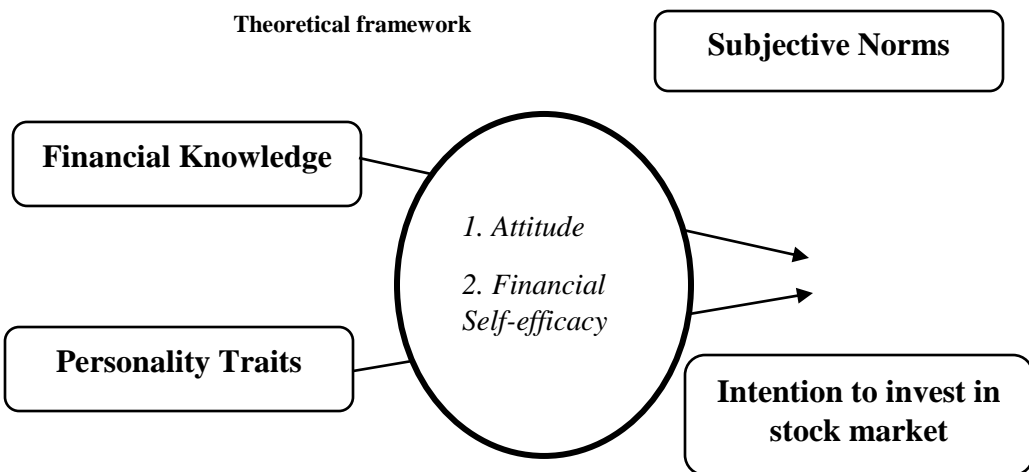
### Financial Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the view by which, one can achieve their objectives and be successful in their endeavors. An essential element of self-confidence is the belief that one can conquer a variety of problems (Bandura, 2006). A person who has a high level of self-efficacy has faith in their ability to do a certain task. According to Bandura (2006), even if a person has a high level of self-efficacy generally, their perception of their own talents may change significantly from one endeavor to the next. The study by Farrell *et al.*, (2016) concluded that self-efficacy is a significant factor that influence the financial behaviors such as investments and savings.

### Hypothesis

Based on the existing literature following hypothesis are established

- H1: *Financial knowledge and the desire to invest in the stock market are positively correlated.*
- H2: *Personality trait and intention to invest in the stock market are positively correlated.*
- H 3: *The intention to invest in the stock market is positively correlated with subjective norms / standards.*
- H 4: *Attitude mediates the association between financial knowledge and intention to invest in the stock market.*
- H5: *Financial self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the association between this personality attribute and the intention to invest in the stock market.*



**Figure 1: Proposed theoretical framework**

## Method

### Questionnaire design

A structured questionnaire has been designed by following the guidelines offered by Sekaran and Bougie (2010) to achieve the study objectives. For qualitative research self-administered and reported questionnaires are considered as one of the effective means to collect the data (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). In this regard, the wording of the questionnaires was selected considering the target-level respondents. The questionnaire was designed in English language because this language is commonly understood in Pakistan. An introduction about the research was given at the start of the questionnaire in the form of covering letter, which was



followed by the next sections. Prior to the distribution of survey questionnaire, experts from the field of study reviewed the questionnaire to confirm the content and face validity. As Kline (2011) suggested 10 samples per item, as study total items are 13 so 298 final sample meet the priori condition.

After considering the recommendations of the experts, questionnaire was modified and finalized. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique is used on data to test multiple relationships simultaneously. This technique simultaneously performs multiple analyses such as factor analysis, regression analysis and path analysis (Gefen *et al.*, 2000). Variance-based SEM was employed to explore the statistical relationship.

### **Measurements of the Variables**

One dependent, three independent, and two mediating variables are used to achieve the objectives of study. Variables are measured by closed-ended questions that were adopted or modified from earlier studies. The questionnaire included 25 items in addition to the demographic factors. Demographic information made up the first portion of the questionnaires, and the primary study constructs were covered in the second part. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used to evaluate each item. According to Torkzadeh and Van Dyke, (2001) self-reported surveys can be used to record respondents' subjective feelings, using 5-point Likert scales are practical. The variables in this study, such as the intention to invest in the stock market, subjective norm, financial knowledge, personality, attitude, and self-efficacy, have all been carefully operationalized, taking into account the objective and nature of the research.

### **Investment Intention**

Individual stock market investment intentions as a dependent variable basically serves as a gauge of someone's propensity to engage in a particular behavior (Yadav & Pathak, 2017). This construction has only one dimension. The construct of investing intention was measured using Chen's (2007) three-item scale. This measure's sample item is "I will frequently invest in the stock market." This construct has a 0.87 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Attitude towards investment in stock market**

The study used people's attitudes as a mediating factor. This variable was measured using a three-item Taylor and Todd measure (1995). "Investing in the stock market is a good idea" is an example item from this metric. This construct has a 0.85 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Financial Self-Efficacy**

Financial self-efficacy was used as a mediator. An individual's perception of his or her financial capacity to make an investment is known as financial self-efficacy. This study has adopted or adapted a six-item financial self-efficacy measure created by Lown (2011). An example item would be "It is difficult to move towards my financial goals." This construct has a 0.92 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Financial Knowledge**

Financial knowledge is used as first independent variable. Financial knowledge, as per Alvarez and González (2017), is the ability to solve financial problems through the application of one's financial awareness and comprehension of financial concepts and practices. This study used a multifaceted approach to test financial knowledge. Risk diversification, inflation, numeracy (interest), and compound interest were the four key ideas that were used to test

financial understanding through four statements following the Klapper *et al.*, (2015) study. This construct has a 0.82 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Subjective Norms**

Subjective norms are used as second independent variable. It is people's perceptions of the world and the decisions they make based on those perceptions. Three items adapted from Taylor and Todd (1995) were used to measure subjective norms essentially people's perceptions of the world and the decisions they make based on those perceptions. "Those whose opinion I value would" is an example response from this questionnaire. This construct has a 0.90 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Personality Traits**

Third independent variables used is personality characteristics. Individuals' permanent personal characteristics, or personality traits, are made up of their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings (Blickle, 1996). Personality is measured as a multidimensional construct that includes willingness to take risks and desire for innovation. The study has adapted a six-item Hyrsky and Tuunanen (1999) measure. Three of the six items on the scale show a predilection for creativity, and the remaining three assess a person's tendency for taking risks. This construct has a 0.88 Cronbach's alpha reliability score.

### **Sampling and data collection**

Data is collected in standard form from respondents, the active investors. The targeted population was the individual investors from three major cities of Pakistan namely, Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi, specifically, targeting two types of individuals. One those who were running their own business (self-employed), and second the job holders at both private and government. These cities are major cities of Pakistan, and are the centers of business activities. Individuals from these were assumed to have more knowledge about stock exchange, thereby they may have more intention to invest the stock exchange. Study followed non-probability sampling method and used snowball sampling technique, to collect information from the respondents. Response rate, demographic analysis, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, reliability and validity analysis, correlation analysis, and structural equation modelling results are presented below.

### **Response Rate**

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among individual investors who planned to invest in the PSX. Out of 500 given out questionnaires 305 responses were collected, with a 61% response rate. Seven incomplete responses were eliminated from the final sample. Finally, 298 valid completed responses with response rate of 60% were used for analysis. Results summary of the response rate is given in table 1.

**Table 1**

#### *Response Rate*

Total distributed questionnaires	500
Total questionnaires received back	305
Total questionnaires useable	298
Total questionnaires excluded	07
Total response rate	61%
Total response rate of useable questionnaire	60%

*Source: Authors' compilation*

## Demographic Analysis

### Gender of the respondents

While collecting the data, the information regarding the gender of the respondents was also collected. It is found that the majority of the respondents were male with the percentage of 77.9 percent and females were 22.1 percent, results are given below in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Gender of the participants*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	232	77.9	77.9
	Female	66	22.1	22.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Age of the respondents

The data on age of the respondents has also been collected. Age is an important factor with reference to individual investor having intention in the stock market. Considering the Pakistani culture, aged people have more resources than the young, therefore, they have more inclination to make investments. The results presented in table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents belongs to the age group between 41-50 years with percentage of 40.9 % followed by the age group of 31-40 with 31.9%. The lowest category was respondents from the age group of 20-30.

**Table 3**

*Age group of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30	27	9.1	9.1
	31-40	68	22.8	22.8
	41-50	122	40.9	40.9
	More than 50	81	27.2	27.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Marital Status

Marital status of people is an important demographic factor that play critical role in making investment decisions. The findings of frequency distribution shown in table 4 suggests that unmarried or single respondents are 41 (13.8%), married are 202 (67.8%), divorced are 46 (15.4%), and widow are 9 (3%).

**Table 4**

*Marital status of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unmarried	41	13.8	13.8
	Married	202	67.8	67.8
	Divorced	46	15.4	15.4
	Widow	9	3.0	3.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Education

The data on the education of respondents is given in table 5 shows that 14 (4.7%) individual investors were having qualification of matric, 26 (8.7%) respondents were having education of intermediate, 112 (37.6) were having qualification of undergraduate, and 146 (49%) were having postgraduate qualification.

**Table 5**  
*Educational qualification of respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Matric	14	4.7	4.7
	Intermediate	26	8.7	8.7
	Undergraduate	112	37.6	37.6
	Postgraduate	146	49.0	49.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Profession

Data about the profession of the respondents given in table 6 shows that government jobs holders also have intention to invest in the stock market, and they were 25 (8.1%). Self-employees were 178 (59.7%), private Job holders were 95 (31.9%).

**Table 6**  
*Professional categories of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Government Job	25	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Self-Employee	178	59.7	59.9	68.0
	Private Job	95	31.9	32.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Income Level

Income level of the respondents also plays an important role in the investment intention in the stock market. The data on monthly income level presented in table 7 depicts that 51 (17.1%) respondents were having income of less than 50,000, 139 (46.6%) were having income in the range of 51,000 to 100,000, 108 (36.2%) have income level of more than 100,000.

**Table 7**  
*Income level of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 50000	51	17.1	17.1
	51000-100000	139	46.6	46.6
	More than 100000	108	36.2	36.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Descriptive analysis

The descriptive statistics of this study is presented in table 8. The descriptive statistics provides findings on sample, maximum and minimum values, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis.

**Table 8***Descriptive statistics*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Gender	298	1.00	2.00	1.2215	.41594	1.348	.141	-.183	.281
Age	298	1.00	4.00	2.8624	.91996	-.429	.141	-.641	.281
Marital Status	298	1.00	4.00	2.0772	.63888	.634	.141	1.333	.281
Education	298	1.00	4.00	3.3087	.81978	-1.142	.141	.837	.281
Profession	298	1.00	3.00	2.2383	.58627	-.101	.141	-.443	.281
Income Level	298	1.00	3.00	2.1913	.70615	-.289	.141	-.970	.281
Investment Intention	298	1.33	5.00	3.2629	.80209	.045	.141	-.478	.281
Financial Self-Efficacy	298	1.00	5.00	3.1331	.97672	.041	.141	-.588	.281
Personality Trait	298	1.00	5.00	3.2931	.93347	-.305	.141	-.534	.281
Financial Knowledge	298	1.00	5.00	3.2232	.83869	.052	.141	-.218	.281
Attitude	298	1.00	5.00	2.9340	.92464	.027	.141	-.333	.281
Subjective Norms	298	1.00	5.00	2.8177	1.17682	.168	.141	-.887	.281
Valid N (list wise)	298								

*Source: Authors' compilation*

The results indicate that skewness and kurtosis values are within the permissible range of +2 to -2, George and Mallery, (2010) suggested this range indicates that the data is dispersed normally, and recommends further statistical analysis.

### Analysis of Reliability

After checking for normal distribution, reliability analysis (internal consistency) of all the measures is measured. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency of each variable. It is suggested that if a variable Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.7 or higher of, then this measure is considered as reliable. Table 9 presents the values of Cronbach's Alpha, which is also referred as the measure of internal consistency, and all the values cross the threshold value, thereby confirming the reliability of measures.

**Table 9***Reliability analysis result of variables*

	Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Investment Intention	3	0.823
2	Attitude towards investment in stock market	3	0.813
3	Financial Self-Efficacy	6	0.948
4	Subjective norms	3	0.916
5	Personality traits	6	0.915
6	Financial Knowledge	4	0.858

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As per Fornell and Larcker, (1981), in behavioral studies, it is important to determine that data is fitting to the proposed model appropriately or not, prior to performing the main analysis. A variable is considered valid when it adequately measures the targeted objective, with a reliable and valid scale (Hair *et al.* 2010). In order to confirm the item structure of exploratory

factor analysis (EFA), this study has performed the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the psychometric properties of all scales. According to Hu and Bentler, (1998) the most widely used fit-indices are CMIN/DF (<2 ideal; < 5 acceptable), RMSR/RMR (<.05ideal; <.08 acceptable), CFI (>.95 ideal; >.90 acceptable), TLI (>.95 ideal; >.90 acceptable), and RMSEA (<.05 ideal; <.08 acceptable)

### Analysis of Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

Although the internal consistency analysis (Cronbach's alpha) carried out before confirmed the data's dependability, further evaluation of the reliability and validity of each variable is done. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) were evaluated for this aim. Fornell and Larcker, (1981). Suggested that the value of AVE must be greater than 0.50 in order to meet the requirements for convergent validity and the presence of CR, respectively. The results of the CR and AVE are displayed in table 10. The results show that both the CR and AVE values are higher than the threshold values, supporting the existence of the CR and its convergence validity.

**Table 10**

*Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity Outcome*

Construct	CR	AVE
Investment Intention	0.895	0.740
Attitude towards investment in stock market	0.889	0.727
Financial Self-Efficacy	0.959	0.795
Subjective norms	0.947	0.857
Personality traits	0.934	0.702
Financial Knowledge	0.904	0.707

*Source: Authors' compilation*

### Correlation analysis and discriminant validity

The discriminant validity of the variables is also measured. It is implied by discriminant validity that one measure is distinct from the other measure. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of AVE must be greater than the correlation of the variables that appear on the diagonal of the correlation analysis in order for the discriminant validity criterion to be met. The square root of AVE values on the diagonal of correlation analysis are higher than the values of inter-correlation of variables, as per table 11 results support the existence of discriminant validity, moreover the correlation among variables are given in table. Cohen (1988), the correlation among variable will be small if the coefficient is 0.10, medium if the correlation coefficient is 0.30, and large if the coefficient is 0.50. shows that the strength of the relationship among variable is medium.

**Table 11**

*Correlations Among l. vs. with sq. rts. of AVEs*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Financial Self-Efficacy	<b>(0.892)</b>					
Personality traits	0.278 <sup>***</sup>	<b>(0.838)</b>				
Financial Knowledge	0.290 <sup>***</sup>	0.257 <sup>***</sup>	<b>(0.838I)</b>			
Attitude	0.258 <sup>***</sup>	0.299 <sup>***</sup>	0.309 <sup>***</sup>	<b>(0.853)</b>		
Subjective norms	0.294 <sup>***</sup>	0.298 <sup>***</sup>	0.256 <sup>***</sup>	0.274 <sup>***</sup>	<b>(0.926)</b>	
Investment Intention	0.322 <sup>***</sup>	0.273 <sup>***</sup>	0.249 <sup>***</sup>	0.269 <sup>***</sup>	0.235 <sup>***</sup>	<b>(0.860)</b>

*Source: Authors' compilation. Note: Square roots of average variances extracted (AVEs) shown on diagonal. \*\*\* significant at 0.001.*

### Summary of the Hypotheses results and discussion

The results of the proposed hypotheses based on the analysis are summarized in table 12, all the hypotheses based on the analysis are accepted. The results suggest that the financial knowledge /literacy, personality traits and subjective norms of the Pakistani investors' positively influence their intention to invest in the stock market. It is further found that the financial self-efficacy and attitude of the investors mediate the investors' intention to invest.

**Table 12**

*Summary of hypotheses results*

No	Research Hypotheses	Results
H1	Financial knowledge and the desire to invest in the stock market are positively correlated.	Accepted
H2	Personality trait and intention to invest in the stock market are positively correlated.	Accepted
H3	The intention to invest in the stock market is positively correlated with subjective standards / norms.	Accepted
H4	Attitude mediates the association between financial knowledge and intention to invest in the stock market.	Accepted
H5	Financial self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the association between this personality attribute and the intention to invest in the stock market.	Accepted

*Source: Authors' compilation*

Findings of the positive impact of financial knowledge on intention to invest is in line with the findings of Mountain *et al.*, (2021); Robb *et al.* (2015); Bowen (2002). Which suggest that having better knowledge could help the investors to reach on an effective investment decision. The findings of personality traits are endorsing the results of Ackert, (2014); Bloomfield, (2010), and Ritter (2003). The relationship of subjective norms is similar to the findings of Tokuoka (2017); Alqasa *et al.*, (2014), and East (1993). The mediating role of financial-self efficacy is endorsing the results of Farrell *et al.* (2016) and Bandura (2006). While the investors' attitude results are in line with Norouzi *et al.* (2022); Trabucchi, *et al.*, (2020) and Jothilingam and Kannan (2013). Suggesting that the sufficient financial resources could positively influence the attitude of the investors and convincing them to make investment decisions.

### Conclusion

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in stock market investment intentions. Researchers are therefore becoming more and more eager to look into the factors that influence investors in general and individual investors in particular to engage in stock market activities. Under the assumption of the theory of planned behavior this study looked at investor's intentions to invest in the stock market. The study primarily focusses on the impact of financial knowledge, personality traits, subjective norms, attitude, and financial self-efficacy on the stock market investment intentions of individual investors. The findings indicate that attitude and financial self-efficacy were significant mediators for investors' investment decisions. The results imply that people with a favorable outlook on investing in the stock market, risk-taking and innovative personalities, and financial expertise are more likely make investments. Those who have a mindset towards investing and financial self-efficacy also have more intentions. It is assumed that the results are of significant importance for individual investors who are intended to invest in the stock market in way. They must have financial knowledge, personality traits like, risk taking and innovative personality, and subjective norms of individual investors are an important indicator of investment intention, that could result into a profitable return. The findings could be used as guidelines for individual investors who want to invest in PSX. Moreover, to enhance the flow of capital to capital markets both investment companies, banks and PSX could arrange the

workshops, seminars and conferences to enhance the financial knowledge and expertise of the investors. Which would support the investors' decisions to invest in PSX.

The limitation is the current research is that it targeted only individual investors as target respondents by excluding the expert and institutional investors. Therefore, in future by expanding the current model including the professional experts and institutional investors is recommended.

### Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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## **Implementation of the Bachelor of Studies (BS) Program in Government Colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Prospects and Challenges**

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The present study explores the challenges and issues faced in the implementation of the BS program offered in government colleges and public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The responsibilities of colleges and universities are highlighted in view of National Education Policies. The research shows how and why the BS education system was initiated in Higher Education Institutions and what measures were taken for its successful implementation. The research methodology used was exploratory in nature, employing a mixed method approach for triangulation. The target population of the study was 65 randomly selected government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, sampled through the Convenience Sampling Technique. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and a questionnaire from 127 faculty members of government colleges. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings of the study highlight the importance of academic autonomy for the government colleges to enable them to grow in knowledge and research. Recommendations such as bringing innovation to higher education, initiating research journals, strengthening of the Higher Education Academy of Research & Training (HEART) and implementing a rationalization policy in transfer rules at the directorate level, are made in light of the findings .

**Keywords:** BS program, Implementation, Academic Autonomy, National Education Policies, Rationalization Policy, Transfer Rules, Directorate, HEART

Since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, it has been committed to focusing on quality education and bringing it up to international standards. According to international standards, there is no concept or weighing of a fourteen-year conventional degree program. The focus is rather on a 16-year education system (Bachelor of Studies). Efforts were initiated by all stakeholders of Higher Education to improve the quality of education in Pakistan by introducing and implementing a four-year BS degree program in colleges and universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan in general, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular, are struggling to improve literacy rates through the implementation of National Education Policies. The BS education represents a gradual transition from a two-year program to a four-year degree program, which was one of the key components of the National Education Policies. It provides an alternative option for students after intermediate, replacing the MA/MSc and BA/BSc programs.

The study Ali and Shah (2019) explored the reasons for implementing the BS program and its impact on students' enrollment for the program's effectiveness in bridging the gap between

theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The study emphasized the hands-on learning and industry-relevant training provided by the program, which equips students with necessary skills for the job market. Similarly, Mustafa (2012) paints a picture of widespread challenges like illiteracy, poor quality, and gender disparity. It prioritizes improved access, quality, and equity, recommending streamlined governance, funding boosts, teacher training, early childhood education focus, girls' education promotion, and enhanced monitoring.

The BS system along with its challenges has revolutionized the outdated system of conventional degree programs prevalent in Pakistan. Its implementation has been successful so far, as it aligns with international standards. As per the requirements of national education policies, social demands, and economic feasibility, the initiation of BS was crucial. It offers various benefits such as reducing student workload, providing a flexible learning environment, and fostering personality development (Iqbal, 2017). Most public sector universities considered it essential for their survival and initiated it in 2011. However, due to political intervention, community distrust, and misperceptions among the college fraternity, the program was unnecessarily delayed in colleges and remained buried in government files until 2010.

After several meetings with high-ranking officials, BS was initiated in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010. It was started on a trial basis in 15 selected colleges, offering 23 BS disciplines, with the objective of upgrading the colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This marked a shift from the conventional annual system of education to a semester system. The program encompasses a wide range of goals and objectives, including personality development, expertise in knowledge, dynamic aspects of learning, research skills, and personal and academic growth. It has since been expanded to 93 colleges and has been introduced in almost all the leading and model colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till 2016. This program was launched with the vision of providing quality education to people at their doorstep with limited resources and affordable finances. The list of 15 colleges is provided below.

**Table 1**  
***Implementation of BS at Initial Stage in colleges***

S. No	Colleges	Department	Total Strength
01.	GPGC No. 01, Abbottabad	Botany & Political Science	69
02.	GPGC Mandian Abbottabad	Computer Science	35
03.	GPGC Haripur	Chemistry, Physics & English	23
04.	GPGC Mansehra	Physics & English	78
05.	GPGC Bannu	Zoology	26
06.	GPGC Kohat	Statistics	38
07.	GPGC karak	Physics	38
08.	GJPGC Swat	Maths & Economics	87
09.	GPGC Charsadda	Economics	40
10.	GSSC Peshawar	Pak Studies, Statistics & Maths	118
11.	GC Peshawar	Physics, Chemistry & Economics	120
12.	GPGC Mardan	Physics	37
13.	GPGC Swabi	Physics	25
14.	GPGC (Women) Mardan	Political Science	40
15.	GDC (Women) Haripur	English (later on shifted to 2011 batch)	

Source: Collected from the Directorate of Higher Education on Nov, 2021.

The course for the aforementioned program was designed to equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies to succeed in their chosen career path or to pursue higher education at the bachelor's degree level. The program often had a more focused and practical approach compared to the conventional system. The aforementioned colleges aimed to

provide students with the foundational knowledge and hands-on experience required to enter the workforce quickly. The program held promising future prospects in terms of expanding education opportunities, enhancing employability, contributing to economic development, facilitating further education, and fostering community development.

Currently, there are a total of 317 public sector colleges, out of which 123 colleges have been upgraded to BS colleges. BS is successfully running in these colleges by providing quality education to the young generation with the facilities of an adequate number of human and infrastructural resources at a low cost. As per the decision of Higher Education Department, BS has to be implemented in all 317 government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Recently, a letter has been issued by the Secretary of Higher Education to implement BS in 115 colleges by abolishing the Associate Degree program due to its importance. The table shows the statistics of BS colleges, collected from the Directorate and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) of Higher Education Peshawar, respectively.

**Table 2**  
**BS Statistics**

S. No	Colleges	Strength
01.	Male colleges in 2021-2023	64
02.	Female colleges in 2021-2023	59
04.	BS Departments in 2010 -2011	23
05.	BS Enrollment in 2010 – 2011	909
06.	BS Departments in 2021-2023	774 (Male 487 and female 287)
07.	BS Enrollment in 2020 – 2021	83872
08.	BS to be initiated in colleges in 2023-2024	115 (Male 65 and female 55)
09.	BS departments to be offered in 2023-2024	219

Source: Collected from the Directorate (HED) and HEMIS on October, 2023.

Since the initiation of the BS program, Higher Education Department has taken several steps to strengthen government colleges. These include:

- i. The establishment of a three-tier governance structure for government colleges: College Council, Joint Management Council, and Provincial Management Council in 2010. This structure caters to all administrative and academic issues.
- ii. Allowing faculty members to pursue higher studies such as M. Phil. and PhDs. through indigenous and foreign scholarships starting in 2010.
- iii. In April 2011, the Project Management Unit Peshawar was established to implement education reforms and restructure govt. colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Its aim is to better prepare students to meet the challenges of the global market.
- iv. The establishment of Higher Education Academy of Research & Training (HEART) in 2013 to provide mandatory and capacity-building trainings to teaching faculty, Principals, and administrative staff at colleges. These trainings aim to develop their capacity, pedagogical and ICT skills, research abilities, and professional competency.
- v. The holding of conferences, research activities, seminars, lectures, workshops, and symposia in matters related to public policy and the delivery of quality services in the fields of higher education, teachers' education, training, and research (HEART Act, 2016).
- vi. The initiation of Best Teacher Awards, Research Productivity Award, and the publication of college magazines on an annual basis for teachers' motivation in 2017 and 2018 by the Directorate of Higher Education.

- vii. The establishment of a Quality Assurance Cell in 2018 to develop a strong liaison between universities and colleges and facilitate colleges' internal Quality Enhancement Cells.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The introduction of the BS program in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not only been faced with multifarious challenges but has also heralded new opportunities and possibilities of change and transformation. These changes are expected to bring about critical innovations and improvements in the higher education system. The foremost among them are gaps in the implementation process of public education policies. The delay, deadlock, and detraction in the process of implementing public policies have hindered the process of change and transformation. These issues have also delayed progress towards delivering sustainable services at the BS level in colleges for marginalized communities in the periphery.

Due to negligence and deviations from the spirit of public policies, the BS program has developed complications and difficulties at the implementation level. These issues can be observed in areas such as affiliation with universities, problems of student migration, variations and differences in syllabi and courses of study, and the unfavorable attitude of affiliating universities towards affiliated colleges. Similarly, issues in the examination process, failure to conduct the semester system in its true spirit, discrimination in assessment methods, and above all, issues regarding fee structure are the main problems that need to be addressed urgently. The intensity of these issues has motivated the research team at the Higher Education Academy of Research and Training (HEART) to conduct a serious and systematic study in order to find solutions to these problems and explore new opportunities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To provide a comparative analysis of the BS program in Government Colleges and public sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- ii. To transition intermediate classes to higher secondary schools in accordance with the requirements of National Education Policies.
- iii. To raise awareness among universities about the importance of excelling in their role of producing M. Phil/PhD researchers.
- iv. To demonstrate the necessity of granting partial academic autonomy to Government Colleges, which are key stakeholders in the BS program, in order to enhance their academic, administrative, and financial strength.

### **Research Questions**

- i. How and why was the initiation of the BS program implemented in government colleges?
- ii. What is the rationale behind considering academic autonomy as essential for the sustainability of government colleges?
- iii. What is the importance of the BS program in government colleges and public sector universities?
- iv. What are the current obstacles and challenges faced by the BS Program in colleges?
- v. What measures should be taken to enhance and fortify the BS program in colleges?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

- i. There is a scarcity of literature available on the BS system of education.

- ii. The role of key stakeholders in assisting the policy-making process is less effective.
- iii. There are policy implementation gaps in different sectors of the education system.
- iv. The study was delimited to public sector colleges and universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only.

### **Literature Review**

Pakistan has implemented various strategies to increase literacy rates and improve the professional development of teachers. This effort began with the National Education Conference in 1947. Quaid-e-Azam, in his message to the conference, emphasized the importance of education for the future of the country and the need to keep up with the rapidly changing world. Subsequent education policies, conferences, and commissions called for structural reforms, moving away from the previous four-tier education system outlined in the All Pakistan Education Conference of 1947 and 1951, as well as the education policies of 1959, 1970, and 1972.

The British colonial system, which had influenced the Pakistani education system for many years, was based on a four-tier structure. Education policies from 1947 to 1978 centered on this structure. It consisted of primary education for grades one to five, secondary education for grades six to ten, college education for grades eleven to fourteen, and university education for fifteen years and above.

In 1979, the Education Policy of Pakistan introduced a three-tier structure. It included elementary education for grades one to eight, secondary education for grades nine to twelve, and higher education for thirteen years and onwards. This policy remained in place until the Education Policy of 2009, which further divided education into two sub-sectors. Bachelor degrees, spanning thirteen to sixteen years, would be offered in colleges, while postgraduate education, starting from seventeen years and above, would be the responsibility of universities.

“The quality of education depends upon country’s educational policy. Countries with a better educational policies and a continued funding can better attain the socio-economic development with an ease. Whereas, countries like Pakistan, despite its several educational policies, is yet to achieve the milestone of socio-economic development. The reasons for such failure may be regarded to partial or complete catastrophe in policy implementation. Moreover, factors like political and bureaucratic reluctance, weaker economy, inconsistency in policy implementation, clash of political ideologies, wars, toppled regimes and above all corruption have been among the major factors of failure” (Ahmad, 2021).

These policies emphasize the need for new reforms and transformations in the education system in order to produce specialized degrees. The goal of these degrees is to focus on faculty development and professional enhancement. These policies also suggest new imperatives that result in the re-organization and re-orientation of the Pakistani education system. Additionally, there is repeated emphasis on phasing out intermediate level education from colleges and shifting it to higher secondary schools to strengthen the BS programs in all colleges. The Education Policy proposes a paradigm shift in the structure and states:

Class XI and XII shall not be the part of the college level and shall be merged with the school level, forming part of existing secondary schools where needed and provision of necessary human and physical resources shall be ensured. This exercise shall be undertaken after a detailed study of the failures of similar previous efforts (National Education Policy, 2009, p. 29).

Several meetings of principals and other stakeholders have been convened since 2013 to shift intermediate level education from government colleges to Higher Secondary schools, as per policy provisions. Despite various efforts, intermediate level education in some areas is still under the control of government colleges. Most of the FA/F.Sc. classes have been transferred to the Elementary and Secondary Education sector. Therefore, it has become necessary for college teachers to enhance their professional skills and be prepared for their career by initiating a BS program. The purpose of higher education, which includes 317 Colleges and 42 universities, is to prepare individuals who are self-reliant and capable of working towards socio-economic goals. This includes a focus on research and contributing to economic growth through innovative ideas and critical thinking.

It is important to compare the responsibilities of colleges and universities. Their respective roles were established years ago. The roles of colleges are to provide equitable and affordable education to young people, and to deliver a well-educated, flexible, and employable workforce to universities. Colleges should offer learning opportunities in response to diverse demands and work cooperatively with stakeholders to ensure appropriate courses are available. They should make optimal use of physical infrastructure to meet increasing enrollment demands and share their expertise and facilities to support socio-economic regeneration and growth. The core responsibility of each higher learning institution is to deliver quality education and research. They should produce students with honors degrees who can then seek admission to M. Phil. and PhD. programs at universities. With the introduction of the BS program, universities will not have sufficient time to focus on their mandated research services (National Education Policy, 2009).

Similarly, universities are mandated to be engines of innovation and research, driving a knowledge-based economy through high-quality research, industry partnerships, and international collaborations. They cultivate academic excellence by specializing in specific areas, awarding PhDs of international merit, and implementing rigorous quality standards. These institutions also contribute to regional development by setting standards for affiliated colleges and fostering sustainable economic growth. Ultimately, these universities aim to be diverse, adaptable, and self-critical, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the region and the world (National Education Policy, 2009). It was envisioned, "All over Pakistan, there is a large network of degree colleges. Universities that already cater to the needs of Master's and Post Graduate Courses should exclusively concentrate on Master's, M.Phil., and Ph.D. studies" (National Education Policy, 1998). The functions of universities are given below as:

The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. The university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively...A university which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact: it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energizing as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes (Whitehead, 1928, p. 02).



## Method

### Research Design

For this study, the researchers used a comprehensive mixed-method approach (Sahin & Öztürk 2019) to combine both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This approach was chosen for triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019), and gaining a deeper understanding of the comparative analysis of the implementation of the BS program offered in colleges and universities. The qualitative approach provided in-depth insights into the participants' interests, experiences, and perceptions, while the quantitative technique measured the strengths and weaknesses of the BS program in colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### Data Collection and Participants

Quantitative data was collected through the questionnaire, while qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. A well-designed questionnaire administered to 127 faculty members randomly selected from 65 colleges provided the foundation for quantitative analysis. Additionally, three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 16 participants: the BS Controller of Examination, Head of the Department, and BS Coordinator; faculty members teaching at the BS level; and a representative from the Higher Education Department and universities. Interviews were also conducted with students and faculty from six universities to gather in-depth perspectives. Demographic information about the faculty (designation, qualifications, and research skills) was collected through the questionnaire.

**Table 3**

*Demographic Information Collected from Colleges through Questionnaire*

S. No.	Designation of Respondents	No. of Respondents
01.	Lecturers	74
02.	Assistant Professors	27
03.	Associate Professors	21
04.	Professors	05
05.	Post Doc Faculty	02
06.	PhD Respondents	18
07.	MPhil Respondents	40
08.	Masters Respondents	67
09.	No. of publications of BS students & faculty in HEC recognized journals	252
10.	No. of M. Phil faculty in the targeted 65 colleges among 127 faculty	585
11.	No. of PhDs in targeted population	256

Source: Collected from the questionnaire distributed among college faculty in October 2021.

Respondents represented diverse institutions such as the University of Peshawar, Islamia College University, and a total of 09 government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring a multifaceted perspective. To delve deeper, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and faculty at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of Chitral, University of Haripur, University of Peshawar, and University of Abbottabad, exploring the merits, demerits, fee structure, and affiliation issues surrounding the BS program. Additional insights were gleaned from a December 2021 seminar led by the Higher Education Secretary, which involved representatives from universities, colleges and the Higher Education Department. Notably, the perspectives of the Director of Higher Education Academy of Research and Training and the Ex-Director of HED further enriched the study's understanding of policy implementation.

### Sampling

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique (Taherdoost, 2016), was used due to its accessibility, with participants selected from the ongoing Mandatory Training Program for government college faculty organized by Higher Education Academy of Research and Training Peshawar.

### Data Analysis

In order to increase confidence in the findings of the study, qualitative as well as quantitative methods for data collection and analysis were used for triangulation (Nobel & Heale, 2019). Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis following Miles & Huberman's (2019) coding method. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare the BS program implementation in colleges and universities.

### Ethical Considerations

All interviews and Focus Group Discussions were recorded, transcribed, and translated with informed consent and participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

## Results

From the interviews and focus group discussions, a total of 11 codes were identified, highlighting relevant issues. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Saldana (2015) and Wicks (2017) were consulted for the identification of codes, which were then classified into organizing codes.

**Table 4**

***Organizing Codes and Issues Identified***

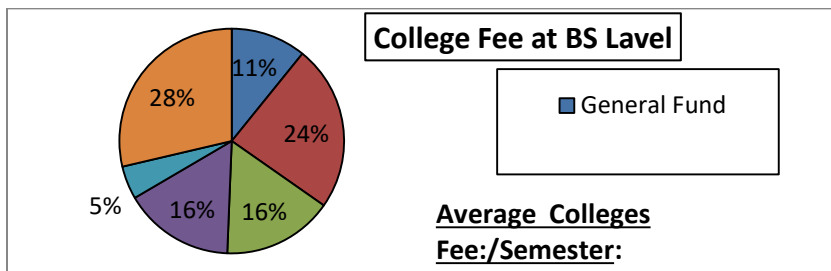
S. No	Organizing Codes	Issues Identified
01.	Semester System	Lack of well-equipped labs and libraries, leading to insufficient facilities for BS students.
02.	Annual System	The current system does not meet global standards and needs to be restructured.
03.	Issues and Challenges	Availability of qualified faculty for BS programs.
04.	Academic Autonomy	Challenges related to migration, course design, rules, fee structure, and assessment techniques.
05.	Education system	Lack of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.
06.	Evaluation and assessment	Inconsistent rules across affiliating universities.
07.	Facilities and Infrastructure	Insufficient resources for the implementation of BS programs.
08.	Lab work	Academic working environment concerns
09.	Resources Sharing	Obstacles to implementing BS in colleges and universities.
10.	Fee & rules	High fees, lack of uniformity in rules among universities, and varying admission criteria in colleges and universities.
11.	Relationship of colleges and universities	Unclear distribution of responsibilities.

On the basis of the codes, few themes have been drawn.

**Table 5**  
***Organizing and Global Themes***

S. No	Organizing Themes	Global Themes
01.	The semester system is the best system as it provides an internationally recognized BS degree, enables students to compete with the world, is research-oriented, and requires meager financial resources in colleges	Access to higher education
02.	Provision of opportunities for private candidates	Outdated System
03.	The main hurdles we face in strengthening BS in colleges are the unavailability of specific books, examination issues, violation of semester rules, high drop-out ratio, delays in results' announcement, issues with position holders, communication gap between stakeholders, and issues with the contents provided by affiliating universities.	Solution and prospects
04.	Academic autonomy is needed to empower the colleges, enabling them to formulate their own curricula, assess students' performance, and award degrees. According to NEPs, BS is the domain of colleges.	Degree Awarding Status.
05.	The whole education system needs to undergo a paradigm shift. The instrument of affiliation needs to be changed as it adversely affects students in the end.	Partial Autonomy
06.	The spirit of the semester system needs to be revised.	100% Evaluation
07.	College teachers need training and seminars on the BS system, proper research orientation, a rationalization policy in transfers, as well as well-equipped resources, labs, library, and trained faculty.	Improvement in BS System
08.	Unfortunately, our colleges are not equipped with good laboratories. This is why students prefer to go to universities for research, where well-equipped laboratories for experimental work are established.	Universities: A hub of research and innovation
09.	The merger of resources, labs, experts, libraries, teachers, students, infrastructure, and departments is the only solution to the challenges faced by universities and colleges.	Merger of Resources

In the subsequent phase, a comparison was conducted on the fee structures of various universities and colleges. The researcher visited the admission sections and websites of different institutions in order to gather information for the fee comparison. It was observed that universities charge significantly higher fees for the same degree compared to colleges, which offer the same program at a more affordable cost. There has been an increase in BS student enrollment at Government Colleges due to the quality education and low tuition fees. Families are now considering Government Colleges a sound financial choice (Canche, 2014), especially for lower and middle-class students seeking cost-effective alternatives for higher education. The comparative analysis of both fee structures is presented in the figures and tables.



**Figure – 1**

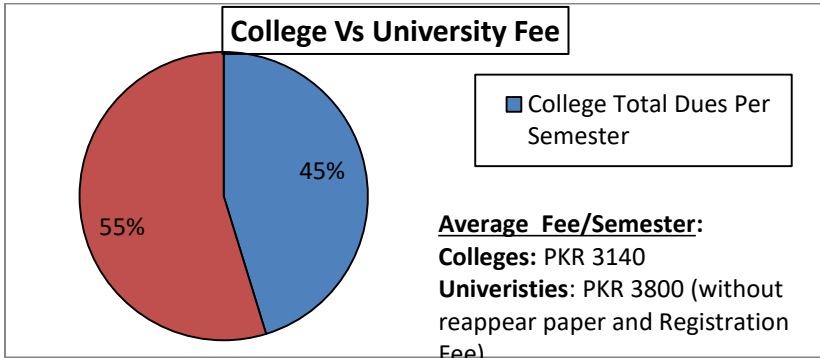


Figure 02

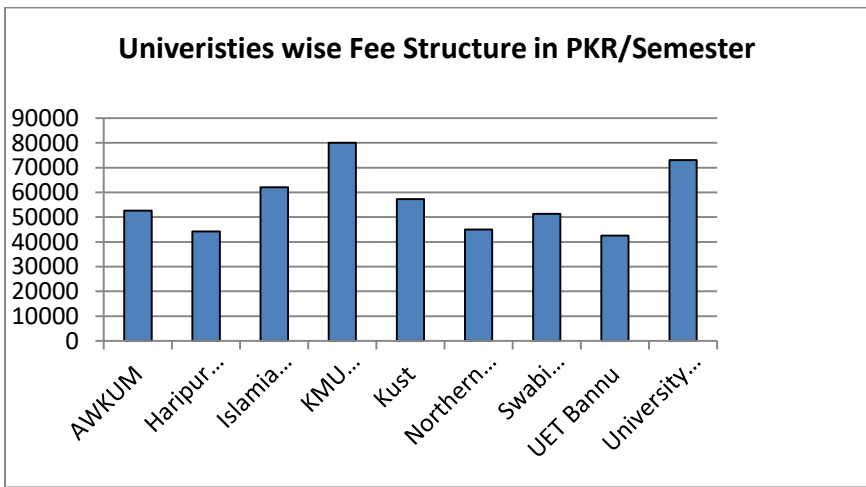


Figure 03

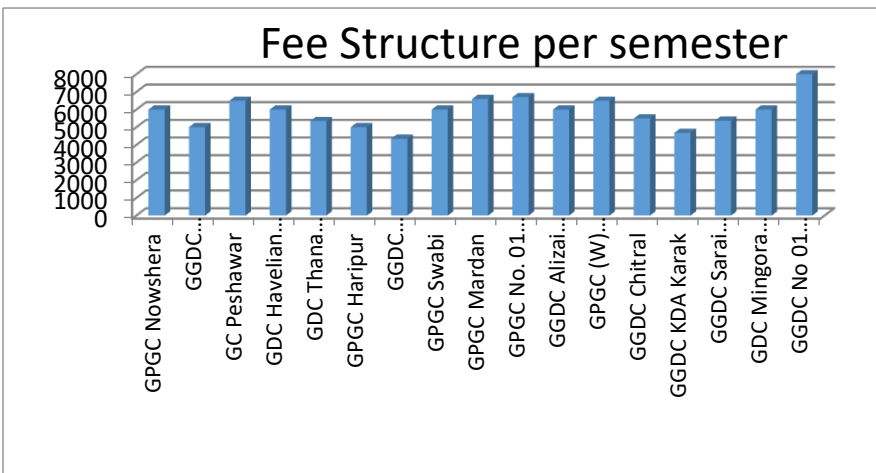


Figure 04

Another question was asked regarding the necessity of special courses, capacity building workshops, and training for college faculty to enhance their teaching and research skills. A total of 110 participants responded positively, whereas only 17 participants responded negatively. Another question, inquiring whether the BS program is a better alternative to the traditional system of annual exams, received 105 positive responses and 22 negative responses.

The question of whether universities or public sector colleges provide superior undergraduate (BS) education was answered by 82 faculty members in favor of colleges and 29 in favor of universities. 16 participants stated that both colleges and universities are equally effective in producing undergraduate graduates. The faculty were also asked about their preferred method of faculty selection, whether it is the university's selection board or the KPPSC that is more suitable for selecting employees for colleges. A total of 116 responses favored the KPPSC, while 11 participants favored the university selection board.

The escalating fees in universities have resulted in diminishing effects, leading to decreased enrollment and a decline in accessible education at colleges. Merit-based admissions in BS colleges are confined to forty seats, while universities have unlimited seats. The following graph illustrates the opening and closing merit of Govt. Postgraduate College Nowshera and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

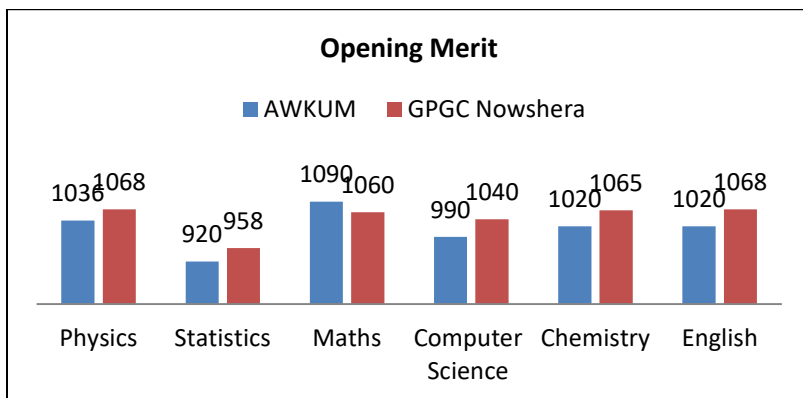


Figure 05

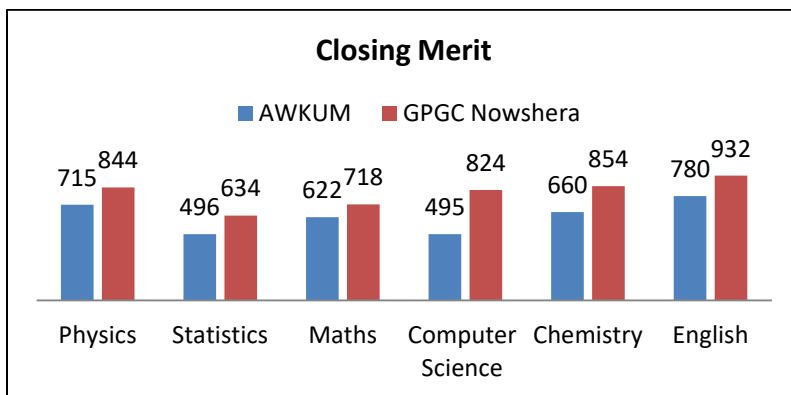


Figure 06

The subsequent question pertains to the necessity of granting degree awarding status to colleges, with the provision that administrative and financial autonomy remains under the purview of the provincial government. Out of the 127 respondents, fifty two respondents expressed a significant need for academic autonomy, while thirty-eight respondents expressed opposition to it, and another thirty-seven respondents remained uncertain.

One participant emphasized the need for the Higher Education Department to address the staff shortage in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the BS program. Another interviewee believed that academic autonomy was crucial to empower colleges, allowing them to develop their own curricula, assess student performance, and grant degrees. Furthermore, a participant argued that the semester system should be reinstated, emphasizing the importance of formulating uniform policies for all colleges and universities. They also suggested revisiting the Universities Act of 2012.

Another participant highlighted the importance of uniformity in courses and syllabi across colleges and universities, advocating for consistent rules throughout the system. Similarly, another respondent stressed the need for equal representation of college faculty in the Board of Studies, Board of Faculty, and Academic Councils. Likewise, one participant noted that universities, being autonomous institutions, generate their own funds and should receive full financial support from the government, comparable to the financial facilitation provided to colleges. The next participant suggested that merging resources, labs, experts, libraries, teachers, students, infrastructure, and departments may be the only solution to the challenges faced by universities and colleges.

### **Discussion**

The BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is facing difficulties due to a lack of adequate laboratories and libraries, which hampers the students' practical learning experience. The current annual system is inconsistent and does not meet global standards; therefore, requiring restructuring. Moreover, the scarcity of qualified faculty members poses a significant obstacle. The unclear distribution of responsibilities between colleges and universities leads to confusion and hinders decision-making processes.

Additionally, the lack of collaboration among stakeholders contributes to inefficiencies. The inconsistent rules across affiliating universities further add to the problem. High fees and varying admission criteria result in disparities and restrict access for deserving students. In order to overcome these challenges, it is crucial to increase funding for infrastructure development and faculty enhancement. Providing clear guidelines for academic autonomy can empower colleges. Encouraging open communication among stakeholders, streamlining fee structures, and revising admission criteria can foster a more inclusive and effective program. Only by addressing these obstacles can the BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa truly empower its students.

### **Comparative Analysis of Bachelor of Studies in Colleges and Universities**

While the BS program has revolutionized higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, students are faced with a critical decision: college or university? To make a good choice, it is crucial to understand the stark differences between these two paths.

Cost plays a major role in this decision. The BS programs in colleges have significantly lower fees, averaging around Rs. 5800/- compared to Rs. 35695/- for universities. This opens up opportunities for wider public access, especially for meritorious students from diverse

backgrounds. Additionally, colleges are located within communities, eliminating the barriers of travel and remoteness often associated with universities located in bustling urban centers.

However, when it comes to academic control and freedom, universities have the upper hand. They enjoy autonomy in curriculum development, not constrained by external bodies such as Higher Education Commission. This allows for greater flexibility and innovation in course offerings. In comparison, colleges have limited influence over curriculum, operating within the frameworks set by universities.

The focus of faculty roles also differs significantly. Colleges prioritize teaching, providing students with close support and guidance. While research activities exist, college faculty career progression is not heavily tied to publications and grants. On the other hand, universities are research-driven powerhouses. Faculty are incentivized to produce research outputs, which influences their career advancement. Sometimes, this focus on research can overshadow teaching, resulting in less individual attention for students.

Ultimately, the decision between college and university BS programs depends on individual preferences and circumstances. Students who prioritize cost and a close-knit community may find colleges to be the ideal choice. On the other hand, students with research ambitions and financial means may find universities more fulfilling. By acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of both systems, students can navigate the BS landscape with confidence and select the path that aligns best with their academic goals and personal aspirations.

### **The Transition of Intermediate Classes to Elementary & Secondary Schools**

The success of the BS program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa raises an important question: should intermediate classes move to higher secondary schools? This potential change requires a detailed analysis to ensure it aligns with the strengths of the BS program.

Supporters envision a smooth educational journey, with reduced dropout rates, better allocation of resources such as infrastructure, funding, and technology, and access to specialized learning pathways offered by higher secondary schools. These goals perfectly match the BS program's focus on accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and skill development. Opponents, however, emphasize potential disruptions, including the anxiety caused by relocation, dilution of college identity, and unequal availability of resources and qualified faculty across schools. These concerns need to be addressed in order to prioritize seamless transitions, community bonds, and equitable access to quality education – all key strengths of the BS program. Ultimately, the decision hinges on:

- i. Thorough analysis: Weighing the benefits of streamlining against the challenges posed by disruptions.
- ii. Engagement with stakeholders: Minimizing anxieties and ensuring smooth transitions.
- iii. Commitment to equity: Guaranteeing equal access to resources and quality education for all students.
- iv. Only through rigorous analysis and strategic implementation can Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leverage the potential of this change, building upon the success of the BS program and creating a stronger, more cohesive, and equitable education system for all.

### **Promoting a Research Culture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Universities**

Universities are mandated to promote research and innovation as they are considered centers of innovation and research. According to the National Education Policy (2009), their responsibilities include producing high-quality research and creating stronger industry-university linkages and partnerships to facilitate joint ventures. They need to work towards developing a knowledge-based economy and implementing measures for accreditation, quality assurance, and peer evaluation of academic programs that meet international standards. Universities should also aim to become diverse, flexible, self-analyzing, and adaptable enterprises. They must contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region and establish standards for affiliated colleges (National Education Policy, 2009).

Further, they have to work to receive research grants for academic projects, as "Universities and research institutes shall place greater emphasis on mobilizing research to promote innovation in the economy" (National Education Policy 2009, p. 12). It is imperative for them to award PhD degrees to individuals who have made "original contributions to the world body of knowledge as certified by international experts" (p. 12). They encourage innovation in the economy through both internal and external funding support. They also collaborate with the world community by developing split-degree programs in partnership with reputable foreign universities" (p. 52). Further it is stated, "To promote quality in teaching, universities should specialize in particular areas instead of attempting to cover the whole range of programs" (National Education Policy, 2009, p. 52).

Instead of developing excellence in specialized fields of study, universities have wasted their efforts and resources by offering admissions in BS programs in various disciplines. The emerging global trends also demand a restructuring of higher education through qualitative and quantitative reforms. The Higher Education Commission's 2025 new strategic vision provides a three-tier model of tertiary education. In tier-I, there should be research-based universities whose sole focus is on producing researchers and scientists. In tier-II, the role of the universities is to offer MA, M.Phil. and PhD programs. In tier-III, there are affiliated colleges that are equal to universities in terms of offering research-based degrees like the BS system.

### **Enhancing Academic Autonomy in BS Colleges**

While the successful implementation of the BS program marks a significant step forward, significant challenges remain for government colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. One critical issue lies in the duality of control they face due to their affiliation with public universities. This creates a complex tug of war between administrative oversight by the provincial government and academic control by the affiliating university. Unlike universities, the colleges do not have any autonomy. According to the World Bank Report (2019), "Affiliating colleges are subject to dual management control: for administrative and financial matters, they are under the control of their respective provincial higher education departments, but for academic matters they are under the authority of their affiliating universities, which award tertiary level degrees."

The National Education Policy (2009) also highlights the same issue, stating: "On the governance side, the academic and administrative management of colleges remains an unresolved issue since the degrees are awarded by the universities while the administrative control of colleges themselves lies with the provincial governments" (p. 47). Autonomy is crucial to address the following issues faced by colleges with affiliating universities:



- i. Affiliation issues of colleges with affiliating universities
- ii. Lack of proper representation of colleges in course designing, meetings of Board of Studies, Board of Faculty, and Academic Council
- iii. Violation of the spirit of the semester system
- iv. Lack of provision for external assessment in the semester system, as it is run with the features of the annual system
- v. One-sided assessment and evaluation techniques, including paper setting and checking, grading system, and assessment methods
- vi. Financial burden on low-income students, including exam fees, affiliation and renewal fees, rechecking fees, inspection visits fees, degree fees, and migration fees
- vii. Insufficient physical infrastructure and human resources in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa colleges.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The implementation of the BS program in government colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has undoubtedly reshaped the higher education landscape, offering a four-year alternative to the conventional system. This study has delved into the rationale behind this transformative initiative, explored its current challenges, and envisioned its future prospects.

Firstly, this research sheds light on the "why" and "how" of the BS program's initiation. Driven by a desire to elevate educational quality, align with international standards, and provide affordable access to students, the program emerged as a strategic response to evolving needs. It offers a four-year alternative to the conventional system, aligning with national education policies and providing a smooth transition from intermediate studies. This shift away from the traditional MA/MSc and BA/BSc programs represents a significant step towards a 16-year education system.

Next, the researchers delve into the critical issue of the academic autonomy, deemed essential for the sustainability of government colleges. Our findings highlight that granting independent control to colleges over curriculum development, and student assessment and evaluation would empower them to tailor programs to local needs, enhance teaching and learning experiences, and unlock their full potential for growth and research. This, in turn, addresses the issue of unequal affiliation arrangements currently faced by colleges, emphasizing the need for standardized processes and uniform standards across campuses to create a more equitable and efficient system.

The study further underscores the dual significance of the BS program for both colleges and public sector universities. For colleges, it signifies an opportunity for growth, increased research potential, and enhanced community engagement. For universities, it offers a platform for collaboration, strengthened research culture, and contributions to knowledge production. Recognizing these intertwined benefits emphasizes the importance of a successful BS program for the overall progress of higher education in the province.

However, this research also identifies obstacles that hinder the program's progress. These include limited academic autonomy, disparities in affiliation arrangements, inconsistencies in resource allocation and assessment practices, and a lack of research incentives in colleges. To address these, the study recommends focused policy interventions. Granting partial academic autonomy, streamlining affiliation processes, promoting a uniform resource allocation mechanism, and standardizing assessment practices are crucial steps towards a more robust system.

Additionally, establishing dedicated research wings like HEART's Academic Audit Unit within colleges will foster a culture of research and scholarly pursuits.

Finally, the study paves the way for a fortified future for the BS program. Recommendations include policy interventions focused on strengthening college infrastructure and faculty development, promoting a research culture through financial incentives and dedicated programs, and allocating resources based on needs and performance. By effectively implementing these measures, the full potential of the BS program can be unlocked, leading to a vibrant and equitable higher education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where quality education is accessible to all.

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## **Social Neuroscience Approach of Persuasion in Visual Communication(s): A Qualitative Content Analysis of Female Representations in Pakistani Advertisements**

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The present study discusses the social persuasion advertisers use to implicitly communicate society's sociocultural norms through visual communication in advertisements, specifically in Pakistan. For instance, the research explores how advertisers, as cultural brokers, represent women by challenging established sociocultural norms by utilising persuasive strategies through visual communication in Pakistani ads. The research comes under the qualitative content analysis paradigm; the data were collected, identified, interpreted, and analysed, focusing on the cultural values/norms represented through women's dressing and sexually devised postures in Pakistani society. Moreover, the research employed the constant comparison method for the data analysis. Findings indicate that Pakistani advertisers represent women mainly in a stereotypical manner. However, when they deviate from representing her in a non-stereotypical way, they go far beyond the set norms to persuade them quickly. For instance, they found representing women as a posture of sexual appeal to persuade ordinary people's minds by employing social neuro-persuasion challenging the Pakistani established sociocultural beliefs, norms, or values. These advertisers seem to deviate from traditional ideologies because they minutely know the sensual, desirous nature of most Pakistani men. Henceforth, they represent women as an alluring tool of persuasion.

**Keywords:** social neuro-persuasive communication, visual communication, cultural representation of women, media and advertisement in Pakistan, Pakistani cultural norms, Turkish culture

The process of advertising for marketing is frequently conceptualised as a competition for the attention of consumers. In today's competitive and fast-paced business environment, the primary goal of advertising a product is to attract customers; however, the question remains to what extent one is willing to stoop to achieve this fleeting attraction. Would it be morally acceptable to degrade women by portraying them in an advertisement as sexual objects to attract additional attention to the product being sold? That is a serious concern. The use of overt sexual appeal has significantly increased in advertising, even though it is not universally accepted and is looked down upon by many people. It is believed that the nurturing mother and the alluring seductress are two common stereotypes used in advertisements (henceforth ads) that use women's manifestation (Holtzhausen, 2010).

The study investigates the neuro-persuasive techniques advertisers use in Pakistani ads' visual communication(s) to project female representation that influences sociocultural or religious values (Kilbourne, 2012). Ideologically, Pakistan is considered an Islamic (majority uni-religious) state (Gabriel, 2021), and primarily, its national, cultural, and social values revolve around traditional/conventional Islamic guidance. For instance, although various social groups exist in Pakistan, Muslims are the majority (Shah and Amjad, 2011 for details). The Muslim majority can be divided into sub-groups possessing distinctive social and religious values. For example, the rightist Muslim group (a realist) keeps traditional/conventional Islamic status (Naz et al., 2013). The middle class, which follows conventional Islamic values, plays a mediator role in every sphere of life (Maqsood, 2017), while the lower class, which is Muslim-majority, follows Islamic values. In contrast, the liberal-elite<sup>1</sup> class concerns do not follow traditional/conventional Islamic values (Cheema, 2018).

Moreover, there are also non-Muslim minorities, but they also have a flexible ideology and practice while reflecting national (conventional) Islamic culture (Akhter, 2020). Moreover, in the context of communication(s), the media makes its way to get benefits from the ambiguity that exists in the minds of people of different classes (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Daalmans et al., 2017; Ullah & Jan, 2021). The media also intends to represent liberality and, therefore, re/constructs (visual) representations of women differently from society's expectations concerning the socio-religious aspect. All this diversity is due to the upcoming changes in the conventional era regarding modernity.

Additionally, the ads incorporate visual stimuli containing social neuro-persuasive communication, making the women (in ads) controversial for orthodox Muslims, middle class, lower class, and non-Muslim minorities. In Pakistan, rightist Islamic religious values and norms contribute significantly to every sphere of life, influencing electronic and print media persuasively. Therefore, the advertisers (the writers or visual directors) would mostly need to collocate their *Personal (stimulus)*, making them tangible and contrastable. It aligns with Pakistani culture in advertising communication.

During the last two decades, the Pakistani entertainment media industry utilised a significant foreign component, i.e., content, workforce, technology, and locations (see Ahmed, 2015 for more details), to meet the global concept of modernisation. Initially, Indian content (drama) penetrated Pakistani media, but after the ban on Indian content on Pakistani television (see Baloch, 2018; Malik, 2019 for more details), Turkish drama came to fill the gap progressively after 2012, fulfilling the audience's requirement. The Turkish drama industry gradually gained a stronghold in Pakistani media in 2019-2021 due to the remarkable success of *Dirilis Ertugrul*<sup>2</sup>. Due to the captivating content, the plot construction of the story of the previously mentioned Turkish drama attracted the audience by introducing the similarities in the religious background of both countries. It becomes evident why the Turkish drama industry made its strong entry into the Pakistani media industry possible.

Consequently, Pakistani advertisers started casting the actors from the prior-mentioned series in Pakistani advertisements (see Ghafoor, 2020 for more details). Resultantly, there revealed a conflict when the Pakistani advertisers acted as cultural brokers (Malefy & Moeran, 2020) and tried to bring global modernity into their local culture through ads. For instance, Turkish actress

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<sup>2</sup> *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (transl. Resurrection: Ertuğrul), is a Turkish historical fiction and adventure television series. The show is set in the 13th century and centers around the life of Ertuğrul, the father of Osman I (the founder of the Ottoman Empire).

Esra Bilgic, who played the role of Halime Sultan (the female protagonist) in the series, appeared in various Pakistani television ads. On the one hand, she gained popularity amongst the Pakistani audience due to her stereotypical/traditional visual appearance representing the Seljuk warrior princess –the quintessential ‘Islamic’ heroine (Rehman, 2020). On the other hand, her (visual) representation in the ad(s) (see Figure 1 in the Analysis section) seemed to mismatch the image that was built in the minds of the Pakistani audience (see Rehman, 2020 for more details). For instance, her visual representation in the Ertugrul series – with traditional headgear and headdress was traditional. Nevertheless, the ad(s) seemed the opposite (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 in the findings section).

Whereas Turkey’s present-day dressing culture concerns it, it appears distinctive from Pakistan, especially in the media. Moreover, it can be observed in urban and non-urban cultures. In urban culture, most women follow modernity by wearing shorts, short trousers, tight jeans, heavy make-up, and revealing dresses (Özcan and Turunç, 2011) that also boldly reveal women’s cleavage in the urban areas. Still, in non-urban areas, women wear their traditional dresses (Koç & Koca, 2011). While in Pakistan, in urban areas, tight jeans with a long shirt would be acceptable to some extent. Still, in urban/rural regions, body-revealing dresses and women’s cleavage-showing dresses would be considered to negate cultural and religious contrastable, tangible or visual stimuli definitions – hence, may not be acceptable in the national rightist cultural values and norms. It reasons that nationwide, *stimulable* societal, cultural, or religious restrictions would never permit a non-stereotypical representation of women in media, specifically in visual communication(s). Hence, in any occupational persuasive (Petty & Cacioppo et al., 2018) influence (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019), the persuader would need to know involvement feelings and beliefs (Harkins et al., 2017) and the favourable/adverse effects of the persuasion attitudes, cognitions, or behaviours (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010; Harkins et al., 2017) of the audience, i.e., consumers in the present case.

At the same time, the representation of the male gender focuses on their authoritative nature by playing the dominant roles, i.e., working in offices and not being confined to beauty but being presented through power (Mirza, 2016). Hence, it can be said that women are historically represented as typical housewives, and this is the only way to restrict them in their roles through similar ads (Jamil, 2018). Similarly, advertisements play a specific and vital role in persuasion in any field, especially in social and cultural life.

### **Objectives**

Having the evidence of leading non-stereotypical and stereotypical advertisements in Pakistan, it becomes necessary to how the visual representation of female models is used to conceptualise how advertisements are made in the present. However, more extensive studies that use the persuasive theoretical lens must be conducted to explore how visual persuasion is imposed through female models in advertisements. Therefore, this study aims to achieve the following:

- To examine the (visual) representation of female models in Pakistani ads by advertisers against sociocultural norms.
- To investigate the ideologies that advertisers promote through non-stereotypical elements by utilising persuasive strategies involving foreign female models
- To understand the significant role of persuasive strategies in changing the established ideologies of society by employing the conceptual model of social neuro-persuasion.

### **Significance**

The present research is significant on a social and cultural level. It lays out the conceptual enlightened national values and norms about women’s visual representation in media, specifically ads. It is an explorative topic for academicians and practitioners (Furnham & Paltzer, 2009).

Politically, the description of women's (visual) image in television ads creates a strong perception of women's duties. For instance, in the case of traditional Islamic values, women are assigned the household and some other specific responsibilities related to their marital life (Ullah & Khan, 2014). However, this research will evaluate the conventional and non-conventional ads on Pakistani television channels. Advertisers generally persuade the audience using visual, semiotic, and textual means to convey their messages (Kilbourne, 2012), contributing to inequality and patriarchy in Pakistan. This study will also examine how the production and construction of the doctrine of 'perfect' and 'ideal' social roles occur through advertisements (Moorthi et al., 2014). This phenomenon of the representation of women incorporating social neuro-persuasion leads this research to a new qualitative conceptual approach to analysing the data. To the best of our knowledge, the framework of social neuro-persuasion has never been employed in television advertisements for sociocultural and visual ideological representation, specifically on Pakistani television and print media ads. The objectives/significance stated above would lead to seeking answers to the following questions.

- How do the advertisers try to represent women against/favour the established sociocultural representation?
- What kind of ideology do advertisers promote by employing persuasive strategies of featuring foreign female models in Pakistani ads?
- What significant role do persuasive strategies play in changing the established ideologies of society?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present research employed conceptual, social, and neuro-persuasive elements (Morin & Renvoise, 2018) to manifest permanent effects on the spectators' minds. For instance, Morin and Renvoise (2018) suggested that six aspects of stimuli and responses should be studied in any persuasive communication between a sender and a receiver and vice versa. The present research aims to employ these stimulating elements in the sociocultural scenario. The advertisement's aspects evoke the spectators' (favourable or unfavourable) thoughts connected directly with advertisers (Hoeken et al., 2020). Six stimuli persuasive strategies highlight the intentions of the advertisers who prepare ads to get specific advantages (Kilbourne, 2012). Moreover, stimuli help analyse the aspects represented in Pakistani ads in Pakistani social and cultural background to highlight the advertisers' agendas. The stimuli model (a: Personal, b: Contrastable, c: Tangible, d: Memorable, e: Visual, f: Emotional) discussed and explained below has been adapted and modified from the work of Morin and Renvoise (2018) as follows:

A) Personal stimulus helps the communicator and the audience understand mutual communicative pre-established shared personal ideologies. To survive their ideologies, the communicator uses selective language comprising specific communication patterns for effective persuasion while leading society (Lorusso, 2017; Feinberg & Willer, 2019). Their primary purpose is to make the audience realise they are following the right path, which would benefit them (Narvaez, 2007). Although conflicts of interest may arise, the audience feels positive change and societal protection (Panksepp, 2004; Morin & Renvoise, 2018).

B) The Contrastable element refers to the two extremes: pain and pleasure, black and white, good and evil, and quality differences (stereotypical vs non-stereotypical in the present case). In this strategy, comparing specific and prominent features seems beneficial for the orator and the viewer. If an orator has the capacity and efficiency to highlight the notable, comparative, and convincing aspects of his message, he will be more successful in his mission (Beard, 2013). While communicating their message (through ads) or contrasting their performance with others, they bring the contrastive objects (Lin & Tsai, 2006; El-Dali, 2019) or ideology and solve the problem.

C) The Tangible element is about the social validation, credibility of a point, and its existing nature, and the advertisers often offer reliable anti or non-anti directions to an advertisement in social, cultural, or religious contexts (Malefyt & Moeran, 2020), hence, to make information processing easy (Laham et al., 2012; Miele et al., 2011).

D) The visual element(stimulus) plays an initial, vital, and influential role in any visual advertisement, especially with the involvement of a woman as a model. In this case, the domination of visual stimulus increases over any other stimuli processing (Morin & Renvoisé, 2018); hence, it controls the receiver's mind with the help of auditory stimuli *enhancing visual processes* (Li et al., 2017). Therefore, the advertiser tries to visualise a situation reflecting a picturesque aspect. It also persuades the audience more effectively as they can vividly envision a situation or event. E) memorability is a stimulus-driven effect (Goetschalckx et al., 2018); the memorable element comprises the ad's distinctive nature in which specific features of the product are described to make it unique and long-lasting (Mohsenzadeh et al., 2019). F) The mentioned stimuli ultimately activate the emotional stimulus of the overall situations (Yuan et al., 2019), which is closely relevant to raw human emotions, passions, and emotional triggers (see Morin and Renvoise, 2018, p. 77-110 for details). Hence, social neuro-persuasion directly derives the elements from their connection to the human brain.

Previous research has employed several persuasive strategies in recent studies analysing political speeches in the socio-political scenario. Nonetheless, the present research has adapted and modified the previously used frameworks of persuasion (see Iqbal et al., 2020; Sibtain et al., 2020 for details), merging with the current framework of Morin and Renvoise (2018), naming it neuro-persuasion in exploring the persuasive strategies used in advertising media for the attraction of the common public and consumer. However, the previous research generally employed traditional persuasion using traditional rhetorical devices – Ethos, Logos, and Pathos that typically dealt with the aspects of the language of the actor (Higgin & Walker, 2012; Ting, 2018; Sibtain et al., 2020) to attract/tempt the audience. However, these strategies could change the listeners' minds to get social and political advantages. From this perspective, this tactic could not convince the audience fully due to the quick process of raising emotions.

### **Literature Review**

Regarding the portrayal of women's roles, her depiction in ads depends on stereotypical thoughts delineating women's primary position in society (Furnham & Paltzer, 2009; Frith & Mueller, 2003; Hussain et al., 2014). Whereas women in Pakistani ads are concerned, they are restricted to stereotypical activities like being taken as an object of attraction because of their physical (visual) appearance. Moreover, their depiction can be observed in household work, supporting men, or depending upon men (Kabi, 2015; Ali & Shahwar, 2011). Whenever an ad about a woman is concerned, she mainly appears in stereotypical ads such as cooking oil, washing powder or preparing a meal for her family (Azin & Tabrizi, 2015). The portrayal of both gender in advertisements gives rise primarily to "gender stereotypes attitudes" (Craig, 2018) because it allows the male members of society to interpret an idea of how women could or could not be represented in the ads as they are here to satisfy men's ordinary life's objectives (Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018). Instead of helping women fight against gender discrimination, the media intends to show women remorselessly in a biased sense (Afshan, 2014).

The advertisements try to attract consumers' minds by showing the products' advantages in an exclusive style and expressing their quality preference to get the spectators' attention. The advertisers' primary purpose is to get a proper return on their capital to invest in their product, influencing the minds (Kilbourne, 2012). Nevertheless, it is also a fact that not all advertisements can attract or persuade customers because they may feel irritated due to their needs and interests,



i.e., what they need and what they do not. Therefore, most people do not respond to the advertisers' messages and avoid the circumstances surrounding them.

Furthermore, while advertisers aim to captivate audiences by showcasing product advantages in unique ways, psychologically persuasive strategies can sometimes alienate consumers (Kilbourne, 2012; Verlegh et al., 2015). Notably, the failure to consider the diverse roles of women, including modern working women, in advertisements might lead to an oversight of a significant consumer segment's interests and preferences. Incorporating a broader representation of women's roles in advertising could enhance the effectiveness of advertising strategies, resonating with a more diverse buying audience (Verlegh et al., 2015). In the past few years, many psychologically active and passive ways of communication have been introduced by observing the customers' moods and responses (Verlegh et al., 2015). These psychological ways significantly affect ordinary customers' interests, and thence, they sometimes avoid ads. Hence, business people seem successful through such psychologically persuasive strategies (Verlegh et al., 2015).

### **Methodological Approaches Used in Literature**

The scholarly discourse on gender stereotypes in advertising spans various studies, each illuminating the evolving portrayal of women while concurrently perpetuating stereotypical representations. Zotos and Tsihla (2014) meticulously outline the historical evolution of female stereotypes in print advertisements, emphasising the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of these stereotypes within a sociocultural framework. Plakoyiannaki and Zotos (2009) contribute by focusing on the frequency of female role portrayals in U.K. magazines, referencing the importance of comparative analyses across diverse methodologies to contextualise findings within a global theoretical framework. Veloso et al. (2021) delve into the historical contexts of Brazilian print advertising, advocating for comparative analyses of methodologies and theoretical perspectives, particularly referencing institutional theory and societal developments, to elucidate the impact on gendered ads. They stress the need to evaluate how differing theoretical frameworks affect interpretations across cultural contexts. Heathy (2020) critically examines contemporary trends in women's media representation, urging comparative analyses of critical discourse methodologies employed globally, referencing social semiotics and critical discourse analysis, to discern nuanced shifts in gender portrayals. Alkan (2016) and Luo (2022) explore women's cultural representation in advertising, advocating for cross-cultural comparative analyses to delineate varying theoretical perspectives such as semiotic analysis and critical discourse analysis utilised in distinct cultural settings. While these studies offer profound insights into gender stereotypes in advertising, a notable gap in the discussion section regarding comparative analyses of methodologies and the concurrent theoretical frameworks utilised, essential for a more comprehensive understanding across varied cultural and theoretical landscapes, remains. Also, a gap focuses on women's representation in advertisements in Pakistani culture. Accordingly, the following methodology was developed for the study.

### **Methods**

The present methodology is grounded on Aslam et al.'s (2023) and Kibiswa (2019) conceptual methods. As qualitative social sciences researchers, it was decided to utilise this conceptual model of persuasion in the media advertising field. The idea of employing this model in advertisements came to hand while watching an ad comprising the protagonist (Halima Sultan) of the famous (in Pakistan) 'Ertugrul' series on television. Consequently, it was observed how advertisers persuade their audience by utilising specific persuasive tools, including or hiring current celebrities, and how they induce the visual representations that the stars depict through the mainstream media. Surprisingly, it was observed that the representations of celebrities, specifically females, varied in dramatic and advertisement media.

The directed qualitative content analysis (DQCA) method, which has been used under the qualitative research paradigm, has been modified for the current context by Assarroudi et al., 2018. For instance, the images were the unit of analysis in the present case (Graneheim et al., 2017). Categories emerged based on prior research and theory (Mayring, 2000; 2014) to obtain the data's relevant meaning (Elo et al., 2014), specifically in advertisements (Chand & Chaudhary, 2012). Such categories are non-stereotypical representations of women and stereotypical representations of women. To increase inter-coder reliability (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) for the current study, which involved multiple researchers, each researcher interdependently encoded the data and discussed the challenges of decreasing the disparities (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Following the talks among the authors, categories were allocated, and anchoring samples were chosen from the meaning units. The final data analysis phase involved extracting meaning units from the examined content centred on the study's objectives and categorisation matrix (Mayring, 2014).

### **Directed Qualitative Content Analysis (DQCA)**

This paper utilised qualitative content analysis (DQCA) to analyse the image data using a systematic coding sheet to collect data by seeing and decoding it (Rasool et al., 2022; Assarraudi et al., 2018). It examined data primarily from the viewpoint of communication, which may be regarded as a subset of data (Kibiswa, 2019; Mayring, 2000). Enhancing, testing and utilising Qualitative Content Analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) further created categories and patterns for data processing (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In the present case, the visual communication by the advertisers, specifically in the context of Pakistani society's cultural values, employed Directed QCA interpreting image (visual) data to build the arguments and specific characteristics (Holsti, 1968). Hence, the research modified the adapted directed QCA from Assarroudi et al. (2018) for the present context as follows;

### **Sample Design**

The sample selection was designed to capture diverse advertisements that portray female representations in Pakistan using purposive sampling. The research employed a purposive sampling technique, leveraging the expertise gained in researching visual communication tailored explicitly for this study. Ads were selected based on several criteria aligned with the study's objectives. Firstly, a comprehensive sampling strategy was devised, targeting a mix of traditional and contemporary media sources, including television commercials, print media, and digital platforms. To ensure depth and relevance, key informants, as Elo et al. (2014) suggested, were consulted to identify information-rich images and video advertisements resonating with the central theme of challenging conventional gender roles in Pakistani advertising.

Furthermore, the selection process prioritised advertisements that explicitly addressed or subtly hinted at issues central to the study's purpose. This entailed an in-depth focus on how these ads targeted specific audiences within Pakistani society. Information-rich images and video ads were selected, focusing on the issues that keep the central importance of the purpose of the present study (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018) through purposive sampling (Coyne, 1997).

The process included a comprehensive examination of how these selected advertisements might subvert or reinforce conventional mindsets regarding female representations, recognising the multifaceted nature of cultural norms and the diverse interpretations within different societal segments.

### **Data collection process**

It was decided that manifest and latent contents were considered for analysis, guiding research's interpretations and posture of images (Elo & Kynga's, 2008), respectively, for deeper understanding by employing directed QCA (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Assarroudi et al. (2018) devised the development of an interview guide and transcribing interviews, respectively. However,

Aslam et al. (2023) conducted their research only by employing directed QCA on text without any interviews. So, the present research would also focus on the content (i.e., images' content). Based on the present research's objectives and questions, the present study developed a guide to extract images to anchor the main categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); these categories were made depending on existing literature. For instance, the focus was on variations that may represent socio-demographics (in the context of cultural values in the present case) and distinctive characteristics (Sandelowski, 2010). For instance, the current research was delimited to the representations concerning visual communication linked with cultural values through the dressing of females in the ads. The study purposefully focused and transcribed the images/video ads that seemed to deviate from cultural values related to female dressing. These images often become controversial and face criticism. Therefore, the study selected those images that became controversial due to their appearance representing the sociocultural norms that negatively deviated from Pakistani society.

Moreover, employing the constant comparison technique (see Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) to provide evidence of how advertisers positively represent cultural values through dressing, some relevant images and ads concerning cultural dressing are also included to understand both advertising techniques better. For instance, the advertisements appeared briefly on television or in newspapers. Therefore, advertisement data were collected from YouTube and uploaded by the advertisers or the other influencers (who provide reviews or criticism). The source links of selected advertisements have been provided in the references section.

Hence, the research focused on the cultural representation of women by advertisers through media television advertisements in Pakistan. The data were collected, identified, interpreted, and analysed, focusing on how cultural values were utilised in the representation(s). The image/video data were collected using the purposive sampling technique associated with the cultural values to express their associations with the culture, observing the visual acts (from video and image ads) and interpreting their symbolic meaning through interpretations (Chand & Chaudhary, 2012). Qualitative research depends on the nature of the research questions, which are appropriate to make sense of the association between phenomena and implications in a cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2016).

### **Specifying the Unit of Analysis**

An organisation, classroom, individual, program, coded text, interview, transcript (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Assarraudi et al., 2018), or image could be the unit of the analysis (Short, 2019). The image was designated as the unit of analysis following the theoretical arguments of previous researchers (Aslam et al., 2023; Assarraudi et al., 2018).

### **Data Analysis Process**

The communicators' identity, the communication's locale, the nature of communication that would have been taking place, its purpose, and the time it occurred were all reviewed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Assarraudi et al., 2018). For example, retrieved from the data, the meaning was linked to the research (Assarraudi et al., 2018; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Elo et al., 2014; Kyngäs, 2020).

The major categories for analysis were developed inductively using the existing study as a basis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Subcategories were objectively defined based on the connections between the current theoretical framework and past research (Mayring, 2000, 2014). For instance, objectively and precisely developed, challenging ideologies through persuasive strategies, challenging Pakistani cultural norms featuring foreign female models and representation of women against cultural norms, promoting ideologies, promoting Pakistani cultural norms featuring foreign female models, and representation of women in support of cultural norms.

Table 1:

*Coding Protocol (Description of coded variables)*

Variable	Description	Details
Action	The action of the model in the image	Posing not related to cultural values (anti-cultural dresses); Posing related to cultural values (e.g., wearing traditional dresses); Engaging with an advertisement (e.g., showing a product).
Objectification	Sexual objectification is present or not:	Posing in rather revealing clothing (absence or tightness of clothing); Posing in untraditional dress.
Focus	The focus of the image is on a specific body part:	Breasts; Buttocks; Abdominals; Arms; Legs

Adapted and modified from Belinska (2018)

The research outlined the primary categories and subcategories' coding criteria based on the coding schema by Smith and Sanderson (2015), Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2018) and (See Table 1) based on theoretical definitions (Mayring, 2014). The coding criteria establish a clear separation between the matrix's primary and subcategories, which may further increase the study's credibility. As a result, the theoretical definitions would be used to extract the theoretical coding rules. Samples were finally anchored to major categories and subcategories, emphasising the meaning units (Mayring, 2014). The data were analysed following the aims and categorisation matrix, reviewing the content summarising the meaning units (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), and applying preliminary coding (Mayring, 2000, 2014) to the data as suggested in previous studies (Aslam et al., 2023; Assarroudi et al., 2018; Kibiswa, 2019).

Inductive derivation was used to organise and categorise the data, identify similarities and differences, and create relationships between general and major categories by constantly comparing subcategories (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). For instance, the research employed the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Triana, 2019) for the data analysis. Possible meanings from visual representations were extracted, focusing on their relationships and differences (Cilliers & Spurrett, 1999) with the targeted culture. Different cultures keep different persuasive appeals in advertisements concentrating on their core dimensions, i.e., American advertisers tend to use individualism, while Koreans emphasise collectivistic attractions (Han, 1994). It was observed that advertisers often employ individualistic appeals in Pakistani advertisements to attract an audience which holds collectivist cultural buying behaviour (Miao et al., 2020). Therefore, the present study has drawn findings basing the analysis more open to the '*individualistic appeals*' in the lens of the said model, incorporating the 'collectivist appeals' to highlight the differences and relationship of visual representations with the Pakistani culture in the context of specific visual communication in ads. Theoretically, With the concern to highlight these cultural differences in the representations described above, a comparative textual analysis was determined as an appropriate method for the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Strauss, 1987).

## Results and Discussion

### Non-stereotypical Advertisements

In Figure 1, a Turkish protagonist of a recently popular series *Ertugrul*, which recently gained popularity in Pakistan and parts of the Muslim world, has been represented through an ad in which she portrays a non-stereotypical trend (see Jamil, 2018 for more details) apparently against the traditional cultural and social norms in Pakistan.



Figure 1 Mobile Ad (Source: BTSgang, 2020)

### Challenging ideologies through persuasive strategies

Through this ad, the advertiser intends to attract the common public by utilising women as a persuasion tool through media. The advertiser does not highlight mobile in the advertisement through a contrastive strategy, as can be seen in other ads. Instead, they intend to show the woman's body and style in the ad (Varghese & Kumar, 2020; Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). The primary purpose seems to be to attract the audience/viewers by producing a glamorous element. Using a 'tangible' stimulus that creates ease for the customer regarding decision making, the advertiser has tried to get an advantage in his business. The visual stimulus is the most effective persuasive strategy that persuades the viewers from a different angle, but this ad, instead of showing a product, manifests a woman's posture (Alam et al., 2019; Shartiely, 2005) (i.e., without dupatta or shawl on the head, the nakedness of arms, cleavage display, and alluring smile) against the traditional social and cultural norms of Pakistan. Although dupatta or shawl removal may be acceptable and limited to modern and liberal culture, chest cleavage display is prohibited due to Pakistani cultural norms. It may be a fact that some Pakistani individuals may consider it liberty when advertisers represent women's nakedness (Alam et al., 2019). Therefore, judging the Pakistani individuals' nature and getting financial advantages, the advertiser has intentionally displayed a woman's body, dress, and style by manipulating a woman's chastity (Varghese & Kumar, 2020). In the Pakistani male-dominated society, such fascination harms the social norms that guarantee people's dignity and grace (Agha et al., 2018). Through such ads, the advertiser raises the heart-touching emotions of the viewers through emotional stimulus. Arising emotions may be a successful product seller strategy because it is a tact that permanently influences the viewer's primal brain. However, it can be said that it is merely a personal touch of a persuasive strategy that highlights how a high-level personality, especially a woman, can influence the viewers' minds but go against the accepted norms set by the dominating male society (Agha et al., 2018). For instance, if the advertiser intends to promote cultural values, they would represent her with her protagonist's look (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Protagonist of Ertugrul Series (Source: IMDB, 2014-2019)

### Challenging Pakistani cultural ideologies featuring foreign female models

It reveals that the advertiser consciously takes advantage of the woman's moderate style, which looks comparatively distinctive from Islamic cultural norms. So, it seems that the advertisers have purposefully shown her in a sexually attractive dress, which persuasively gets gazing attention from people, specifically men. When the exact depiction of the ad is seen in Pakistani culture, it shocks the audience because of the conflict found in Halima's (protagonist) personality ("Pakistani fans are", 2020).

While in the Turkish series Ertugrul, she wears a full-body and short-covering dress representing a woman's gentility and soberness according to the Islamic traditions (see Figure 2), but in the ad (Figure 1), she looks completely different from the personality depicted in the drama and seems going beyond the represented Turkish traditional and cultural values. The same ad also receives dislike in Pakistani culture due to its permanency and stability in its nature ("Ertugrul star Esra", 2020). In Pakistani culture, religion has a leading and vital role in people's life. Therefore, people do not seem ready to accept shows or ads that negate their culture or social values. In Figure 2, the same protagonist is portrayed differently: sobriety and gentleness are acceptable in any Islamic society. In this regard, advertising media plays a vital role in changing the masses' ideology according to industrialists' wish to sell their products at any cost, ignoring that women are not so free to expose their bodies openly in Islamic society. However, they do it just for their materialistic interests.

In the facts mentioned above, it can be observed that Turkish culture may vary slightly from Pakistani culture even then both countries have the same religion and social values to some extent (references). For instance, in the Turkish series 'Ertugrul,' she is represented just as a housewife, always assisting her family with chores and is bound to just domestic boundaries, obeys her husband, mother-in-law, and all other family members. She is not allowed to interfere with the matters associated with her husband or any other male affairs (Rehman, 2020). She is depicted as an obedient woman who cannot express herself or do anything according to her desire because she is a part of a typical patriarchal society unwilling to consider any woman equal to a man in status (see Figure 2). However, in the ad (Figure 1), she seems to expose her physical posture on the demand of media gentility exposed due to her lust for the money she gets from her exposure (Alam et al., 2020; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

To some extent, advertising media is responsible for such types of acts. However, primarily women themselves desire to get change in this perspective, and they too want to get rid of the restrictions of religious, cultural, and social values because they think that to be restricted just in household work, their personality damaged, and they cannot grow properly (Rehan & Raza, 2017). While on the other hand, stereotypical elements never give women so much liberty, thinking that giving independence to women spoils society. They believe that women should remain under the men's domain, and the men decide what activities should be assigned to them (Amir-ud-Din & Abbas, 2020). Similarly, dominating male societies think that women are feeble, timid, and delicate and are unable to perform complex jobs; they should be given chances in the fields which suit them, such as cooking at home, washing, sewing, giving birth to babies, and their nurturing, and sweeping as well (Nasir et al., 2019). However, due to these bans and restrictions, women now feel deprived of their fundamental rights (Hadi, 2017)—women's objectification and representation against sociocultural norms.

Women may be an “object” of beautification; however, in this ad (Figure 3), the woman herself seems to be objectified as a beauty product. For instance, advertising media represents her (own wish) in this ad (Figure 3) as an object that attracts society's gaze, making a smartphone ad poster more attractive.



Figure 3 Jazz Smartphone ad (Source: Ibrahim, 2017)

The model girl (Figure 3), shown in this Jazz ad, has fully exposed her body figure in an attractive way that gets the viewers' full lusty attention and may not be acceptable stereotypically. This act of attraction may be known as a persuasive(contrastive) strategy to attract most men. Watching such a sexual exposure of a woman through such an ad, most men, not all, might be tempted and consider it the proper action of the woman in the display. They move to buy the attractive product display, becoming a source of help for the advertiser in selling their product.

Nonetheless, there might also be a big part of the society that dislikes such ads assuming these acts (represented in such seductive ads) unsuitable because such portrayals may corrupt the whole ideological, religious, social, and cultural beliefs primarily related to women's chastity. Due to these conflicts, a clash arises between the groups – liberal-elite and rightist (Naz et al., 2013; Cheema, 2018; Maqsood, 2017). These conflicts of interest always cause dispersion, and advertising media and other related agents get full advantage of the situation by manipulating the woman, who ultimately becomes a victimised ‘object’ (Varghese & Kumar, 2020) in the society where she lives or belongs. Whether she works consciously or forcibly in such ads (as shown in Figure 3), she eventually becomes a victim of a patriarchal society that always observes her as a harmful object, not a bearable or acceptable thing.



Whereas the ad mentioned earlier is concerned, it goes beyond the limitations of established norms of a specific society that sets its views about women who are just restricted to the home or outdoor activities. Similarly, in such ads, Pakistani culture and social norms consider women's nakedness against Islamic and cultural values. However, despite limitations, non-stereotypical elements come forward and benefit from the opportunity, ignoring the societal norms due to societal conflicts (Jamil, 2018). The models in such ads might be considered role models for some female members. Even males may be attracted to and want these beautiful and seductive women who rarely come into their real lives. T.V. ads might be designed to attract customers to do a profitable business. They intend to play with people's emotional and psychological states by representing females as ad showpieces. This representation of women would not attract most people of some specific community because it seems against their societal and religious norms. However, the ad (as shown in Figure 3) can be attractive to the liberal-elite class that never minds such display, i.e., female body exposure, and it is the class that also influences the people of stereotypical minds of the society (Jamil, 2018). Hence, many middle- and lower-level groups are attracted to and follow such ads. However, the reality is that conservative people never seem ready to accept such ads because they think of them vulgarly according to their cultural norms and even consider them against their religion. It can be viewed as the multinational company's duty to see society's cultural and religious values and norms to keep the peace.

Another well-known stereotypical national (state-owned) company, Ufone, has presented an ad (Figure 4) that can be considered similar to the Jazz smartphone ad.

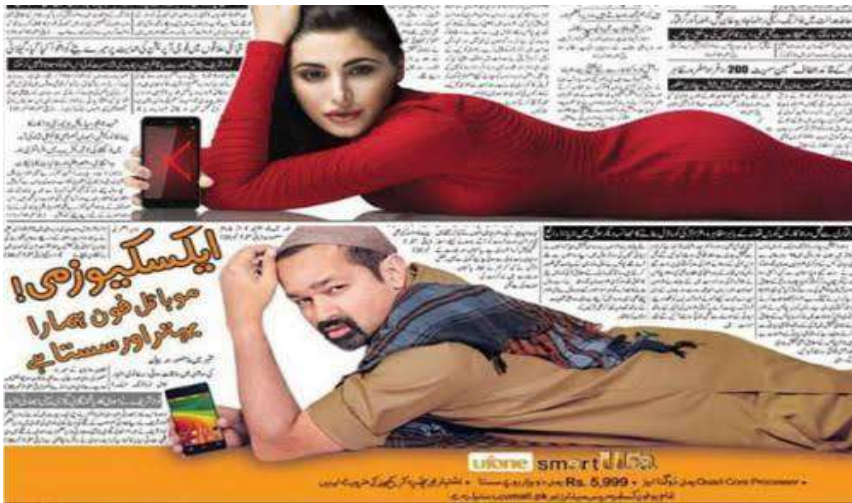


Figure 4 Jazz and Ufone Ad (Source: Jang, 2015, December 20, p. 1; Express, 2015, December 28, p. 1)

A man (Figure 4) can be seen lying in the same position as the female is lying in the Jazz ad. The Jazz ad's parody may be, but it also insults the girl/woman following stereotypical Pakistani psychology (Jamil, 2018). The stereotypical point of view never allows a woman to show herself in such a posture. The lying position of man might not be considered wrong according to societal norms. However, as shown in the Jazz ad's previously mentioned picture, a woman may not be expected to expose herself that way. Its main reason may be that the patriarchal system prevails almost globally but in various approaches. In Pakistan, the same system prohibits women from adopting a freestyle body exhibition anywhere or in any society. The woman is wearing a red dress symbolically, which shows the extra attraction of her body. Furthermore, her hips are offered upward to create a sexually appealing effect on the viewers' minds. It is a fact that stereotypical



elements of the said society also tend to insult women's non-stereotypical representation – hence, ultimately, only the woman is much criticised in both cases.

### **Stereotypical Advertisements**

#### **Promoting Pakistani Cultural Ideologies featuring foreign female models**

In the ad (Figure 5), the model is the same (as in Figure 1), but her exposure is differently represented as stereotypical by the same media advertising agency.



*Figure 5 Jazz Ad (Source: Jazz, 2020)*

The advertiser has depicted her as a stereotypical character reflecting Pakistani society's social, cultural, and religious values. Although she belongs to a distinctive culture with no fully stereotypical style in Turkish Islamic cultural background, she is represented in this ad in Pakistan's stereotypical manner. The role of advertising media (in the case of ad) and television media (in the case of the Ertugrul series) intend to show her in aspects of persuasion – as advertising media utilises her as a tool of persuasion for alluring purposes. T.V. media uses her as a persuasion tool for stereotypical purposes (Jamil, 2018). Hence, in both situations, utilising the same woman/girl (actress/model), the consent/attention of the advertiser/producer seems to manipulate a woman because she plays both roles controlled by patriarchal societies' managing agents.

A persuasive, tangible stimulus is a powerful tool that plays a pivotal role in every stereotypical Pakistani advertisement, adding validity and acceptance from the social and cultural perspective (Jamil, 2018). These ads (as shown in Figure 6) depict women's social responsibility in a society that fully attaches them to domestic activities according to Pakistani society's stereotypical norms and values.

## Representation of women favouring sociocultural norms



Figure 6 Family Ads (Source: Zameen.com, 2018; Wall's Creamy Delights, 2017; Tapal Official, 2017; Benish Mahmood, 2016)

Moreover, it seems to possess a unique persuasion approach (contrastive stimulus) in which distinctive and comparable product features are represented in the ad, indicating a family's inclination towards the Coca-Cola product. Contrastable stimuli always convert the viewers' primal brain, giving a stereotypical impression (Jamil, 2018) necessary for success. However, this ad shows its reasonable or stereotypical impact on a family to unite them. The whole family shows their happier moods in favour of Coca-Cola's product due to the ad's stereotypical nature on behalf of the producer. Through the visual image, the producer highlights a willingly stereotypical reflection of society. In these social and domestic activities, the advertiser seems successful in getting an advantage on a large scale regarding his business.

For instance, the ability to perform these traditional activities as the roles of sister, daughter, mother, and wife can be celebrated and considered respectable in Pakistani society, which limits all these roles in strict societal norms. These ads (Figure 6) reveal that male and female duties are pre-decided and predictable. For instance, all the family members seem happy and elevated if they show interest in the kitchen and household work. The ads might be valuable in representing female participation in these activities. They refer to traditional norms and Islamic teachings without the proper knowledge to prove the ideology that only women should be involved in household work. However, at the same time, another class, i.e., the liberal class, does not consider this trend essential to be followed.

According to these liberal groups, working is women's responsibility in household activities, but men's equal participation should also be there. The women want freedom from such limitations set by Pakistani patriarchal society and intend to break rules that restrict them within a limited boundary. This picture further elaborates on a new trend of liberalism when the young family females are portrayed without a dupatta (shawl), an essential norm in a traditional Islamic society. On the other hand, the media has its strategy to create confusion in all the groups of a society divided into social groups with different ideologies. Hence, observing these various ad

perceptions shows that advertising media seems responsible for generating stereotypical and non-stereotypical roles or trends (Jamil, 2018).

## Discussion

### Inferences of Analysis in Social Context

The present research's data describes and discusses the representation of women in television advertisements, which are utilised as impressive, motivational, and influential persuasive tools. Pakistan is an Islamic society, and Islamic values can be reflected in any Islamic practice, culturally and socially motivated communication(s). Therefore, the present research analysis suggests that most advertisers who deviate from the national religious and cultural values face criticism with less appreciation in the social domains. For instance, in Figure 1 and Figure 3, models from Turkey and India are hired by QMobile (a mobile company) and JAZZ (a cellular network provider), respectively. In Figure 1, the ad represents the woman in a bold dress (deviating from culture). The Turkish model was chosen due to her popularity (see Figure 1 for details), which she gained through a series named *Ertugrul* (a Turkish drama) in which she wore a traditional dress throughout the serial, representing the Turkish Islamic culture which is now can be found in its rural areas mostly.

Moreover, the advertisers also know the nature of the audience, who often get attracted to intercultural features from other cultures, i.e., according to the best knowledge, the Pakistani audience habitually watches and is fascinated by Bollywood (Indian) movies and dramas for the last two decades. However, since the previous decade, after the ban on Indian content by the Supreme Court of Pakistan due to its negative impact on Pakistani culture (see Figure 3), they have been attracted much to the Turkish entertainment industry, especially during the COVID19 pandemic after the success of *Ertugrul* series (see Introduction section for more details). Nonetheless, when advertisers cast female protagonists in the ads, they know the nature of most Pakistani men as they are easily captivated by the women's seductive representation(s). So, the casting agents/directors mostly cast attractive and alluring figures (girls) who can easily seduce men. Pakistani models, often fearing criticism, refuse to perform seductive roles due to cultural and religious restrictions. Hence, their (casters/directors) ultimate choice persuades foreign models who intentionally and liberally play these roles. Whatever is depicted in the ads (see Figure 1 and Figure 3 for details), women (models) are represented against Islamic cultural values and norms that keep influential and impactful persuasive influence. That is why, through encountered criticism, the state-owned cellular company (Ufone) immediately criticised the woman in the Jazz ad, featuring a male model on its own with a tangible *tagline* "*Excuse me! Mobile phone hamara behtr aur sasta hai*" (trans. Excuse me! Our mobile is low cast and better). The ads represent two different cultural trends, i.e., non-stereotypical and stereotypical. Due to women's non-stereotypical representation, advertisers pave the way for women to be criticised by the stereotypical society, which becomes the cause of this criticism (Jamil, 2018). The contrastable stimulus urges the audience to recognise the differences in their specific cultures' backgrounds. That is why society criticises women who belong to the liberal class and do not follow their traditional social norms and values.

Consequently, if the advertisers offer any behavioural change that does not incorporate the cultural and social norms existing in society, they would not be able to persuade and get the stimulative attention of the audience (idea extracted from Falk et al., 2010). Similarly, in semiotic/verbal communication(s) of culturally deviated ads, *contrastable or tangible stimuli* (Morin & Renvoise, 2018) seem inactive when incorporating Islamic cultural values to some extent. For instance, the featuring models from other cultures would not justify the original cultural and social values due to the Pakistani audience's absence of Personal (self-concepts) even though these representations would conceptually hurt the emotional stimulus, leaving negative impacts on

Pakistani culture against national (Islamic) cultural influences (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019). Henceforth, the audience's culturally controlled cognitions and behaviours (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010; Harkins et al., 2017) would be affected by a negative social influence—persuasion— (Cacioppo et al., 2018). Therefore, based on conceptually derived findings, it would be argued that the advertisers seem to fail to mould, pour and promote the original norms and values of Pakistani society. Ultimately, due to the negligence of advertisers, women get stuck in the phenomenon of objectification (see Fredrickson & Roberts, 2006) through this type of representation.

The results of the present conceptual study support the already existing persuasion models yet incorporate a new conceptual model of neuro-persuasion, which is adapted and modified from Morin and Renvoise's (2018) theoretical frameworks.

Moreover, the results of the present study need to be revised and generalizability incorporated. Although the ads are included in a limited number, the theoretical assumptions are made based on foregrounded theoretical frameworks maintaining trustworthiness by quoting the textual and pictorial evidence from the advertisements.

Finally, the present study is qualitative, and the neuro-persuasive strategies and their implementation are purely studied based on theoretically established frameworks. The implications of the present study would need to be verified through quantitative studies involving the real-time participation of the audience for further clarification. However, the conceptual neuro-persuasion framework (adapted from Morin & Renvoise, 2018) would need to be quantitatively verified, and the experimental justifications would also be provided involving the real-time participants from two more cultures explicitly related to changes in brain activity in reactance to persuasive communication (see Chua et al., 2011; Cooper et al., 2015; Falk et al., 2011; Falk et al., 2015; Falk et al., 2016; Riddle et al., 2016; Vezich et al., 2017 for more details).

### **Conclusion**

The portrayal of women's roles in Pakistani television advertisements seems to go beyond the general public's social surroundings based on routine life exercises. Television ads should depend on a socially acceptable phenomenon according to the said social phenomena. However, most ads deviate from social, cultural, and religious norms. The above-analysed advertisements depict sociocultural acceptances and rehearse by visually portraying various characters in Pakistani T.V. advertisements. Both stereotypical and non-stereotypical represent the conflict in the audience's minds (Jamil, 2018). The public's depiction of people (in ads) delineates the rights, obligations, status, and individual traits that any individual holds in that specific culture. In television commercials, women's depiction can generally be found in conventional patterns that trail the subordinative role in jobs and explicit undertaking portion. In general, women receive a terrible reaction in advertisements that depict women's disempowerment in male-oriented Pakistani society.

Hence, they start considering themselves inferior to men. Women always expect to possess good character in all walks of life as they mostly portray themselves as mothers or homemakers taking responsibility for the house and people living there. Furthermore, if they do not obey the commands of a patriarchal society, they may have to face many problems. On the other hand, males display authority, dominance, and hegemony in the house and outside. Gender portrayal of women in Pakistani television channel ads shows the customary acceptance of individuals towards women's interest in their day-to-day practices.

The research indicates that women can also enjoy a certain level of freedom and liberty in single and married lives. Through the advertisements on television channels, it becomes evident that women avail themselves of equal opportunities in both cases, i.e., whether single or married. The concept of modernity and gender inequality would still prevail in society. On the contrary, the deep-rooted stereotypical elements in the patriarchal Pakistani society would not distract people's minds from embracing the sociocultural norms that show discrimination against women.

Whereas visual representations are a concern, they have an immense effect on their viewers, and these advertisements reveal a significant impact of ads showing their practical implications on people's minds. However, it would be an excellent point to investigate future inquiries about the responses submitted by perceiving such a traditional portrayal of gender orientation (mainly women). The stereotypes can be mentally connected with individuals' traditional attitudes and gender approaches to show women in various aspects. These ads' premise might be the earlier factor in reinforcing women's subordination and objectified position in public. To weaken the conventional conceptualisation of women in ads, it needs to demolish those traditional roles that can be the physiological and mental barriers towards self-rule and self-acknowledgement of the women of Pakistani society. It may be that the present man-centric structure would also be another real help towards the false conceptualisation of women's portrayal. The male-oriented society never needs and wishes for the equivalent status of women in various fields of life. So, we need to reshape the appearances, depictions, and examples of our social and cultural structures to make an equivalent and reliable condition for both males and females so that they might be able to express their real potential, capabilities, and capacities to introduce their selves in an actual setting.

It also becomes clear that scholarly discourse provides a multidimensional prism through which to analyse the representation of women in media when combining the local cultural context in Pakistan with the more significant global theoretical developments around the representation of women in advertising. The scholarly discourse around gender roles, stereotypes, and cultural norms elsewhere can be assessed, and it becomes clear that theoretical frameworks and the specific challenges experienced by women in Pakistani society are at variance.

The way that women's roles in advertising are defined concerning the status of women in the local society necessitates an in-depth examination of the various topics that have been covered. These themes include the representation of women as stay-at-home moms, their status as second-class citizens, their underrepresentation in professional settings, and the perpetuation of gender inequality. In this regard, advertising regulations constitute an essential foundation for regulating ethical portrayal; yet, the reported infringement reinforces stereotypes and is not in step with the advancement of society. The concepts of gender equality are compromised by these violations, which uphold social norms and traditional gender roles which restrict the agency and potential of women.

The final discussion incorporates scholarly viewpoints to emphasise the need for a paradigm change in the current context. Academic research provides a path forward by challenging prevailing preconceptions and empowering women through inclusive representations in advertisements. Rewriting the community narratives and pushing for significant changes in how women are portrayed are opportunities that arise from bridging the gap between theoretical acquisitions and local cultural nuances.

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