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Effects of Emotional Development on Urban Poor Children

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ABSTRACT

Since its independence in the 1960s, Malaysia has been considered one of the most successful countries in eliminating poverty, with a headcount ratio of 5.7% in the year 2004. Nevertheless, according to the World Development Indicators (WDI), Malaysia's poverty headcount ratio climbed to 8.4 % in the year 2019. The onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has now further exacerbated the ongoing rise of urban poverty, which is attributed to urbanisation expansion. In urban areas, poverty may significantly affect the community's health, environment, and social life. Urban poverty can also have psychological consequences for children. The objective of this study is to investigate the levels of stress and depression among urban poor children. A total of 327 respondents used in the research were primary and secondary school students in Puchong District, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. Using SPSS, the collected data was analysed. The findings indicated that the respondents' levels of stress and depression were moderate and low, respectively. This implies that the family's economic situation has no significant impact on the emotional development of urban children living in poverty. The findings of this study can aid the Zakat Center, *Baitulmal*, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in their efforts to promote human development by providing these children with the necessary assistance, particularly in the field of education.

Keywords: Urban poverty; Emotions; Stress; Depression; Education.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is an Asian nation inhabited by several religious, cultural, and linguistic minority groups. Malaysia's three main ethnic groupings are Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Throughout its history, Malaysia has prioritised the primary sector, which consists of agriculture and forestry based on natural resources. Manufacturing and industry are the secondary economic sectors of Malaysia. Poverty and disparities in wealth are Malaysia's most pressing issues. From 1971 to 1990, the Malaysian government adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) to promote development. The fundamental goals of this New Economic Policy (NEP) are to decrease and eradicate abject poverty and reorganise society to remedy economic imbalances. Nonetheless, this issue remains problematic.

In Malaysia, urban poverty symptoms are no longer unusual. According to the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER), more than two-thirds of Malaysians reside in metropolitan areas (Goi, 2022). This growth is attributable to the pace of urbanisation and migration to cities, both of which contribute to the growing urban poverty problem (Murdad *et al.*, 2022). However, in 2019, Malaysia's poverty line income (PLI) increased from 980 to 2,208 Malaysian ringgit (Ali *et al.* 2022). Despite this increase, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) estimates that about 400,000 families continue to live below this threshold (Jamaluddin & Hanafiah, 2020).

The problem of abject poverty in Malaysia was heightened during the COVID-19 crisis, which has persisted since 2020 (Cheng, 2022). During the Malaysia Government Movement Control Order (Malay: *Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Kerajaan Malaysia*), a period in which the government of Malaysia instituted national quarantine and cordon sanitaire measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of citizens lost their jobs, and several businesses also closed. According to Hassan *et al.* (2022), over a million households may have fallen into abject poverty due to the COVID-19 era in Malaysia. Thus, the problem of abject poverty is on the rise in Malaysia and has several ramifications, including psychological effects on children. In addition, the problem of economic stress associated with urban poverty directly affects families (Nor *et al.*, 2019). The pressure to earn more wages to provide for a family's needs also reduces bonding time (the time families spend together). According to Talib (2016), a family's financial condition also influences their capacity to fulfil their social duties, namely their ability to raise children effectively.

In Malaysia, many urban families are negatively affected by low economic standards. The incidence of depression among schoolchildren is one of the effects. Although the issue is relatively mild in Maylasia, if left unchecked, it would become perilous (Norhayati, 2013). Compared to dropouts who continue their education, just 35.8% (n = 2189) of adolescents seek further education in 2019 (Nor *et al.*, 2019). Cassiba (2018) argues that secondary and primary school dropouts among Malaysian youth in Malaysia are related to poverty.

Consequently, as mentioned above, this study will address the psychological impact of urban poverty on children. This research also intends to measure the amount of emotional stress among urban children and the level of emotional depression among urban poor children. This study is crucial because it aids stakeholders such as zakat centres, *baitul mal* (Arabic term for "House of money" or "House of Wealth."), and non-governmental organisations in devising public policies to enhance the living circumstances of urban regions, in line with the government's goal of creating human capital.

RESEARCH THEORY

Yahaya and Ahmad (2010) stress the use of Maslow's Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs, which claims that a person must satisfy all fundamental needs, including physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. This is the parent's responsibility to provide the necessities for a child to develop good self-esteem. Children with unstable cognitive and emotional issues often have low self-esteem, although developing them at a young age is still feasible. This is because if a person's fundamental needs are addressed, they will be more self-confident and thus develop a good self-esteem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This investigation analyses emotional development's impact on poor urban children residing in the Puchong region of Selangor, Malaysia. 327 Puchong district elementary and secondary school students participated in the research. The research focuses on various factors, including personal history, family background, educational level, issues relating to the family's financial situation, and the kind of housing occupied.

This research was done by distributing a questionnaire to numerous elementary and secondary schools in the Puchong District. The students who got aid from the *zakat* centre are the respondents. While the received information will be examined quantitatively, this data relies on the frequency and score-based quantity categories. This is because quantitative data is suited for research that uses questionnaires and test instruments to collect information (Zohrabi, 2013). A questionnaire is used as the research instrument, with its contents determined by the aims of the investigation. The researcher has separated the questionnaire into two sections, namely part A and part B. In Part A, respondents are expected to answer various questions about their demographics. Part B asks people to rate how they feel about a statement on a four-point scale.

Part A: Demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender and family income.

Part B: This section has 24 question items to obtain and identify the objectives of the study. The breakdown of items is divided into two main parts, namely:

- **A.** Stress Levels
- **B.** Levels of Depression

Respondents' responses are elicited using a four-point scale for which the researchers develop question items. This four-point scale has varying weights for never, rarely, often, and very often. The summary is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Consent Level Scale

Approval	Stage Score
1	**Never**
2	**Rarely**
3	**Often**
4	**Very Often**

In the Puchong District, school zakat coordinators, teachers, and school counsellors distributed initial surveys to responders. Respondents were given enough time to complete the questionnaire, which was then returned to the researcher. The researcher then gathers all surveys for examination and analysis and determines the necessary Alpha value.

The computed Alpha values suggest that the items for each research question can be utilised. Therefore, the actual research was done with Puchong District elementary and high school students. The study team then distributed the questionnaire to respondents and instructed them on how to respond. After completing the form, the researcher examines the data to determine the study's results and draws conclusions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Evaluation of Section A

Distribution of Survey Participants Considering Gender

The gender breakdown of responders is shown in Table 2. With a total of 187 participants, it was revealed that females represent the majority in this research (57.2 percent). Meanwhile, there were 140 males (42.8 percent).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Men	140	42.8
Women	187	57.2
Total	327	100

Respondent Distribution Based on Household Income

The distribution of respondents by family income is shown in Table 3. The findings indicate that a substantial number of respondents' household income is less than RM3000, namely 218 (66.8 percent), followed by 80 respondents whose household income is between RM3000-5000 (24.4 percent). The number of respondents with household incomes of RM 5,000 or more is 29 (8.8 percent).

Table 3: Respondent Distribution Based on Household Income

Household Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than RM3000	218	66.8
RM3000-5000	80	24.4
RM5000 and Above	29	8.8
Total	327	100

Evaluation of Section B

To determine the impact of stress levels and depression levels on urban poor children's cognitive and emotional development, the researchers categorised four frequency levels for each item as frequently, uncommon, and never. The frequent segment contains individuals who often agree with the offered claims (K) and frequently (SK). In contrast, the second portion is uncommon (J), and the last portion is never (TP), which comprises people who never agree with the statement.

The Impact of Stress on the Emotional Growth of Urban Poor Children

Table 4: Frequency Distribution and Proportion of Stress Level Effects

	Investigation Questions	Answer							
		NEVER (TP)		UNCOMMON (J)		FREQUENT (K)			
		1 (TP)		2 (J)		3 (K)		4 (SK)	
		f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
1.	I find it difficult to relax without money.	51	15.6	140	42.8	61	18.7	75	22.9
			15.2%		42.8%		41.6%		
2.	I tend to overreact to others when there is less funds.	161	49.2	120	36.7	28	8.6	18	5.5
			49.2%		36.7%		14.1%		
3.	I am easily agitated while facing financial difficulties.	62	19	133	40.7	70	21.4	62	19
			19%		40.7%		40.3%		
4.	I have difficulty organising my study time	74	22.6	115	35.2	86	26.3	52	15.9
			22.6%		35.2%		42.2%		
5.	I get irate if I don't have money.	176	53.8	90	27.5	47	14.4	14	4.3
			53.8%		27.5%		18.7%		
6.	It is tough for me to make choices when there is no money.	105	32.1	132	40.4	53	16.2	37	11.3

			32.1%		40.4%		27.5%		
7.	I find it challenging to remain calm while considering family financial issues	71	21.7	155	47.4	61	18.7	40	12.2
			21.7%		47.4%		30.9%		
8.	I will not accept anything that inhibits me from continuing my current activity.	84	25.8	123	37.6	60	18.3	60	18.3
			25.8%		37.6%		36.6%		
9.	I am easily offended when others insult my family's poverty	97	29.7	87	26.6	57	17.4	86	26.3
			29.7%		26.6%		43.7%		
10.	I prefer solitude when money is scarce.	135	41.3	96	29.4	47	14.4	49	14.9
			41.3%		29.4%		29.3%		
11.	I lacked concentration in class because I was anxious about household hardship.	160	48.9	89	27.2	50	15.3	28	8.6
			48.9%		27.2%		23.9%		
12.	I feel isolated from my friends due to the disparity in our levels of life	148	45.3	106	32.4	44	13.5	29	8.9
			45.3%		32.4%		22.3%		

The research analysis revealed, based on Table 4 above, that the impact of stress levels on the emotional development of urban poor children is mild. This can be seen when 53.8 % of the study's results indicate that poor children with no money never experience frustration. 27.5% of respondents said they seldom get angry when they have little money. However, 18.7% said they often feel furious when they lack financial resources.

The research also indicated that urban children without money are less likely to behave aggressively towards others. 49.2 % of respondents said they had never done so. In contrast, 36.7% seldom act up despite having little money. Despite this, 14.1% of urban poor children agree that they tend to behave excessively toward others when they have little finance.

In contrast, 48.9 % of urban children in this study never felt depressed, and worries about poverty and other issues at home did not affect their ability to concentrate in class. While 27.2% reported being seldom depressed, there was no class concentration owing to family poverty concerns. A small number (23.9%) of poor urban children report being sad and distracted in class due to family poverty.

In addition, financial issues within the family hurt the cognitive and emotional development of urban poor children. 47.4 % of respondents said they seldom feel calm

while considering their family's financial issues. However, 30.9% of respondents indicated that they often find it challenging to remain calm while contemplating money issues. In comparison, 21.7% of respondents claimed that their family's financial issues never disrupted their inner peace.

The survey also revealed that 45.3% of the urban poor children said they never felt alienated from their peers owing to the disparity in living circumstances. In addition, 32.4 % said it is not uncommon to feel socially isolated due to poverty. In contrast, 22.3 % said that they often experience inferiority and social exclusion due to living circumstances. This demonstrates that the poor urban children can get along with their peers despite their disparate living conditions.

In analysing the impact of stress on the emotional development of urban children, the survey revealed that 43.7% of the children stated that they are often upset when their family's poverty is insulted—followed by 29.7 % who were not upset when people mocked their family's poverty. Similarly, 26.6 % seldom feel hurt when family poverty is insulted by people. Overall, however, it can be concluded that the poor children of this city are emotionally impacted when their family's poverty becomes an insult.

Regarding feeling peaceful in connection to money concerns, 42.8% of respondents indicated that they seldom feel calm when they do not have money. However, 41.6% of respondents agreed that they find it challenging to remain calm when they have little money. While 15.2% of respondents claimed that the issue of lack of money never impacted their peace of mind, it was shown that the issue of poverty negatively impacts urban children's self-comfort.

In addition, financial issues affect the emotions of urban poor children from a learning perspective. The survey findings revealed that 42.2% of students often struggle to manage their study time when they have financial difficulties. Moreover, 35.22 % of those surveyed said they rarely have difficulties organising their study time when they have financial difficulties. Despite having financial difficulties, 22.6% of students have never had trouble managing their study time.

The surveyed poor urban children also stated that lack of money was not the reason they dreaded being alone. This is shown by the fact that 41.3% of respondents were never left alone when they had no money. While 29.4% of respondents claimed that they are seldom alone when they have no money, most respondents reported that they are often alone when they have no money. However, just 29.3 % of urban children often feel alone when they are poor. The responses of urban poor children to the frequency and rarity of solitary are almost the same.

In terms of anxiousness, the survey revealed that 40.7% of urban youngsters are easily agitated when they have financial difficulties. In contrast, 19% of respondents said they had never experienced restlessness while having financial difficulties. This is followed by 40.3% of those who feel restless while experiencing financial difficulties. This data indicates that many urban children become restless when financial difficulties arise. This suggests that the surveyed urban children's cognitive and emotional development is interrupted by stress.

Considering the decision-making factor, the majority of urban poor children, 40.4%, say that they seldom find it difficult to make choices when there is no money. Additionally, 32.1% of respondents claimed that lack of financial resources never impacted their decision-making. Moreover, 27.5% of respondents said that it is tough to

make decisions when there is little money. This indicates that the inability of the urban poor children to make life choices is not due to a lack of financial resources.

In addition, urban poor children reported that money issues seldom prevented them from pursuing their activities. According to the study's findings, 37.6% of respondents claimed they were seldom influenced by financial issues and could not tolerate anything hindering them from continuing their work. Nonetheless, 36.6% of poor children claim they often cannot tolerate financial obstacles that hinder them from continuing their activities. Another 25.8 % have never been impeded in their regular activities by financial difficulties.

The overall impact of Stress Levels on the emotional development of the urban poor children is mild. A high majority of the urban poor children report experiencing restlessness and agitation when confronted with financial difficulties. The poor urban children confess to being highly angered when their family's poverty is insulted. In addition, financial constraints impede their ability to manage their study time, making it harder for them to make judgments when they lack funds. These results indicate that the urban poor children continue to suffer. These results indicate that the urban poor children still suffer stress-related impacts on their emotional development, even if their financial issues are not severe.

The Impact of Depression Levels on the Emotional Growth of Urban Poor Children

Table 5: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Depression Level Effects

	Investigation Questions	**Answers**							
		NEVER (TP)		**UNCOM-MON (J)**		**FREQUENT (K)**			
		1 (TP)		**2 (J)**		**3 (K)**		**4 (SK)**	
		f	**%**	***f***	**%**	***f***	**%**	***F***	**%**
1.	I feel sad when reminded of poverty in the family	82	25.1	130	39.8	58	17.7	57	17.4
			25.1%		39.8%		35.1%		
2.	I easily cry when reminded of poverty in the family	111	33.9	110	33.7	55	16.8	51	15.6
			33.9%		33.7%		32.4%		
3.	I feel restless and can't keep quiet when remembering the poverty in the family	121	37	100	30.6	70	21.4	36	11
			37%		30.6%		32.4%		

4.	I feel more offended than usual when hanging out with a friend who has property	158	48.3	87	26.6	57	17.5	25	7.6
			48.3%		26.6%		25.1%		
5.	I am not enthusiastic when living in poverty	184	56.3	77	23.6	41	12.5	25	7.6
			56.3%		23.6%		20.1%		
6.	I feel desperate for life	226	69.1	54	16.5	35	10.7	12	3.7
			69.1%		16.5%		14.4%		
7.	I feel worthless when unable to change family life	151	46.2	101	30.9	51	15.6	24	7.3
			46.2%		30.9%		22.9%		
8.	I don't seem to be able to experience positive feelings at all when life is plagued by poverty	160	48.9	107	32.7	44	13.5	16	4.9
			48.9%		32.7%		18.4%		
9.	I feel that my life is meaningless anymore because life is shrouded in poverty	205	62.7	70	21.4	37	11.3	15	4.6
			62.7%		21.4%		15.9%		
10.	I am ashamed of my family's poverty	201	61.5	66	20.2	39	11.9	21	6.4
			61.5%		20.2%		18.3%		
11.	I am not confident in myself when there is no money	166	50.8	84	25.7	53	16.2	24	7.3
			50.8%		25.7%		23.5%		
12.	I am always alone if I have financial problems	132	40.3	114	34.9	44	13.5	37	11.3
			40.3%		34.9%		24.8%		

The analysis of the research revealed, based on table 5 above, that the influence of the degree of despair on the emotional development of urban poor children is minimal. The results show that 69.1 % of the urban poor children have never felt hopeless despite having financial troubles. Despite financial hardships, 16.5% of respondents stated they seldom felt despair about their future. However, 14.4% concur that when they consider money concerns, they often feel hopeless.

62.7 % of the urban poor children surveyed in the research said that they never felt that life lacked purpose, despite living in poverty. In addition, 21.4 % of respondents said that feeling meaningless due to poverty is uncommon. In contrast, 15.9% of respondents said they often experience sentiments that life is pointless when surrounded by poverty.

The statistics demonstrate that urban children can manage their depressive moods despite being disadvantaged.

When evaluated from the perspective of self-shame in relation to the issue of family poverty, 61.5% of individuals answered that they had never felt embarrassed despite living in a challenging family situation. This is followed by 20.2% who said they seldom feel embarrassed by their family's poverty. However, 18.3% of those born into impoverished homes claimed to feel humiliated often. However, it was shown that the issue of family poverty did not significantly influence the emotions of urban poor children.

In addition, the urban poor children stated that the issue of poverty did not make them lose their desire to live. 56.3 % of those surveyed never felt discouraged about life despite poverty. In addition, 23.6 % of respondents responded that they seldom believe their families' poverty leads them to lose their zest for life. However, a modest percentage of urban poor children, 20.1 %, agree that they often lack enthusiasm while living in poverty.

In discussing the level of self-confidence of urban children when faced with a lack of money, the study showed that 50.8% of these children agreed that they never thought that the lack of money made them lose confidence. 25.7% admitted they rarely feel insecure about themselves when there is no money. Meanwhile, 23.5% agreed that they often lose confidence when there is no money. These findings show that the self-confidence of urban children is still strong despite facing financial problems.

Meanwhile, 48.9% of urban poor children in this study admitted that they think poverty will make them lose positive feelings about themselves. While 32.7 % of urban poor children stated that they could not experience any positive emotions when their lives are plagued by poverty, 18.4 % of urban poor children admitted that they frequently feel unable to experience any positive emotions when their lives are plagued by poverty.

In addition, the study's findings also showed that urban children stated that they never felt more offended than usual when associating with friends with property, which is 48.3%. Meanwhile, 26.6% also admitted that it is rare to feel offended when associating with friends who have possessions. However, 25.1% reported feeling more offended when socialising with friends who own more material possessions.

The urban poor children also stated that they never feel worthless when they cannot change their family life, which is 46.2%. 30.9% said they rarely feel worthless when they cannot change their family life. However, 22.9% of these poor children often feel worthless when unable to change their family life. This situation shows that the emotions of the poor children of the city are a little disturbed when they cannot deal with the poverty problem in their families.

The study also found that urban children are less likely to be alone if they have financial problems. A total of 40.3% stated that they had never done so. Meanwhile, 34.9% admitted that they rarely act alone despite having financial problems. 24.8% of urban children admit that they often blame themselves if faced with financial problems. Financial problems do not seriously affect the cognitive and emotional development of urban poor children.

If you look at the aspect of despair, most urban poor children admit that they rarely feel sad when reminded of the poverty in their family, which is 39.8%. However, 35.1% said they often feel sad when reminded of poverty in their family. 25.1% say they never felt sad when reminded of the poverty that plagued the family. This proves that family poverty affects the cognitive and emotional development of urban poor children.

From the point of view of feeling anxious and unable to remain silent when remembering poverty in the family, the study's findings showed that urban poor children never felt anxious when remembering family poverty, which is 37%. Meanwhile, 32.4% stated that they often feel anxious and cannot remain silent when remembering poverty in their family. 30.6% stated that they rarely feel anxious when they think of family poverty. These findings show that many urban children feel anxious when financial problems befall them.

Moreover, it can be seen that the problem of poverty in the family also disturbs the emotions of the children of urban poor families. The study's results proved that 33.9% stated they never cried when thinking of poverty in their family. While 33.7% stated they rarely cry when thinking about family poverty, 32.4% admitted that they often cry when thinking about poverty in their family.

If viewed as a whole, it can be concluded that the effect of the level of depression on the emotional development of urban poor children is in a low state. Many urban poor children admit that there has never been a feeling of despair about life despite facing financial problems. They also do not feel ashamed despite living in a difficult family. These findings show that the urban poor children still experience the effects of depression on their emotional development when facing financial problems, even though they are not at a high level.

DISCUSSION

Emotional perspectives on the stress levels of urban poor children.

Based on the study, it has been shown that the respondents' level of stress is moderate. This is indicated by the children who seldom responded to stress-related questions. Analysis indicates that the consequences of stress cannot be felt and comprehended in detail between the ages of seven and fifteen. However, previous research has indicated variances in stress levels among students, with one group being able to manage stress without having negative physical, mental, or emotional impacts and even being able to motivate themselves. In contrast, another group cannot do so (Solberg & Viliarreal, 1997; Humphrey& Mccarthy, 1998; Yoon, 2002). Consequently, the impact of stress on a person may manifest in a variety of situations, such as emotions of loneliness, lack of sleep, nervousness, and excessive anxiety, as well as bodily symptoms resulting from an experienced incident (Wright, 1967). However, the respondents' responses did not imply that they suffered from high stress since most did not exhibit the symptoms. This study's researchers think that the children's moderate stress levels are primarily due to immaturity. Compared to their parents, who work hard to make a livelihood, these children continue to lack an understanding of the concept of adversity.

A 2018 UNICEF study on poverty and the denial of rights of urban children living in low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur found that most household family heads worked harder than ordinary workers yet were often paid less. This is because most household heads have a little educational background (Agha *et al.*, 2019). According to the study conducted by Romas and Sharma (2004), each individual responds differently to varying amounts of stress in their lives; one may differentiate stress levels between children and adults based on age-related traits and the amount of responsibility they carry. As a result, children experience less stress in their everyday lives, which can affect their health, personality, social relationships, and academic performance. However, despite poverty, a

few urban poor children are more exceptional than their classmates, motivating them to emerge from the poverty cocoon (Shamsadaal *et al.*, 2018). According to the study, once students can effectively control their stress level, they can attain their objectives.

According to a UNICEF Report (2018), some poor urban children do not get a decent education, with 51 % of 5-to-6-year-olds not attending preschool and 2% of 7-to-17-year-olds not attending school in Malaysia. However, just 14% of children have mediocre or poor academic performance. Despite several hurdles, some urban children's academic performance is close to the national average. Due to this, the researchers observed that the low-stress levels of urban poor children result from their young age and the fact that they do not have a direct role in supporting family life; thus, they are not burdened by family poverty.

The Prevalence of Depression among the Urban Poor

The research findings indicate that the prevalence of depression among urban children is low. Nevertheless, the observations of the respondents indicated that there were emotional consequences that interrupted their lives. Age-related characteristics, however, make it difficult for young children to convey emotions of unhappiness and what they see in others around them. This opinion is consistent with the findings of research done by Norhayati (2013), who discovered that, among children, depressive symptoms are more challenging to diagnose since they are often mistaken for just becoming a habit. Similarly, recent research exploring this phenomenon of depression has shown that children also experience depression. However, depression in children is a clinical issue that has gotten little attention (Herman, 2005). Consequently, the researchers revealed that urban children, especially those between the ages of 7 and 14, did not share their internal conflict openly due to a lack of adult attention. However, on the distributed questionnaire, these children reported depressive symptoms such as frequent feelings of melancholy, anxiety, irritation, poor self-esteem, misplaced guilt, incapacity, and concentration and memory difficulties. These depressive symptoms have been categorised by Ahmad *et al.* (2010) as having four connected aspects: emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological.

Most urban poor parents in the metropolis are often too busy working to afford the high cost of city living. Consequently, the children no longer have a place to vent and cannot discuss their difficulties with their parents, who serve as listeners, guides, and mentors. According to Norhayati (2013), children aged 9 to 12 also feel the desire to communicate their pent-up emotions. Occasionally, however, children are not afforded space due to the activities of parents who transfer their obligations to babysitters and others. Due to this, the children will conceal their emotions until they experience emotional upheaval.

In addition, the researchers observed that family factors drive the emotional impact on urban poor children. Components of life stress affect the emotional and physiological features such that they feel self-conflict, especially in children who are new to unfamiliar circumstances, home challenges, and depression. The creation of identity among these groups is very susceptible to external factors. Lack of parental knowledge makes children more prone to depression. For instance, children may feel embarrassed by others if they are criticised publicly for their parents' situations. In this circumstance, children exposed to parental pressure might feel the urge to distance themselves from

their parents, resulting in despair. As a result, young children often experience feelings of inferiority and lack of confidence while dealing with others, especially schoolmates.

CONCLUSION

Amid the urban sprawl, a small number of individuals continue to struggle to exist against the tide of modernity. Consequently, this research investigated the urban poor's circumstances and the effect on their children's psychological development. If they do not have a good education, they will be forced to act improperly. Consequently, several parties must participate in a holistic strategy to resolving their issues.

In this context, initiatives to eliminate urban poverty include wealthy religious people and groups, the government, business institutions, and nongovernmental organisations. For example, government and private institution intervention programmes can help address the urban poor's economic, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. It is intended that this research would assist the necessary stakeholders in combating urban poverty collaboratively.

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DAMAI Model: A Conflict Resolution towards Peaceful Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, a harmonious relationship between practitioners of various faiths is seen as one of the most desired prerequisites, making it a continuing topic of debate. Tensions, disputes, and even acts of violence between members of different faiths are not caused by chance but rather by the adherents' particular religious beliefs-inspired manner of life. By analysing the theological models established by Christian theologians of recent centuries, the authors gave their view on the problem's origins, namely the influence of using specific theological models on other faiths. Currently, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism are the most prevalent theological frameworks used by each religion to create and propagate its ideas. Using these models leads religious devotees to lose their impartiality while examining other faiths, resulting in a distorted viewpoint. To foster a climate of mutual respect among members of diverse faiths, the authors propose DAMAI, an alternative model of a theological approach to many religions that consists of Dialogue (*Dialog*), Justice (*Adil*), Charity (*Mengasihi*), Security (*Aman*), and Innovation (*Inovasi*). This concept benefits from becoming a tool for dispute resolution and fostering a religious lifestyle defined by tolerance and respect among members of different faiths.

Keywords: Conflict; Conflict Resolution; Peaceful Indonesia; Theology of Peace.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known to be a peace-loving country. Even though it is composed of different ethnicities, religions, and races. Indonesia has become a shared home for its population of millions. Its diversity of ethnicities results in an interesting phenomenon, in which each of Indonesia's regions has a motto or slogan of 'unity and peace.' This is akin to the Nigerian context as reflected by Eyo (2022). One of its examples is found in the Dayak community, whose motto of *Adil Ka' Talino* (fair to fellow human beings)*, Bacuramin Ka' Saruga* (to reflect/guide/view life in heaven)*, and Basengat Ka' Jubata* (always remembering God as the giver of life) becomes a point of access to social relations (Katarina & Diana, 2020). Basyir (2016) stated that each of Indonesia's regions has its own local wisdom to preserve harmony, for example, the Balinese concept of *Menyama Braya* (everyone is a brother or sister). Similarly, Papuans have a call to *Papua Tanah Damai* (Papua Land of Peace), and especially in Jayapura Regency, a motto of peace is formulated as *Kenambai Umbai* (one people with cheerfulness working together to achieve everlasting glory). These mottoes are encapsulated in *Pancasila* as the nation's foundation, the 1945 Constitution, and the motto of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Even so, there are various potentials of *SARA* (Indonesian *abbreviation* for ethnicity, religion, race, and other social divisions)-related conflicts. Riniwati (2016) disclosed that Indonesia's diversity provides advantages and, at the same time, also creates conflict potential. An example is a conflict of religions triggered by the use of one of these theological models, namely exclusive, inclusive, and pluralistic models. The fundamental premise that has the potential to conflict with the three theological models is based on a "dogmatic" issue that carries a statement of particularity (singular truth).

In Indonesia, the influence of these three models raises the question of whether a "belief in God" conduct is indicated by the first *Pancasila* principle (The principle is on the belief in the one supreme God). A number of supporters of particular faiths internalise a "holier-than-thou" mentality based on this never-ending inquiry, which alienates and even anathemizes adherents of other religious views. This leads in "majority against minority" and "superior versus inferior" mentalities. Consequently, religiously motivated acts of violence are unavoidable. Different occurrences, such as those in Poso (December 25th, 1998-December 20th, 2001), Ambon (December 26th, 1999-September 16th, 2010), Jakarta and various districts of Java (September 12th, 2012), have resulted in the deaths of several people.

In Papua (the largest and easternmost province of Indonesia), religious-related conflict potentials are caused by several conditions, including interpretations of religious verses, delivery of religious teachings offending to other religious adherents, obstruction to the construction of houses of worship (especially mosques and Islamic prayer houses), and hidden and/or blatant Islamic and/or Christian proselytization practices. These conditions create various acts of confrontations such as attacks vandalism attacks towards mosques during call of prayers deemed too loud, construction ban of Islamic Center by churches (April 18th, 2007), and religious incidents in Tolikara (July 19th, 2015) (Pamungkas & Indriasari, 2021).

In the context of Christianity, the aforementioned three theological paradigms may spark tensions in interreligious communal life. The paradigm of exclusivity concentrates its perspective of salvation on an ecclesia-centric viewpoint, which positions the Church

at the heart of salvation and causes the Church to identify itself as the dominion of God's kingdom (Coward, 1992; Coward, 1996; Panikkar, 1978). This model is centred around the mottos of *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* (no salvation outside the Church) and *Extra Ecclesiam Nullus Propetha* (no prophets outside the Church) (Hick, 1982). Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, modified this notion in his teachings, saying that there is no salvation outside Christ (Braaten, 1977). Some verses considered as the basis of this notion include John 3:36; John 14:6 & 9; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Philippians 2:10-11; 1 Timothy 2:5; and 1 John 5:12.

The second model of inclusivism emerged around the 16th–17th century and has a Christ-centered (Christocentric) view of salvation, which has a Christological dimension (Dupuis, 2001). In this model, Jesus constitutes the centre of salvation and represents God's divine love for the world (Knitter, 2002:38–39). On the one hand, this notion recognises Jesus' particularity as the centre of salvation. On the other hand, this notion also recognises Jesus as God's representative who brings the universality of God's love within him so that all humans receive salvation. The paradigm of inclusive theology seeks to prioritise the particularity of God's continuing incarnation in Jesus Christ while also addressing the degree to which the universality of God's love applies to Jesus Christ and how God's wish that all people be rescued functions (Kung, 1995). This notion includes the following Bible verses as its basis: John 1:1–14; Acts 14:16–17; and 17:27–28; and Romans 1:20. The researchers oppose the viewpoint, which attempts to reconcile its identification of Christ as the centre of salvation with the idea that other faiths do not necessarily acknowledge Christ as their centre of salvation and are "anonymous Christians."

The third model is called pluralism. It has a theocentric (God-centred) view of salvation. This model accepts the truths found in other religions, enabling them to endorse elements of common good found in all religions, since truth is relative (Hick & Knitter, 1987). Hence, this model stresses the truths found in all religions (Lumintang, 2002). Furthermore, this theology is based on the historical Christ (Eckardt, 1996; Hick, 1977). The pluralistic model of theology emerges because some religions tend to affirm themselves as unique and special and see themselves as the primary religion for others, which they call secondary. This situation arises due to their religious justification, which positions them as particular and colonial. In this circumstance, it is hard for religions to flourish while simultaneously purging themselves of their excessively human attributes and embracing the primordial forces underlying their formation.

Amid plural situations triggered by the problems of the essence of divinity, self-justification occurs continuously and radically (Copeland, 1962; Kraemer, 1960). The loss of religious recognition, solidarity, and brotherhood dramatically increases the potential for the emergence of conflict between religious adherents. As a result, religion is understood as an oppressor of liberty and a destroyer of consciousness (Smith, 1985). Karl Marx further affirmed this understanding, stating that religion is the breath of the oppressed, the heart of the heartless world, the soul of the soulless frost, and the opium of the masses (Gnanakan, 2000). The authors state their objection to this model for two primary reasons. First, this model potentially unleashes the dangers of relativism, an attitude that takes all religions to have the same truth and understands that various religious traditions are essentially phenomena of one similar thing. This implies that even though the interpretations of each religion are distinct, the interpreted teachings of all faiths provide the common basis of all religions. Second, this model causes the particularities of religions to be "emptied", and even "sold." The condition is caused by

the model's adherence to the theory of "experienced expressionism" When applied to religion; the theory concludes that the various religions have different objectification of a core expression shared by all religions, and it is the norm to determine whether or not the objectification(s) work. In experienced expressionism, the "inner thing" is put forward first, then the "outer thing". In other words, experience precedes linguistic and/or cultural expression.

After analysing the models mentioned above, the authors of this research propose the *DAMAI* model, which criticises and rejects the religious models that have the potential to trigger the nation's disintegration. The *DAMAI* paradigm incorporates biblical ideals derived from "*kharis kai eirene*," which translates to "God's grace and peace for all religious adherents."

DAMAI MODEL: A PEACE-BUILDING CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTRUMENT IN INDONESIA

Theoretical Review

Inter-religious disputes in Indonesia are a contemporary reality which have occurred in the past. Different dogmatic doctrines further enhance their ideas of God, since they employ various models of theology. History recounts the presence of anarchistic activities in which some faiths view themselves as superior to others.

Tangible acts by adherents of each religion are understood as blasphemous behaviour towards other religious adherents and are contrary to the essence of their respective religions. Such problems of religion have threatened the stance of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (It is the official national motto of Indonesia, the phrase comes from the Kawi language meanining "Unity in Diversity"). Such religious problem has also questioned *Pancasila* as the nation's foundation & Indonesia as a religious country (Aritonang, 2021; Lestari, 2015). Consequently, the possibility of national disintegration is generated. In the name of religion, such actions that border on treason should not be permitted. Diverse research (Sukma, 2005; Bräuchler, 2009; Sukma, 2012; Moore, 2014; Arifin, 2016; Suntana & Tresnawaty, 2021) have attempted, and a variety of strategies have been used to resolve and overcome them, but an ideal, sustainable peace has yet to be achieved.

Based on this regretful situation, the authors propose a model called *DAMAI* (lit. 'Peace' in Indonesian, an acronym for *Dialog*, *Adil*, *Mengasihi*, *Aman*, and *Inovasi*) as an alternative solution to *SARA*- loaded, especially religious-related, conflicts.

Reasons for Proposal

DAMAI (Indonesian word for 'peace') is an often-used, often-heard term. An equivalent for this word in Hebrew is *shalom,* meaning 'a state of health, wholeness, and good'. In Greek, *eirene* is the equivalent, similar in meaning to *shalom* (Wangyu & Panggarra, 2010). There are many concepts in which the Bible relates this word to, including salvation (Gen. 43:27; Exo. 4:13; Psalm 85:10; Mrk. 5:34; Luk. 7:50); friendship (Joshua 9:20); contentment (Judges 19:20); peace (1 Kings 5:12; Hebrews 12:14; Isaiah 48:18; Isaiah 57:19; Luk.1:79; Luk. 2:14; Luk. 10:5; John 14:27; John 20:19; Acts 10:36);

prosperity (Psalm 122:7; Jeremiah 28:7); good fortune (Psalm 73:3); tranquility (Psalm 4:8).

In its broadest terms, peace means' 'tranquillity' and 'non-disturbance'. It is also defined as a state of 'no war, peace, and harmony' for human beings, which can also be defined as 'living in a brotherhood of harmonious fellowship." (Maz. 133:1-3; Gaurifa, 2020; Utomo, 2019). Based on the aforementioned definition of peace, the authors state two founding reasons for the importance of *the DAMAI* theological model. This model creates a state of fellowship (*koinonia*) and presents the signs of God's kingdom (*shalom*). Detailed explanations of the two reasons are provided below.

Creating *Koinonia* through DAMAI

Koinonia is often referred to as "fellowship" (Simanjuntak, 2018). In the Christian faith, however, its use highlights the significance of God's extended family (familia Dei) to humanity, which becomes its members. As members of God's extended family, humans should be able to live in peace and harmony. In this capacity, people should be accountable for promoting a peaceful and balanced way of life among all individuals and groups in society. The link between charity and God's family must be expressed in this *Koinonia*. The fulfilment of God's love for humanity occurred when He sacrificed His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be the saviour of humanity.

The Church as the Body of Christ reflects a way of life that reflects the identity of God's family (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). As the Body of Christ, the Church is obligated to share life and care for people regardless of their background. In this instance, the Church should not be confrontational but informative and persuading.

It is believed that the DAMAI theological model will play a vital role in fulfilling the concept of harmonious living among religious members. The DAMAI model allows each religion to educate, practise, and preserve the ideals of peace to offer a religious life that, although having diverse religious characteristics, is connected in a brotherhood of love as one large family of God who lives in harmony and peace with others.

Realizing signs of God's kingdom through DAMAI

Since a peaceful living is constructed on the foundation of lifestyles free from enmity and conflict, then actually through *DAMAI* comes what the authors call 'signs of the Kingdom of God'. In the Koine Greek Bible, a term of '*baisileia tou Theou*' is used. Here, the authors view the Kingdom of God in the perspective of God's kingship, which, through *DAMAI*, is realized. God's kingship realized through *DAMAI* wants to present God's role as a King Who governs the lives of all His creatures and declares *shalom* (joy, peace, and goodness) for His people.

God's kingdom is visible in the peace He brings through the life and deeds of Jesus Christ as His only Son sent to the world to reconcile humanity to God. In this peace, Jesus declares signs of God's kingdom in various acts, such as healing people, consoling people, providing nourishment, strengthening faith, casting out demons, even raising the dead (compare Luke. 4:18-20). Therefore, through peace-based *DAMAI* theological model, God empathizes with people and gives them chance to live in His grace and as one familial fellowship of God under His government which continues to present peace, joy, and happiness to His people.

DAMAI Model Principles

The authors put forward this DAMAI model based on God's work that by Christ reconciles all things, the whole cosmos, to Him (Col. 1:20). This reconciling work covers the macrocosm, the universe, and the microcosm, humans. Thus, the assessment of this DAMAI model presented in this research must be situated within the frame of this work of God.

By understanding that all the works of God, both the works of creation and salvation, are an expression of God's love, all five elements of this *DAMAI* model need to be infused, imbued, grounded, and lived by love. Therefore, love, or charity in this case, does not only become one of the elements in this model, but also its basis and whole essence, in accordance to its position in Christianity as the main law (Mark. 12:29–31) applying towards a person's relationship to God, his/her neighbours, and him-/herself. All things, including religious adherents who want to live in harmony with each other, are reconciled by God, who is love (1 John 4:16b). Referring to the description above, the authors would like to elaborate on the principles of the *DAMAI* model.

Dialog (Creating Dialogue and Communication)

Dialogue is one means of achieving peace and resolving conflicts. It serves as a tool for communicating with and meeting parties to carry out all forms of good deeds (Ottuh et al., 2014; Dajwan, 2021; Darmawan, 2019). Multiple accounts in the Bible describe discussions between God, humans, and the universe referred to as "the dialogue of creation." The Old Testament, particularly Genesis 1:1–30, vividly illustrates how God organises heaven and earth. It is a general revelation from God (Sihombing, 2018). The tale begins with formless and empty earth, darkness upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moving over the face of the oceans. God created everything through His activity; before that, there was nothing. The work of God was accomplished by a dialogue (words/power) in His Word, which became Jesus Christ, in whom all things were created (John 1:3; compare Col. 1:16).

The primary objective of God's labour is to convey goodness to His creation, as He declared all He created to be "very good" (Genesis 1:31). (Sihombing, 2018). It reveals the discourse of God's activity via a universal revelation in which the Son of God is typically present throughout the universe. The unique conversation of God's activity (special revelation) is explained by the presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to redeem and save humanity and to meet them. The arrival of Jesus Christ on earth will bring humanity goodness (compare Eph. 2:7). In this view, Jesus was sent to earth so humanity could attain all of God's goodness through Him alone. Thus, the principal objective of the discourse of God's action in God's unique revelation is to urge sinners to repent and gain God's kindness.

According to the aforementioned theological perspective, the fundamental goal of the "conversation of God's activity"—both creation and redemption—is to bring about goodness. To promote a harmonious and peaceful existence for all religious believers, it is proper in the Christian life to demonstrate all good works for our neighbours (see Galatians 6:9–10, John 5:29, and Ephesians 6:8). Besides the common life aforementioned, the conversation of work encourages all faiths toward a shared goal of addressing humanitarian issues and averting violence. In this context, all religious

believers may collaborate on initiatives such as alleviating poverty, which is characterised by restricted assets and limited scientific and technological knowledge. In addition, all believers should collaborate to eradicate backwardness and alienation in all social, cultural, economic, and political spheres, where community members are often treated as objects rather than people, victimising them against diverse interests.

In addition, religious believers should collaborate on a purpose to avoid drug usage that affects the young of each faith and the country as a whole, including combating misinformation, taking HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) prevention seriously, and assisting catastrophe victims. The aforementioned works make it evident that the conversation of God's work calls attention to a common purpose for the Church, religion, and government that focuses on shared prosperity and virtue. In other words, the work dialogue is an inter-denominational, inter-religious, and inter-governmental dialogue.

Despite the multiplicity of faiths and dogmas, religious conversation of labour is evident in this way of life, particularly in worshipping God by mutual service in unity (Onimhawo & Ottuh, 2007). People sin when they know how to do good but choose not to do it. Doing good indeed requires sacrifice, but this should only be undertaken if it is God's desire. Because whoever does good comes from God, and whoever does evil has never seen Him, it follows that whoever does evil has never seen God (compare 1 Pet. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:19; 3 John 1:11).

Adil (Being Just)

One of the primary triggers for religious conflicts is injustice. For peace and harmony to exist, there must be a condition of justice that applies to all faiths, as doing justice entails giving each person what they deserve. Many verses talk about justice, such as Isaiah 45:8; Amos 5:24. Theologically, this verse is the essence of Deutero-Isaiah (also called Second Isaiah, section of the Old Testament Book of Isaiah (chapters 40–55), and wants to reveal the importance of the Word of God to King Cyrus. In this call, Isaiah wants to explain that the essential qualities of a king, "righteousness" and "salvation", are given by God through the created universe and that a king should be willing to help his people, especially in defending what is right. For this reason, King Cyrus was seated on the throne by God, although he was not one of God's people (45:4).

By examining this part, the authors concluded that justice is related to the duty to pay attention and to ensure that each person obtains his or her rights—other verses, such as Isaiah 56:1; Ezekiel 45:9; and Micah 6:8, similar state things. Isaiah 56:1 mentions that keeping judgement and doing justice is God's will, since His salvation is near to come and His righteousness is to be revealed. Ezekiel 45:9 emphasises the avoidance of various acts of violence and persecution of God's people. Meanwhile, Micah 6:8 reminds God's faithful that He requires them to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.

Similar to the Old Testament, the New Testament contains several verses discussing the importance of just living among neighbours as God's people, such as in 1 Timothy 6:11. This verse implies that evil is not God's intention for His people to do (compare 1 Tim. 6:10). Furthermore, justice (living righteously) is closely related to godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Hence, a righteous and just life is one example of Godliness that should be realised in faith, love, patience, and meekness to others, regardless of *the diversity of SARA*. Another example is found in Titus 2:12, in which Paul exhorted us that it is the teaching of God that Christians should "(deny) ungodliness and worldly lusts" and "should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world". Based on the texts mentioned above, it is clear that a life of justice and

righteousness should be realised and felt by all. Therefore, everyone should live in obedience to the law, free themselves from conflicts in the name of specific interests, and live humbly before God.

As for the case in Indonesia, the fifth principle in *Pancasila* should become the guide for Indonesians to realise justice by eradicating any potential social gaps that can lead to discord. Conversely, Indonesians should together be responsible for living a life that upholds justice in accordance with prevailing laws and norms, such as stopping various forms of wickedness and violence in the name of SARA and showing a life full of wisdom, patience, and tenderness to others as a form of Godliness in order to create harmony and peace between religious adherents. The values of justice create a life of harmony and equality (Darmawan, 2019). In this spirit, equal, non-discriminatory treatment should be realised in all aspects of life and on all sides of the community. One of the aspects of the community that needs more attention is its religious side.

Due to the importance of expressing justice, all religious adherents are called together to realise justice for others by actions such as giving room and opportunities for each religion to develop itself without harming other religions. It is certain that if the life of justice and righteousness is fought for, then unity manifesting in peace and harmony can be created and adequately maintained so that no potential for harm and conflict exists in the lives of religious adherents.

Mengasihi **(Loving Each Other)**

In order to achieve harmony between religious adherents, love for each other is fundamental and must be practiced. In each religion, there is a teaching of love. By loving each other, harmony between neighbors in religious living can be achieved (Singgih, 2015). In Christianity, many Biblical sources talk about love, such as John 3:16, which expressly describes God's Agape love for humans. Also, Christianity says that the message of love is the first and most important law (Tafona'o, 2019), which is clear from what Jesus said in Matthew 22:37–39, Matthew 5:44, and Luke 6:27, among other places.

The verses above explain that love, or charity, is a spiritual characteristic expected for each religious adherent, especially a Christian, to have and practice. As Christians, each person is asked to love not only God but also his or her neighbor and even his or her enemies, since love covers many sins (compare 1 Pet. 4:8). Jesus gave His disciples the commandment to love each other as "a new commandment" (John 13:34). However, this commandment does not contain novelty since it has existed since the Old Testament era (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). The novelty of this commandment lies in how it does it, namely the way Jesus does it. This is clear in John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Hence, loving each other is the commandment of Jesus (compare John 15:17). The commandment also extends to enemies of Christians with a similar application. Paul the Apostle expounded this Christian love teaching in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 by providing various applications of Christian love. Paul then says that love, or charity, is the greatest when compared to faith and hope. Based on the different Bible passages above, we can say that God loves us a lot and that everyone who loves God must love their neighbours (compare Matthew 10:8).

Love from God can resolve various forms of violence and conflict that often bring misery to humans (Maia, 2019; Novalina, 2020). In an atmosphere of violence, humans love to oppress, harm, and destroy each other to realise their so-called interests. In this case, conflict or violence is a social phenomenon in which each human tends to defend

himself/herself and his/her existence. Within this scope, there is a tendency to control others and act arbitrarily in thoughts, words, and deeds against others. A culture of love needs to be realised to build harmony between religious adherents, which can prevent and solve all forms of violence in the name of religion. The manifestation of love should be apparent in all forms of life. Thoughts, words, and deeds representing mutual respect, love, honour, protection, and care should manifest in daily life. Thus, a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere can permeate all areas of life.

Aman (Creating Security)

Security is a living atmosphere of quietness, comfort, and tranquilly with others. An authentic sense of security – not a false, make-up one – is, of course, needed in the lives of all religious adherents. Not a false sense. The Bible provides examples of true and false senses of security. Amos 6:1-7 records the prophecy of Amos during the reigns of King Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom (787–747 BC) and King Uzziah in Judah (783–742 SM). During this era, the two kingdoms were blessed in abundance with prosperity. All things, including the relationship between religion and state leaders, were excellent in spiritual terms. Also, at this point, the two Israelite kingdoms were unconquerable and unsurpassed by their neighbouring enemies. Therefore, the leaders of both countries felt content, secure, and comfortable.

The cities of Zion and Samaria were two centres of life for Israelites at that time, since Zion was the centre of religious activities in the South and Samaria was the centre of politics and government in the North. Thus, religious elites were packed into Zion (and Jerusalem) while political elites and state leaders, especially of the North, gathered in Samaria. In this manner, religious and state leaders enjoyed prosperity, security, and comfort.

Historical records in the Bible show that in this era, the two kingdoms experienced exceeding progress and wealth (compare 2 Chr. 8:3-4; 2 Kings 14:25; 2 Chr. 26:9 & 15; and 2 Chr. 26:6-8). In light of this, it is correct to say that Zion and Samaria experienced prosperity, glory, tranquillity, security, and comfort. However, Amos the prophet said this sense of security in the two kingdoms was false since only state and religious leaders felt it while the ordinary people, especially the simplest ones, did not. Amos declared, “Woe to them!” in which “them” referred to the religious leaders.

The harsh criticism from Amos the Prophet could not be separated from the moral depravity the religious leaders seemed to cultivate. Corruption, oppression, and extortion seemed to become habits that could not be abandoned since it was from these things that they could finance their living, even to the point of living in abundance. This created a sorrowful situation: the so-called God’s chosen had depraved moral lives.

Based on the theological explanation above, it needs to be emphasised that religious adherents must have good morals for the sake of a safe, peaceful, and comfortable life since it is strongly related to the behaviour of life. By having good morals, all people of God can differentiate between acts ordained by God to do and chosen not to do (compare Romans 12:2). With morals, each person can understand which acts are worth doing to others and which are not. Morals are related to the values of life acceptable to others, such as mutual love, mutual empathy, solidarity, mutual tolerance, the mutual struggle for good, joy, prosperity, and peace, equality, and mutual condemnation of various acts of violence in the name of religion. Therefore, moral people should view others as brothers and sisters and exterminate mutual suspicion due to various interests.

An attitude toward life that creates a sense of security makes people experience peace or comfort. The Apostle Peter said that people who experience peace have an incorruptible spiritual adornment (treasure) that comes from a gentle spirit and is very precious in the sight of God (1 Pet. 3:4). Therefore, it is clear that every person can only enjoy a sense of security and peace with a gentle spirit or humble heart (Matt. 11:29). That person also has self-control (Gal. 5:23), patience, and love (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12). They are also people who do not like quarrels (conflict/violence) but instead like to be friendly to everyone and try to have wisdom/understanding and respect (Titus 3:2; Jas. 3:13; I Pet. 3:15).

Inovasi (Initiating Innovation)

Religious adherents need internal and external innovation to establish a peaceful and harmonious living environment. The Bible explains the essence of change, as in Matthew 5:13–16. In the verses, Jesus wanted to explain the importance of internal change with externally-spreading impacts. Jesus explained this type of change by using two devices: salt and light. Salt and light are two necessities of human life. *Salt* is a seasoning which also acts as a preservative. Light, when positioned in a dark place, will illuminate its surroundings. In these ways, Jesus used salt and light to illustrate a positive and significant change. Christians must be the catalysts for change and improvements to the quality of life wherever they are. So that God be glorified, each Christian must be responsible as an agent of change whose suitable activities are felt and seen by others.

Another example comes from Romans 12:2. In this verse, each believer should not be conformed to this world but be transformed by renewing the mind (Dwiraharjo, 2018; Manurung, 2019; Sumiwi, 2018), meaning that the renewal should come as total and comprehensive in the lives of the faithful. Through this transformation and renewal, one can understand and differentiate between the things God ordains him/her to do and those things God ordains not to do.

It should be concluded that in life with others, both those of the same faith and those who are not, it is necessary to show a total and comprehensive change in life for the good of others and the benefit of the person's faith. Another takeaway is that to create a peaceful and harmonious life for religious adherents; each person needs to make changes that renew life. This change eventually brings mutual happiness, joy, harmony, and peace to all religious adherents, which in turn leaves all activities not bringing change and mutual happiness behind, such as acts of superiority and conflicts in the name of religion. In this spirit, there are three principles of change that religious adherents need to own: the will for themselves to be changed, the will to change themselves, and the will to initiate changes for mutual peace and harmony.

CONCLUSION

The "truth of life" for religious individuals is to live in peace as God's people. Nonetheless, peaceful living is always a unique difficulty, especially for religious devotees, owing to the rise of several religion-related disputes. Several elements contribute to the possibility of religious strife. Among these are the effects of using religious models. The exclusive, inclusive, and pluralistic theological paradigms have allowed faiths to scorn, injure, blaspheme, and humiliate one another in their struggle for a single truth. Observing this unfortunate reality, the authors believe that the *DAMAI* theological model is a valuable new strategy for resolving and avoiding religion-related disputes and fostering peace

among religious followers at the regional, national, and worldwide levels. It will to break stereotypes which often causes conflicts among people. This was one of the ways Jesus used in dealing with the Jewish-Samaritan conflict of his days (Eyo, 2018).

The *DAMAI* method comprises the fundamental concepts of Dialogue (*Dialog*), Justice (*Adil*), Generosity (*Mengasihi*), and Security (*Aman*) (*Inovasi*). A culture that encourages discussion is necessary to begin contact with one another and become aware of the differences in values, which in turn promotes understanding and fosters harmonic and peaceful coexistence among religious believers. In the open discussion, a condition of justice will exist in the lives of religious believers, particularly in their thoughts, words, acts, and emotions, which generates the desire to achieve harmonious living. Each religion devotee is required to live a life of kindness toward their neighbour, unimpeded by sectarian divides, in a fair existence. A safe, comfortable, and tranquil atmosphere of life between religious adherents will manifest in this life founded on charity. In the end, a contextual and contemporary innovation in theology will emerge in teaching religious values and the values' application responsibly and free from conflict.

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Piloting Web-Integrated Primal For Beginning Qualitative Researchers through Multidimensional Research Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

Educational technologies are powerful digital tools that teachers can harness to improve instructional productivity and efficiency to achieve maximum student learning development. This study utilised a multi-dimensional mixed-method research design to validate the researchers' developed Web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers. The three phases of this study require two different sets of participants selected through purposive sampling. Senior high school teachers who are fully immersed in teaching Practical Research 1 and 150 students from the two classes of Technical, Vocational, and Livelihood track in Dolores National High School, S.Y. 2021–2022. The data collected were analysed using weighted mean and qualitative response description for phase 1, t-test for independent samples for phase 2, and Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological data analysis method for phase 3. The data reveals that the web-integrated primal is highly acceptable in terms of content and relevance and highly acceptable in terms of mechanics. Furthermore, a significant difference in the learning gain scores was manifested between the two groups. This also means that web-integrated primal is more effective in improving the students' research competence. Lastly, misleading reviews, the unreviewed bulk of manuscripts, and difficulty crafting research topics led the respondents to suggest screen-

ing feedback from reviewers, working in groups, and creating pre-identified research categories. Thus, this study concludes that the innovation is acceptable and effective, though there is a need to revisit the guidelines of the web-integrated primal.

Keywords: Web-integrated primal; Beginning Qualitative Researchers; Peer-review, Dolores National High School.

INTRODUCTION

Technology advancements have dramatically affected the education system in the Philippines, as teaching strategies and processes need to be aligned with the learners and the advancing technology. Educators worldwide are expected to be equipped with the necessary skills and competence to meet the demands of 21st-century education. The Philippine educational system was revised from the K–12 basic education programmes after the former president, Benigno S. Aquino III, signed Republic Act No. 10533 (also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) to build a curriculum consistent with 21st-century learning and quality education similar to other nations. In the Philippines, the education department is implementing several initiatives to promote, inculcate, and sustain the research culture in elementary and secondary education (DepEd, 2017). The department recognises the importance of research within the academy and even in different walks of life, where research plays a crucial role. Students gain analytical and critical thinking skills through research and strong communication skills that are important in the global arena.

Research is the foundation of knowledge and innovation. To provide quality education, the Department of Education pushed for implementing the Senior High School programme in 2016. The programme directs the inclusion of two more grade levels in primary education, Grades 11 and 12—thereby offering several subjects, including practical research 1 and 2, and inquiries, investigation, and immersion, which are all research-focused courses (DepEd, 2017 as cited by Roxas, 2020). Practical Research 1 is a preparatory research subject for senior high school students that requires the conduct and preparation of qualitative research related to learners' expertise and daily experiences. According to Murtonen, Olkinuora, Tynjälä and Lehtinen (2008), academic education should prepare learners to understand the importance of research skills in society and their future working lives. Acar (2017) believes that the introduction of the K-12 Senior High School model will increase the compatibility of Filipino students and professionals throughout the globe. In addition, Roxas's (2020) qualitative investigation of senior high school students' opinions found that completing research in SHS would prepare them for future research endeavours, such as in college since they will have learned relevant information through research. Hence, teaching research drives learners to a better future.

Undoubtedly, the ability to write in numerous contexts in life is invaluable. Senior high school students are required to produce scientific research technique compositions, draught experiments, business proposals, marketing concepts, essays on contemporary social issues, critical articles, project plans, and other summative assessments, according to Paurillo (2019). However, many students still have difficulties with academic writing, despite the efforts of the education sector to scaffold and enhance students' writing skills. Therefore, there is a need to fill the gap and advance an in-depth understanding of the students' academic writing difficulties (Roxas, 2020). Several studies have mentioned

learners' difficulties in writing manuscripts, including Megaiab (2014), who noted the difficulty in applying proper tenses, articles, singular and plural, verbs, prepositions, spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation due to mother tongue influence. Ghabool, Mariadass, and Kashef (2012) cited language use and punctuation as significant factors influencing learners' ability to write manuscripts. Hence, Al Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) recommend aligning the school writing curriculum with an emphasis on ideas' development, content knowledge, and critical and creative thinking.

Similarly, in the researchers' school, they observed several students who found difficulty framing statements and even grammar and other language structures. In addition, findings in the study of Lassoued, Alhendawi, and Bashitialshaaer (2020) mentioned pedagogical, technical, and financial or organisational obstacles teachers face in delivering quality education. Also, Al Fadda (2012) argued that for most native speakers, and more so with second language speakers like most Filipino senior high school students, academic writing in English at advanced levels is a challenge and difficult. Thus, focus on understanding the importance of writing (Gallagher, 2016). This pushed the conduct of action research, specifically focusing on guiding beginning researchers through primal in Practical Research 1.

According to Farombi (as cited by Tety, 2016), instructional materials include books, audio-visual, software, and hardware related to educational technology. He further opines that the availability, adequacy, and relevance of instructional materials in classrooms can influence quality teaching, positively affecting students' learning and academic performance. Aldevera et al. (2019) and Ulla (2018) agreed that the difficulties faced by senior high school students were the scarcity of facilities and the absence of learning materials and tools. Technology integration in the educational setting has gained wide acceptance and practise since it makes it easy and quickens students' learning. The worldwide pandemic calls for the conduct of online instructions and the utilisation of electronic materials such as learning management systems (Irfan, Kusumaningrum, Yulia & Widodo, 2020; & Reich, Buttimer, Fang, Hillaire, Hirsch, Larke, and Slama, 2020), and the use of learning websites (Dhawan, 2020; Wargadinata, Maimunah, Eva, and Rofiq, 2020) are all effective in improving distance education delivery.

Two-thirds of the global internet population have visited a social networking or blogging site, and the time spent on these sites is growing at three times the rate of the internet as a whole (Briones et al., 2011). This strongly suggests that the exchange of information is the most crucial aspect of social activities in virtual communities. A wider variety of online forums are used in community media, such as blogs, business discussion forums, chat rooms, emails, consumer product review sites and forums, general internet conversations, mobile blogs, and social networking sites (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Kaplan and Haenlein (2012) further classified social media by utilising studies related to media and theories of social evolution. In this regard, the researchers aim to integrate the teacher-made Primal in Practical Research with 21st-century skills such as collaboration, critical inquiry, and research skills and practises through learning websites.

Different research skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, analysis, and dissemination are just a few strategies and tools that can be acquired and needed to take on research (Meerah & Arsad, 2010). As interactive forms of education are highly encouraged in today's school year to supplement the student's learning, a comprehensive instructional material would be of great help to assist our learners in research. Hence, this action research primarily aims to validate the researcher's developed web-integrated

primal in terms of its content, relevance, and mechanics in learning delivery. Moreover, this investigation aims to determine the impact of the innovation in terms of the Grade 11 learners' research competence in the Dolores National High School during the school year 2021–2022.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This investigation validates the researchers' developed Web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers among two Grade 11 TVL classes at the Dolores National High School during 2021-2022. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of acceptability of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers in terms of contents, relevance, and mechanics as evaluated by teachers in Practical Research 1? content
2. What is the effect of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers on the experimental group's competence in comparison with the control group?
3. What are the suggestions of the participants to improve the over-all aspects of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study's participants are beginning qualitative researchers in the Dolores National High School during the school year 2021-2022. Beginning researchers are learners who have not undergone any research classes in their junior high school.

This study used a multi-dimensional mixed-method research design specifically, (1) a quantitative evaluative research design to validate the knowledge–sharing website cum Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers in terms of the identified constructs, (2) a quasi-experimental research design to measure the effect of the said innovation on the research competence of the respondents, and a (3) Phenomenological Research for it seeks to describe the lived experience of Grade 11 TVL students in the utilisation of knowledge–sharing website cum Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers. The three phases of this study required two different sets of participants. For phase 1, the researchers used purposive sampling in evaluating the acceptability of a knowledge-sharing website cum Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers in terms of content, relevance, and mechanics of the innovation. Specifically, the researchers chose senior high school teachers who are fully immersed in teaching Practical Research 1 for Grade 11 students in Dolores National High School. For Phase 2, the researchers picked two classes from the Technical, Vocational, and Livelihood track in the Dolores National High School, comparable in terms of their maturity and performance, to serve as the experimental and control groups. A Levene's test for equality of groups will be conducted to assure the comparability of the selected classes. Thus, 70 Grade 11 TVL students were chosen as the experimental group, and another 70 students of the same strand and grade level were chosen as part of the controlled group. And for the third and last phase, the researchers picked learners among the experimental group to share their learning experiences and suggestions for improving the entire innovation.

The researchers used three (3) instruments for this study. First, an acceptability/Likert-based questionnaire primarily focuses on validating certain constructs of a knowledge-sharing website cum Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers. Secondly, the researchers developed a 50-item pre/post-test instrument to

measure respondents' level of competence in the identified learning competencies. Lastly, the researchers employed Focus Group Discussion to select respondents to air out their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving the entire innovation, which has a 2-hour time allotment. These research instruments passed through content validation of a panel of experts such as master teachers, professors, language teachers, and education program supervisors who are experts in the field of research. Moreover, the test instrument has undergone a test-retest type of reliability measure, with an outcome of a Cronbach alpha.

This study's data gathering procedures commenced after receiving necessary requisites from the higher authorities, such as the Eastern Samar Division Superintendent, Schools District Supervisor, and the School Principal. The researchers submitted a copy of this study's proposal manuscript and a letter asking permission for its conduct. Once approved, the researcher sought permission for the innovation to be presented for content validation by the same set of authorities with experts from the schools' division of Eastern Samar. Afterwards, the researchers implemented the innovation in one experimental group, while the other group remained under the modular print instruction. Then, researchers conducted a 2-hour Focus Group Discussion to collect recommendations of instructional material features that can be added to the innovation. After which, the recommendations were analysed and integrated into the material. The researchers obtained consent from the respondents of this study by first explaining the purpose and methods of the study, ensuring the confidentiality of the responses collected by using only pseudonyms in the presentation of data, allowing the respondents to review the interpreted data prior to its presentation, and destroying the transcripts after the data was interpreted.

Since this study employed qualitative investigation of respondents' lived experiences on the use of web-integrated primal for beginning qualitative researchers, the researchers were strictly following exhaustive approaches of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to achieve trustworthiness of results, which will add rigor and strength to data gathering, and thickness of descriptions (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Specifically, "member checking" was employed to build an agreement between the respondents and the researcher regarding the meanings and subsequent themes to be formulated (Froilan, 2018). The outcome of this process, transcript reports, translated phrases/statements, and derived themes were scrutinised by identified researchers with experience and publication regarding Qualitative Research in the province, including the division research coordinator of the schools' division of Eastern Samar.

Data analysis for this study used three methods to answer the established research questions. First is the weighted mean and qualitative description of responses, which summarises the validation made by selected teachers in Practical Research 1. Second is the t-test for independent samples to compare the experimental and control groups' levels of competence. And finally, Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method of data analysis is composed of seven steps.

The third approach has undergone the following steps. The first step is familiarisation, where the researcher familiarises the data by reading through the participants' accounts several times. Then, identifying significant statements with great relevance to the phenomenon will be identified through the investigation. Next is formulating meanings relevant to the phenomenon that arise from carefully considering the significant statements. This was followed by clustering themes by identifying

meanings into common themes across all accounts; then, the researcher developed a detailed inclusive description of the phenomenon, incorporating all the themes produced in the previous step. The next step was producing the fundamental structure by condensing the detailed description down to a short, dense statement that captures just those aspects deemed essential to the structure of the phenomenon. Lastly, verification of the fundamental structure was sought by returning the fundamental structure statement to all participants to determine whether it captures their experience, wherein the respondent may go back and modify earlier steps in the analysis in the light of this feedback (Murrow et al., 2015).

Table 1. Arbitrary scale and verbal interpretation of data

Response	Arbitrary Scale	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Excellent-Very Highly Acceptable
4	3.41 – 4.20	Very Good – Highly Acceptable
3	2.61-3.40	Good-Acceptable
2	1.81-2.60	Fair – Less Acceptable
1	1.00-1.80	Poor-Not Acceptable

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of acceptability of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers in terms of contents, relevance, and mechanics as evaluated by teachers in Practical Research 1

The first objective aimed to determine the level of acceptability of the Web-integrated primal for beginning qualitative researchers in terms of contents, relevance and mechanics, which Practical Research 1 teachers evaluated. Table 2 shows the mean scores of each three-component with corresponding interpretation. It reveals that the web-integrated primal is "very highly acceptable" in content and relevance with a mean score of 4.24 and 4. 51, respectively, whereas mechanics has a "highly acceptable" rate of 4.13. The overall mean score of the web-based material in all categories is 4.34, with a qualitative description of "very highly acceptable" that supported the respondent's claim of innovation satisfaction.

Respondents' were highly pleased with the content of the web-based material. Teacher A stated, "*the material covered all competencies based on the curriculum guide of Practical Research 1, which was presented more clearly and interactively, surely the students will enjoy learning from this*" (p.1, line 20). Regarding relevance, Teacher B stated, "*the samples, lectures and worksheets were all aligned and were coherent and the feedbacks given by other researchers to students output were truly informative. It was very easy to comprehend*" (p.4 line 15). Though the mechanics of material showed the least mean score, it was still highly acceptable. As Teacher A also stated, "*the website is creative and performed its required functions including data storing, sorting, and finalising output, and I can recognise how to use the system easily*" (p.1 line 30).

Table 2. Web-Integrated Primal's level of acceptability for beginning qualitative researchers in terms of content, relevance and mechanics.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Content	4.21	Very highly acceptable
Relevance	4.51	Very highly acceptable
Mechanics	4.13	Highly Acceptable
Over-all	4.28	Very highly acceptable

The findings of this study are coherent with Olawale (2013) claims that properly prepared instructional materials are effective in enhancing, facilitating and easing the teaching process, creating livelier and concrete learning and therefore cannot be over-emphasised. Similarly, Nardo (2017) pointed out that learning material should elicit the students' independence that would enable the child to self-progress at his rate, giving him the satisfaction of fulfilling the job on his own. These studies support the conduct of the web-based material, which offers peer-review, enabling students to reflect on the reviewer's comments and allowing them to revisit their work for further improvement. The innovative means of teaching qualitative research through the web-integrated primal was left with satisfying reviews from the teachers who rated its acceptability and referred to the material as creative, interactive and informative. Hence, reimagining the delivery of necessary educational capstones is vital and urgent in the dynamic teaching and learning process.

Effect of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers on the experimental group's competence in comparison with the control group

To have a better grasp of the quality and effect of the web-based learning material, an evaluation of the students' competence was done through a pre-test and post-test method Test of significant difference in learning gains of the comparison and experimental groups. Table 1 depicts the test result of significant difference in learnings using t-test analysis assuming unequal variances at a 5% significance level. The result shows the experimental group bearing a higher learning score of 23.72% over the comparison group with 18.04%. Also, a minor standard deviation of 0.06 was seen in the experimental group, which entails the researcher's capacity to offer intervention to lessen learning gaps among extreme learners. Furthermore, the t-test analysis resulted in a computed p-value of 1%, which is smaller than the alpha value. Hence, there is ample evidence to reject the null hypothesis and declare a significant difference in the learning gain scores between the two groups. This also means that the use of web-integrated primal is more effective in improving students' research competence.

Table 2. Test of significant difference of learning gains of the comparison and experimental groups

Groups	Learning gain score	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Comparison	18.04%	0.08	2.02	0.01	Reject H_0
Experimental	23.72%	0.06			

These results adhere to the findings of Nardo (2017), stating that experiential learning is needed and that learner receives a more prolonged effect of what is done when the learners are involved in initiating and evaluating wherein the learning material elicits the independence of the students that would enable the child to self-progress at his own rate, giving the satisfaction of fulfilling the job on his own. Considering the changes in the new normal set-up and the pressure set by distance learning, e-learning opens a more significant opportunity for the continuity of education, which is supported by Firat (2016) that by proliferating and integrating e-learning technology in the Philippine education system, the transformation of teaching and learning process increases the academic achievements of Filipino students. The overall findings imply that integrating new concepts that the students can relate to and developing the learners' social being through constructive brainstorming offers a significant impact on the delivery of learning.

Suggestions of the participants to improve the overall aspects of the web-integrated Primal for Beginning Qualitative Researchers

Screening Feedback from Reviewers

Respondents were gathered for a Focus Group Discussion about their suggestions to improve the overall aspects of the web-integrated primal for beginning qualitative researchers. Most suggestions would focus on screening peer-review of the student's output through comments and feedback. According to the respondents, the majority of the reviews were accurate and helpful. However, some would leave a wrong or misleading input which often leads to students' confusion. Student A (p.6, line 2) appreciated the innovation stating that "the feedbacks were informative and helped them gain beneficial insights needed in crafting research papers". Another respondent also stated that "comparing different viewpoints were beneficial in improving manuscripts though some peer-reviewers left a confusing comment without further explanation, most of this comment were about choosing the right qualitative design". Student C also added that some reviewers would only leave a remark stating "that's a wrong research design" without leaving an explanation. They suggested screening options should be before the comments are posted. They also added that questions and follow-ups should be asked to strengthen the reliability and content validity of the comments of the reviewer. It was also suggested that, if possible, there should be an option where teachers can review the feedback.

The students' remarks showed the great importance of a guided peer review system where learners and developed researchers can have a meaningful exchange of outputs. Kelly, Sadeghieh, and Adeli (2014) also emphasised that the peer review process has become critical in assisting editors in selecting plausible, high quality, novel, and promising research papers; however, it still has flaws and deficiencies, and a more suited screening method for scientific papers has yet to be proposed.

Organising Research Groups

The responses from the Focus Group Discussion revealed that respondents could better collaborate with their peers, suggesting that instead of drafting research papers individually, students' output is more substantial when working with their classmates or groupmates. One of the respondents said, "it would be more efficient and manageable for us to work in groups instead". Another respondent explained that crafting research papers in groups "would help them draft the paper better as there are more people who can contribute ideas" to the research topic. Student C also expanded that working with peers in drafting their research provides enough time since the submitted outputs will be lessened "the more outputs submitted the more outputs to be given feedback thus the limited time to evaluate each research output". Respondents implied that by working with peers, their research outputs could be initially evaluated within the group, giving the evaluators a lesser chance of corrections.

The responses thus suggest that drafting the research paper in groups would be more beneficial to the researcher, thereby improving the quality of the paper since it would be more manageable to work on. Parallel to such suggestion is the assertions of Odom, Glen, Sanner and Cannella (2009) explained that drafting the research paper in groups would lessen its preparation time, make the process more manageable, and promote collaboration among researchers.

Providing pre-identified research categories

The students also noted that the duration of developing a research topic from nowhere takes longer and consumes the allocated time for other research tasks. Student D stated that "there were plenty of sample research papers presented in the web and still I find it hard to choose a topic due to broad variety of choices, it would cut that time short if there were fewer pre-identified categories that we could choose from".

Student A said that "it was hard to begin a paper when I don't know where to start. There are varied choices that I spent so much time deciding what area I should focus on, especially since I was just starting to learn research. She suggested giving her coresearchers areas to focus on where they can start crafting drafts. Respondents lamented that as a beginner in the research field, one of the most challenging choices is choosing a topic. Thus, they suggested crafting at least five themes to focus on. These findings are supported by Praharaj, Samir & Ameen, Shahul (2020), claiming that seasoned researchers choose a research topic easier due to their awareness on the gaps of knowledge in a specific field than novice researchers who commonly have difficulty in identifying an area to do research.

The qualitative analysis of the respondents' suggestions through Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method of data analysis showed coherence with the works of Odom, Glen, Sanner and Cannella (2009), stating that peer-review is beneficial and allowed comparison of viewpoints. However, it was time-consuming, and topics were not motivating and required lots of work. Thus, it was suggested that groups should be smaller yet not individual to allow more time for quality evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that the Web integrated primal for beginning qualitative research is very highly acceptable as assessed by Practical

Research 1 teachers. The significant difference between the learning gain scores of the two groups in favour of the experimental group shows that using the web-integrated primal in teaching Practical Research 1 is adequate. Lastly, the respondents were satisfied with the results of the innovation. However, they suggested screening comments and feedback from reviewers, creating research groups rather than crafting manuscripts individually; and assigning pre-identified research categories.

From the derived conclusions of this study, the researchers recommend that the concept of the web-integrated primal on peer-reviewing be used in other subjects requiring performance-based outputs from the students, especially in senior high school research-related subjects. The innovation may also be introduced for use in other schools of the Schools Division of Eastern Samar and its acceptance and efficacy in the said institution to test the reliability of its results.

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The Priority Debate between Hyslop and Nagel: A Unificationist Reconciliation

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ABSTRACT
The Problem of Other Minds (POM), in philosophy, is the challenge of explaining the commonsense idea that others possess minds and are capable of thinking and feeling similar to oneself. The dilemma has been explored in the analytic (Anglo-American) and continental philosophical traditions. It has also been a point of contention in epistemology, logic, and philosophy of mind since the 20th century. Contemporary discourse on POM has been approached from different disciplinary perspectives. However, two of these perspectives, epistemological and conceptual, have been central. The trend of literature discussing POM has separated the two perspectives as though they are independent, without exploring the possibility of seeing them as two sides of the same coin. Using the positions of Alec Hyslop and Thomas Nagel as representative of epistemological and conceptual problems, respectively, this paper argues that a proper solution to POM lies in the ability of the proposed solution to see the two perspectives as two ways of solving a problem. Therefore, the POM must represent the unity of the two perspectives such that the solution simultaneously solves both challenges. This is the objective of this study.

Keywords: Other Minds; Separatist Thesis; Unificationist Thesis; Thomas Nagel; Alec Hyslop.

INTRODUCTION
According to Avramides (2019; 2001), there is little agreement on what constitutes the Problem of Other Minds (POM). This, in a way, shows that interpreting POM is itself a problem. Two significant interpretations of the problem have emerged namely, epistemological and conceptual interpretations. According to the epistemological problem of other minds (EP), POM is primarily concerned with the justification of commonsense belief in the presence of other minds; hence, the problem is epistemological. On the other hand, the conceptual problem of other minds (CP) insists

that POM is more about grasping what the concept "other minds" really means, given that each person is aware of only his/her mind from the first-person perspective.

The approach to tackling POM described above is what this paper terms "the separatist thesis." The separatist thesis identifies a version of POM and attempts to resolve or dissolve it, neglecting, as it were, other forms in which the problem might be generated. This paper rejects the separatist thesis for its lopsidedness and seeks a more balanced approach to resolving or dissolving POM. Using the debate between Nagel and Hyslop as a representative of EP and CP, this paper attempts to reconcile these two extremes by exploring a unificationist option wherein the two problems are reduced to two sides of the same coin.

THE SEPARATIST THESIS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL

Hitherto, the debate on POM has been characterised by the strategy of selecting one of the many versions of the issue and then seeking to either resolve or dissolve it. When this is done, the resulting resolution or dissolution is taken as a standard solution to POM, regardless of whether or not it gets some other versions of the problem covered. This approach to POM I will here call the separatist thesis. I will illustrate the separatist thesis using EP and CP in this section.

EP and CP represent the two most popular POMs so far (Avramides, 2019, 2001). Fundamentally, "EP has to do with whether, and, if so, how beliefs concerning the minds and mental states of people other than the person who has the beliefs in question are justified" (Bonjour, 2010, p. 149). Epistemologically conceived, POM focuses on the following questions: How is the knowledge of other minds acquired? "How is it possible to have knowledge of other minds?" (Gomes 2009, p. 219) If such knowledge is possible, how is it justified? How do we know that other people are not simply philosophical zombies, similar to us in all physiological respects but lacking an inner life? Even if I know that another person has sensations, sees, and believes, how can I know just what the other feels, sees, and believes? (Avramides, 2019: 2001; Gomes, 2014). Rationalising the need for these questions, Becchio et al. (2018) clarify:

> How possible questions of this nature arise when something seemingly impossible nevertheless happens. These are, therefore, obstacle-dependent questions: we ask how the knowledge of x is possible when there appears to be an insuperable obstacle preventing knowledge of x. In the case of knowledge of other minds, the apparent obstacle is the supposed opacity of other minds, such as the idea that we can never have direct knowledge of another's mental states (internet).

Based on appropriate responses, two sets of questions are posed above, which lead to two versions of the EP. Both are demands for justification for the claims we make concerning the minds of others. The two versions of EP are identified by Overgaard (2017) as the th*at version* and the what *other version* of EP. The *that version* asks how we arrive at the knowledge of other minds in the first place, while the *what version* asks how we come to know what mental states others are in at any time. It should be noted that the two versions of the EP are not mutually exclusive. An appropriate answer to the latter version has the former covered, although not the other way around. Besides these two versions of the how-question (of) EP, Zahavi (2014) identifies the *why* question. The "why" question asks why others think and feel the way they do and what this means to them (Avramides, 2019).

EP has been historically associated with the problem of epistemic scepticism. Graham (1996) describes it as "the problem of how to defend our common-sense belief in other minds against the general denial of other minds." Here it is clear that EP arises from a specific variety of scepticism, which, like other kinds, should not be allowed to thrive. Given that scepticism stands at the heart of POM, the philosopher's primary concern in the problem is the pursuit of a defensive mechanism aimed at dismantling the foundation of this scepticism and establishing our knowledge of other minds on solid footing. The philosopher's interest in the other minds problem centres on answering the question: "How can we show that the belief in other minds is warranted, and that wholesale scepticism about other minds is false?" (Graham, 1996) As an epistemological question, this requires setting out epistemic norms for determining the presence of minds and mental states wherever they may be found.

On the other hand, CP, to also quote Gomes (2009), asks the question: "How is it possible to think about other minds?" (p. 219). This question raises the problem of the unity of concepts of mental states (Smith, 2010). It arises precisely from the difficulty of reconciling the generality of mental concepts with the unity of mental states. Mental concepts refer to mental states. Mental concepts are general because they apply equally to others and to oneself, whereas mental states are unified. After all, being qualitative or subjective states, there is something it is like to have them. Hence, when I use a mental concept, I refer to a mental state to which I alone have access. The mental concept of pain, for instance, is what each subject comes to possess from subjective feelings of an individual's own pain. My pain is entirely different from someone else's pain in all phenomenological details. The mental concept used to refer to the sensation of pain ought, therefore, to be unique to the individual subject of pain. Here, the saying that experience is the best teacher is correct because experience teaches each subject to know what pain feels like from his/her own case alone. Suppose this is true about the nature of mental states. In that case, it raises the question of how the subjective experience of mental states is to be reconciled with the general nature of mental concepts employed to communicate them. This is what CP consists of, according to Avramides (2001):

> Where questions concerning the minds of others are taken to be epistemological, there is not only an assumption that it makes sense to think about one's own mind in advance of others but there is also an assumption that the concept one comes to have in this way is essentially general… I shall allow that it may be possible somehow to come, by reflection, to have a concept of my mind. What I want to question is whether the concept one comes to have in this way can be thought to have the generality required to permit one to raise questions about the mind of another. This question has come to be known as CP (p. 219).

As Balogun (2022) notes, the foregoing way of generating CP derives primarily from a particular conception of the nature of concepts. According to Davidson (1987), "what counts as evidence for the application of a concept helps define the concept, or at least places constraints on its identification" (p. 422). This suggests the fact that determination of the meaning of a concept includes what counts as good evidence for its successful application. The consequence of this idea of concepts is well noted by Davidson (1987):

> If two concepts regularly depend on their application to different criteria or ranges of evidential support, they must be different concepts. So, if what is apparently the same expression is sometimes correctly employed based on

> a specific range of evidential support and sometimes based on another range of evidential support (or none), the obvious conclusion would seem to be that the expression is ambiguous (p. 422).

The ambiguity to which Davidson alludes results from two perspectives on mental states: one requires evidence, and the other requires none. Suppose I describe my pain as excruciating, and another subject describes her pain as excruciating. There seems to be no way of settling the meaning of "excruciating" because my own "excruciating" pain is arrived at non-inferentially, whereas I arrive at the "excruciating" pain of the other subject based on her verbal or other bodily behaviour (Balogun 2022, p. 31). Donald Davidson thinks that such an expression as "excruciating pain" must be ambiguous because its meaning is arrived at on a different evidential basis from one subject to another. Reconciling these various conceptual perspectives has constituted a large chunk of CP.

Overgaard also identifies two versions of CP: the *that* and the *what*-versions. The *that* version points to the mystery of how we come to form the notion of other minds, given that only our own minds are ever directly accessible to us throughout our lives. Merleau-Ponty (2012) interprets the th*at* version of CP in light of the following questions: "How can the word "I" be made plural?" How can we form the general idea of the "I"? How can I speak of another "I" than my own?" The difficulty involved in answering these questions results from the alleged unobservability of mental states from the third-person perspective. The *What* version of CP asks how it is possible to conceive of mental states inaccessible to one. Like the former, the *what* version becomes problematic because of the lack of direct perceptual access to others' mental states. Wittgenstein's (1958) remark below clarifies:

> I am told: 'If you pity someone for having pain, surely you must at least *believe* that he has pains'. But how can I ever *believe* this? How can these words make sense to me? How could I even have come by the idea of another's experience if there was no possibility of any evidence for it? (p. 46).

The worry expressed above is informed by the absence of "possibility of evidence" for believing in the existence of mental states other than one's own. An appeal to others' bodily behaviours fails to foot the bill here because there is no necessary connection between bodily behaviours and the mental states they are (historically) associated with.

Although there are traces of CP in the premodern period, especially in the writings of Augustine of Hippo (Avramides, 2001), a contemporary articulation of the problem has been attributed to certain portions of the later Wittgenstein. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1963) argues that "if one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is not too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I do not feel on the model of pain which I do feel" (p. §302). The difficulty that Wittgenstein is grappling with here has to do with how an extension of the meaning of mental concepts to other people's mental ascriptions is achievable, given that we come to have these concepts on an individual basis. If all the mental states I ever experience are mine, what warrant do I have to attribute mental states to others? Gomes (2011) characterises the difficulty of answering this question as "the problem of accounting for our ability to think of another person as a bearer of mental states or a subject of mental states" (p. 355). This, Gomes claims, is distinct from any worries we might have about whether it is possible to know about other people's mental lives, hence his acceptance of the distinction between EP and CP.

Fundamental to CP is the problem of solipsism. The solipsist argues that she alone exists in the universe since nothing else is real except her own experiences. One of the consequences of the solipsist mode of thinking is the problem of ambiguity. A concept is ambiguous when it does not admit to a unified conception of meaning at every instance of its use. Ambiguity suggests varieties of meaning. Within the context of CP, solipsism poses the problem of whether we have one unified concept in all cases when we consider mental concepts such as pain. Consider Smith's (2010) articulation of this problem:

> Suppose that one can be in a position to grasp a mental concept Ψ simply by reflecting upon one's own inner experience. From this first-person perspective, one's conscious mental states are given to one as one's own. It might then seem that being given to me should be a part of the meaning of Ψ. But this makes it problematic to see how the very same concept, Ψ as-given-to-me, could be attributed to another. So it is not clear how one can, from the first-person perspective, come to have a grasp of Ψ that allows it to be ascribed to others (p. 203).

The problem of ambiguity arises here because if each subject has a unique way of being aware of her mental states, based on which she describes them using certain mental concepts (e.g. pain), then the suspicion that the meaning of each of the mental concepts is relative to the individual carrier of mental states appears to be a real possibility.

This section has explained EP and CP as different versions of POM. Of course, there are more problems in other minds than those here presented. The two are relevant to the subsequent analysis because of their central position in the other mind's discourse. In the following section, the paper will rehearse the debate between Hyslop and Nagel over which of the two problems of other minds deserves more attention than the other.

HYSLOP'S EP VERSUS NAGEL'S CP

Hyslop (2010; 1995) is a staunch defender of EP. He believes that EP is a challenging problem for other minds and that CP engenders no severe problem. His motivation for settling for EP hinges on the claim that POM is strictly about the justification of our beliefs about other minds. I have averred in the last section that CP is a search for a general concept of mind. However, it seems "in order to have a general concept of something, we presumably must have some background set of knowledge that contextualises the general significance of the concept and its applicability" (Stoll, 2019, p. 100). This will generally suggest that EP is logically prior to CP, especially given that the former is presumably required to understand the latter. Arguably, this supposed requirement of the background knowledge needed for a general conception of mind spurs Hyslop's prioritisation of EP over CP.

At least three questions are relevant here. (i.) Why is the search for justification of belief in other minds important to the other minds discourse? (ii.) How is the need for this search generated? (iii.) How is the justification to be sought? These three questions are central to understanding Hyslop's characterisation of POM as squarely epistemological. Part of my task in this section will be to attempt to respond to these questions within Hyslop's framework of analysis of POM. Before answers are sought to these questions, one should note, contrary to Avramides (2019), that Hyslop regards neither scepticism nor solipsism as a threat to the belief in the existence of other minds. Hence, attempts to resolve other minds problems are not borne out of the desire to combat either scepticism or solipsism. For Hyslop (1995), neither solipsism nor

scepticism is an option because they only arise within philosophical theorising, and do not constitute any worries outside of it. Hyslop (1995) writes:

> Outside of professional scepticism or psychopathology, we are sure we are not alone. Other human figures are, at least to an extent, sufficiently as we are. We are sure they, too, engage in thinking, reasoning, doubting and believing. We are sure they feel sick, in pain, happy, and so on, from time to time (p. 1).

Against this backdrop, POM is not about whether we are sure that others have minds or mental states. It is instead the question of what entitles us to be sure they do. On what basis is the sureness that others have built their minds? This, according to Hyslop, is the real problem with other minds.

It can be appropriately answered in the following manner. The epistemological issue of justification pertains to the evidence that we have in holding something to be the case—or not the case. The existence of other minds is an example of cases where we have sureness, but we do not know what entitles us to be so sure. There is the belief that others have minds, but justifying the belief is problematic. Perhaps POM is an instance of what Cassam (2007) calls the *how-possible* questions in epistemology. Generally conceived, a *how-possible* question is one in which there are obvious reasons to doubt the possibility of the phenomenon about which the question is asked. According to Cassam (2007), "To ask a *how-possible* question is to ask how something which looks impossible given other things that one knows or believes is nevertheless possible" (p. 1). Given the human inability to directly perceive the mental states of others, nothing about others suggests that they have minds or mental states as we do. To claim the contrary demands that we give a justification for our claim. This is why the need for justification of belief in the existence of other minds becomes imperative.

Hyslop appeals to the asymmetry problem. According to this analysis, POM is generated by the asymmetrical relation one subject bears to another, which makes mutual transparency of mental states to each other impossible. Hyslop (2010) writes:

> The asymmetry is a matter of what is known directly and not known directly, and the specific kind of knowledge. It is not a matter of what can be observed, perceived, felt, as opposed to what cannot be observed, perceived, felt. Were I able to observe the mental states of another human being that would not mean that I did not have a problem of other minds. I would still lack what I needed. What I need is the capacity to observe those mental states as mental states belonging to that other human being. They would have to be experienced by me as someone else's mental state. My experience of the other would have to come accompanied by that guarantee, attached as it were to an epistemological label. The situation would only then be as it is in my own case. I would only then be in possession of the direct knowledge that I and all of us forever lack (n.p).

In order to substantiate the point above, Hyslop urges us to imagine a set of Siamese twins, Fred and George, who share a leg. This means that when there is a pain in the shared led, they both feel it. But each feels the pain as his own pain, and not as the other's. "In feeling what is George's pain, Fred does not thereby learn that what he feels is felt by George" (Hyslop 1995, p. 6). Even though the pain is a shared one, each does not feel what the other's pain is.

Meanwhile, what is needed is for each to feel the other's pain as what it is—the other's pain. This phenomenon is what Klein (2015), using the craniopagus example, refers to as "shared mental states but distinct personal ownership." Since each of the parties involved in the shared mental states feels the same state as distinctively hers without feeling the same as the other, shared mental states do not provide evidence for the possibility of knowledge of other minds. It is reasonable to note that the lack of direct knowledge of the other by each of the twins does not generate POM. The problem is generated because each person involved has direct knowledge of her own pain but lacks the same as the other. This creates some kind of asymmetrical relation between them. Hyslop argues that without this asymmetrical relation between Fred and George, ultimately among persons, there would be a problem of minds, not of other minds (Hyslop 2010; 1995). The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the asymmetry in respect of knowledge creates the other minds problem. Each of us is aware of our own mental states in a non-inferential way. We know our (unexpressed) anger, hunger, anguish, pains, etc., in a way that others do not. Moreover, just as others lack this direct knowledge of our mental states, so do we of their own mental states as well. If this narrative well describes what is known as POM, then the problem is that of justifying our belief in the existence of other minds, which makes it straightforwardly epistemological.

To the third question, there have been two significant ways of justifying belief in the existence of other minds: direct perceptual and inferential models (Stoll, 2019; Avramides, 2019; Krueger, 2010). According to the first model, the justification of belief in other minds takes the form of direct observations of the mental states of others. Hyslop rejects this model for two reasons. One, it is not clear that observing other people's mental states is impossible—here, perhaps he has in mind mental phenomena such as telepathy and other extra-sensory means of observation. Two, directly observing the minds of others does not make any difference since it does not differentiate the observer's own mental states from those being observed. Hyslop (1995) notes that "what would be needed would be my observing it as the pain of another" (p. 5). Having rejected the direct perceptual model, Hyslop opts for the inferential model, and particularly, the analogical inferential model. I will not be here concerned with the details of his version of the old argument.

Nagel believes that the interesting problem of other minds is not EP but "the problem of how I can conceive my mind as merely one of the many examples of mental phenomena contained in the world" (Nagel 1989, p. 19). That is, it is not (an EP of) "how can I conceive of minds other than my own" but (a CP of) "how can we conceive of minds subjectively incommensurable with our own" (Nagel, 1989, p. 19). It is instructive to point out that the interestingness of Nagel's CP consists in the claim that once an appropriate answer is offered to it, then EP loses its intractable grip. For before one can raise the epistemological question, one must have a quite general concept of mind—general because it applies both to oneself and others (Avramides, 2001). Hence, the problem with which Nagel may be thought to be grappling here has to do with the origin of our belief in the general concept of mind. It is the question of how I come to conceive mind as capable of being instantiated in others, given that my own mind is revealed to me through an introspective means. If all my life I have been aware of only one mind, that's mine, what puts me in a position as to conceive of minds other than mine? This question, as Nagel understands it, is logically prior to the epistemological question of how we come to believe that others have minds.

In choosing CP over EP, it seems that the ultimate motivation for Nagel's preference is the avoidance of the problem of conceptual solipsism. Avramides (2001) argues that "the conceptual solipsist challenges us so much as to make sense of the attribution of mind to another" (p. 49). The point is that if I come to think about the mind in the first place from reflection on my own mind, it is a fundamental question of how I extend this concept to include the mind of another. Solipsism, as understood by Nagel (1978), is a metaphysical problem rather than an epistemological one. As a metaphysical position, "it denies sense to the supposition that there are other persons beside oneself" (p. 104). This way, the implication remains that the concepts which one applies to one's experiences do not include the possibility of application in the sense to anything outside one's experience. Nagel cites Wittgenstein's (1958) remark in *The Blue Book* as representative of the solipsist position: "If what I feel is always my pain only, what can the supposition mean that someone else feels pain?" (p. 56).

The solipsist's idea of experience, pain, for example, is that it is something felt. Once this felt element of the experience is stripped or unavailable, the subject loses her right to apply mental concepts referring to the experience because, then, there will not be an experience anymore. All experience is a felt experience. This makes all experiences a product of phenomenal consciousness. In the case of pain, particularly, a solipsist may insist on a particular way of feeling and ask how can there be pain when this way of feeling is not present in my body? The reply that it might be present in another body, as noted by Nagel (1978), is of no help with that problem:

> …for it presupposes an understanding of what it would be for the same thing to be experienced not by me but by another, and that understanding is exactly what is lacking. His view is that the pain, something with which he is familiar, cannot be conceived apart from its relation to his own consciousness. A solipsist may retain the full range of first- and third-person psychological language, but he must regard himself as using it in a different sense… when he ascribes 'experiences' to 'others' from that which is operative when he describes his own experiences" (p. 104).

Perhaps, Nagel's concentration on the fight against solipsism can be explained in terms of his belief that conceptual solipsism poses a graver danger to our understanding of other minds than the traditional problem of epistemic scepticism. Of course, both conceptual solipsism and traditional scepticism pose some difficulty to other minds, but with different dimensions and intensity. Hence, the choice of the more critical problem largely depends on which of them – conceptual solipsism and epistemic scepticism – a philosopher thinks is more pressing. 'More pressing' can be given at least two interpretations. One, as in the case of Hyslop, 'more pressing' means inadmissible of *easy* solution. Hyslop opts for EP because there are no particular difficulties associated with CP for him. On the other hand, Nagel interprets 'more pressing' in terms of the interestingness of CP.

One may ask why Nagel thinks solipsism poses a greater danger than scepticism to the understanding of other minds? This may be answered in terms of the measure of tolerance that Nagel is prepared to mete out to the difficulties posed by each of these problems. Whereas Nagel is willing to allow some measure of epistemic scepticism with regard to other minds, he has zero tolerance for solipsism. In order to be able to ask any question about other minds, *ab initio*, the problem of solipsism must be properly dealt with. Hence, unless we can solve CP, we are left in the position of conceptual solipsism;

that is, we are left in a position it does not so much as make sense to raise a question about the mind of another (Avramides 2001).

Nagel accepts that there are minds in other organisms, both those sufficiently like us and those radically unlike us. In "What is it Like to be a Bat?", Nagel (1974) tells us that conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon occurring at different levels of animal life, even if we are not entirely sure of its presence in simpler organisms. However, it is generally challenging to say what provides evidence of it. Even in the face of the extremism of denial by some of the possibility of conscious experience to mammals other than humans, Nagel is prepared to concede to countless other creatures unimaginable to us in diverse places, even beyond the human planet. This point is suggested by the fact that, regardless of the difference between the human sort of experiences and those of others, there seems to be something it is like for every organism to be the organism it is. This Nagel's (1974) 'hard realism' makes scepticism an unavoidable position for Nagel. Avramides describes scepticism as the flip side of Nagel's hard realism, meaning that it is not theoretically possible for Nagel to accept hard realism and reject radical scepticism about the knowledge of other minds even though the latter appears incongruent with his project. Hence, Nagel's overall epistemological programme and picture of reality accommodate some dose of scepticism. This scepticism, however, is not inconsistent with our commitment to the belief that there are other minds. As Avramides (2006) writes,

> Hard realism is Nagel's starting point: other minds exist, and it would be flying in the face of reality to deny this. Part of this hard realist picture is that other minds exist – not just in human beings, and not just in creatures like ourselves, but in creatures in many respects dissimilar to ourselves (p. 231).

Notice that Nagel's hard realism is ontologically motivated. It only covers the *existence* of conscious experience in other creatures, either like us or otherwise, but it does not go beyond that. It does not, for instance, cover what it is like for these diverse creatures to be the creature that they are. This may not be possible on our own part. In the specific case of bats, for example, Nagel (1974) writes:

> I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet, if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate for the task. I cannot perform it either by imagining addition to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of addition, subtraction and modifications. […] On the other hand, it is doubtful that any meaning can be attached to the supposition that I should possess the internal neurophysiological constitution of a bat. Even if I could by gradual degrees be transformed into a bat, nothing in my present constitution enables me to imagine what the experiences of such a future stage of myself thus metamorphosed would be like. The best evidence would come from the experiences of bats, if we only knew what they were like (p. 439).

One could gather from the above that Nagel's hard realism extends as far as he is willing to grant the possibility of conscious experience in other creatures. This implies that the extent of this realism dictates the extent of Nagel's scepticism about what it is like for these various creatures to be what creatures they are. In other words, even though we can be confident that other animals, such as bats, have minds, we are unable to comprehend what things are like for them. Such scepticism as this, Nagel concedes, is tolerable,

harmless and therefore manageable. There seems to be nothing anyone can do about it because it is a brute fact that stares all of us in the face. The case is not the same for conceptual solipsism, however. It is the possibility of avoidance of conceptual solipsism that makes CP interesting. Unlike EP, CP is a problem philosophers can, indeed, say something about if they are not to fall into conceptual solipsism. As Nagel (1978) asserts, "the avoidance of solipsism requires that the conception of other persons like oneself (not necessarily the belief that there are any) be included in the idea of one's own experience from the beginning" (p. 106).

THE UNIFICATIONIST THESIS

The unificationist thesis I am proposing here is the view that, taken from a holistic point of view, and EP cannot be divorced entirely from CP and vice-versa. In this section, I will sketch out and offer arguments in defence of the unificationist thesis. In all, three arguments are offered. The first appeals to the common ancestry of both EP and CP, the second to the reducibility of one to the other, while the third argument is an implication from the claim that knowing is a mental state (Nagel 2013; Williamson 2007; 1995).

A good understanding of the two forms of POM shows that they both derive their explanatory force from common ancestry, namely, their acceptance of the existence of an asymmetrical gap between one's case and others. Stoll is right when he observes that "both problems rest on a fundamental asymmetry between oneself and others" (Stoll, 2019). They both accept that POM is generated by asymmetry between first- and third-person attributions of mental states/concepts. Hence both EP and CP endorse the asymmetry thesis. In its epistemological formulation, POM results from asymmetry in knowledge between one's mental states and those of others. It is this asymmetry that brings about the gap in epistemic exposure or extension to other minds. Hyslop, who has earlier been shown to accept the asymmetry thesis, notes that the asymmetry that generates the epistemological problem of other minds is that each of us sometimes knows directly that we are in the mental state we are in, and we never know directly that someone other than ourself (*sic*) is in the mental state they are in (Hyslop, 2010).

Conceptually conceived, on the other hand, POM is generated by the asymmetry in the meaning of mental concepts. This creates a conceptual gap in the meaning of mental concepts. It is because we do not know what things are like on the other side that this problem arises. If mental concepts refer to mental states, then there is a problem of how meaning (of mental concepts) is to be fixed where the possibility of directly observing mental states to which they refer is permanently foreclosed. Hence, CP owes its intractability to the inability to secure the sameness of the meaning of mental concepts across intersubjective domains.

It could then be surmised that both variants of asymmetry rest on what has come to be known as the unobservability principle (UP). This is the "idea that minds are composed of exclusively intracranial phenomena, perceptually inaccessible and thus unobservable to everyone but their owner" (Krueger, 2012; Bohl & Gangopadhyay, 2014). The thesis that we are not privileged observers of others' mental states stands at the heart of both EP and CP. Hence, in seeking out a solution to POM, either in the form of EP or CP, what is being sought is how to explain the possibility of other minds, despite UP; or otherwise (how to) show that UP is false. In any case, it shows an inextricable connection between EP and CP regarding their generation as problems. Hyslop (1995) writes:

> Nagel's way of putting it helps clarify the connection between this (conceptual) problem and EP. The latter looks for the justification of our belief in the pains of others, given that we cannot feel them. The former wonders how we can conceive of those pains, given that we cannot feel them (p. 9).

One could then argue that EP is explanatorily *reducible* to CP and vice versa. In each of these cases, the same response will suffice for them both. For instance, John Wisdom opines that the issue involved in POM, really, is "that we do not *know* what it would be like for this condition to be fulfilled, what it would be like to observe the state of the soul which inhabits another body" (Wisdom, 1946, p. 125). This is EP. However, if this is transposed to Nagel's manner of speaking, it may yield something like: "POM is generated by our lack of knowledge of what it is like for others to have minds." This is both EP and CP. Also, rather than asking, "How do we know that another person is in pain?" which would be completely epistemological, we may ask, "How do we know what it is like for another person to feel pain?" which combines both EP and CP together. This is because it not only raises the epistemological concern about how we know that others are in pain, but it also raises the conceptual problem of acquiring the perspective required for determining the meaning of the mental concept 'pain'.

Another way of stating the above argument is to reverse the order and reduce CP to EP. Malcolm presents one of the classical ways of generating CP. According to him,

> If I were to learn what pain is from perceiving my own pains, then I should have learned that pain exists only when I feel it. This property is essential, not accidental; it is nonsense to suppose that the pain I feel could exist when I did not feel it. So if I obtain my conception of pain from the pain that I experience, then it will be part of my conception of pain that I am the only being that can experience it. For me, speaking of another's pain will be a contradiction (Malcolm 1963, pp. 105-106).

I have earlier indicated that CP is a problem with the meaning of mental concepts. So the argument here is that if my concept 'pain' is learned from my first-person perspective on pain, then it is a real question of how I come to know the meaning of another's concept 'pain'. This is CP. However, the argument can be rephrased, without loss in content, to yield EP. To achieve this, one needs only to follow a pattern similar to Malcolm's argument above by observing that knowledge of other minds and mental states is an extension of knowledge of one's own mind and mental states. But knowledge of one's own mind is introspectively accessed, which implies that it is direct and without any mediation between the knower and what is known. The same thing can be said of mental states, for example, pain. There is no pain that I know is not my pain. Hence, to claim to know the pain that is not my pain is to stretch my epistemic capacity beyond its limits. Pains, or any mental states for that matter, are simply not sorts of thing that one does know when one is not currently undergoing them.

The third argument derives from the mental status of the concept of knowing. Philosophers have been cautious about granting this claim, but, as Nagel (2013) noted, the inclusion of knowledge in the class of mental is a good piece of knowledge in psychology. Although not all philosophers hold this bias (Carruthers, 2009), the denial of the mental status of knowing within the philosophical community stems from the claim that because the analysis of knowledge includes the condition of truth, which is to be sought outside the knowing subject, it is not correct to reduce knowledge to a mental state

(Williamson, 1995). While this argument may be correct for the concept of knowledge, the same cannot be said of the concept of knowing, which has been widely recognised as a mental state. One motivation for this is the acknowledgement of knowing as an intentional state (Williamson, 2009; 2000; 1995; Jacob, 2019) and a propositional attitude (Nelson, 2019). As an intentional state and a propositional attitude, knowing has intentionality. Philosophers have agreed that intentionality is a mark of the mental (Place, 1996; Crane, 2011, 1998; Horgan & Kriegel, 2008; Voltolini, 2013; Jacob, 2014; Neander, 2017; Pernu, 2017).

Considering that knowing is a mental state, and every mental state has what it is like, there must be something it is like to be in a mental state of knowing. This is the subjective character or distinctive aspect that accompanies every mental state. What, then, is it like to know another person's mind? A proper answer to this question is capable of helping us find a mid-way between EP and CP, thereby providing further support for the unificationist thesis. Since knowing implies possessing a specific mental state, knowing other minds puts one in possession of a specific mental state in relation to the mind claimed to be known. However, mental states, because of their phenomenality, are inherently perspectival. Hence the question, what perspective is knowing other minds required to have? A standard response to this question is that to know the mental state that another person is in, the knower must be capable of accessing that person's mental state from a distinctively first-person perspective. The resultant difficulty in achieving this explains the intractability of EP. This is because accessing the other person's first-person perspective on the mental state implies having her perspective on the mental state in question, which is conceptually suspect.

To demonstrate the interface of EP and CP, consider a claim that I know that another person is in pain. If I claim to know that another person is in pain, I am required, as a warrant for my claim, to know what the feeling of pain is like, from the perspective of the person whose pain I claim to know. Given this requirement, what starts as a claim to knowledge now becomes a conceptual demand on what it means for another person to be in pain. It is a conceptual demand because, for one to claim to know that another person is in pain, there is a need to settle what it means for another person to be in pain, which turns on the interpersonal knowledge of pain. This interpersonal or objective notion of mental state (i.e. pain) is at stake in CP. This way, EP is CP, differently understood.

CONCLUSION

The consequences of the foregoing discovery on POM are enormous. For instance, it helps to point out that attempts by earlier scholars to separate EP from CP may not yield a complete solution to the problem because just about when one gets resolved, the other rears its ugly head. Apart from the fact that conceptual issues are epistemological issues, there are cases in which conceptual issues cannot be addressed except in relation to epistemological issues. Besides, some discussants of POM, for example, Davidson (2001) and Cassam (2007), do not distinguish between CP and EP. Davidson's concern about POM is purely EP, but this has severe implications for CP. On his part, Cassam starts with what he refers to as the perceptual model, an epistemological journey, only to discover that, in achieving his aim, he has got CP to deal with. In all, one can submit that EP and CP are two sides of the coin and that solving one in isolation from the other is, at best, a palliative approach that may only reduce the severity of the problem but does not remove the substance; and at worst, impossible to achieve.

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Implementation of the Tahfiz Al-Quran Education Program in Malaysian Polytechnics to Strengthen Islamic Studies

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ABSTRACT

Numerous reforms are making Islamic studies more accessible to Malaysian students in various polytechnics. The most significant reforms are the program structure, content, course credit depreciation, and meeting hours. The proposed reforms are projected to enhance Islamic Studies at the polytechnics to help produce graduates who can apply al-Quran al-Karim daily. The Malaysian Polytechnic's Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim Education Program (Tahfiz-TVET) is one of the new reforms projected to help strengthen students' knowledge of Islamic Studies. This study explores Malaysian Polytechnic's Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim Education Program (Tahfiz-TVET) and its link with Islamic Studies at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic. This study will explore the JAKIM-Polytechnic Tahfiz al-Quran Certification Program. In addition, it will also expose the Islamic Studies courses in *Mata Pelajaran Pengajian Umum* (MPU) (General Studies

Unit) at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic. This study contends that the JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz Certification programme at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic has religious and social importance. The religious significance is that the program will assist in producing graduates with a solid Islamic foundation and (*akhlaq) good* virtue, morality, and etiquette. Both programmes will also help produce technicians and engineers to meet the nation's professional and social job demands. Thus, the program's ultimate goal is to develop holistic Muslim professionals.

Keywords: Al-Quran Karim Education Program; Malaysian Polytechnics; Islamic Studies; *Akhlaq*.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic world has undergone some changes since the 1970s. As several studies show, the reawakening of Islamic awareness has touched every element of Muslim "life. From this fascination has sprung clichés like "Islamic reawakening," "Islamic resurgence," "Islamic revival," "Islamic renewal," "political Islam," "Islamic fundamentalism," "militant Islam," "dagger of Islam," or "Tslamism," among many others. The global wave of Islamic awareness is a prominent topic of debate in Western academic and propaganda circles, resulting in sensational terms that convey worry, dread, and distrust toward Islam in the modern world (Green 2019). On deeper study, the prevailing impression of Islam is not as horrible as some researchers may have asserted, and there are many degrees of Islamic awareness among the different Muslim communities.

At the same time, this trend is not novel nor surprising to devout Muslims. There is a notion among Muslims that a revival will occur whenever Islam experiences a downturn. This is based on the Hadith recorded in Abu Dawud's collection, which states: "At the beginning of every century, Allah will send to this ummah someone who will renew its religious understanding" (Njogu & Adem 2017, p. 167). This indicates that Islam's history will not be smooth; the forces of ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*) will continue to wage battle against Islam. Consequently, significant changes will occur over the next century that will attempt to disfigure Islam and imperil the faith and existence of the *Ummah* (the whole community of Muslims bound together by ties of religion). When this occurs, God will raise within the society people who will combat *Jahiliyyah* ("ignorance," or "barbarism," and indicates a negative Muslim evaluation of pre-Islamic life and culture), rectify the wrongs it has created, restore Islam to its original form, and give the society a fresh lease of life.

Earlier Islamic revivals were linked with individuals such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, Shah Walli Allah Dihlawi, Uthman Dan Fodio, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Ridha, among others (Haque¸2004). There were also instances of Islamic revival in the Malay World, a region of South-East Asia that includes modern-day Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, and southern parts of Thailand and the Philippines, as evidenced by the careers of Imam Bonjol of the Padri Movement and Islamic intellectuals such as Shaikh Daud Patani, Shaikh Tahir Talaluddin, and Syed Shaikh al-Hadi (Kahn¸2020).

Similarly, the recent surge of Islamic reawakening in Malaysia's educational system is commendable as it tries to rekindle good Islamic followership among young scholars and professionals (Zakariya 2006). Since the 1960s, the Malaysian national

education system has mandated the Teaching and Learning (TnL) of Islamic education at the elementary and secondary levels (Harper, 2011). Its inclusion as a core topic corresponds to the requirements outlined in the Razak Declaration of 1956, the Rahman Talib Report of 1960, and the Education Act of 1961 (Embong et al., 2020). All three treaties stipulate that Islamic education should be incorporated into a particular curriculum and taught in recognised schools with at least fifteen (15) Muslim pupils. Islamic Education (Pendidikan Islam) was once known as Islamic Religion (Pengajian Islam) and was first taught outside official school hours.

The formal scheduling of the 120 minutes per week of TnL time for Islamic lessons only started in 1962. In 1996, the Education Act further promoted the study of Islamic education by establishing it as a core topic at the primary and secondary levels. The TnL time allotment was then extended to 150 minutes per week in *Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan* (SRJK) (Primary School), 140 minutes and one practical session per week in *Sekolah Menengah Rendah* (SMR) (Junior High School), and Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) (*Middle School and High School*) (Shuhaimi bin Haji Ishak 2013).

The Malayan Islamic College (KIM) was combined as a single college and renamed the Faculty of Islamic Studies under the newly created Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) on the 18th of May 1970 (Khoo 2011). Since then, the Malaysian government has focused on promoting TnL-Islamic Education at higher education institutions. Through this, students would access a genuine source of Islamic knowledge based on al-Quran and al-Sunnah. Therefore, Islamic education is a topic that will be studied throughout a Muslim's lifetime at Malaysian institutions of higher education.

This research examines Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic's Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim Education Program (Tahfiz-TVET) and the General Studies Program (MPU) relationship with Islamic Studies. This paper argues that the JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz Certification programme at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic is religiously and socially significant.

ISLAMIC REVIVALISM IN MALAYSIA

Islamic revivalism, like other religious revivalisms, is a societal phenomenon that often occurs due to social, economic, or political crises, such as moral decline, corruption, economic stagnation, or external danger. The Islamic revivalisms vary according to each Muslim country's social, political, and economic variety, but they all seek the reinstatement of Islamic law, i.e., the *Shari'ah*, as the ultimate authority of the state constitution (Badamasiuy & Okene, 2011). However, it may be comprehended by examining the links between society, the state, and religion. In addition, the Islamic renaissance has not been the exclusive result of opposition parties; governments in many countries have also contributed to its emergence.

Malaysia's democratic history is among the longest in the Islamic world. Since the first election in 1955, the Islamic party has always participated. Nonetheless, Islam has been more apparent in Malaysia than ever during the last two decades. Although local elements such as modernity, urbanisation, and capitalist development have encouraged the expansion of Islamic revival in Malaysia, the ethnic dichotomisation of society between Malay Muslims and non-Muslims is the primary driver. As Islamic groups emphasise the construction of an Islamic educational system, an Islamic economy, an Islamic political order, and an Islamic legal framework, the Islamic renaissance has been

increasingly identified with the social, political, and economic systems. In other words, they advocated the establishment of an Islamic state.

Numerous works have addressed the Islamic revival in Malaysia from various perspectives. However, most comments have focused on the emergence of the *dakwah* movement as the most visible manifestation of Malaysia's Islamic revival. *Dakwah* is the Arabic phrase for "to welcome or summon to Islam" (Alimuddin 2007). According to Nagata (1986), *Dakwah* may be extremely obvious in attire for women, Arab robes and turbans for men, ceremonies, prayer, and observance of dietary taboos. Nonetheless, it encompasses a broader behavioural and intellectual phenomenon in Malaysia, extending beyond this idea. In general, the *Dakwah* movement has revolved around three leading organisations: *ABIM, Jama'at Tabligh*, and *Darul Arqam*, plus the Islamic political party. The mantras "Islam is the answer" and "Islam is a way of life" are shared by all of them.

The urbanisation of the *Dakwah* movement increased the movement's potential to influence a more significant percentage of society than previously. The New Economic Policy (NEP), formed by the Malaysian government, aimed to improve the Malay population's economic status, boost job opportunities for Malays in metropolitan areas, and provide them with a higher quota of university seats. This has also enhanced the influence of the Islamic movement as more Malays enrol in colleges and joined the Islamic youth movement (ABIM), which was founded in 1972 (Abbott & Gregorios-Pippas, 2010). Students who left Malaysia for further study in the 1970s had the option to participate in Muslim Students' Associations in the Middle East and Western nations and maintain close contact with Muslim intellectuals. To this, Abu Bakar (1991) avers,

> In both the United Kingdom and the United States of America, where there exist large congregations of Malay students. These Malay youths-in contrast to their predecessors-were able to acclimatize better to Islam, having had relatively good background knowledge of religious subjects. The view that they were prone to outside manipulation is an exaggeration, for they responded naturally to the teaching of visiting Ulama and respected Ustaz, and organized Islamic activities (pp. 224-225).

Many of them got active in Islamic organisations or joined university faculties upon their return to Malaysia. The new generation of Malay intellectuals, unlike their predecessors who had been westernised, were proud of their Islamic identity and played a crucial role in promoting the Islamic character and re-educating the younger generations in Islam. Due to the Islamic awakening, Islamic studies subjects have made their way into Malaysian institutions. This is the primary motivation for examining the Taftiz Al-Quran Karim Education Program implementation at Malaysian Polytechnics to Strengthen Islamic Studies, using Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic as a case study.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation examines printed and digital materials using library research and document analysis methods. The study was also conducted using accessible primary and secondary materials in English and Malay. These materials can be generally categorised as historical, religious, sociological, and anthropological, in addition to Islamic literary books and articles. Books, journals and periodicals are the primary and secondary sources that have been examined. Using Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic as a case study, the technique outlined above is utilised to examine the implementation of the

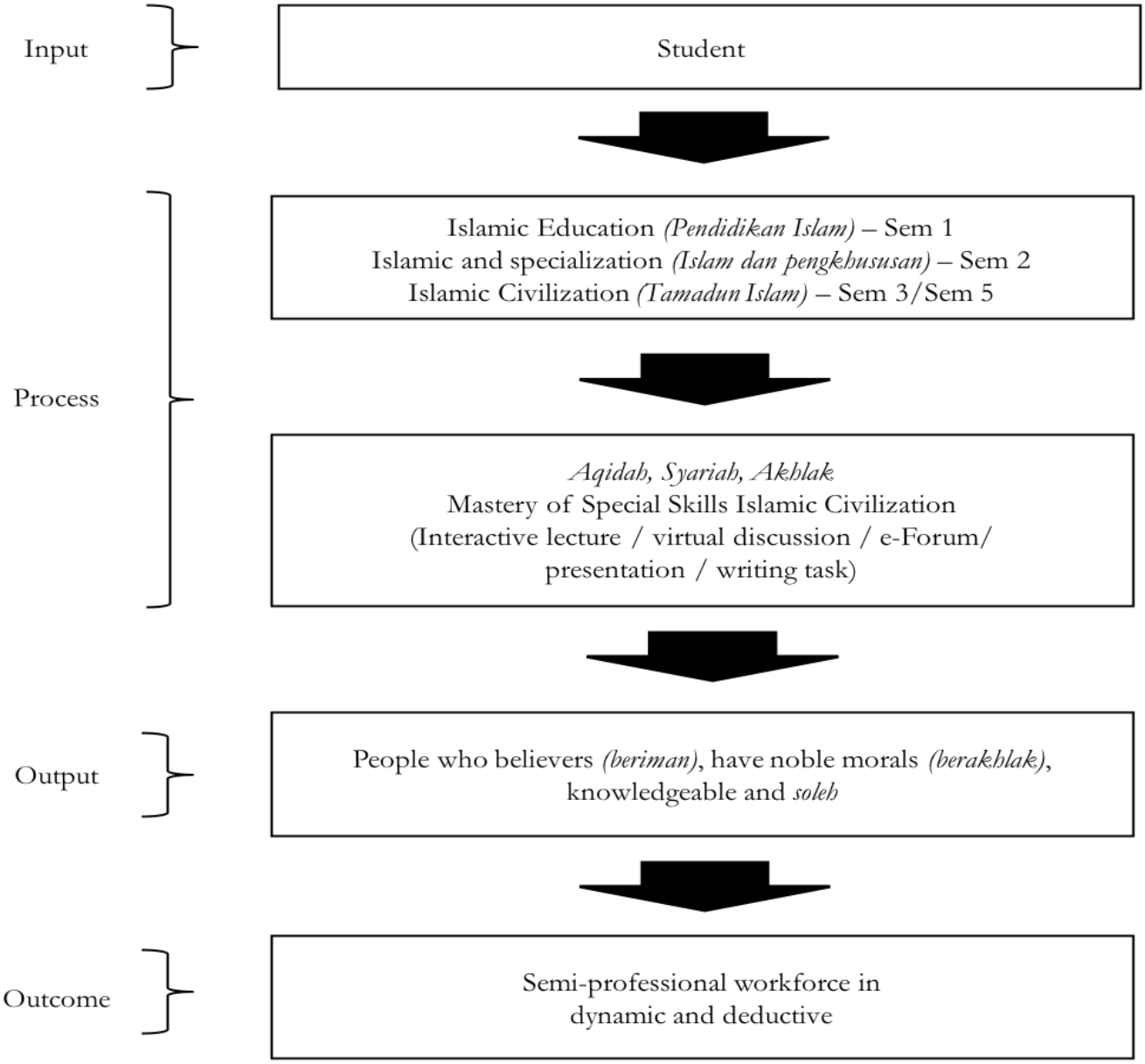
Taftiz Al-Quran Karim Education Program in Malaysian polytechnics to strengthen Islamic studies.

ANALYSIS

Conceptual Framework for Islamic Studies at the Polytechnic

In Malaysian polytechnics, Islamic Education courses fall under the Department of General Studies (DGS), which is part of the General Studies (MPU) section. The MPU courses are compulsory, meaning that all students must attend and pass them in order to get a diploma. Figure 1 explains the conceptual foundation of Islamic Education curriculum offerings for General Studies (MPU).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Implementation of the Islamic Education Curriculum for MPU in Malaysian Polytechnics.



Source: Yusni Mohamad Yusak & Zainab Hanina Abdull Samad, 2013.

The adoption of the Islamic education curriculum for MPU in Malaysian polytechnics is seen in Figure 1 above. Islamic Education courses are provided in three semesters: Islamic Education in the first, Islam and specialisation in the second, and Islamic Civilization in the third. The above table demonstrates that Islamic Education courses at polytechnics are founded on the three fundamentals of Islamic knowledge: *Akhlak, Syariah*, and *Aqidah*. *Aqidah* in Islam refers to religious beliefs held with clarity and conviction in one's heart and soul. They are devoid of any hesitation or doubt. *Syariah* refers to a body of Islamic religious law that controls, in addition to religious rites, parts of Muslims' daily lives. *Syariah* law also offers religious adherents a set of ideas and guidelines to assist them in making significant life decisions, such as financial and investing. In Islamic theology, *Akhlaq* is the application of virtue, morality, and etiquette to human daily dealings (Rohmad et al., 2020, p. 1653). The most prevalent Islamic phrase for morals is *Akhlaq*. Thus, the fundamental underlying of the three concepts serves as the foundation that fosters thorough comprehension and conviction regarding the concepts of *tauhid* (this implies the oneness of God), good moral conduct, and students' *muamalat* (rules governing good commercial transactions) (Yusni & Zainab Hanina, 2013).

The curriculum for Islamic education in Malaysian polytechnics starts with establishing the basis of religion and divinity through *Tauhid*. Following this are the fundamentals of *Shariah* Knowledge, which emphasise components of worship and devotion to Allah SWT. In contrast, the *Muamalat* component concentrates on the aspects of human connections in everyday life and is reinforced by acquiring moral knowledge with an emphasis on personal, family, and community care. In addition to imparting religious information, the primary objective of Islamic Education is to generate professional workers who are proficient in various skills, particularly technological expertise. The June 2014 Polytechnic Islamic Education Curriculum is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The National Polytechnic Islamic Education Curriculum, Effective from June 2014

No.	Course Code	Course Name	Credit	Topic	Assessment
1.	DUA2012	Sains, Teknologi dan Kejuruteraan dalam Islam	2	5	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations
2.	DUA2022	Pengurusan dalam Islam	2	5	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations
3.	DUA2032	Hospitaliti dan Pelancongan dalam Islam	2	5	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations
4.	DUA2042	Seni dalam Islam	2	5	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations
5.	DUA6012	Integrasi Malaysia	2	4	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations

(Source: www.cidos.edu.my)

ISLAMIC STUDIES IN MALAYSIAN POLYTECHNICS

As shown from figure 1 above, in Malaysian polytechnics, the Islamic Studies Curriculum is a graduation requirement for Muslim students who must complete the course. The Islamic Studies (IS) curriculum in Malaysian polytechnics aims to develop *aqidah*, *syariah*, and *akhlak*, the three core Islamic bits of knowledge. Since the establishment of the first polytechnic in 1969, Islamic Studies has been offered as a course. The execution of the Islamic Studies curriculum at the time consisted of lecture sessions and hands-on exercises. The lecture sessions consisted only of descriptions, lectures, and student lecturers' class discussions. Meanwhile, the practical approach was utilised to teach the practical features by demonstration, simulation, or demonstration, i.e. to clarify the pillars (*fi'kli* and *qauli*), pronunciation, and recitation of *surahs*, prayer routines, and funeral preparations. The Islamic Studies curriculum has undergone significant modifications recently, including code revisions, credit numbers, themes, and examinations (Mas' ud *et al*., 2019).

In 2011, as part of the Malaysian Polytechnic Curriculum Transformation initiative, the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) methodology was deployed. The OBE board would be responsible for scrutinising the input process and final draughts review of the any new curriculum development before the Polytechnic Curriculum Board would approve it (Naveed Bin Rais et al., 2021). To guarantee that the Polytechnic's programmes are current and in accordance with the most recent industrial practises, the board often solicits advice from the relevant industry. Before suggesting a new curriculum and learning method, it must conform to Malaysian higher education's quality assurance standards. Additionally, it must be approved by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). Table 1 above, shows the framework of the Islamic Studies curriculum as authorised by the aforementioned agencies.

As part of an effort by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in the year 2013, Malaysian polytechnics were also obliged to include the General Studies (MPU) component in required courses (Da Wan & Hanafiah 2022). Such compliance places Islamic Studies at the polytechnic in a bind between MOHE compliance and faculty and students' need for course offerings. In compliance with MOHE regulations, the Islamic Education curriculum as a stand-alone course was postponed, although the course's core and content are were still taught in Islamic courses and specialisations. Harmonisation of Basic Subjects Table 2 shows the curriculum structure for polytechnic courses.

Table 2: Alignment Of *Mata Pelajaran Pengajian Umum* (MPU) (General Studies) Curriculum Structure with Polytechnic Curriculum in Version 1.

Stage	Level of education	U1	U2	U3	U4	Total Credit
Diploma Advanced Diploma	(Stage 4) (Stage 5)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2 credit)	8-11 credit
MOHE		Malaysian Studies	Soft Skills Courses	Courses characterized by Malaysia	Co-Curricular	8-11 credit

				Malaysian Studies		
Polytechnic		Malaysian Studies	Islam & Specialization	Communication and Broadcast in Islam	Co-Curricular	8 credit

(Source: MPU Guide Version 1.0 and www.cidos.edu.my)

Based on the compliance and implementation of the MPU Version 1 curriculum in 2013, it has been determined that the Islamic Education course lost its identity as a stand-alone subject. Under unit 2 (U-2), "Islamic studies" and "specialisation" were united. However, several attempts have been made to reinstate Islamic education as a stand-alone course in Malaysian polytechnics' curricula. With the 2016 introduction of MPU Guidelines Version 2, courses in Islamic Studies have once again accomplished this feat. The connection between the MPU Version 2 curriculum framework and the polytechnic curriculum is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Alignment of MPU Curriculum Structure with Polytechnic Curriculum in MPU Guidelines Version 2.

Stage	Level of education	U1	U2	U3	U4	Total Credit
Diploma Advanced Diploma	(Stage 4) (Stage 5)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2-3 credit)	1 subject (2 credit)	8-11 credit
MOHE		Statehood (Malaysian Studies)	Soft Skills Courses	Courses characterized by Malaysia Malaysian Studies	Co-Curricular	8-11 credit
Polytechnic		Malaysian Studies	Soft Skills Courses	Islamic Studies / Islam & Specialization / Communication and Broadcast in Islam	Co-Curricular	8 credit

(Source: MPU Guidelines Version 2.0; www.cidos.edu.my)

Table 3 illustrates the restoration of the Islamic curriculum, notably Islamic Studies. The second version of the curricular framework is shown in Table 3. Version 2 became effective in 2016. The availability of this version is meant to enhance the implementation of the Islamic Studies curriculum for Muslim students at private higher education institutions (IPTS) in Malaysia through the General Studies Curriculum (MPU). The curriculum for Islamic Studies at MPU is structured into three forms: degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

Meanwhile, as stated in the table above, the MPU Islamic Studies curriculum of the Malaysian polytechnic has become a competitor to other Islamic courses, specialisations, Islamic communication and broadcasting in this form. Each polytechnic may offer just one U3 course. Thus, offering Islamic Studies at MPU does not seem to provide an acceptable return on credit value and student engagement. Beginning in June 2019, the Polytechnic Curriculum Structure and Islamic Studies Offering had another version (version 3).

Table 4: Effective Islamic Education Curriculum Structure in Version 3 (With effect from June 2019).

No.	Course Code	Course Name	Credit	Topic	Assessment
1.	MPU23012	Islamic studies	2	4	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
2.	MPU23032	Islamic Studies DDT	2	4	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
3.	MPU23052	Science, Technology and Engineering in Islam	2	5	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
4.	MPU23062	Management in Islam	2	5	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
5.	MPU23072	Tourism and Hospitality in Islam	2	5	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
6.	MPU23082	Art in Islam	2	5	Demonstrations, presentations, e-Folio, problem-based learning (PBL)
7.	MPU23122	Islamic Communication and Broadcasting	2	3	Quizzes, projects, e-folios, presentations

(Source: www.cidos.edu.my)

Table 4 displays the most recent version of the Islamic Studies curriculum available in Malaysian polytechnics. This version displays a whole course in Islamic Studies for MPU students. Islamic studies, Islamic Studies DDT, Science, Technology, and Engineering in Islam, Management in Islam, and Tourism and Hospitality in Islam are among the topics covered in these courses. Islamic art and, finally, Islamic media and broadcasting. Similar to various other polytechnics in Malaysia, the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic used a different strategy to further encourage the adoption of Islamic Studies at polytechnics through the Tahfiz al-Quran Education Program.

TAHFIZ PROGRAM IN SULTAN SALAHUDDIN ABDUL AZIZ SHAH POLYTECHNIC

The 2014 National Seminar on Islamic Education and Research at Malaysian Polytechnics (SKPI'14), held in Behrang, Perak, suggested the establishment of the Tahfiz Programme in all Malaysian Polytechnics (Yusak et al., 2019). The committee was tasked with researching, planning, drafting, and submitting proposal papers for the tahfiz programme. The Tahfiz curriculum at polytechnics continues the Tahfiz curriculum in secondary schools. The purpose of the tahfiz programme in Malaysian academic institutions is to promote the study and application of the Quran. According to Yahaya et al. (2022), the Tahfiz curriculum at polytechnics contributes to the improvement of Islamic Studies (IS) and the Program of Lifelong Learning for Islamic Education (PISH). According to Hassan et al. (2019), the purpose of teaching the tahfiz curriculum in Malaysian polytechnics is to encourage students to continue their education in Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and to encourage their memorization of the Quran (Ikhwan et al., 2020, p. 866).

Formerly known as Shah Alam Polytechnic, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic (PSA) is a Malaysian polytechnic situated in Shah Alam, the capital of Selangor in Malaysia. On March 8, 2002, the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, renamed Shah Alam Polytechnic after the late Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Dipertuan Agung. As with other polytechnics in Malaysia, the Tahfiz al-Quran Education Program (PPTQ) of the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic (PSA) strives to produce graduates with high marketability and popularity among industry and employers. Through this, it is also predicted that PSA students taught in vocational education and training (TVET) institutions would be graduates with high marketability and be able to memorise the 30 juzuk al-Quran al-Karim. PSA curriculum blended academic subjects with *ukhrawi* knowledge (knowledge about the afterlife) to produce graduates and educated professionals with adequate knowledge to meet the spiritual and economic demands of the country. Thus, the Tahfiz al-Quran Education Program (PPTQ) at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic (PSA) integrates the Polytechnic curriculum, the Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum, and the Co-curriculum (Quranic, Encyclopedic, and Ijtihad-an Islamic legal phrase that refers to autonomous reasoning by an expert in Islamic law) methodologies to engage its students.

Polytechnic, as a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) hub in Malaysia, is committed to providing opportunities for huffaz (people memorises all thirty juzuk of the Quran) to further their studies, particularly in the fields of education, training, and vocational at the Diploma or Degree level. PPTQ is offered in Malaysian polytechnics in partnership with the Darul Quran, Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM). The JAKIM-Polytechnic Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim Certification Program is the

name given to the JAKIM-Polytechnic Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim Certification Program developed by PPTQ in conjunction with JAKIM (Tahfiz JAKIM-Poly) (Yusak et al., 2019).

Before receiving the Malaysian Tahfiz Certificate, the JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz programme at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic (PSA) requires 60 extra credit hours to be completed (STM). Tahfiz JAKIM-Poli allows the inclusion of new courses, particularly courses in Islamic Studies, through three key components: the compulsory, the optional, and the institutional courses. The Compulsory courses include Hifz al-Quran Tahriri, Hifz al-Quran Syafawi, Tajwid Ilmi, Tajwid Amali, and Adab Hamalatul Quran courses. Meanwhile, the elective courses consists of Fiqh Ibadat and Arabic courses, in addition to the institutional courses of Communicative English 1 and 2, Arabic, and Islamic Studies. The Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim, JAKIM-Polytechnic Certification framework is outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Tahfiz al-Quran al-Karim JAKIM-Polytechnic Certification structure in Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic

Semester	Categories	Subject	Credit Hours
1-5	Compulsory	Hifz al-Quran Tahriri (1-5)	15
		Hifz al-Quran Syafawi (1-5)	15
		Tajwid Ilmi (1-2)	4
		Tajwid Amali (1-5)	10
		Adab Hamalatul Quran	3
	Elective	Fiqh Ibadah	3
		Bahasa Arab	2
	Institution	Islamic Studies	2
		Communicative English 1	2
		Communicative English 2	2
		Total	**60 credit hours**

Source: ***JAKIM-Polytechnic Tahfiz al-Quran Certification Program***

The JAKIM-Polytechnic Certification structure, as mentioned in Table 5 above, consists of an extra eight courses centred on Islamic Studies, accounting for 93 percent (56 credit hours) of the allotted 60 credit hours. Detailing an allocation of 25% (15 credit hours) for the subject of Hifz al-Quran Tahriri, and 25% (15 credit hours) for the subject of Hifz al-Quran Syafawi; 7% (4 credit hours) for Tajwid Ilmi subjects; 17% (10 credit hours) for

Practical Tajwid subjects; 5% (3 credit hours) for the subject of Adab Hamalatul Quran; 5% (3 credit hours) for the subject of Fiqh Ibada.

DISCUSSION

As seen in Table 5 above, the Tahfiz al-Quran Education Program (PPTQ) (The JAKIM-Polytechnic Certification) at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic now offers several Islamic Education courses. Also, the number of Islamic-specific courses offered has increased under the MPU curriculum's (Version 3) Islamic Education Curriculum Structure, as indicated in table 4. The aforementioned suggests that more Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic students are receiving more Islamic education courses. This means that the Islamic Studies curriculum is taught in 56 credit hours of the 60 credit hours allotted to the Tahfiz al-Quran Certification Program, as well as seven (7) courses (14 credit hours) at MPU.

Islamic education aims to instil *akhlaq* (virtue, morality, and etiquette) self-regulation in Muslims and thereby establish a wonderful Muslim community. Islamic Studies (Pendidikan Islam) was introduced as a subject to spread knowledge, skills, and internalise Islamic values based on the Quran with the goal of moulding behaviour, aptitude, personality, and life view as a vicegerent of Allah S.W.T., thus having the responsibility to develop the self, society, environment, and the state towards achieving prosperity in the world and the hereafter (Syarifudin et al., 2020, p. 518). If Islamic Education can promote good *akhlaq*, then a series of Islamic Education courses throughout the years of primary education, secondary education, and another Islamic Education course at the tertiary level should be sufficient to internalise the Islamic values and produce students with magnificent akhlaq. According to McCullough and Willoughby (2009), religion can influence self-regulation and boost health, well-being, social behaviour, and academic accomplishment among college students.

According to the notion of self-regulation, humans engage in the affective and behavioural processes to preserve a good sense of self while behaving appropriately in society and working toward achieving one's objective (Oyserman *et al.*, 2017). In the context of students, a self-regulated individual should be able to exhibit good behaviour while also achieving the aim of academic achievement. It also demonstrates that self-regulated behaviour assists children in self-regulating learning to achieve better academically. According Wentzel (1991), an exceptional student displays good academic accomplishment and moral behaviour. When Islam emphasises human accountability for their actions, it signifies the power of the human mind and soul in projecting moral behaviour and thinking, as Allah S.W.T. mentions in the Quran: "By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it!" (Abdullah, 2014, p. 212).

According to Chowdhury (2018), since the primary goal of education is to produce knowledgeable and morally upright citizens with good character (which Islam refers to as *akhlaq*), there is an urgent need for education to devise mechanisms to produce well-balanced citizens in terms of knowledge and virtue. This is why both the JAKIM-Polytechnic Certification programme and the MPU unit have many Islamic educational courses available to students at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic. The idea is to mould students and graduate professionals who are also Muslims with *akhlaq*.

CONCLUSION

The JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz Certification Program and version three (3) of the General Studies (MPU) course are new formulas for strengthening Islamic Studies at Malaysian polytechnics, especially at Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic. The offer is the consequence of the actions and expressions of the campaign to keep students' access to the Islamic Studies curriculum. The offer is also in response to the government's attempt to empower Islamic Education and Lifelong Islamic Learning (PISH) in the Malaysian Polytechnic system. Adopting JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz Certification and the newly introduced General Studies (MPU) Islamic course will benefit students and the country in the long run.

The JAKIM-Poli Tahfiz Certification programme and MPU Islamic course provided at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic, according to this study, are religiously and socially significant. The religious relevance of the curriculum is that it will help produce graduates with a robust Islamic basis and (akhlaq) excellent character, morality, and etiquette. Both programmes will also assist in producing technicians and engineers to satisfy the nation's professional and social work demands. As a result, the program's ultimate purpose is to produce a well-rounded Muslim professional.

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Pedagogical Relations in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Developing Nations: The Class-Size Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the challenges associated with pedagogical relations exacerbated by large-sized classes in higher education institutions (HEIs) found in developing nations. Using the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa as a case study, the perspectives of the undergraduate students and their lecturers were examined. The study was conducted at the Bloemfontein Campus, QwaQwa Campus, and South Campus of the institution. 79 students and 37 faculty members from seven faculties were interviewed for this research. The Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP) conducted the interviews electronically using semi-structured interviews. Given the present changes brought on by the pandemic, this research shows that a relational pedagogical orientation is crucial for successful teaching and learning. It permits the development of students' self-assurance, enhances class engagement, assists students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and decreases the dropout rate and underperformance. The finding also reveals that the interviewed lecturers were apprehensively divided in their responses regarding the possibility of actualising pedagogical relations due to large-sized classes, and the difficulty of drawing the line between leniency, familiarity, contempt, and fairness also presents a challenge. The research indicates that lecturers should pay close attention to the usage of technical jargon and the language difficulties encountered by most new students. It also suggests that small class sizes should be encouraged, initiatives to make lecturers more approachable should be strengthened, students' names should be used frequently in class, faculty and staff should have a caring culture and assist students, and lecturers should maintain a "humane" professionalism.

Keywords: Student welfare; Education development; Teaching and learning; Higher education; Caring culture; Student-lecturer relationship.

INTRODUCTION

Relational pedagogies refer to the (social) relationships between lecturers and students (Kang, 2022). Although lecturers are often thought to have control over any process that enhances effective interaction between students and lecturers, some lecturers do not believe its plausibility, others are indifferent in their teaching philosophy, and the students also have a significant (often neglected) role in developing such relationships. Teaching and learning have become e-learning intensive in the post-pandemic era, and given the relational gap generated by e-learning, relational pedagogy has become a need for institutions in developing countries (Mukherjee & Hasan, 2022). Due to class sizes, most higher education institutions (HEIs) and their students grapple with maintaining pedagogical relationships.

Recently, the abrupt shift to mainstream e-learning and the changes that came with the post-pandemic outcome have skyrocketed the need for relational pedagogy drive. The question is whether pedagogical relations will ever be actualized in HEIs in developing nations. The purpose of the study is to empirically examine the current use of relational pedagogies by lecturers, students' perception of how their relationships with their lecturers enhance teaching and learning, and how the teaching philosophies in HEIs could be enhanced to engender pedagogical relations in higher education (HE) setup. This qualitative research was conducted at the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa to examine the viewpoints of undergraduate students and their lecturers. The study asks the critical question: how can the student-lecturer relationship be improved to enhance teaching and learning processes in HEIs of developing nations? To guarantee that the fundamental research issue is adequately addressed, the following sub-research questions have been developed:

1. What are the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding relational pedagogies?
2. How can pedagogical relationships improve philosophy teaching and learning in HEIs?

This research contributes to the current literature on pedagogical interactions in developing country higher education institutions. The study outcome is also expected to contribute to the inquiry regarding how to improve pedagogical relations in HEIs from the students' point of view since the general impression had been that the lecturers should take the lead in driving pedagogical relations in the HE setup.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Relational pedagogy

Relational pedagogy, or pedagogical relations, involves establishing and maintaining a classroom climate and culture of trust, care, and autonomy (Hollweck, Reimer & Bouchard, 2019). This description emphasises the importance of placing the student-lecturer relationship at the centre of the learning process to build a climate and culture of care, interaction, and trust in the classroom. The relationship between lecturers and students is developed organically through social interaction and instructional methods (Crownover & Jones, 2018). The evidence from other countries revealed a shift from teaching an entire class to individualised teaching, as could be found in the Swedish context (Aspelin, 2014).

Similarly, in Denmark, research has shown that the continuous use of the supportive student-lecturer relationship enhances teaching and learning processes

(Aspelin and Jonsson, 2019). The concept of pedagogical relations hinges on love, obedience, and authority, although it is closely aligned with the institution's powers that give authority to the instructors (Friesen, 2017). A question has been previously asked about the *vulnerability of liability* that emerges when pedagogical relations are being discussed, implemented, or executed (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019). As a result, the question spreads, as does the vulnerability, when the institution(s) has a history of racial divide, large class sizes, top-down policy implementation, and language of learning issues. For instance, Vandeyar (2020) argued that although most South African universities have established policies and structures to address equity transformation and change issues, the epistemological traditions still hold even though this transformation has yet to happen for some shady reasons. Given the intricacies of the matter, pedagogical relations often receive very shabby (or inadequate) attention from the institutions' policymakers, irrespective of their significance *vis-à-vis* teaching philosophy.

Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Teaching Philosophy

Brownlee and Berthelsen (2008) argue that the social and learning context includes the epistemological beliefs of lecturers that are socially constructed. This implies that HEIs require a conscious and deliberate process to develop the relational competencies of the lecturers. Similarly, Aspelin (2014) argues that pedagogical attitudes can be explained through three types of student-teacher relationships. There are three types of asymmetric relationships:

1. An asymmetric intersubjective relationship,
2. An asymmetric subject-object relationship,
3. An asymmetric object-subject relationship.

According to Aspelin (2014), a teacher who adopts a relational attitude achieves an essential bond with the student(s); s/he approaches the student as a unique subject and responds as a pedagogical subject. Thus, since the teaching practise is expected to be interactive, it should involve a process of observing students' existing conceptions and sensitivity. The implications of this for the role of the teacher include facilitating students' learning; identifying diverse students' needs; and identifying students' learning needs when planning a course and orchestrating classroom teaching (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne & Nevgi, 2007), which would not happen without a well-established relational interaction between the subjects. The subject-object or object-subject relationship detracts from the teaching philosophy that considers the teacher and learner collaborative (Aspelin and Jonsson, 2019). In other words, the student must be seen as both a student (who must be taught and receive directives) and a collaborator.

The institutions' decision-making authorities should ensure that the teaching philosophy of the institution incorporates the drive for "humane professionalism" and a relational sense of community for better teaching and learning to ensue. In situations where racism, religious or political bigots, neglect of students' voices, and what may be described as "over professionalism" are possible, the institution must consider relational pedagogical drive very important (Hollweck, Reimer & Bouchard, 2019). These elements can become the "optical illusion" in a teacher's pedagogical beliefs and philosophy (or lecturer's), thereby continuing to detract from the dividend of a functional teaching and learning environment. Hence, there must be an intended motive to care and exhibit relationship competencies towards the student, which constituted part of the lecturers'

training. In the African context, these factors are prone to exist in HEIs irrespective of the large-sized classes that form the economic module of most HEIs.

Ethics of Care and Emotions

In HEIs, the development of rapt relationships between the student and lecturer includes student-student relationships, student-content relationships, and students' adjustment to the learning environment (Aspelin, 2014). Thus, focusing on the concepts of care and connectedness, Owusu-Ansah & Kyei-Blankson (2016) argued that while there is a need for academics to obtain relevant pedagogical knowledge, competencies, and/or skills, the students must be able to anticipate that they are being respected, appreciated, and cared for by their lecturers and staff. In other words, the students must feel that they are being respected to build the needed trust for effective teaching and learning. The institutional and academic cultures define the context of the ethics of care in every institution. The study by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) shows that the institutional context and culture of the teacher-student relationship are crucial. In relation to the HEIs in developing nations, the question that emerges is whether institutional culture, as well as academic culture, can influence effective teacher-student relationships given the large-sized class phenomenon that forms the economic module in these institutions.

Lecturer-Student Relationship

The teacher-student relationship has been described as a dynamic process dependent on the active roles of lecturers and students in HEIs (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). Thus, any strong pedagogical relationship is dependent on the context, i.e., climate and culture (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2008), and the commitment of lecturers and students. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) expanded on the story of the pedagogical relationship between lecturers and students by identifying three major domains: antecedents, quality, and consequences. The antecedent is that the relationship between lecturers and students is influenced by the quality and frequency of teacher-student interaction. In relation to the *quality* of the interaction, the affective and support dimensions are essential to enhance the relationship between lecturers and students. Regardless of the *consequences,* the teacher-student relationship remains the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom environment. In the end, the importance of a solid pedagogical relationship directly correlates to student success. Student motivation, student engagement, and student performance (Parnes, Suárez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi, and Schwartz, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted a social constructivist theory to examine the pedagogical relationships at an HEI level. The social constructivist theory explains the link between internal relations in the teaching and learning setting and external influences (Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2008). The internal relations explain the associations between new information to be learned and the previous knowledge and beliefs. In comparison, the external influences describe the associations between the self, others, and the learning environment where they negotiate learning and share knowledge. The theory followed by Brownlee (2004) conceptualised relational pedagogies through three main elements: mutual respect among lecturers and students; situating learning in students' experience; and enabling a constructivist perspective of knowing and learning. The social

constructivist theory enables the researcher to examine social and learning context perceptions, participants' experiences, and approaches to maintaining relational pedagogy. Other theories have been used in different studies on pedagogical relations, such as Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, Nel Noddings' care philosophy, and Thomas Scheff's social psychological theory (Aspelin 2014; 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative method to ensure that the research question was adequately answered. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. Whilst purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide desired views and experiences, the recruitment of participants through snowball sampling was done through referrals from participants (Creswell & Poth, 1998). The study was conducted on the Bloemfontein Campus, QwaQwa Campus, and the South Campus of the university campuses. Triangulation, the practise of collecting data via individual interviews and focus group discussions, was utilised in research to collect and compare findings from diverse datasets. Regarding sampling, 79 students and 37 teaching staff participated across seven faculties and three university campuses. The interviews were conducted electronically using semi-structured interviews. Ethical clearance was sought and obtained before any fieldwork or data collection and was strictly adhered to throughout the study. Three researchers from the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP) conducted the interviews. Pseudo-names were applied to ensure anonymity.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented according to the sub-questions they address. The letters "S" and "F" represent responses by the students and lecturers, respectively.

Question One: What are the perceptions of lecturers and students regarding relational pedagogies?

STUDENTS RESPONSES:

1. Developing Social Relationships is Important

The majority of participants indicated that the social relationships between lecturers and ,students are important to the learning processes as Participant S4 explained:

> The social relationship between lecturers and students is important…because it allows me to speak to someone who is much more mature and can explain things to me as well as guide me in my study. In my case, my mom cannot provide that much guidance since she is far away from me. However,having someone like Dr…. (Lecturer) who is right here in the agricultural building is good because can go and talk to her. She always informs us to contact her if we need to talk to her…. on any issues concerning the change ofcourse or if we need assistance with something (Personal Interview).

Concerning the importance of social relationships to lecturers and learners, participant S14, who is from the faculty of Agriculture and Natural Sciences (NAS), explained why he felt that social relationships are important to the learning processes in class:

> I think if we have a good relationship with our lecturers, it would be very easy to study because you cannot study a module that is taught by a lecturer you do not have a good relationship with you. You would always be arguing…. Yes, would always be arguing. About what…or what she is saying (Personal Interview).

Participant S37 hence added that:

> We (students) learn better when the teaching is personalised through a good socialrelationship between lecturers and students… students who join the university from rural and less developed settings often need support to adjust to the university environment…. (Personal Interview).

2. Building Student Confidence

One of the importance of quality social relationships between students and lecturers is that it helps to build the confidence of students, especially in class, as Participant S64 expressed:

> I feel like I perform better in class if I know that a lecturer knows me and understands my problems concerning schoolwork or other external problems. This is because when they assist me, it would go along way to help me develop an interest in the course and also follow what they tell me to do. Compared to a lecturer that does not know me or the problems that I am going through, I think thatI would not be able to put in much and I may end up failing due to such problems… (Personal Interview).

Developing a social relationship is significant considering the ongoing fundamental teaching and learning changes at the HEIs given COVID-19 induced outcomes. Consequently, the drive for pedagogical relations is increasingly emerging as being obligatory for efficient teaching and learning to ensue.

LECTURER RESPONSES

The UFS lecturers have the following views:

3. Teacher is Many Things to the Learner Which Makes Pedagogical Relations Intrinsically Obligatory

The teacher has multiple roles to play toward the students' development. This gives credence to the importance of continuous pedagogical relationship drive for effective teaching and learning. Participants F14 indicated that:

> I believe in the exchange of ideas with my students and by so doing, I learn and also get additional knowledge from the interaction I have with my students…then that is how socially I think we should be… (Personal Interview).

Similarly, F19 from the Faculty of Health Sciences added that:

> I think it is important that students feel comfortable approaching you as the lecturer and that there is an environment where both the student and lecturer can communicate not just about academic issues, but also about other issuesstudents might need support with…. I believe that when we teach students, we do not just teach them content, we also play a very important role in their development. So, we need to have the opportunity to see the

> student as a whole person with all the things that make up a whole person…. (Personal Interview).

Many students from the Faculty of Science lamented over hazing bureaucratic and administrative processes, as well as the general attitude with which the Faculty treat them.

4. Students perform better when they feel welcomed

The views of F19 further reveal that lecturers expect students to feel comfortable when they enterthe learning environment, but without a good relationship, this would never happen as F13 reported:

> I think relational pedagogies provide an opportunity for lecturers to get to know their students better and for the students to open up about some of the challenges they may be experiencing in their academics (Personal Interview).

Similarly, F7 affirms that:

> if you want to get the best results from your students, you should maintain a good pedagogical relationship with them. This should include having frequent interaction with thestudents, developing cordial relationships with students and allowing the students to contribute without any feeling of intimidation or fear (Personal Interview).

The lecturers make their work easier and more enjoyable for the students while developing (or building) social relationships with them (students) in the learning environment.

5. Optimising Participation and Involvement

Participant F14 from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences expressed that she maintains a good social relationship with the students as a way to optimise students' involvement in activities and classroom participation:

> I have a social relationship with my students because if I create a social distance between me and my students, the students cannot share their views in class…. Again, they may be scared to ask questions simply because they cannot tell what answers they would receive. See, I have given my WhatsApp number to my students and I tell them to call me anytime they have issues with their academics (Personal Interview).

The goal of relational pedagogies should be seen as a collective goal which gears toward students' optimum achievement and development, as well as to expand engagement. Some students could shy away from class discussion simply because of the way they feel.

6. Apprehensiveness Over the Successful Implementation of Pedagogical Relations Due to Class Size

Conversely, other participants begged to differ in their argument that developing a pedagogical relationship with students does not matter and may not be feasible after all.

> F12—I do not think that itis important for lecturers to develop pedagogical relationships with students in the current teaching conditions. I teach a first-year module with a total class size of about one thousand students. It is not possible for me to answer students' calls and respond to their emails." She further explained that, "I think it is the lecturer to student ratio that is the

> problem…. However, if you break them into smaller groups it means that we have to repeat sometimes the same class…. (Personal Interview).

Participant F17 highlighted the challenges lecturers face especially when they are required to develop social relationships with students in large classes.

> what prevents me from developing a good social relationship with students in large classes is about the size – the number of students. There is also no opportunity for such relationships to be developed. If we had smaller groups, then as a lecturer, you get to know your students (Personal Interview).

The comment by F12 revealed that some faculty and academic discipline lecturers have a minimal opinion or are indifferent regarding the importance of lecturers building or maintaining a good relationship with the students for efficient teaching and learning.

7. Difficult to draw a line between leniency, familiarity and fairness

The lecturer participants who were apprehensive regarding pedagogical relations justified their stance with the following rationalization:

> …well it all depends…I once had a student I tried to be close enough to understand her predicament. The student never did the work after many postponements….not until I became 'mean' and bring in force, that was when I received the work…. (Personal Interview).

F22 also added that:

> The students can take advantage of you as a lecturer because of your leniency, others can maybe think you are not being serious, and then consider your kindness as being weak…pedagogical relations must be pursued with caution as the case may be….although in most cases you find out that it's one out of ten who try to take advantage…. (Personal Interview).

Many other lecturer participants highlighted scenarios where their close relationship with a student ended up discouraging the student not to be hands-on or do what was required thereby not finalizing their academic work. Thus, this point exposes the complexities surrounding pedagogical relations and therefore gives credence to the importance of capacity building on the topic.

Question 2. How can pedagogical relations enhance teaching and learning philosophy?

8. It Allows More Support for Students from Disadvantaged Background

Participant S11 shared expressed the need for an enhanced social relationship as boost to support received by students from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds:

> S11—some students are from a disadvantaged background so it would be important for lecturers to develop a good social relationship with such students…. (Personal Interview).

Good social ties between lecturers and students should increase the learning experiences of students, according to the participants.

9. Reduce Failure, Dropout and Underperformance

Using his practical experience, participant S2explained the effects of building a tenuous relationship with students in HE:

> I would use a practical example that we experienced. I think this was our firstyear as well. Fortunate enough for me, I am quite an outspoken person. Andnow I had fellow classmates who were not really outspoken, and we are first-entry students. We had a lecturer who was really hostile but that implied that I am not someone that you can come to me at any given time to ask for assistance and about marks and so forth. There was a time when I wentto enquire about my marks, and when I got to the office door, there were about five other students outside there. They were all scared to knock on the door just to get in and enquire about their marks. They literally stood there;I think they stood for like about ten minutes too scared to knock. I asked, why aren't you going in? Then one of them said, you go in first…. I am scared. They were all scared. So, imagine now I have an issue with my marks, I need to know whether I passed, or I need to enquire if I can get extra work to get an extra per cent, or I need my work remarked or something like that…. But I'm so scared to approach my lecturer that I even end up giving up which could lead me to fail. So, that is the kind of response (Personal Interview).

Participant S2 further explained how the social distance between lecturers and students could affect students' learning and academic performance. There are lecturers who literary believe, for some reasons, that pedagogical relations does not matter:

> If lecturers become so hostile or just portray this anger, then, I do not know how to put it. What this means is that they take a position that sought of indicate or suggest that "I do not care…. I am not approachable, do not approach me. This becomes an issue for students to approach them. But on the positive side that I have experienced lecturers who are approachable, and who are willing to assist. I have had issues in terms of registrations and issues with my marks…because some lecturers always have their doors open to us as students, is has made it easier. Even now in my faculty, there are final year students who have issues but cannot send a simple email to their lecturers to inform them that, I cannot write my test because of this reason and can I have an alternative arrangement. They are even scared to e-mail their lecturer (Personal Interview).

10. Small-Size Classes Help to Improve Communication or Interaction

Participants in the *Natural Science* and *Faculty of Health Sciences* felt that the number of students in the various lecturer hall did not affect the student-lecturer relationship. While some participants from the Faculties of Education and Humanities begged to differ. For instance, participant S5, a student at the faculty of education added:

> I mean if the class is small we are much more comfortable speaking, however, if the class is large there are more eyes looking at you and so you feel a little bit shy but I think people should just feel comfortable speaking…I don't think that should be the reason why people shouldn'tcommunicate because then you are just. To answer your question, I think that one of the factors would be a small class size…. the small class sizes of cause positively influence the student-lecturer relationship in the classroom (Personal Interview).

Similarly, participant S63 reiterated that:

> I think that when lecturers create small groups in class…I mean if you are small groups then the lecturer can always go to one group and ask if they have a problem and can then go to the next so that in itself makes communication much easier (Personal Interview).

Participant S82 thus added that:

> We never got a chance to fully utilise them for the intended purposes that they werebuilt for…. And from the research that I did, from 2008 up until 2019, the overcrowding of classrooms has been a problem on the QwaQwa campus, like youtouched on, the lecturer cannot move within the setting of the classroom. The biggest lecture halls we've had on campus, lecture hall 5 and the geographical auditorium, as big as they are, cannot accommodate an aspect of one module. I have been attending class in lecture hall 5 on the QwaQwa campus and you'd find that the class is overcrowded to a point whereby now people have to sit on the steps,people have to sit on the floor where the lecturer is supposed to be moving. And asmuch as the class is crowded, as a student sitting at the back, it's not really a good setting. You cannot really concentrate on what the lecturer is saying. So, the issue of overcrowding on the QwaQwa campus is also a dominating factor in terms of the teaching setting on the campus (Personal Interview).

11. Lecturers Should See Themselves as Mentors

The majority of participants noted that when lecturers also serve as mentors in the learning environment, this reality could positively influence student-lecturer relationships if the lecturers would all see themselves in that light. S87 who is a student in the faculty of education emphasised:

> I also want to touch on what my colleague said about lecturers becoming some sort of mentors to us students. Because some of us see ourselves in the same profession [teachers] that they are in so it would be nice to have someone not only that you can look up to, but also that could guide you as well. I feel that lecturers should be the ones who reach out to students as well as remind them of what they need including providing them with the necessary support. Because sometimes you can go to an academic advisor or an academic something for advice, and you might find there's huge traffic of students there before you and you have to wait for like daysor weeks, whereas you can just e-mail your lecturer and they could sort of like explain something better to you and then your issues are all sorted out (Personal Interview).

Other participants also argued that effective interaction between lecturers and students could positively influence the student-lecturer relationships in the classroom.

12. Lecturer Disrespectfulness

The view of S85 was also shared by participant S29 from the faculty of health sciences, who indicated that lack of respect on the part of lecturers for students and intimidation hinder the quality of the student-teacher relationship. Excerpts below reveal the views of S29:

> The first thing that comes to mind is disrespect. You know, if there are about 200 or 150 students in a class and I ask questions only for a lecturer to make me feel that I am not good enough to be in the class, then that would

> certainly put me off. Also, when a lecturer disrespects a student, that student would not want to get close to the lecturer let alone share his or her problem. The lastone that I would add is that lecturers who intimidate students are not liked bystudents (Personal Interview).

The lack of good teaching skills was highlighted by participant S33 as one of the features that could hinder the effective relationship between lecturers and students, "I think that sometimes lecturers who are not very good when it comes to what they teach tend to be very straight forward with students and avoid interacting with students…….we see these a lot in class" (Personal Interview).

13. Encouraged Quality Interaction and Lecturer Approachability

Participants agreed that the use of e-learning has resulted in lecturers opening up several avenues to improved communication and interaction. Hence, widen the engagement with the students:

> S57—Interaction …. I mean quality interaction between lecturers and students could enhance the relationship between lecturers and students. Before the COVID-19 pandemic that was a bit difficult [interaction] but I think with the current use of online learning, we are able to interact well with our lecturers (Personal Interview).

In addition, S25 expressed that:

> …I think that our lecturers should communicate well with us as students, theyshould be punctual to class, and they should give us prompt feedback, mustbe open to us as students and should look presentable. I also think that lecturers should be passionate about what they are teaching. Since our course involves more practical sessions, I expect them to include more demonstrations rather than referring us to textbooks. When lecturers provide us with examples in class, we tend to focus more on what is been taught (Personal Interview).

14. **Use of the Student's Names**

Participant S3 highlighted the importance of lecturers identifying students by names. She noted that students confidently get involved in the learning process especially when they are being identified by their names by the lecturers:

> There is this doctor in our faculty who takes her time to study the names of all the students in the class. Although we are quite many and rotate the sessions with her, she makes sure that she recognizes all the names of her students. Aside from our names, she also asks us about our background….where we are from etc. What happened is that I gave in much effort in that modulebecause I felt that she was really interested in my academic development (Personal Interview).

DISCUSSION

The existence of fear or reluctance on the part of pupils to express their difficulties indicates a significant issue. If the students worry about the response they will receive when seeking support, then, there is a severe problem with relational pedagogy. Effective communication within and outside the school environment drives the relationship between teachers and students. Emerging discourse in higher education has emphasised

the importance of transmitting information and knowledge between lecturers and students in the learning process (Suciu, 2014).

However, any social distance between the teacher and the learner could result in ruptures in the relationship, constraining effective teaching and learning. Hence, any pedagogical relationship between lecturers and learners should depend on solid communication, an open environment, and respect. The finding shows that the name-calling of students by lecturers in class is necessary for building relationships between participants in HEIs teaching and learning. The institutional climate reports of 2019 and 2021 revealed that the UFS was doing well in supporting the social integration of first-year students into the university. The corollary question is whether such support translates into academic integration for these first-year students through social relationships or mainstream pedagogical relations.

Furthermore, the relational proficiencies of lecturers are learned and developed through interaction with students (Ljungblad, 2021) in a learning environment. Most lecturers believe developing a good social relationship with students, including caring for their learning needs, is vital. Participants noted that having a good social relationship with students creates an atmosphere of trust and commitment to contribute to classroom discussions, helps lecturers identify students' learning needs, and creates opportunities for lecturers to get to know their students better. In order to enhance the pedagogical relationships between lecturers and students, some participants thought that lecturers should develop cordial relationships with students and allow the students to contribute without any feeling of intimidation or fear. According to Walker and Gleaves (2016), the concept of caring teaching in practice consists of two pedagogic structures: (1) the active development and preservation of pedagogical relationships; and (2) the importance of trust, acceptance, and individual attentiveness in the part of lecturers and students.

Meanwhile, while this study focuses on how lecturers can build their social relationships with students, there is a question regarding the students' responsibility. The students must respect their lecturers and adhere to the rigid relational rules set by the university or institution to promote effective teaching and learning. Aspelin (2017) asserts that the university or the institution can help to push pedagogical relationships drive-by enacting and implementing cohesion policies against potentially deprivable factors. These factors include racism, intimidation, bigotry, bullying, and underdeveloped feedback and communication channels.

The study outcome gives a general impression and reveals that most UFS student participants hold social-relationship expectations over the lecturers. Hence, in the students' opinion, the lecturer has more responsibility (or obligation) to lead social relationship drive in a higher institutional setting. As such, this conventional perception makes it quite unclear whether these students take their side of responsibility in maintaining, nurturing, and facilitating pedagogical relations seriously. Similarly, the theories by Buber and Noddings suggest a two-dimensional conception of lecturers' relational competence as (1) an immanent phenomenon, implying that the teacher is directly involved in an inter-human relationship with an attitude of natural care; and (2) a transcendent phenomenon, which implies that the teacher manages social relationships with an attitude of ethical care (Aspelin & Jonsson, 2019). The first aspect is existential, an intrinsic part of all authentic encounters. This is not a conventional attitude that a teacher can learn; it is cultivated through pedagogical practice and teacher education. The second aspect of relational competence is socially constructed. As lecturers and teacher

educators, we can work actively and purposely to cultivate such an attitude. The study, therefore, recommends the following.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The lecturers should pay attention to the use of technical language (this came up as a result of language difficulties that the new entrants face as second-language speakers of English).
2. Reducing large-size classes as students indicated that a small-group teaching method works for them. The lecturer and faculty should make an effort to facilitate student support.
3. The university website communication channels should be the drive for students' respect and lecturer approachability (very important).
4. Using students' names when responding to them in email, classroom, etc.
5. A caring culture among the staff should be encouraged by the HEIs found in developing nations.
6. Avoiding factors such as inadequate class preparation, low confidence, excess workload, and communication deficiencies by the lecturers should be seen as primary reinforcement of professionalism.

CONCLUSION

The current study concludes that while the experiences of lecturers and students at the HEIs of developing nations are different, as well as challenging in terms of building pedagogical relations. The large class size is a sensitive issue for the HEIs authorities, given that the economic model is built around class size. It is a difficult issue owing to the decreasing government sponsorship of HEIs in developing nations. These reasons give credence to the significance of pedagogical relationships as a drive for these universities or institutions found in developing nations. It is vital to internally develop strategies to promote good pedagogical relationships in these institutions. This initiative should be included in the teaching or instructor philosophy of contact learning institutions. It should also be seen as an effort by lecturers to change from traditional frames of reference or perspectives that saw creating social relationships with students as contrary to the ethics of professionalism to the "humane professionalism" teaching philosophy.

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Searching for Dasein: Positive Science's Failure to Become the Philosophical Locus of Natural Knowledge Universality

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ABSTRACT

I will argue in this article, using mainly Heideggerian conceptual apparatus that positive science has failed to represent the philosophical *locus* to ground the phenomenological-essential structure of the universality of human knowledge of the natural world. To show the phenomenological structure of the synthetic *a priori* judgments of natural science, Kant tried to substitute metaphysics through transcendental philosophy, but he only managed to develop the programmatic form of *philosophical questioning*. That programmatic account has not yet formed the objective historical consciousness of the universality of natural science. It is the mere "possible experience" of a subject. I will argue that *subjective possible experience* cannot give a historical perspective on the universality of scientific possibilities. It is, therefore, an incomplete property for the phenomenological codification of the intentional unity of meaning of the natural science content. The result is a void of ontological parameters for judging natural science's role in our culture as the highest instance of universal knowledge.

Keywords: Dasein; positive science; universality of human knowledge; subjective possible experience.

INTRODUCTION: HEIDEGGER ON THE REIFICATION OF RATIONAL PARAMETERS OF UNIVERSALITY

Two interconnected themes underlie the key that unlocks Heidegger's philosophy's rhetorical and conceptual engine. The first theme, called "ontological difference", represents the author's engagement with the division between the question of Being (*Sein)* and the question of beings (*Seiendes)* (Philipse¸2021; Chalita & Sedzielarz, 2021). This thematic object allows the author to generalize a model for the study of any phase of philosophical thought. The model involves the question: what is the orientation with

which this phase of philosophy approached the question of the essence of Being? If it was from an ontic orientation, that is, giving primacy to entities in their regular interconnections, the author believes that there is the phenomenon of forgetting or concealment at work. Suppose it was from an ontological orientation, giving primacy to the question of Being *qua* Being, or the essence of Being. In that case, the author believes there was an original and authentic understanding of the very production of the categorial structure in which Being is shown, phenomenologically codified, or uncovered.

The second is the theme of "Dasein", i.e., in Heidegger's words, the entity that "in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it" (1962, p. 32). This means that we are grasping "that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask this question" (1962. p. 35). Indeed, this brings us to the question of Being and truth its temporality. The existential nature of Dasein – or its finite, factual, uncertain situation – underlies the consolidation of a horizon of possibilities that appears in the world as a *future* and not a mere logical-semantic or imaginative abstraction of the diagrammatic possibilities of modelling *truth*.

> Dasein projects itself towards its potentiality-for-Being in the 'truth'. This projection is possible because Being-in-the-truth makes up a definite way in which Dasein may exist (1962, p. 415).

Thus, Dasein can be called that way of being in which we place ourselves when we are in possession of some specific temporal awareness of the question of truth and the possibilities of truth (Guignon, 2012). According to Heidegger:

> Dasein's Being finds its meaning in temporality. But temporality is also the condition that makes historicality possible as a temporal kind of Being which Dasein itself possesses, regardless of whether or how Dasein is an entity 'in time'. (1962, p. 42)

The two themes (ontological difference and Dasein) are intertwined. Heidegger believes that the existential situation of the question about Being creates an ontic-ontological primacy, in the very sense that it is through (Dasein's) existential path that *ontological difference* comes to be experienced as a challenge of (Dasein's) own possibilities and horizons of interpretation (Shah¸2015). As our experience tends to dramatize the conceptual and hermeneutical history produced by this Dasein, this mode-of-being becomes close to us ontically, but not ontologically: "Dasein is ontically 'closest' to itself and ontologically farthest" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 36). This is to say that we come to be acquainted with our Dasein through its psychological and anthropological reifications. It is natural for us to be sensitive to that mode-of-being through psychological reifications, such as anxiety and fear, or mechanistic reasoning, such as probability and the calculation of marginal harm. Heidegger spends pages and pages of his most influential work (*Being and Time*) narrating the slight and subtle differences in authenticity between each of these dramaturgical expressions of Dasein (Micali, 2022). However, I do not need, in order to capture the main point, to go down this avenue. The fact that each historical human being has become a presence that contributes to the conceptual universe through his *Dasein* does not prevent us from observing this *Dasein* without its human counterpart.

In this theoretical exercise, Dasein describes the types of philosophical expression that a historical epoch uses to codify its possibilities and question the essence of Being. At

the cost of advancing a daring interpretative license, we could complement this description by stating that some of those codifications are made ideologically, narratively, and according to other inauthentic forms of pseudo-philosophical awareness. As this codification comprises the phenomenological correlation structures that will come to be essential, each historical epoch is sensitive to Being through its philosophy, or ideology, which defines for it its notion of "possible" and "necessary", and the subsequent parameters of the universality of its historical phase (phenomenologically codified by the synthetic and analytical *a priori* ideal structures that spread through the institutions of mediation of truth, such as language and scientific paradigms).

My hypothesis does match a typical interpretation of Heidegger. According to it, what Heidegger is trying to do, throughout his career through different doors, is to rescue a pre-metaphysical, pre-psychological, but also pre-linguistic (and pre-intentional) way of studying the phenomenon of openness that generates *reformist interpretations* of the difference between essence and factuality—and the subsequent awareness of "possible truth" that this difference normativizes. This form must also be pre-propositional to avoid the state of normative obscuration created by the logical-semantic idealization of this sphere of essences. What he intends by reusing the controversial expression "Dasein" is to define the place of questioning where the original question is rescued, instead of obscured. As he defines Dasein at the beginning of *Being and Time* (2010) as the being that is in question in its own Being, he succeeds in invoking not a reification of ontological difference, but the reflexive place where that difference is generated. This study is possible, however, only through a kind of rescue of the original ontological question. The knowledge about essence/factuality is generated not in the calming humour of a resigned attitude but through an attitude of defiance and contravention. The places where this knowledge is possible are those where there is still room for reform, either by means of revision or reinterpretation.

ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE AND DASEIN

What the problematization of Dasein thematizes is the ability to generate knowledge about the difference between essence and actual existence (factuality), *as a problem*. Heidegger calls that the *ontological difference*. The expression *ontological difference* refers primarily to the difference between *Seiendes* and *Sein*, beings and the Being of beings. The type of knowledge generated in the production of this difference is that of negation, or the possible expansion of knowledge of the entities beyond the sphere of its positive presence. The theme of negation, however, is controversial enough not to warrant a simple description. I will have to review this notion little by little, as the text develops. A good fixed point to introduce the problem is Kant's reflection on the object of transcendental theology of the *Transcendental Dialectics*, where he discusses two different forms of determination. For Kant (1998):

> ...the thoroughgoing determination in our reason is grounded on a transcendental substratum, which contains as it were entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken, then this substratum is nothing other than the idea of an All of reality. All true negations are then but limits, which they could not be called unless they were grounded in the unlimited (the All) (p. 555).

Logical negation has a character limited to a unilateral opposition, that is, it is limited to a rule of exclusion of certain possibilities, while ontological negation (or transcendental)

explores a substrate of all possibilities excluded by the determination. According to Kant, the rule "indicated only by the word 'no', is never truly linked to a concept, but only to the relationship of this with other in judgment" (Kant, 1998, p. 555). It is the last representation of difference which interests us. Knowledge of that difference is set to highlight the ontological character contained in the awareness of the *specific or essential differences* that characterize the limits of the counterfactual possibilities of being. Speaking of Aristotle, Heidegger (1995) states "...he designates questioning concerning beings as a whole and questioning concerning what the beings of beings, their essence, their nature is" (p. 34).

As polemic as it may sound, I will assume as our reading hypothesis that the coining of this expression (ontological difference) reflects Heidegger's strategy for approaching the theme of the "essence" or essential possibilities of Being (*being qua being*). This hypothesis granted, the ontological difference is the description of the stability of any awareness of possible-truth, i.e., the description of the *categorial stage* where the awareness of truth possibility is distinguished from possible-falsehood in a consistent way. That consistency equals the tolerance of Being to counterfactual assessment, or the *limits of the non-actual* for the beings compatible with that generic category. The scientific awareness of that moment of stability is what conditions the consolidation of a paradigm of studies, when the categorial fondation is assumed as consensual and even accepted with a degree of blindness. The scientific stage of that awareness is one way of making consciouss experience "positive", in the sense that its intencional correlations are then bound to the surface of evidence. Positive sciences may be seem as a production of stable platforms of negation, in order to ground any higher speculation in a theoretical unity that is still connected to positive interpretations. This is a politics to avoid crisis in paradigmatic studies.

Let's use an allegory to color this explanation. We may imagine that when humanity, entering the stages of high speculation, comes to conceptualize about the *possible* in an ontological way, i.e., from the perspective of the *essential difference* of Being, it is also able to create that awareness as a knowledge that is modeled against the background of a negation, a counterfactual assessment, or a "difference". If it is able to enter the conjectual activity avoiding indifference and indiscernibility, one can claim to have mastered some degree of knowledge of the difference between non being and being. Some categorial ground is stablished to set that difference as primitive and stable. As Being can be said in many ways, each category will express that difference in a manner proper to its ontological region, and therefore that humanity stage built a compreension of Being that is prior or fundamental. The fundamentality of that awareness is destined to be forgotten, though, the more that compreension of the ontological region is based on a deep categorial frame that is taken for granted and then its negative aspect is taken out of questioning. Positivism – as a philosophical claim on the computational and verificational view on meaning – is the most complete stage of that forgetfulness of the negative part of the compreension.

The degree of clarity that a stage of civilization can give to this difference can be checked by monitoring the stability of its models to predict consistency. In one of Heidegger's own examples, Thales of Milleto tried to gain knowledge of this difference, but he failed, because he determined the Being of beings by using another being: water. As this example shows no ontological difference in the characterization of beings and their determination, in Thales' explanation no awareness of the categorical foundation that

systematizes the generic compatibility of the beings of the considered group-category – physis – was achieved. In fact, only after Aristotle's Metaphysics could the ontological question about the first principles – or the highest causes – be fully separated from the special sciences and then absorbed by the categorial question. Non-contradiction hence becomes the center of the first-science problem.

We may think of that as one of the most primitive stages of intellectual conciousness. Once faced with this phenomenon, the Being can be unfolded in its possibilities according to its essential differences, that is, from a negative knowledge of peculiar kind, capable of avoiding indifference, confusion, conceptual instability. As humanity is now ready to enter the speculative arena without losing itself in some mythological dramaturgy, it becomes ready to fix parameters of rational discourse. That difference is the awareness of possibility as consistent compatibility, i.e., of the stable points where truth is distanced from falsehood in unified ways. From the beggining it is a Logical awareness, although only after some ontological reflection (Aristotle's metaphysics) the Greek cuture was able to make that awareness reflectively as a law: non-contradiction.

After considering this way of generating knowledge of ontological difference, we can say that we do not know or are not sure about all the strategies used by a scientific culture to generate this knowledge of the possible, as opposed to the factual. The history of the Greeks is one of the unique references we have. We know that this is an expression of intellectual activity in its most speculative and theoretical forms (a conceptualization), but we have no idea if the example of the Greeks would repeat itself in another scientific culture. To speak of western culture, there are at least two radically different ways that confronted each other at some point: metaphysics and the natural science. Both tried to generate ontic knowledge from some deep conceptualization, although the second is more sensitive to empirical revision (French & McKenzie, 2012; Bhaskar, 2014). We know little about how the ontological difference is generated because we have no means of analysing it without some knowlegde of how things are pre-conceptually. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (2010), promises to study that pre-stage of the problem. He wanted to thematize that negative activity of conceptualization from its pre-conceptual root, as something present in the structure of the problematization, i.e, the being that – because of its finite nature – is the mode the positiveness of Being is problematized.

As a reading hypothesis, the idea of *Dasein* finds a place in the Heideggerian system as his conceptual door to access the theme of "possibility" or "differential essence" through the original structures in which *possibilities* open up. In the work *Plato's Sophist*, Heidegger (1997) states: "to be disclosing, to remove the world from concealdness and coveredness. (...) that is a mode of being of Human Dasein" (p.12).

KANT'S LOGIC OF EXPERIENCE AND THE ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THE DASEIN THAT *DISCLOSES* THE PARAMETERS OF UNIVERSALITY FOR NATURAL SCIENCE

Heidegger thinks that at least one time in Western history, the authentic expression of philosophy, distanced from its covered or ontic conversions, happened. But Heidegger's proposition about the conditions for authentic philosophy, and therefore the rule he uses to exclude "bad expressions" of philosophy, is fairly underdeveloped. We are not speculating about the author's unstable opinions about *philosophical happenings*. Let's just talk about his divided and reluctant position around the situation and performance

of metaphysics to establish itself as a place for authentic philosophical *aporia*. The author, like Kant, is torn between solidarity with the metaphysical enterprise and criticism of its speculative deviations. Kant asks in the preface B of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "what sort of treasure is it that we intend to leave to posterity, in the form of a metaphysics (...)?" (Quintero, 2021, p . 235). His conclusion is that there is a negative utility for this study, although it cannot go beyond the limits of possible experience.

For Heidegger, if understood as ontology or a question about the essence of Being, metaphysics is the mode of expression of the question about finitude (Dasein) most apt to do justice to a historical understanding of the Universals that populate the categorial center of gravity of the scientific canon of truths of an epoch. Thus, if we understand metaphysics as Kant's phenomenological theory of the synthetic unity of representations, we may say it is the expression of the most authentic Dasein: "the question concerning the possibility of ontological knowledge becomes the knowledge of the essence of a priori synthetic judgments" (Heidegger, 1997, p. 9). If we understand it, however, as a reification of the necessity of universal knowledge in pure supersensible terms, it would prevent these Universals from surpassing their merely speculative nature. It would block its ability to position itself as Conceptual unities within an arena of verification and correction by the intuitive sensibility (the space-time conditions of instantiation). This would place metaphysics beyond the reach of the subjective intuitive manipulations that would allow these universals to assume significance in a Dasein.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* (1998) is, in this context, the text indicting this degeneration of metaphysics. It is an attempt to rescue the existential conditions (Dasein) of the historical universals of Newtonian natural science, placing it within the reach of correction instruments elaborated as a new parameter of rationality: Empirical Logic (mathematical schematic diagrams mixed with other types of *a priori* syntheses). As Kant pulls the metaphysical question to its synthetic *a priori* model, studying the forms of synthesis of the manifold, he rescues the possible Dasein of Newtonian natural science, showing the origin of the phenomenological codification – the *forms* posed by the subject – of the relations of essence sewing natural tempo-spatial phenomena. This is the accomplishment of Kant's *Copernican Revolution* in Philosophy (see Kant 1998, p. B xvi)

Kant was able to give a rational yardstick for regulative judgment of the higher stages of theoretical speculation in natural science, notably those making use of mathematics and *inductive schematization* (understood as empirical or synthetic logic). But we argue that the most Kant achieved was revealing the categorial role of the subjective expression of existence. The subject appears as the reification of an experimental Dasein activity of the empirical scientist. It is the activity of experimental manipulation to adjust its incomplete experience and to encode its universality in pure synthesis (apperception). This merely subjective contribution creates a state of universality exposed to merely heuristic rational parameters, which always fail to create the connection with the ontological theme. When we try to bring it to phenomenological clarity, subjectivity is limited to an intentional-codification of its manipulative results.

CONCLUSION

Although Positive Natural Sciences accomplishes the requirements of calculation, the universality of its possible essences has not yet been grasped with enough ontological awareness. This means that the necessity of the distinction between Sense and pseudo-sense (non-sense, absurd, unknowable) within the categorial framework of high

theoretical natural science does not reach a state of stability that match our understanding of the world. So our historical understanding of the rational parameters of the universality of that science is drastically incomplete to describe it as a *meaningful field* that can be phenomenologically encoded and universally communicable. That is, we have not matured the phenomenological codification that would give stability to the *universality* natural sciences have to reach to be a worthy substitute for ontology in the task of both disclosing the essential truth of the totality of beings and giving us a horizon of life-understanding.

I also conclude that the return to metaphysics through the transcendental model – Kant's project – reified the philosophical question inside a subjectiveness that is sensitive to its finitude and temporality merely through an awareness of its cognitive limitations (its impossibility of accessing *things in themselves*). As that cognitive limitation is practically manifested by the expression of fear and economic prudence, the result is an ever-increasing ideological reification of the ontic results of natural science, which threatens to become an industry for the production of probability curves harnessed by the culture of calculation.

The void of ontological parameters for evaluating the universal nature of natural science *a priori* knowledge provokes a subsequent crisis of the positive sciences' ability to justify themselves philosophically. This was spotted by Husserl's lecture in Vienna in 1935 (*Philosophy and the Crisis of the European Mankind*), and it is discussed extensively in the Introduction to General and Transcendental Knowledge: "At bottom these sciences have lost their great belief in themselves, in their absolute significance" (Husserl, 1969, p. 5). The last message encouraged by this reflection is: the crisis of modern sciences should not justify a return to mythical irrationality or gnostic anti-logocentric reflection, but should invoke the need to improve the human capacity to give a temporal-historical perspective to its models of universality – whether institutional or scientific.

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Impact of the COVID-19 on Food Security and Sustainable Development Goals in India: Evidence from Existing Literature

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ABSTRACT

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, India's food security was in a precarious state. The outbreak has further exacerbated the country's food insecurity. In India, the COVID-19 pandemic has a detrimental influence on the food, nutrition, and health security of the poor, pregnant women, children, disadvantaged members of society, small and marginal farmers, daily wage earners, salespeople, and informal labourers. This study assesses the performance of India's food security before and after the COVID-19 pandemic based on secondary data. This study further examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and SDGs in India based on existing studies. This study reveals that poverty, income inequality, hunger, child malnutrition, unemployment, health insecurity, women's insecurity, gender disparity, and social inequality have increased in India due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the aforementioned reasons, India will face some challenges

in increasing production activities across the board. Furthermore, the food security and income of vulnerable sections of society would be in peril. This study posits that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be difficult for India to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of no poverty (SDG1), zero hunger (SDG2), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), clean water and sanitation (SDG6), decent work and economic growth (SDG8), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG9), reduced inequality (SDG10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG12). This study proposed some policy suggestions to help increase food security and achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India in the near future.

Keywords: Food security; hunger, COVID-19 pandemic; developing economies; Sustainable development goals; India.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the susceptibility of poor individuals, children, and women to extensive vulnerability to food and nutritional security (treimikien et al., 2021). On December 31, 2019, the Chinese government alerted the World Health Organization (WHO) about an epidemic of severe pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei province, a metropolis with an estimated population of 11 million. On January 2, 2020, 66 percent of the first 41 people hospitalized with the virus had direct contact with the Huanan Wholesale Seafood Market ("Huanan market") (Dev & Sengupta, 2020; Sukhwani et al., 2020). On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed the COVID-19 virus a worldwide pandemic (Hoossain, 2020; Aday & Aday, 2020). Afterwards, it swiftly expanded throughout the nations of the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered both health and economic effects (Dev & Sengupta, 2020). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in industrialised and developing countries, the socioeconomic activities of the majority of people, as well as the health of humanity and many medical institutions collapsed. Due to poor infrastructure, inadequate health and medical facilities, lack of social and job security, high dependency of people on the agricultural sector, low technological ability, low living standards, and low coping strategies, the pandemic have also increased the economic vulnerability of developing countries. In developing countries, almost every sector—tourism, financial markets, small-scale businesses, MSMEs, oil, agriculture, dairy and milk production, dairy business, and service sectors—were badly impacted by the global COVID-19 epidemic (Chaudhary et al., 2020; treimikien et al., 2021). Consequently, the food and nutritional security, economic capabilities, and social security of the vulnerable people in developing countries have further declined (Sinha, 2020; HLPE, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also spawned a number of other issues, including natural disasters, variations in the price of food grains, and significant strain on the health system. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many developing countries faced a variety of problems, including malnutrition, obesity, poverty, income inequality, low productivity of food-grain crops, low economic capacity of the population, low employment opportunities, high unemployment, stagnant rural wages, inadequate infrastructure, ineffective government policies, climate change, and natural disasters. (Singh et al., 2019; Sukhwani et al., 2020; Sinha, 2020; Singh, 2020; Mishra & Rampal, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded this problems.

According to UN and FAO studies, the COVID 19 pandemic has caused a 10% rise in food costs, which has exacerbated the poverty of 100 million people in developing nations by 2020 (Kansiime et al., 2021). The impact of COVID-19 appeared to be the destruction of the food system chain, a rise in food prices due to an imbalance in the supply and demand of food-grain products, a decline in consumption pattern, a decline in employment and loss of employment in the informal sector, transport restrictions, and an increase in the vulnerability of consumers in developing nations (HLPE, 2020; Sukhwani et al., 2020; Sinha, 2020; Workie et al., 2020; Suri, 2021).

At the global level, around 2 billion people are facing moderate food insecurity and 700 million people are facing severe food insecurity (Pirasteh et al., 2021). Therefore, as food demand is significantly associated with the income of the people, the consumption patterns of poor people are adversely affected in developing economies (Workie et al., 2020). Before the COVID-19 epidemic, 100 million people worldwide were hungry and malnourished (Suri, 2021). Furthermore, around 690 million (8.9%) and 750 million people in the world were undernourished and food insecure in 2019 (Suri, 2021). Food is also a fundamental human necessity, there is no way to exist without it. Thus, food security is essential for sustainable development (Workie et al., 2020). In 199 nations, hunger and malnutrition among children have grown by 1.6 billion, and 83 to 132 million people may suffer from acute hunger in the future owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, it is also estimated that the number of undernourished people on the planet will approach 840 million by 2030 (Suri, 2021). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be difficult for many countries of the world to attain the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. (Psillakis, 2021; Shulla et al., 2021; Pirasteh et al., 2021).

In India, the food, nutrition, and livelihood security of the largest population depend upon the agricultural sector, which is highly climate sensitive. The Indian agricultural sector faces several problems due to climate change and natural disasters every year (Maggo, 2020). For instance, India has lost 18 million hectares of cropped area and 40% of food production due to floods during 2017–2019 (Preethan & Ginoya, 2021). Furthermore, around 90% of the working population is engaged in unorganised sectors in which they do not have any security (i.e., social, safety, and jobs), and 80% of the working people earn less than INR15,000 a month (Summerton, 2020; Sinha, 2020; Pirasteh et al., 2021). India has around 120 million smallholder farmers who contribute around 40% of the nation's food-grain production. Furthermore, around 50% of the Indian population depends upon agriculture and the allied sector for their livelihood security (Maggo, 2020). There was high food insecurity, nutritional insecurity, high-income inequality, extreme poverty, high employment rate, low per capita income, the low economic capacity of people, high inflation, and high disparities in socio-economic development in India before the COVID-19 pandemic (Singh & Sharma, 2018; Mishra & Rampal, 2020; Suri, 2021). India has around 195 million undernourished people, a quarter of the hungry people in the world (Sukhwani et al., 2020).

In India, around 194 million people do not have a secure source of food, nutrition or livelihood security (Preethan & Ginoya, 2021). There is significant variation in the socio-economic structure, demographic profile, availability of houses and sanitation, and epidemiologic and health facilities across Indian states (Acharya & Porwal, 2020). Subsequently, most states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha could not develop an appropriate path for socio-economic development due to the

existence of high food insecurity, nutritional insecurity, income inequality, extreme poverty, high illiteracy, low infrastructure, low productivity of food-grain and cash crops, social riots and conflicts, political instability, and low industrialization (Kumar et al., 2017; Acharya & Porwal, 2020). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional risk for the agricultural sector, which was under threat before it (Maggo, 2020).

In India, production in the agricultural, service, and industrial sectors was adversely affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic at a broader level (Chaudhary et al., 2020). India is a highly agriculturally intensive country, which ensures the food and nutritional security of everyone and the job security of agricultural workers and the farming community. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic directly hit the food, nutrition, and health security of a marginally weaker section of society, especially children, pregnant women, and agricultural workers (Nguyen et al., 2021). The food system plays a key role in increasing food availability and stability (Mina & Kumar, 2020). It includes the farmers, traders, retailers, and consumers who were negatively impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India (Sukhwani et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic harms the economic activity of migrant labour, small businesses, daily wage workers, farmers, and street vendors in the informal sector in India (Mishra & Rampal, 2020; Singh et al., 2020; Pirasteh et al., 2021). Subsequently, food insecurity, nutritional insecurity, poverty, income inequality, health insecurity, malnutrition, and hunger have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India. These are crucial components of most targets of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. Thus, there would be a serious concern for India to achieve the SDGs by 2030 (Pirasteh et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is an important contribution to the existing literature which examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and SDGs based on previous studies in India. This study addressed the answers to the following research questions:

1. What was the position of food security before the COVID-19 pandemic in India?
2. Which components of food security are highly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India?
3. Which goals of the SDGs were negatively affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India?

Based on the aforementioned research questions, this study could achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide the performance of India's food security before and after the COVID-19 pandemic based on secondary data.
2. To examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and SDGs in India based on existing studies.
3. To provide policy suggestions to increase food security and achieve SDGs in India.

FOOD SECURITY AND ITS ASSOCIATES

Food is an essential requirement of the human body, and without it, no one can survive. Food security may not be defined by a single indicator due to its multi-interaction association with agricultural production systems, socio-economic activities, climatic conditions, geographical location, political activities, cultural preferences, and government policies (Singh & Sharma, 2018). As per the Food and Agriculture Organization, food security is defined as "All people, at all times, having physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and

food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Muenstermann 2017, p. 40). Food security has four components, i.e., availability, access, utilization, and stability (Singh & Sharma, 2018). Food security is also associated with a situation in which all people in a society have the economic capacity and physical resources to acquire food as per their need to maintain an active and healthy life. Thus, it is also associated with food availability, food accessibility, food quality, and cultural preferences (Sukhwani et al., 2020). The Economist Intelligence Unit published a report on the Global Food Security Index (*GFSI*) to examine the relative performance of food security across economies. This organisation integrates four components of food security, i.e., affordability, availability, quality and safety, and natural resources and resilience. HLPE (2020) included six components such as availability, access, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability of food to define food security during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food Availability: This aspect of food security is linked to food production and related activities, domestic food grain stocks, and food grains imported from surplus areas (Kumar et al., 2017; HLPE, 2020). Hence, factors associated with food production can be considered to explain the food availability of a region. A summary of food availability-associated variables is given in Table 1.

Food accessibility: This component of food security is linked to the economic capacity and purchasing power of people to buy food-grain products (Kumar et al., 2017; HLPE, 2020). Thus, food accessibility is negatively associated with poverty and income inequality. There are several variables, such as per capita income, income from farming activities, inflation, price of food-grain products, market accessibility, and so on, that have a significant impact on food accessibility, such as per capita income, income from farming activities, inflation, price of food-grain products, market accessibility, and so on. The summary of the most relevant factors which are positively and negatively associated with food accessibility is given in Table 1.

Food Stability This component of food security maintains the equilibrium of food grains and other staple products in the domestic market (Kumar et al., 2017). Therefore, it measures the equality in demand and supply-side components of food-grain products in a nation. The list of factors which have a positive impact on food stability is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicators of food security and its Associates

Components	Indicators
Food Availability	Percentage of arable land, agriculture labour, availability of food in market, milk production, caloric availability of food-grain, current stock of food, farm income, food-grain production, government expenditure on agriculture & on rural development, in-house availability of food, livestock population, per capita calorie per day, per capita consumption expenditure, per capita depth of food-deficit, per capita dietary energy supply, per capita electric power consumption, per capita energy use, per capita food production variability, production of oilseeds, net irrigated area, net sown area, rural connectivity, tractor.

Food accessibility	Consumer price index, credit deposit ratio, cropping intensity, dependency ratio, depth of the food deficit, employment rate, literacy rate, fertilizer consumption, food-price inflation, infant mortality rate, institutional support, length of road, literate population per hectare land, per capita arable land, per capita GDP, per capita income, percentage of families below poverty line, percentage of female population, percentage of main workers, physical accessibility of food, poor people on per hectare land, population growth, urbanization, prevalence of severe food insecurity, prevalence of undernourishment, gross irrigated area, ratio of scheduled castes and scheduled tribe to total population.
Food Stability	Gross irrigated area, accessibility of information, bank credit disbursed to agricultural sector, cereal yield, cropping intensity, employment in agriculture, fertilizer consumption, food prices, food supply, food-grain area, forest area, income inequality, livestock production, number of fair price shop, per capita food production variability, per capita food supply variability, per capita land under cereal crops, per capita land under cereal production, population growth, ratio shop, storage capacity, urbanization.
Food Utilization	Drinking water, primary health care and primary school enrolment, nutritional adequacy of food, local preference of food, food quality, children under 5 years of age affected by wasting, children under 5 years of age who are stunted, children under 5 years of age who are overweight, infant mortality rate, incidence of anemia among women (15-49 years), incidence of exclusive breastfeeding among infants 0-5 months of age, minimum dietary energy requirement, average dietary energy requirement.

Source: Rukhsana (2011); Shakeel et al. (2012); Sajjad et al. (2014); Kumar et al. (2017); Singh & Sharma (2018); Singh & Singh (2019); Sukhwani et al. (2020); FAO - Food Security Indicators (2021).

Food Utilization: It is associated with nutritional content in the food and maintains the nutritional security of the people. Nutritional security depends upon several factors such as physical variables, climatic condition, soil quality, human factors, science & technology and human intervention, etc. The factors associated variables with food utilization is given in Table 1.

OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Sustainable development is defined as a situation which meets the requirements of present and future generations while maintaining environmental sustainability (Singh et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2021). Sustainable development can be achieved through economic development, social development, environmental development, and technological development (Singh et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2021). Therefore, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development in 2015 (Shulla et al., 2021). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have 17 different goals which are expected to be achieved by global economies by 2030 (Psillakis, 2021). These 17 goals have five pillars, i.e., people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership, to increase human

well-being and prosperity worldwide (Srivastava et al., 2020). The objectives of each goal of the SDGs are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Objectives of each goal of SDGs

Goals	Main Objectives
Goal 1: No Poverty	To provide employment with minimum wages and social benefits. To provide social protection to the poor and vulnerable section of the society.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	To achieve food security and zero hunger through sustainable agricultural development and to increase the income of farmers and fishers. To reduce the negative impact of different diseases on human body through strengthen the medical facilities.
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	To reduce global mortality ratio. To prevent death of newborns and children under 5 years. To reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.
Goal 4: Quality Education	To provide the better education facility to the girls and boys to increase their skills and knowledge. To create entrepreneurial capability among the youth.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	To reduce gender discrimination through providing equal opportunities to girls and boys. To give equal rights and ownership to the women, and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	To provide the equitable access to safe source of drinking water to increase livelihood security. To meets the water requirement for irrigation, industries, and energy and electricity production. To provide adequate sanitation, hygiene facility, and reduce environmental pollution with environmental sustainability and ecosystem services.
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	To increase sustainable share of renewable energy. To enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology. To promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	To create better ecosystem at working place, and provide appropriate remuneration for service of people and conducive working space. To provide the job security to working population and increase inclusive economic growth.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	To use science & technology to increase industrial growth as maintaining the sustainability in ecosystem services. To develop quality and resilient infrastructure to increase economic development and human well-being. To promote sustainable industrialization through innovation and technological capabilities. To promote technology development, research and innovation, ICT, and industrial diversification.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	To promote the social, economic and political inclusion without any discrimination in age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin and religion. To adopt fiscal, wage and social protection to achieve gender equality.
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	To ensure accessibility for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing, and sustainable transport system. To enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization with maintaining the environmental impact of cities. To implement policies towards resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation action to climate change, resilience to disasters.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	To implement programmes on sustainable consumption and production. To achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.
Goal 13: Climate Action	To increase resilience and adaptive capacity to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change and natural disasters. To increase awareness among the public toward climate change mitigation and adaptation.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	To reduce marine pollution and manage protection of marine and coastal ecosystem services. To reduce the impact of ocean acidification.
Goal 15: Life on Land	To promote sustainable management of forestry, and conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystem services. To integrate ecosystem and biodiversity resources.
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	To reduce violence and related deaths. To promote the rule of law to ensure equal access to justices. To reduce corruption and bribery and develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions.
Goal 17: Partnership to achieve the goal	To strengthen domestic resource mobilization through international support to developing economies. To mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources. To promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies for developing economies.

Source: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html.

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 ON FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

Food Security of India before COVID-19 Pandemic

The Global Food Security Index (*GFSI*) is published by The Economist Intelligence Unit to assess the relative performance of global countries in food security. According to the report, between the year 2016 -2021 India has a deteriorated position in global food security (refer to Table 3). The ranking of India in global food security improved during the 2016–2020 period. However, when compared to 2019, the absolute value of GFSI has decreased in 2020. The Global Hunger Index (*GHI*) also measures the hunger of global countries. *GHI* is an integration of four components, i.e., the under-five mortality rate; the prevalence of wasting in children; the prevalence of stunting in children; and the

proportion of undernourished. As per the *GHI* (2020) report, the world was at a moderate level across countries (Suri, 2021). India's ranking was 102 out of 113 countries in *GHI* in 2019, thus it has the poorest performance in *GHI* in global economies. However, India's GHI rating has improved from 102nd in 2019 to 94th in 2020, as child nutrition continues to improve (Preethan & Ginoya, 2021).

Table 3: India's position in *GFSI*, *GHI* and indicators of food security

	Global Food Security Index (GFSI)		Global Hunger Index (GHI)		GDP per capita (constant 2011)	Prevalence of undernourishment (3-year average)	Number of people undernourished (3-year average)	Prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	US $	%	Million	(%)
2016	75	49.4	97	28.5	5851.4	14.7	192.3	52.6
2017	74	48.9	100	31.4	6182.9	14.2	187.6	52.8
2018	76	50.1	103	31.3	6518.8	13.8	184.9	52.9
2019	72	58.9	102	30.3	6713.9	14	189.9	53
2020	71	56.2	94	27.2	6118.4	15.3	208.6	
2021	-	-	101		-	-	-	-

Source: Various publication of The Economist Intelligence Unit and International Food Policy Research Institute; and Food Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO).

Furthermore, around 53% women has the prevalence of anaemia due to lack of nutritional and food security in India. The per capita gross domestic product has declined in 2020. Subsequently, the prevalence of undernourishment as a percentage of population and in number of people have increased in 2020 after COVID-19 pandemic.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security in India

The pandemic of COVID-19 has had a detrimental influence on food security in emerging countries (treimikien et al., 2021). Specifically, the COVID-19 epidemic significantly affected all aspects of food security in India in several ways (Nguyen et al., 2021). Due to socially alienating standards, abrupt lockdowns, and border closures, food accessibility and availability have become unclear (Sinha, 2020). Due to social distancing standards, both the demand for products and services by individuals and the output of the agriculture sector decreased (Chaudhary et al., 2020). According to Amjath-Babu et al. (2020), The COVID-19 pandemic in India has a substantial impact on all initiatives linked to food security.

Food Availability

When the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak in phases 1 and 2, which was the harvesting period for Rabi crops such as wheat, sorghum, millet, and maize in India (Summerton, 2020), the harvesting, marketing, and processing of these crops were adversely affected due to the reverse migration of labour and the lack of appropriate marketing in India (Ceballos et al., 2020; Workie et al., 2020; Maggo, 2020). Therefore, the supply chain of food-grain products was adversely affected in India (Aday & Aday,

2020). All mechanisms of the supply of food-grain products declined in the domestic market. Furthermore, Rabi crops could not be harvested due to a lack of agricultural workers, and farmers could not sell their agricultural products in the domestic market due to the lockdown.

Farmers could not prepare the land for winter crops due to a lack of finance and other inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, machines, technology, market accessibility, transportation, pesticides, and agricultural workers (Maggo, 2020). Harvesting operations rely on agricultural labor, equipment, and effective marketing (Ceballos et al., 2020). Farmers were unable to buy seeds, machinery, fertilizer, and other inputs for the growth of new crops in the next crop season (Mina & Kumar, 2020). Furthermore, in an urban area, most people depend on the market to buy food-grain products. Furthermore, during the lockdown period, most poor households lost their jobs and economic capacity in rural and urban India (Alvi & Gupta, 2020; Pirasteh et al., 2021). Subsequently, all activities related to food availability were negatively impacted in rural and urban India.

Food Accessibility

The imbalance in demand and supply of food-grain and vegetable crops caused a decline in the prices of vegetable crops in India. In contrast, the prices of food grain products increased in urban areas due to a shortage of food grain products (Mishra & Rampal, 2020). As the price of foodstuffs increased during the COVID-19 pandemic period, thus, consumer behaviour was also adversely affected (Aday and Aday, 2020). In India, around 400 million workers in the informal sector are under stress due to the loss of their jobs (Chaudhary et al., 2020). Subsequently, the economic accessibility and poverty of informal workers increased due to the loss of jobs (Workie et al., 2020). Furthermore, the cost of harvesting, marketing, transport, and labour increased during the lockdown period (Ceballos et al., 2020; Aday and Aday, 2020). India's smallholder farmers produce over 40% of food-grain production (Ceballos et al., 2020; Maggo, 2020), and 263.1 million agricultural workers and 1 billion domestic consumers have a high dependency on agricultural production (Singh et al., 2020). Consequently, the income and food security of small farmers and common citizens has also declined in India (Ceballos et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021).

Smallholder farmers were highly vulnerable due to a lack of resources, credit, and basic healthcare facilities (Maggo, 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of local farmers and poor people who were unable to afford food products. It reduces the economic accessibility of farmers and poor people in India (Harris et al., 2020). Farmers were bound to take a loan from their relatives with a high-interest rate due to a decline in agricultural income (Ceballos et al., 2020). Migrant workers and labour migrated from urban areas to rural areas due to the loss of jobs in the cities. Subsequently, the income of people has declined due to a decline in employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. Also, it was essential to maintain social distance to control the spread of diseases (Sukhwani et al., 2020). Around 380 million Indians are working in the informal sector (Summerton, 2020). Most manufacturing industries in the informal or unorganised sector were closed. This caused a reduction in employment for unskilled workers in this sector (Workie et al., 2020). This group of workers do not have much savings and social security to cope with an unprecedented lock-down (Chaudhary et al., 2020). They were also facing psychological pressure and mental illness due to job losses and health issues such as fever and fatigue (Aday & Aday, 2020; Nguyen et al.,

2021). Accordingly, unskilled and migrant workers could not maintain their daily dietary patterns due to a lack of money or being unable to borrow money from their relatives (Summerton, 2020).

Impact on Food Stability

Indian farmers do not have proper storage facilities for food-grain products due to a lack of infrastructure facilities, and they were unable to sell their products in nearby Mandies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The food supply chain was stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mina & Kumar, 2020). Furthermore, farmers were bound to sell their food-grain products at atleast the minimum price to maintain their additional daily requirements. Also, high-quality fruits, vegetable crop production, and dairy products were damaged due to a lack of storage facilities or farmers could not sell them in the market (Mishra & Rampal, 2020; Štreimikienė et al., 2021). Food products cannot be exported from one region to another due to transport restrictions (Štreimikienė et al., 2021). Subsequently, the income of farmers significantly declined and they could not repay their crop loans and informal debt due to in India (Mina & Kumar, 2020; Ceballos et al., 2020). Also, farmers were unable to borrow money from their relatives to maintain the cropping pattern for the next season. Accordingly, the food stability of components was adversely affected in India.

Impact on Food Utilization

Poor communities meet their nutritional security from staple foods such as wheat, rice, sorghum, and maize due to their low income. They cannot afford non-staple foods such as eggs, meat, and milk because of their low income (Summerton, 2020). Most Indian farmers do not have proper storage facilities; thus, 20% to 30% of food-grain production was damaged due to a lack of storage facilities, which caused a reduction in the quality of food in India. Food utilisation is also adversely affected due to a reduction in healthy diets, shelf-stable food, and a decline in actual nutritional content in the food (HLPE, 2020; Sukhwani et al., 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, nutritional security, child feeding and nutrition, women's diet, education system, employment, income inequality, health infrastructure, industries and agricultural activities was negatively affected in India (treimikien et al., 2021; Pirasteh et al., 2021). The SDGs are linked with food and nourishment, i.e., SDG1 and SDG2. Food safety and supply security were negatively affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Most people could not afford food grains as per their needs due to rising food prices. Hence, it increased hunger in India (Pirasteh et al., 2021). Most academic institutions could not open during the pandemic. Subsequently, around one out of five students lost learning for a year. Quality education was also adversely affected due to around 66% of the working population losing their jobs or receiving low income in the informal sector in urban India. Furthermore, self-employed and agricultural workers and the farming community in rural areas also lost their jobs and income. Accordingly, decent work and economic growth were also negatively impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India (Srivastava et al., 2020).

Self-employed women and female workers lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also increased the additional burden on women. For instance, around 67%

of women spend more time taking their children who were unable to go to school in India. Hence, gender inequality and additional pressure on women have increased in India. Subsequently, hunger, poverty, and income inequality have increased in India (Chaudhary et al., 2020). India's rank dropped from 117 in 2019 to 120 in 2020 in the Sustainable Goals Index as per the Sustainable Development Report 2021. Medical facilities and hospitals were also overwhelmed due to the extensive pressure of patients in India. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic harms SDG3, which focuses on good health and well-being (Pirasteh et al., 2021). Furthermore, India's performance has declined in SDG4 (quality education), SDG 6 (clean water & sanitation), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) in 2021 due to COVID-19 (Pradhan et al., 2020). For India, it would be difficult to achieve no poverty (SDG1), zero hunger (SDG2), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequality (SDG10), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG11) in the future (Srivastava et al., 2020; Pirasteh et al., 2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SDGs is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on various goals of SDGs in India

Goals	Impact of COVID-19
Goal 1: No Poverty	90% workforce of informal sector could not maintain their livelihood security due to lack of jobs, thus it causes to increase poverty in India.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	Food supply chain was disrupted due to COVID-19, thus hunger increased in India.
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	Human health and well-being were adversely affected due to lack of healthcare facilities in India.
Goal 4: Quality Education	Most of academic organizations were not open during pandemic, thus it reduces quality education and foundation of the students in India.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	Livelihood security and healthcare security of women decreased due to loss of jobs.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Water and sanitation facilities were in stress due to extensive labour migration from urban area to rural area in India.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Reduce employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers in informal sector which caused to reduce economic growth by 3.2% and unemployment rate by 26% in India.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Industrial output and business operation decreased due to decline in investment in infrastructure and most sectors such as crude oil, refinery, fertilizers, cement, natural gas and renewable energy were shrink in India.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	Income inequality was increased due to decline in jobs in formal and informal sector in India.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Water demand was increased and demand of fertilizers, steel and other industrial products were declined due to low economic and purchasing power of the people.

Source: Chaudhary et al. (2020); Srivastava et al. (2020); Štreimikienė et al. (2021); Pirasteh et al. (2021).

CRUCIAL SUGGESTION TO INCREASE FOOD SECURITY AND SDGS IN INDIA

There is an urgent need to enhance India's food system in order to increase food security and eliminate hunger. Most farmers are not ready to accept new farm bills that were passed in the Indian parliament last year (2021). This may be caused by a hampered supply chain of food-grain products in the domestic market. Another negative implication of this bill may be that it may cause a reduction in the supply of cash crops to the agri-industry. Subsequently, production activities of agri-industries, the income of farmers, and employment opportunities may decline in the near future. Most farmers and workers in the informal sector in India have very limited economic capacity. Therefore, it is suggested that the government should provide financial support to farmers to help buy agricultural inputs for cultivation and to agricultural workers, daily wage earners, and others to sustain their livelihoods and move out of the loan and poverty trap. There was high unemployment in India, and most sectors of the economy are struggling to maintain their production activities after demonetization and the implementation of the new tax regime, i.e., GST. Thereafter, the COVID-19 pandemic hampers all sectors of the Indian economy. Consequently, most skilled and unskilled labour in the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors have lost their jobs.

In India, unemployment increased from 6.7% to 26% due to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and around 14 lakh people lost employment (Pirasteh et al., 2021). Hence, it would be a challenge for India to create jobs in all sectors of the economy. Otherwise, it would be difficult to create demand for food-grain and non-food-grain products in the domestic market. India has a high population density with poor health infrastructure (Ceballos et al., 2020). India needs to develop adequate health infrastructure to reduce the negative impact of similar pandemics in the near future (Maggo, 2020). During the lockdown period, the employer could not provide social security to their employees. Thus, it will be a critical challenge for policymakers to maintain the trust of the labour force to return to their jobs in their respective industries. As 90% of the working population is engaged in the informal sector in India, there is a need to provide financial support to this sector to increase the economic capacity of workers in this sector and to increase the economic growth of India. As workers do not have any social security in the informal or unorganised sectors in India, the government should provide social security to the workers in this sector to achieve SDGs by 2030 as producers do not have the trust to increase the supply of goods and services in the domestic market. Hence, it is essential to increase the demand for products in the domestic market to increase the motivation of producers to increase the supply in the market. It would be useful to create jobs for skilled and unskilled labour in India. Crucial suggestions to increase SDGs in India are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Crucial suggestions to increase SDGs in India

Goals	Suggestions
Goal 1: No Poverty	Increase the demand and supply components of food security and agricultural sector.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	Increase the economic capacity of population in informal sector.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	Develop appropriate health infrastructure and facilitate health security to the rural and urban dwellers.
Goal 4: Quality Education	Increase the academic quality through providing appropriate instruments to the students and trainings to compensate the losses of academic syllabus during lock down period.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	Increase the jobs for women in informal sector.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Reduce labour migration to maintain the ecosystems services and to provide clean water and sanitation.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Provide social security to the workers in private and unorganized sectors.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Increase the demand of products in domestic market. Increase the extensive investment in private sector to increase their investment in money and capital market. Meet the labour requirement for industries in informal sector.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	Create extensive jobs in informal and unorganized sector.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Increase the demand of products in domestic market through increasing economic capacity and purchasing power of people.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY PROPOSALS

The prime aim of this study was to provide an assessment of the performance of India's food security before and after COVID-19. Furthermore, it examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and SDGs based on previous literature. Finally, it comes up with some policy suggestions to increase food security and achieve SDGs in India. India's position in food security was very poor among the global countries before the COVID-19 pandemic. India's ranking in *GHI* and *GFSI* significantly declined after the COVID-19 pandemic. Per capita income has also declined after COVID-19 in India. All components of food security were negatively impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Food availability was adversely affected due to supply chain disturbance, labour shortage, inappropriate harvesting of rabi crops, lack of transport, and loss of food-grain production (Summerton, 2020; Ceballos et al., 2020). Also, farmers could not buy seeds, machines, fertilizer, pesticides, and agricultural inputs for the growing of crops in the next season (Mina & Kumar, 2020; Workie et al., 2020; Pirasteh et al., 2021).

Food accessibility declined due to loss of jobs and income, high food prices, lack of demand in the market, and disturbance of school meal programmes (Alvi & Gupta, 2020; Ceballos et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). The economic capacity and purchasing power of people declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India (Harris et al., 2020; Ceballos et al., 2020; Sukhwani et al., 2020). It also increases the debt trap and poverty of small farmers (Mina & Kumar, 2020; Ceballos et al., 2020). Food stability also declined due to supply chain disturbances, market instability, price volatility, import and export restrictions, and a lack of proper storage facilities for food-grain crops (Mina & Kumar, 2020). Due to their low income, the poor community of society obtains nutritional security from staple foods such as wheat, rice, sorghum, and maize. Hence, food

utilisation was also adversely affected due to a reduction in healthy diets, shelf-stable food, and actual nutritional content in the food (Sukhwani et al., 2020).

India will face four major challenges to ensure food security in the future: to maintain the demand and supply components of food security; to increase the trust of Indian farmers towards the new agricultural or farm bills; to move farmers out of the loan trap; to create extensive jobs for skilled and unskilled labour; and to develop appropriate health infrastructure. Most activities which are essential to increase food security, health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, equality, consumption, and production were adversely affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it would be difficult to achieve no poverty (SDG1), zero hunger (SDG2), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), clean water and sanitation (SDG6), decent work and economic growth (SDG8), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG9), reduced inequality (SDG10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG12) in India.

The Indian government needs to increase extensive investment in the agricultural sector to ensure sustainable food production, reduce hunger and food insecurity, and develop resilience to cope with natural calamities in India. Increase government support for food and cash transfers to farmers and vulnerable groups such as migrants, landless labourers, daily wage earners, and pregnant women (Sinha, 2020; Workie et al., 2020). The Indian government also needs to strengthen the public distribution system to ensure that the food security of the vulnerable people in society is guaranteed (Saxena & Mohan, 2021). There is also a need to make further changes in fiscal policy to increase the social welfare of Indian citizens (Sinha, 2020). Adoption of a food system-based policy to cope with this type of pandemic is imminent (Mina and Kumar, 2020). The increase of monetary investment in key sectors—education and social development—is also mandatory in India (Suri, 2021). The reduction of the cost of nutritious food; the implementation of social protection programmes; and the creation of more job opportunities to increase the standard of living of people and ensure the food security of rural and urban dwellers in India are necessary steps by the Indian Government (Suri, 2021). Lastly, the implementation of effective policies for poverty reduction, empowerment of women, and the empowerment of the vulnerable sections of society by the Indian government is also a necessary step toward improving food security (Aday & Aday, 2020).

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Fighting Two Infection Diseases: The Tales of Local Meat Vendors in dealing with COVID-19 and ASF

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic has practically affected businesses all over the world, whether they are small, medium, or macro enterprises. The business community was in survival mode and attempting to recover. In addition to the interruptions caused by the pandemic, the African Swine Fever (ASF) struck numerous nations. The goal of this paper is to look into the experiences of local meat vendors as they dealt with the ASF outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic. This qualitative phenomenological research involved ten pork meat vendors in the Southern Philippines who participated in the key informant interviews (KII). The data from the interview analysis is used to achieve what is called phenomenological psychological reduction. Ethical concerns, such as maintaining

confidentiality and anonymity, were taken into account. Pseudonyms replace the original names to maintain anonymity in this work. Before conducting the interview, the informants read the full content of the informed consent before signing it. Participants were also allowed to use the language they felt comfortable with. This investigation uncovered the following major themes relating to local meat vendors: a huge reduction in income; dealing with government regulations; fear of viruses; and the threat of competition. Two themes emerged for their coping strategies: innovation and strengthening customer loyalty. This study also found that it was difficult for the local meat vendors to cope with the two contagious illnesses (COVID-19 and ASF), but they had to do so to survive and make a livelihood.

Keywords: Meat vendors, African Swine Fever (ASF), COVID-19, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created chaos in almost all aspects of human society. Businesses all over the world are severely affected. First, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the agricultural sector and food supply (Siche, 2020). It is also a threat to animal breeding (Ding et al., 2021). However, while the world was still dealing with the pandemic, another virus, African Swine Fever (ASF), emerged (Fanelli et al., 2022). African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly infectious and fatal illness that can affect both domestic and feral pigs (Luskin et al., 2021). It is a highly infectious viral illness that affects domestic and feral pigs and has a fatality rate of up to 100% (Schulz et al., 2019). It poses little threat to human health but has catastrophic consequences for pig herds and the agricultural economy. The swine fever has created more pressure on the food supply and security of citizens in the affected areas (Deaton & Deaton, 2020; Laborde et al., 2020; Doi et al., 2021). In the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture (DA) first discovered the presence of ASF in Davao Occidental and Davao City in February 2020 (Palicte, 2020). When local governments in the Philippines started to loosen the lockdown measures they had put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, officials became worried that the ASF would spread as food products, especially pork, are moved from one place to another.

According to Angeles-Agdeppa and Custodio (2020), pork is only second to rice as a source of dietary energy for Filipino working adults. As of 2021, it is thought that African swine fever (ASF) has killed more than one-third of the Philippines' pig herds (Kedkovid et al., 2020). This threatens food security in the Philippines - a country that is already struggling because of the COVID-19 outbreak's effects on the economy. Thus, farms in the Philippines experienced significant losses due to the African swine flu pandemic. In the year 2019, when the epidemic expanded across the Philippines, the region is said to have lost almost $20 million each month (Cruz, 2019).

The majority of pork marketed in the Philippines comes from tiny backyard farms, thus, the loss of pork disproportionately impacts small farmers. Selling home-raised pigs is a common and lucrative method for Filipino residents to earn a livelihood. Numerous backyard growers are dispersed around the nation without as much official oversight. The loss of backyard pork production has secured the incapacity of households that largely depend on pig production for their income and nourishment. This has also made it harder for the government of the Philippines to use zoning and other methods to stop African Swine Fever. Furthermore, with ill pigs exhibiting signs such as spleen, liver, and kidney lesions, the value of pork declines, hence decreasing the revenue of local farmers. In

addition, one of the disease's distinguishing characteristics is a dramatic surge in pig fatalities on a certain farm. ASF is infectious and has a high death rate, allowing it to eradicate large numbers of sick pigs simultaneously. Thus, with these double pandemics of both COVID-19 and ASF, it is the local meat vendors who suffer the most.

This paper describes local meat vendors' lived experiences, focusing on the pork vendors in selected municipalities in the southern Philippines affected by the ASF and COVID-19 pandemics. Furthermore, the implications of both outbreaks for the pork industry are still poorly explored. The study's findings contribute to the body of literature on how government and local meat vendors deal with the impact of a pandemic on the pork industry and its implications for the economy and food supply.

PORK INDUSTRY AND VIRUS OUTBREAKS

Several viral outbreaks have already occurred in the past. These outbreaks, as expected, had devastating consequences for the pig industry (Gallardo et al., 2015; Pejsak et al., 2014). Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome Virus (PRRSV), Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea Virus (PEDV), Foot-and-mouth Disease Virus (FMDV), and African swine fever virus are the most well-known swine viruses (ASFV). In the last 20 years, these viruses have spread quickly and caused many countries huge economic losses.

Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome Virus (PRRSV) is an enclosed virus with about 15.4 kb of single-stranded genomic RNA (Rossow, 1998). The virus belongs to the *Arteriviridae* family. In terms of PRRSV molecular epidemiology in Asia, the 2006 discovery of a PRRSV2 strain in China, dubbed "highly pathogenic PRRSV" (HP-PRRSV), might be regarded as a milestone for the virus. Prior to 2006, PRRSV2 was prevalent in a number of Asian nations. The CH-1a-like strains are also regarded as typical Chinese PRRSV2 strains (Rossow, 1998). In 2006, HP-PRRSVs, such as the JXA1 strain, were found, resulting in the first HP-PRRS epidemic in China. With a high death rate, infected pigs developed symptoms of severe, high-grade hemorrhagic fever and cyanosis. In 2009–2010, a second China-HP-PRRS epidemic occurred (Zhang et al., 2018). This epidemic was brought on by PRRSV2 strains that differed genetically from the 2006 HP-PRRSVs. Since their appearance in 2006, HP-PRRSVs have proliferated and become the predominant strains in a number of Southeast Asian nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar (Zhang et al., 2018). Notably, the first outbreaks of HP-PRRSV outside of China were reported in 2007 in Vietnam and later in 2008 in the Philippines (Zhang et al., 2018). In China and Southeast Asian countries, HP-PRRSV seems to be getting worse in China and countries because infected pigs are crossing borders without permission and private farms don't have good biosecurity.

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea Virus (PEDV) is an enclosed virus with about 28 kb of single-stranded genomic RNA (Than et al., 2020). The virus belongs to the *Coronaviridae* family and the *Alphacoronavirus* genus. It is yet unknown where the new PEDV strains originated. Before 2005, the majority of PEDV complaints in Asia originated from China and South Korea. The majority of detected viruses were of the classical strain. In Thailand in 2007, Vietnam in 2009, China in 2010, and South Korea in 2013, however, major PEDV epidemics caused by non-S INDEL developing strains were first documented (Than et al., 2020). The virus has spread to other Asian nations. PEDV is prevalent in several Asian nations. Inadequate management of gut feedback, gilt acclimatisation, and biosecurity are likely major contributors to viral transmission in the same herds. PEDV is largely spread through the faecal-oral route, and sick pigs shed

massive quantities of the virus for seven to nine days (El-Tholoth et al., 2021). Transmission may occur via direct contact with sick pigs or indirect exposure to their faeces, which can survive in cold, moist organic matter for up to one month. Virkon S and other popular disinfectants destroy the infection. PEDV may also be transmitted by the air, sperm, and blood plasma.

Foot-and-mouth Disease Virus (FMDV) is a non-enveloped virus with an estimated 8.4 kb single-stranded RNA genome (Domingo et al., 2020). The virus belongs to the family *Picornaviridae*, genus *Aphthovirus*. Within two to three days of exposure, symptoms of the disease might manifest and can continue for up to ten days. Foot and mouth disease (FMDV) is a severe, highly infectious, economically important viral illness of animals. The illness affects pigs, cattle, sheep, goats, and other ruminants with cloven hooves. It is a transboundary animal disease (TAD) that has a significant impact on livestock output and disrupts regional and global traffic in animals and animal products. Despite the difficulties in treating FMDV, there have been just two outbreaks of serotype C since 1996, in Brazil and Kenya in 2004 (Domingo et al., 2020). The FMDV virus may be transferred by intimate contact, animal-to-animal transmission, long-distance aerosol transmission, and fomites, or inanimate items, most often food and motor vehicles. The virus may also reside on the clothing and skin of animal handlers, such as farmers, as well as in standing water, raw food leftovers, and feed additives containing infected animal products (Brito et al., 2017). FMDV may potentially be transmitted to cows through the sperm of sick bulls. Control strategies include quarantine and destruction of both diseased and healthy (uninfected) cattle, as well as export prohibitions of meat and other animal products to non-infected nations. The latest to emerge in recent years is the African Swine Fever (ASF) (Kedkovid et al., 2020).

ASF is an encapsulated virus with about 170–193 kb of genomic DNA. The virus belongs to the *Asfarviridae* family (Xiong et al., 2021). African swine fever (ASF) is one of the worst viruses that afflict pigs and wild swine. ASF may be transmitted by direct or indirect contact. In addition, the virus has been demonstrated to be very resistant in the environment and to remain for extended periods of time in infected foods or pig products, making environmental decontamination difficult. When contaminated blood is involved, disinfection is of utmost importance because blood carries a larger concentration of dangerous viruses than oral and nasal secretions and faeces. Recent research has shown that ASFV in faeces can be passed on to navel pigs through an indirect route, but this can only happen for a short amount of time. Despite the history of pandemics, many farmers and traders lack awareness about the virus (Dione et al., 2017; Woonwong et al., 2020). Furthermore, improper slaughtering processes and inadequate food storage (Dione et al., 2016) were major risk factors that may contribute to various contaminations and virus spread (Abdullahi et al., 2016).

Consumers are naturally fearful and hesitant to buy pork because of the ASF phenomenon. Some of them avoided buying pork because of the price (Mason-D'Croz et al., 2020), but primarily because of inconvenience and food safety (Gwin & Lev, 2011). For traders or meat vendors, they were on the losing end. The problem was the inability to continue exporting live pigs and pork (Mussell et al., 2020). When outbreaks come, like ASF, the traders or meat vendors suffer the most, as their livelihood depends on the pork business.

ASF during COVID-19 Pandemic

The novel COVID-19 virus, initially identified in China in late 2019 and proclaimed a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, has shook society and altered people's lifestyles (Cvetković, 2020). This has had a significant impact on healthcare systems and the global economy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic may have altered other facets of African swine fever's (ASF) introduction into ASF-free nations. Due to the virus's transmissibility, the ASF has continued to spread to new locations since December 2019. Animal diseases may have been harder to stop and control because of COVID-19 lockdowns, which may have helped the disease spread further.

ASF is not considered a new disease; in fact, it has been around for decades and has made its way to several continents, including Europe. African swine fever (ASF) is a transboundary animal disease (TAD) affecting species of the *Suidae* family (Lewis & Roth, 2021). ASF is a highly infectious viral illness with significant (95-100%) fatality rates in both farmed and wild pigs (Lewis & Roth, 2021). Initially identified in East Africa in the early 1900s, the virus migrated to Europe in the late 1950s and has lately wrought havoc in a number of Asian nations (Simberloff¸ 2013). The outbreaks have bad effects on the economy, especially for farmers whose jobs depend on the global pig industry and for consumers who have to pay more for pork.

The genotype I ASF virus (ASFV) was first reported in Portugal in 1957 before spreading to Western European countries: Spain (1960), France (1964), Italy (1967), Malta (1978), Belgium (1985), and the Netherlands (1986) (Danzetta et al., 2020). European countries successfully eradicated the disease in 1995, with the exception of the island of Sardinia, Italy, where the genotype I ASFV has been endemic since 1978. Genotype II ASFV was introduced in Europe, in Georgia, in 2007 and then slowly spread to neighbouring countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Belarus) (Sauter-Louis, 2021). In 2014, the first cases of wild boars were reported in Lithuania. Cases were subsequently reported in Estonia, Latvia, and Poland, and more recently in the Czech Republic (2017), Romania (2017), Hungary (2018), Bulgaria (2018), Belgium (2018), and Slovakia (2019) (Martínez-Avilés¸ 2020).

In 2020, Germany reported its first case of a wild boar (Sauter-Louis et al., 2021). Since its initial report on January 15, 2019, in Mongolia, eleven outbreaks affecting 105 farms or households have been recorded in six regions, including the capital, Ulaanbaatar. More than 10% of the total pig population (3,115 pigs) has died or been killed as a result of ASF outbreaks (Sariga & Deepa, 2021). The first ASF outbreaks were reported in Malaysia (Sabah State) in both wild boars and domestic pigs in February 2021, followed by Sarawak State in Sibu Division in January 2022 and Serian Division in February 2022. ASF was found in the states of Melaka, Pahang, Perak, Johor, and Negeri Sembilan on the Malay Peninsula (Kurz, 2021).

Since the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) identified an ASF outbreak in North Sumatra Province in 2019, ASF has been officially verified in 10 out of 34 provinces: Sumatera (Lampung, North, South, and West), Riau, Java (Central, West, and Yogyakarta), Bali, and East Nusa Tenggara (Dharmayanti, 2021). ASF has been confirmed in the Western Kalimantan Province of Borneo. In the province of Central Kalimantan, samples also proved positive. The Department of Livestock Development (DLD) of Thailand confirmed ASF in Bangkok's pet pigs in January 2022 (Thanapongtharm,

2022). As of August 30, 95 cases of African swine fever (ASF) had been reported in 31 provinces and special administrative regions.

As of July 2022, ASF outbreaks had happened in 53 provinces, 704 cities/municipalities, and 3832 barangays in the Philippines (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. 2022). The first outbreak was confirmed by the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) to have happened in July 2019. Without a cure or a vaccine, the only way to stop the spread of the disease is to strictly follow and keep an eye on the steps that have been suggested.

The COVID-19 and ASF pandemics have disrupted the food supply chain (Aday & Aday, 2020; Hobbs, 2020; Pu & Zhong, 2020; Singh et al., 2020). For example, the Canadian pork industry is affected, with implications for pork supply for Canada and the United States of America (McEwan et al., 2020), the latter being the importer of the former's pork products. Moreover, the pandemic could impact animals' health as farmers and those in the veterinary services would be quarantined or limited in terms of movements (Gortázar & de la Fuente, 2020). On a positive note, the COVID-19 pandemic, because of movement restrictions, reduces ASF transmission risk. For example, in Japan, the risk of spreading ASF in the country from China was minimised because illegal entries of people carrying food products were also minimised (Suguira et al., 2020). Another view was reducing meat consumption due to people's perception of viruses coming from animals and changing healthy eating habits during the COVID-19 pandemic (Attwood & Hajat, 2020). Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic could either lessen the spread of ASF and even improve people's drive for a healthy lifestyle through a change in food choices.

For ASF, there are positive and negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is bad news for the meat vendors and traders. They already suffer from the loss of sales and income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, their way of life is in danger because of the ASF and the COVID-19 pandemic

METHODS

The study employed a descriptive phenomenological qualitative design to study the experiences of local meat vendors as they dealt with the ASF outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic in the Southern Philippines. According to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003), this specific design describes the experiences being lived through very carefully. The data from the interview analysis is used to achieve what is called phenomenological psychological reduction. Ten local meat vendors in the Southern Philippines willingly participated in the semi-structured interviews. They were selected based on the following criteria: The informants must be local meat vendors: (1) they must live in a city/municipality in Southern Mindanao; (2) they must be meat vendors inside the wet market, which means they have their own stall; (3) they must be the owners of their businesses; and (4) they must have experienced the impact of ASF and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main sources of data were the semi-structured key informant interviews (KII). The seven-step method of Colaizzi (1978), as used by Tudy and Gauran-Tudy (2020), was used to analyse the data. As a qualitative inquiry, trustworthiness was observed by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confidentiality, as asserted by Guba (1981). Ethical concerns were considered, such as upholding confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms replace the original names to maintain anonymity. Before conducting the interview, the informants read the full content of the informed consent before signing it. Participants were allowed to use the language they felt comfortable with.

Lastly, the participants and the researchers were well aware of the growing cases of the pandemic today. Thus, there was strict compliance with basic health protocols.

RESULTS

Based on the study's purpose, we presented the results into three cluster-discussions on the challenges faced by local meat vendors in the wet market and their strategies.

Challenges Faced by Local Meat Vendors

Huge Reduction of Income

All of the local meat vendor participants shared about the huge reduction of income because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it was amplified when ASF hit their area. They witnessed how their sales gradually plunged while the costs of doing business cannot cope with their income. One of the participants shared:

> It was very difficult for me up to this day because of a continuous drop in sales. Before, I could sell up to two whole pigs a day. But now, even half of it is very difficult to market. There is a big difference now in terms of income. It can barely support my family if ever there is any at all. (Maria, Transcript 2, Page 1, Lines 3, 7-9).

Dealing with Government Regulations

Though their business is considered essential, permitting them to continue selling meat, they could not go away with government protocols that affected their transportation, workforce, and usual customers. For example, a participant described how the COVID-19 pandemic worsens the situation:

> During the ASF outbreak, my income was still quite good, considering that people from faraway areas could still travel and buy our products. However, when the government imposed border lockdowns, it restricted potential customers traveling from one place to another (Amor, T1, P3, L82, 84-85).

Fear of the Virus

Though ASF did not pose a direct threat to their health, the participants were afraid of contracting the virus. Moreover, they recognized the glaring fear of their customers because of ASF. It was difficult on their part to explain to the customers that their meat is safe and clean. The paranoia, both for COVID-19 and ASF, was too much for the customers to feel. Maria observed a usual situation in the market wherein people tend to fear the presence of both viruses:

> There was really discrimination against our product because they would feel hesitant to buy. Some would say, "We will not buy that product. It might have the virus on it (Maria, T2, P1, L31-32).

Threat of Competition

The participants recognized the leveling up of competition was because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the traders used online platforms to promote and sell products. Even ordinary citizens can sell meat products even without securing National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS). Jocelyn expressed her worries about the flourishing of meat sellers using the internet:

> We were greatly affected during this COVID due to the disruption it brought. The rise of online selling also contributed to the decrease of income by meat vendors here in the wet market (Jocelyn, T9, P2, L-65-66).

Strategies Made By Local Meat Vendors

After analyzing all their responses, three emerging themes were identified: innovation, quality assurance, and customer loyalty.

Innovation

The majority of the participants found ways to be innovative to cope with the challenges. They created value-added products like turning the excess or unsold raw meats to tocino (bacon) and the like. These processed products were ready to cook and more saleable during the pandemic. They established small stores located in their homes as it is permitted temporarily. Most importantly, they also recalibrated their strategy by utilizing social media. One meat vendor, who also employed online marketing, shared:

> With this pandemic, we now use social media by posting our products online. Besides that, we also made processed products such as chorizo, tocino (bacon), shumai (steamed dumplings) (Ryan, T10, P2, L57-58).

Strengthening Customer Loyalty

The strengthening of customer loyalty was the common response from the informants. They invested more strengthening good relationship with their regular customers. They ensured the best quality and safety of products. But, they put much effort into ensuring their customers are satisfied. Ryan expressed how important it is to establish a good relationship:

> With this pandemic, I learned how to value my customers more. You should treat your customers very well and take care of them. Besides that, offering discounts to those who fell short in the budget is my means to build a strong relationship with customers (Ryan, T10, P2, L 86-92).

DISCUSSION

The simultaneous outbreaks of ASF and COVID-19 create so much havoc in the lives of people in the Philippines. These two infectious diseases result in panic and feelings of uncertainty, particularly those in the pork industry. The COVID-19 pandemic is already putting so much pressure on the pork industry worldwide (D'Souza & Dunshea, 2021; Hayes et al., 2021; McEwan et al., 2020). Like in the Philippines, the ASF outbreak is a big challenge for the meat vendors, resulting in lost potential income (Mason-D'Croz et al., 2020). The experiences of the participants corroborated the experiences of other people who saw the dramatic changes in how businesses thrive during a pandemic (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation, which further decreased the potential income of meat vendors. People stopped buying food because of fear of the ASF. Simultaneously, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented people from going to the market for fear of getting infected in a crowded place. The result was a big drop in sales and income for meat vendors.

While the meat vendors are dealing with the impact of ASF on their livelihood, the government's health protocols push them to the wall. The government made sure the virus would not spread. Crowded places, like public markets, are considered hot spots for

virus spreaders. People, regardless of status, job, or business, need to follow the government restrictions. In short, there is no other way for the meat vendors to follow government orders for their safety and the safety of their customers. They also have legitimate fear because of the viruses, but they have to convince the customers that their products are clean. Like ASF, customers are naturally very concerned about food safety during an outbreak (Gwin & Lev, 2011). These vendors are in a tough and challenging situation, unprecedented in the history of the pork industry. Added to their concern is the pressure to embrace technology as competition stiffens due to online marketing and selling. The pandemic gives birth to a business opportunity for anyone who wants to sell anything, including meat products, using the internet. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these underground businesses did well even though they didn't have the right permits to do so.

Despite the challenges, the meat vendors managed to find ways to cope with the situation. With unsold fresh products, they resorted to turning these into still valuable ones. This move is favourable for both the vendors and the customers. Customers want to store more food, and these by-products are the easy answer while giving vendors additional potential income. Adding processed meat products is feasible even before the pandemic. However, with unsold meat increasing day after day, meat vendors find a way to sell their products still.

The vendors still feel lucky to continue doing business by relying heavily on customer loyalty. Exploring marketing efforts like brand equity and consumers' perception is vital to meat products' success (Groenewald et al., 2014). Their strategy is to strengthen the relationship with their *suki* (repeat customers). Their loyal customers are their lifeline in business. Getting their trust, especially during a pandemic, is crucial for their survival.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The stories of the meat vendors in the Philippines are sources of rich information for the government, customers, and other meat vendors. Their struggles and coping strategies in fighting ASF and COVID-19 are worth reflecting on with lessons that can positively or negatively affect when similar outbreaks could happen in the future. For the government, the study's findings give the impression of how important it is to provide needed support for the pork industry when ASF strikes. Knowing the necessity of a food supply for the people, the government cannot afford to allow the industry to collapse. Supporting this industry during an ASF outbreak, much more when it happens during another pandemic, is crucial for its survival.

For the customers, the meat vendors' stories provide them with a picture of how the vendors survive in a crisis while providing food for them. These stories could help them support and understand the situation. They also get assurance about the food products' safety and quality. In the end, customers would still be able to buy from the vendors and keep buying their goods.

For other meat vendors, learning from the participants' struggles and coping strategies in this study gives them a view on how to mitigate and ensure they continue to survive and earn a living. The findings could help them weather the crisis, which could happen in the future.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

On the one hand, the findings enlighten meat vendors' lived experiences during the ASF outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic. It is something that can attract the attention of the government, customers, and other meat vendors. On the other hand, the study's findings using qualitative design cannot be generalised to describe all meat vendors' actual situation in the entire Philippines or anywhere in the world. Meat vendors in other parts of the world might have a different experience, even if they also experience problems with two infectious diseases. Hence, further research can be done, particularly on the impact of the food supply on pork products, when ASF strikes amid another pandemic.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings of the study expose the grim reality of meat vendors fighting against two infectious diseases. The informants' stories reveal the experiences of how meat vendors in any country deal with the impact of ASF and the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, it is not easy to do business in times of double health crises: ASF and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study elucidates the challenges encountered by local meat vendors in the Southern Philippines, specifically the huge reduction in income, dealing with government regulations, fear of viruses, and competitors' threats. However, they tried to cope with these challenges through innovation and the strengthening of customer loyalty. Based on the results, the government should do more to help, customers should be more understanding and loyal, and other meat vendors should learn from what happened.

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The Church's Ethical Responsibilities towards *Net-Zero Carbon Emissions* Objectives

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ABSTRACT

The overuse of fossil fuels and growing industrialisation throughout the world have caused greenhouse gases to be released, raising the global temperature and posing global environmental problems. Therefore, achieving net-zero carbon emissions is imperative. Net-zero carbon emissions can be attained by balancing the entire amount of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions over a period of time and making environmentally sustainable initiatives. For environmental sustainability to be successful, it must have a means of translating into environmentally friendly attitudes and actions of humans towards the environment. The Christian faith teaches that the earth is the Lord's and that humans have moral responsibility as "stewards." Thus, Christians and the Church corporately have a basic role in achieving net-zero carbon emissions. This paper presents a systematic discussion using the Indonesian Church as a case study to look at the moral responsibilities of the corporate church in attaining net-zero carbon emissions. This work

employs the research method of "content analysis" to examine both the primary and secondary existing literature on the research topic. This essay first identifies the theological role of the church in addressing environmental issues, which implies understanding the stewardship mandate that God has placed on humans to care for the earth. This paper also discussed the educational role of the corporate church in educating its adherents. Lastly, from the practical aspect, this paper discussed how and why the Indonesian church should support the government's programmes (such as the Green Village program) to help overcome the environmental crisis.

Keywords: Church; cultural mandate; environment; holistic services; Net-Zero carbon emissions.

INTRODUCTION

The use of fossil fuels (especially petroleum, natural gas, and coal) in various fields of industry, power generation, and transportation in the world today produces exhaust gases (mainly CO2, CH4, or methane, N2O), which damage the ozone layer of the Earth's atmosphere. These exhaust gases are called greenhouse gases (GHG). This GHG then triggers an increase in geothermal heat, where the earth's temperature is getting hotter. This has been going on for a long time, causing environmental damage as well as damaging the ecosystems of all living things (including humans). The increase in the earth's temperature is now known as global warming (An *et al*., 2018). This global warming then causes an even bigger problem, namely the occurrence of climate change. Research by environmental experts shows that the temperature on the planet Earth is expected to increase by 2°C in the next two decades due to global warming. However, research indicates that if emissions (exhaust gases) are mostly replaced by greenhouse gases, this temperature rise can be reduced to 0.5 °C. This means that we need to stop making carbon-containing gases by burning fossil fuels (Frolicher & Paynter, 2015).

In addressing the climate change problem mentioned above, the United Nations (UN) has started efforts to address and control climate change by holding an annual conference between countries known as the COP (*Conference of the Parties to the UNFCC*) since 1995. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international organisation set up by the United Nations to help countries around the world work together to deal with climate change. The UNFCC programme adopted the Kyoto Protocol of 1977 (legalized in 2005) and the 2015 Paris Agreement, which entered into force in 2016 (Kuyper *et al*., 2018). The latest meeting of the *COP26 Summit,* which took place in November 2021, was attended by 120 countries, including countries that are members of the G20. This event resulted in a joint commitment to strive to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Each country agreed to contribute together to prevent an increase in carbon emissions in their respective countries through "*Nationally Determined Contributions"* (NDCs).

The goal of the NDCs is for each nation to be monitored every five years until 2030 (Ojo & Theodore, 2021), in exchange for the geothermal COP26 goal of 1.5°C by 2030 (Montek & Patel, 2021). The Church needs to know about the global environmental crisis that the world is currently experiencing, especially regarding the joint efforts of the international community to achieve net-zero emission reductions (net-zero emissions). The church must act to preserve life on this earth from carbon dioxide pollution that destroys it. Unfortunately, the church, especially the evangelicals, both the laity and the

theologians, pays little attention to social responsibility and mainly focuses on spiritual service that prioritises individual salvation (Wijaya, 2019). Church services should not only be limited to serving humans, but all creatures created by God, including environmental issues. But the church's current concern for environmental damage is very concerning (Telaumbanua, 2020). Recent research from the BRC (Numbers Research Center) representing groups of Evangelical churches shows that churches have not paid enough attention to social services (Wulandari, 2022). This environmental crisis must be the concern and responsibility of the church.

The purpose of this article is to explain how the church, as a member of the global community, should have moral obligations to society and the Indonesian government in order to contribute to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and assist in repairing the damage caused by climate change due to excessive carbon gas emissions.

METHOD

The article uses the "content analysis " method by analysing existing literature in the field of Net-Zero Carbon Emissions *Zero Carbon Emissions*, Global Warming, Climate Change, Environmental Damage, and the Church's Role in Facing the Environmental Crisis. The resources used were from various research and scientific articles published online and offline. The discussion is then carried out by descriptively presenting the role of the church in supporting the reduction of the earth's temperature through concrete efforts to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide that pollutes the air and causes geothermal energy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The church's ethical responsibility in responding to and taking an active role in preventing and reducing environmental crises can be met by the church being aware of its role in congregational education, environmental theology, and living practise on environmental crisis issues.

The Theological Role of the Church in Responding to Environmental Issues

The church is part of the global community that should participate in giving ethical attitudes, concerns, and responsibilities in understanding global problems that occur today. One of these global problems is the issue of climate change due to global warming. Therefore, it is hoped that the church will not turn a blind eye and be apathetic to environmental issues (Tampubolon, 2020). The theological role of the church in addressing environmental issues, especially climate change, is to understand the mandate that God has placed on humans to care for the earth (Cultural Mandate), and the church is called to serve its mission holistically as follows:

Understanding the Cultural Mandate

Since the beginning of creation, humans have been given the task by God to preserve the habitat of the environment in which they live and manage natural resources in order to continue their descendants on this earth. This task is a mandate that God has placed on man's shoulders and must be carried out as a form of his responsibility to God, the Creator (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:1-25). Biblical scholars call this task mandated by God to humans the Cultural Mandate. This mandate was echoed with great appreciation and worship by the psalmist and prophets in the Old Testament, revealing that the heavens and the earth and all that is in them reflect the glory and omnipotence of God, and that humans are

empowered to manage nature with a fear of God (Psalm 8; Isaiah 6:3; 37: 16; Jeremiah 10:16; 31: 35; Amos 4:13).

Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus alludes to the creation of cultural identity, precisely human nature, as male and female, referring to the *Cultural Mandate,* where one part of human nature is the family institution as a means of childbearing, and its existence must be preserved and must not be corrupted by human sin (Matthew 19:4-6). Nicholas Thomas Wright concluded that when discussing "*nature"* it cannot be separated from the person of Jesus, who is part *of the world of nature* (Kristanto *et al*., 2022). Likewise, the Apostle Paul comments on the way God's people dress in the city of Corinth, which teaches that nature reveals the cultural identity of men who are inappropriate if they have long hair because they are not in accordance with the order of God's creation (1 Corinthians 11:15). Thus, it can be ascertained that before man fell into sin and was given the mandate to preach the Gospel by Christ, humans had been assigned by God to glorify Him through the Cultural Mandate, Genesis 1:26-28 (Kamuri, 2020).

Furthermore, one well-known Protestant reformer, John Calvin, also spoke about the responsibility of believers to the environment. According to Calvin, it is an ecological act of the church to preserve nature, which is God's blessing for human welfare, as a form of implementation of the Cultural Mandate (Cahyono, 2021). There is another modern theologian, Alister Edgar McGrath, who raised the concept of *nature* as part of revelation so that it became an effort to make theology friendlier to the environment. Before Edgar, the discussion of the concept of nature was often separated from revelation. *McGrath's* Natural Theology awakens the church to embrace and make peace with nature. As a theological study, it is integrated with revelation and adaptive to scientific progress and, in return, is more holistic (Kristanto *et al*., 2022; Nassa, 2020).

The ethical responsibility of caring for and maintaining the natural environment created by God is part of the cultural mandate assigned by God to all humans living on earth as an integral part of the lives of every human being. If God still preserves his created nature, then the church, as human beings in this world, should do the same thing in an effort to reflect God's image. Therefore, the church, as part of humanity, cannot escape the responsibility of preserving the natural environment created by God (Setiawan *et al*., 2021).

Understanding Holistic Service

To maximise the church's ethical functions and responsibilities in responding to the environmental crisis, the church needs to have a holistic service paradigm. This holistic service is an effort that aims to bring prosperity to humans in the form of restoring life to fully human spiritually, mentally, and socially. The church should be present and behave with a holistic paradigm by carrying out services that answer all aspects of human life, not only bringing prosperity in the spiritual aspect, where humans are saved from God's wrath through preaching the gospel, but also mentally and socially restored. There, a person who has believed in the gospel of Christ is restored in spirit to continue their struggle in the midst of this world. Therefore, the Bible must be understood not only to answer needs and solve spiritual problems, but also to answer all the problems of human life (Tembay & Eliman, 2020). This includes taking part and participating in helping victims of natural disasters (Siahaya *et al*., 2020), committing to building houses to Net-Zero Carbon performance globally (Aryai & Goldsworthy, 2022; Jankovic *et al*., 2021; Pomponi *et al*., 2021); developing zero carbon supply chains in industry and economic

activities (Nihayah *et al*., 2022; Piontek *et al*., 2021); and tourism (Chuenwong *et al*., 2022).

Latumahina (2013) explained that the world community is currently facing three major problems with the main problem being environmental degradation, namely environmental pollution, and Global Warming. He states the other two world problems are social disintegration and poverty problems. For this reason, the church is called to carry out the task of Christ's messiah-ship, which is to present human welfare (Luke 4:18-19). This should be the foundation of a *holistic ministry*. This holistic ministry paradigm should be properly understood by the church so that it can become a witness of Christ and an effective agent of world transformation. The church should not only take care of its internal problems, but it should also speak out and provide real support and solutions in the social, economic, and environmental fields.

The Educational Role of Facing the Environmental Crisis

The Church Understands Net-Zero Carbon Emissions

Net-Zero Carbon Emissions is the vision of countries in the world who want to fight together to reduce the earth's temperature from global warming due to air pollution that occurs continuously throughout the world. Industrial activities in factories that still use fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and petroleum (oil and gas) contribute a lot of exhaust gases or waste that cause the earth to become warmer. This is in addition to the fumes of motorised vehicles that use diesel fuel, gasoline, and other fuels, such as those derived from petroleum. Exhaust gases from industrial activities in factories and motor vehicles above are in the form of CO2, CH4, N2O, HFCs, PFCs, SF6, etc. These gases are known as greenhouse gases (GHG), the dominant ones being CO2, CH4, and N2O. As a result of industrial activities and the use of various means of transportation that contribute a lot of GHG, the earth becomes warmer—the Greenhouse Effect.

Additional GHG also damages the ozone (O3) layer. It should be understood that the ozone layer actually protects the earth from direct sunlight. When the Ozone layer is damaged by these GHGs, what happens is that the sunlight that was previously filtered by the Ozone layer to prevent excessive geothermal heat now hits the earth directly. This condition causes a significant increase in the earth's temperature, which eventually leads to changes in the earth's climate, making some parts of the earth increasingly uninhabitable and causing the polar ice caps to melt. Environmentalists refer to this phenomenon as "climate change."

Developed industrial countries such as the United States, China, Russia, Japan, Britain, and Canada, including Indonesia (which is rife with forest fires), have contributed greatly to contributing a lot of greenhouse gases, plus the use of CFC (Freon) gas in various household industries and electronics, such as gases used in air conditioners, rubber, foam plastics, booster gases in aerosol packaging, and freezers such as refrigerators (Hamaduna, 2021). With the increasingly polluted air on earth, it is not surprising that *the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC)—an agency of cooperation between the United Nations and the *World Meteorological Organization—predicts* that the earth's temperature will rise by 2˚C every decade for the next two decades (Suhardi & Purwanto, 2015). This has then led to a shared vision and commitment from various countries in the world to work hand-in-hand to reduce air

pollution from carbon emissions to zero, or *Net-Zero Carbon Emissions*, by at least by 2050.

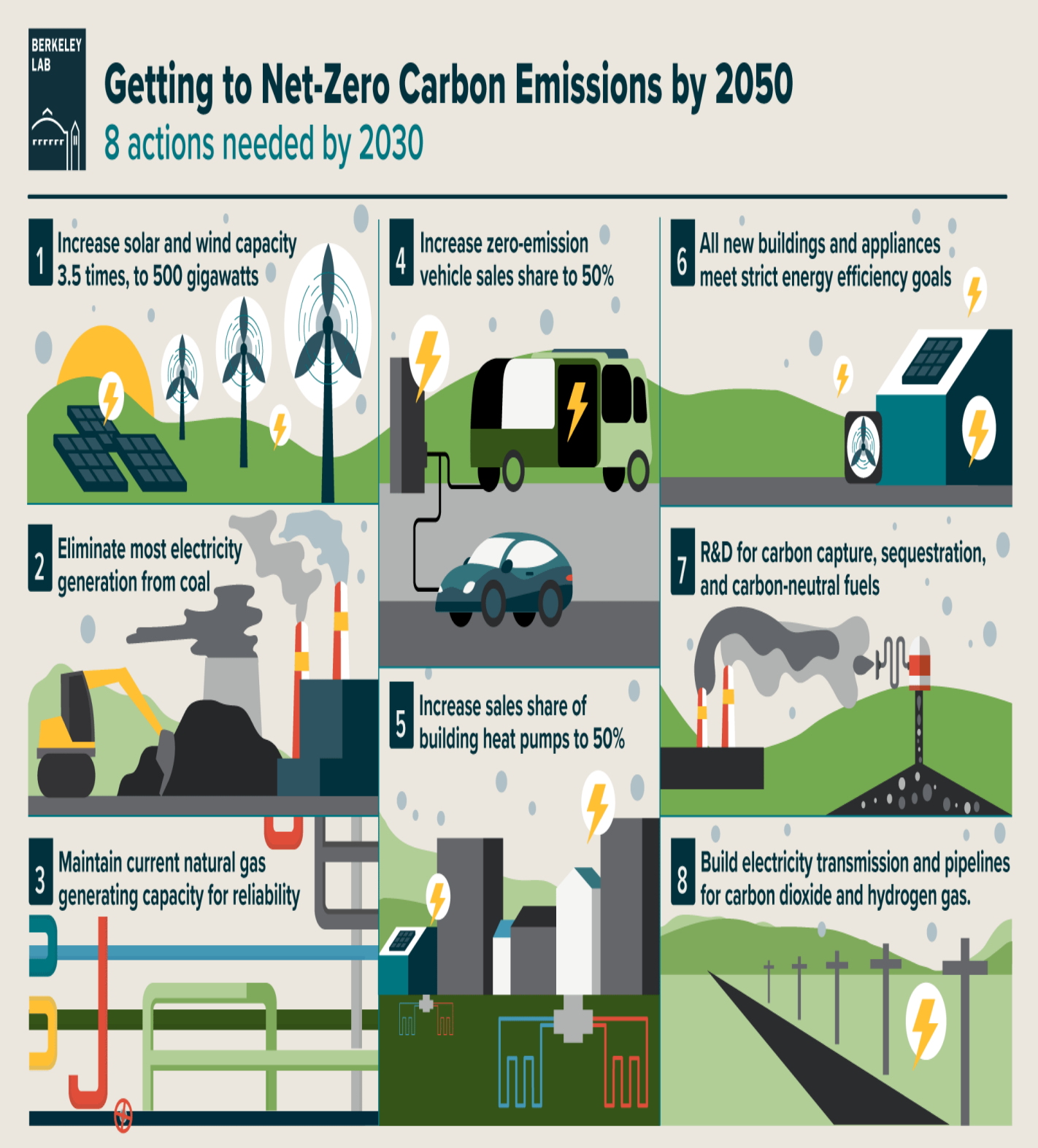

Figure 1: Efforts to Achieve Net -*Zero Carbon Emissions*

The Church Realizes Damage to the Natural Environment

The Church in England has started to launch a vision to become a church that is a net-zero carbon emitter by 2030 (Humphreys, 2021). This step needs to be followed by churches around the world, including churches in Indonesia. Taking into account the Creation Mandate, it is up to people to take care of the order of God's creation that they have exploited and damaged.

The church needs to take concrete steps to start educating congregations through seminars on the environmental crisis and sermons on reforestation efforts. So far, according to Togardo Siburian, churches have generally stayed silent in teaching about environmental issues, whereas the role of the church should be to lead the way as stewards of nature (Siburian, 2010). Marthinus Ngabalin (2020) agrees with Siburian's point of view, especially in evangelical circles where church sermons seem to focus more on salvation and less on social and environmental problems.

Ecumenical groups are a little more responsive and adaptive to social problems related to environmental issues. The PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia) has begun to pay attention to the problem of environmental damage that is getting worse in Indonesia at the 12th General Assembly held by PGI on adaptive measures to social problems related to environmental issues. The PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia) has begun to pay attention to the problem of environmental damage that is getting worse in Indonesia. In the 12th General Assembly held by PGI on October 21–30, 1994 in Jayapura, Indonesian churches were called on to proclaim the gospel, namely the good news to all creatures (Mark 16:15), including taking part in paying attention to environmental issues. Until now, PGI is still trying to motivate all church members who are members of this forum to care about the environmental crisis and not stand by as spectators but play an active role in helping the community and government overcome the environmental crisis.

Therefore, in line with the PGI mandate above, church leaders both at the synod level and at the local church level need to educate every member of the congregation to be aware of global warming and environmental pollution that is happening in Indonesia. This can be done by giving the congregation the tools and information they need to take care of the environment and help stop natural disasters in their area (Telaumbanua, 2020).

The Church's Practical Role Supports Achieving *Net-Zero Carbon Emissions*

The Church Supports the Government's Program to Overcome the Environmental Crisis.

In 2007, the Indonesian government launched the Green Village program. This programme is primarily aimed at people who still live in slums scattered in various cities throughout Indonesia. The goal is to create environmental conditions that are cleaner, more comfortable, and healthier for those who live there. It also hopes to protect the environment from the threat of water and air pollution, environmental damage, and to support sustainable development (Puspita & Dewi, 2013). The Green Village programme launched by the government includes how to manage waste from households, maintain cleanliness in the living environment, create open green spaces, and, of course, improve the quality of sanitation for residents in slums. In principle, the Green Village programme helps to preserve the function of the environment where citizens live. This programme

needs to get moral support and real action from all elements of the community, which in turn will reduce the impact of greenhouse gases.

The church, as part of Indonesian society, should not stand idly by and turn a blind eye to the cleanliness of the environment. The first concrete step that the church can take is to support the Green Village programme that has been proclaimed by the government. This includes supporting community reforestation programmes created by local governments to improve the cleanliness of cities and regions where residents live. This support can look like motivating church members to participate in implementing government programmes to preserve the environment.

In addition to the above, to implement environmental awareness among members of the congregation, the church can involve members of the congregation in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are actively involved in the movement to preserve the natural environment, such as environmental activists. It is even possible for the church to collaborate with followers of other religions to be actively involved in cleaning activities and preventing environmental crises that occur in the community. Thus, the church can help its members learn how to become more environmentally conscious (Yuono, 2019).

Other concrete actions that can be taken by the church together with community members are improving village facilities and infrastructure by providing trash cans and garbage carts for residents in need, cleaning roads in villages, making numbering for houses for residents' houses and the manufacture of signboards for entrances or alleys where residents live. In addition, churches can be actively involved in educating community members on how to dispose of and manage waste so that it is environmentally friendly. Churches can participate in repairing village infrastructure by repairing footpaths, providing health centres and security posts, as well as repairing water sewers in villages where churches are located. The DKI church in Jakarta is already helping slum settlements (Eni, 2018). Likewise, church members can collaborate with members of the community to do community service together to clean up the environment where they live. They could also participate in groups such as the women's empowerment programme or the PKK Karang Taruna program, which make a positive contribution to the cleanliness and comfort of their environments.

On a broader scale, churches can also encourage members of their congregations to take socially responsible and ethical actions by working with environmental NGOs to combat illegal logging and excessive exploitation of natural resources. In this context, the church needs to cooperate with various elements in society, both educational institutions and the business world, in order to prevent global warming caused by carbon gas emissions (Anjaya *et al.*, 2021). The problem of environmental pollution in forests, water, or air usually involves economic, social, and political aspects. Various church organisations such as PGI, PGLII, PERSETIA, and PASTI need to work with the government, NGOs, and other service institutions engaged in the environment to make various concrete efforts. Churches should encourage church members to take various approaches with community members to find solutions to overcome the crisis in the natural environment in Indonesia. For example, churches can learn from the local community, which often has the potential to be used to protect the environment and natural resources (Pasang, 2011).

All the reforestation and nature conservation efforts that have been mentioned above lead to one goal: caring for God's earth. Steps towards increasing sources of clean

oxygen gas in the air in the form of green open areas, caring for trees, processing healthy waste to avoid air pollution, and maintaining the function of forests as lungs are all steps in the right direction. All of these efforts will automatically reduce excessive carbon dioxide emissions in this country. Of course, all of these efforts can only be successful if church groups, the government, NGOs, and other related parts of society work together.

Applying a Green Lifestyle

Excessive carbon emissions pollute the air, water, and soil, causing damage to nature and increasing geothermal energy. As mentioned earlier, exhaust fumes from factories, motorised vehicles, power plants, forest fires, burning waste (especially plastic waste), and both industrial and household activities are the main causes of carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and nitrous oxide (NO_2). This is very dangerous for human health and pollutes the soil, water, and air, which causes global warming. Some types of plastic take 100 years to be decomposed by the soil! For this reason, it is necessary for the awareness of the parties concerned above, both industry players and the public, to change the paradigm and lifestyle to one that is more environmentally friendly. By using the term "green lifestyle", local churches can be connected to a larger global goal. (Istiadji, 2011) Another great way to connect projects across the archipelago of Indonesia and across the world is through awareness campaigns (Utomo, 2017). In this way, church leaders need to be aware of how to teach their congregations to use the Green Lifestyle as the values of a Christian life in their own lives, with their families, at work, and in ministry in the church and the wider community (Wenas *et al*., 2021).

Figure 2: contains various habits of life that need to be developed to develop a *Green Life Style* as follows:

GREEN HABITS	GREEN LIFE STYLE
- Energy saving	- Turn off electrical equipment when not in use - Reduce the use of LPG (using an electric stove) - Use alternative power sources (solar panels) - Reduce the use of air conditioning - Reduce the use of cooking oil (palm)
- Prevent Pollution (soil, water, air)	- Use motorbikes and electric cars - Don't burn trash- especially plastic waste - Separating organic and non-organic waste - Recycle trash - Reduce paper usage - Avoid piling up trash - Ferment waste that produces eco-enzymes(Rochyani *et al*., 2020)
- Reducing Plastic Usage	- Use biodegradable plastic / recycled plastic from organic materials (Kamsiati *et al*., 2017, p. 67).

	- Use reusable cloth bags when shopping at the mall/supermarket - Reduce drinking water from plastic bottles - Reduce consumption of packaged foods
- Greening the House	- Plant a shade tree on the front/back porch) - Plant ornamental plants - Plant fruit trees - Provide a green open area - Educate family members with *Green Life Style*
- Supporting Green Activities	- Do Community Service - Clean waterways in your neighborhood - Implement the Green Village Program - Support the policy of rejecting *Illegal Log-ging* - Support the activities of government NDCs
- Green Paradigm *business/industry players	- Accommodate the *People-Planet-Profit mindset** - Process environmentally friendly factory waste (avoiding water, soil, air pollution)* - Apply the *Green Economy protocol* * to business - Use building materials that support carbon emission reduction (Robati *et al*., 2019)

CONCLUSION

The role of the church in supporting the achievement of net-zero carbon emissions must be an integrated effort in the theological, educative, and practical orders. It entails church leaders, clergy, every member of the congregation, government officials, community members and leaders all working together to prevent the natural environmental crisis that has resulted in the natural environmental crisis. In the theological order, the church plays a role in understanding the Cultural Mandate and Holistic Ministry. In an educational setting, churches are educated to understand net-zero carbon emissions and to be aware of the damage to the natural environment. And in a practical setting, churches should be invited to participate in supporting government programmes to overcome environmental crises and implement a green lifestyle. Humans must work together to prevent damage to the earth due to pollution from carbon emissions in the air, soil, and water.

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***GNOSI:* An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis**
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Ecopoiesis and econoesis of Okam's *Difu*

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ABSTRACT
Ecocriticism is a reaction to the increase in environmental consciousness. It is a kind of literary criticism that focuses on how literary writings contribute to ecology. Ecological theory is used to examine the interaction between the biological environment and the text. It looks at the aesthetics of literature and the philosophical connections between people, the environment, and texts. This article within the domain of ecocriticism aims at analysing Okam's writing style as it interplays with the propensity of Ameshi villagers in *Difu* to confirm the people's raison d'être. However, Hubert Zapf's theory of imaginative literature is employed to interpret the nature of cultural interconnectedness and diversity in the masterpiece under the aegis of the hypothetico-deductive method and the literary cultural-ecological approach. These methodologies imply that new hypotheses are derived from spontaneous relational conversations between the characters in the drama and their environment, which serve as reservoirs of cultural-ecological knowledge. This study begins with a discussion of ecocriticism in literature, followed by a description of the theory of creative literature to expand on Hubert Zapf's ideas and confirm results from evaluating the playwright's ecopoiesis and characters' econoesis in certain extracted samples of *Difu*. Finally, it shows the interconnectedness of nature in the play vis-à-vis Ameshi's culture.

Keywords: ecopoiesis; econoesis; cultural ecology; drama; literature; Difu; theory of imaginative literature (TIL).

INTRODUCTION

From the time immemorial drama is known for its impacting ethical values via entertainment in the amphitheatre. Every drama is always contextual and deals with

issues within cultural ecosystems because it is one of the most popular and age-old literary genres. Hence, I coined the term "econoesis" in this study to refer to an act of thinking within the physical and metaphysical environmental parameters that inform people's worldviews in time and space to set out patterns for traditions and culture. As for ecopoiesis as an idea of Roberts Haynes re-echoed by Landis as "terraforming or the establishment of an ecology" (1997, p. 43). In literature, Zapf (2016a) refers to ecopoiesis as the:

> differentiations of narrative structure, complexities of character relations, the interaction between external environments and interior worlds, chronotopes of time and space, compositional arrangements of motifs, symbolism, language, and rhythm, as well as to the intertextual dynamics from which any new individual text is composed (p. 92).

In this study, based on Zapf's thought, I conceive ecopoiesis as a knitted literary write-up about environmental experience in which the author create two distinct utopic environments where natural world and metaphysical world interlinked to form the intrigue of the story or the poem. This article aims at analysing Okam's writing style on the environment as it interplays with the propensity of Ameshi villagers in *Difu* to confirm the people's raison d'être. However, Hubert Zapf's theory of imaginative literature is employed to interpret the nature versus cultural interconnectedness and diversity in the masterpiece under the aegis of the hypothetico-abductive method and literary cultural-ecological approach. These methodologies imply that new hypotheses are derived from spontaneous relational conversations between the characters in the drama and their environment, which serve as reservoirs of cultural-ecological knowledge. This research is structured to begin by clarifying some terms while introducing the study; then, it describes the theory of imaginative literature to build on Hubert Zapf's thoughts and validate findings from examining the playwright's ecopoiesis and characters' econoesis in some extracted text samples of *Difu*. Finally, it summarises the interconnectedness of nature in the play vis-à-vis Ameshi's culture.

ECOCRITICISM IN LITERATURE

The planet's climate is changing as a result of global warming; the oceans are becoming more acidic; the rate of extinction of species is approaching a critical threshold; the frequency of extreme weather events appears to be on the rise; and there are serious discussions about water and food security. Partially due to a catastrophic fire in the Amazon rainforest in August 2020, which produces 20 percent of the world's oxygen and controls global temperature, the Earth is on the verge of a catastrophe (Alencar et *al.*, 2020). Due to the above, some regions of the world experience excessive drought, while others experience heavy rain and floods. The reason for these maladies is that since the industrial revolution, humans have altered the atmosphere of the Earth. Human activity as caused - extreme weather rises sea levels, melts polar ice caps, and causes mass extinction (Hanna & Hall, 2020). This age of demonstrable human influence on Earth's ecosystems is referred to as the "anthropogenic era" (Crucifix *et al.*, 2005). To combat ecocide, scientists are identifying issues and providing remedies. Scientists are also assessing the cost of a transition to a green revolution economy, depending on the market. Above all, business analysts, scientists, and engineers collaborate to develop post-carbon growth-promoting technology. However, what is the function of academics who belong to

scientific fields that are frequently lumped together under the category “humanities”? How can they help come up with solutions to this multifaceted environmental crisis?

In response to the above inquiries, the subject matter of ecocriticism. Through the analysis of literature, ecocriticism as a subject matter tries to bring to attention the essential concerns of environmental deterioration (Johns-Putra¸ 2016). Many ecocritics believe that rapid economic growth is not synonymous with inclusive economic development. They believed that it was important to consider the negative effects of industrialization, mechanisation, globalisation, privatisation, and liberalisation in literature. Since ecology is the study of the link between the natural world and human existence, ecocriticism and ecocritics investigate the function of “location” in literature and other cultural materials through the use of theoretical methodologies (Murphy 2013). Ecocritics often examines the subtext of literary works, revealing anthropomorphic, patriarchal, and capitalist views toward non-humans, women, the environment, and landscape (Iheka 2018). Ecocritics also analyses dualism in texts such as nature versus culture and reason versus emotion since these ideas lead to certain perceptions of the environment (Grewe-Volpp, 2006). Thus, literary studies and environmental action are linked through ecocriticism.

An increasing number of literary critical theories have transitioned from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in recent years. This is due to the fact that literary criticism is a mirror of modern society. At the initial stage, most theories were human centric, concerned with human value and not with non-human nature (Coulton & Lindley, 2019). These theories originated due to socio-economic changes in society. For instance, in the field of literary critical theories, through Sigmund Freud, the inner complexities of the mind came into focus, leading to the discovery of the sub-conscious and the unconscious mind (Mondrzak *et al.*, 2018). Sigmund Freud’s research gave birth to psychoanalytic criticism that was later developed by critics like Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan. The theories from the above authors were basically anthropocentric in nature because they focused on the psychic lives of the characters and paid no regard to their external environment. The theories were aimed at researching the hidden, repressed motives of characters or the author behind the story. The psychic context of the literary work received more attention than its social, historical, or environmental context. Hence, psychoanalytic criticism is anthropocentric rather than ecocentric. Modernist Western writers like W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce delineate their era as “man’s rootlessness, his neurosis, and his moral degradation” (May, 1997). In their writing, there is nostalgia for the past world of faith in fixed values where there was peace, harmony, and certainty in life. There is only a sense of despair and hopelessness in modernist writing. The modernist writings are chiefly anthropocentric because their focus is on human beings.

In contrast, postmodernism accepts all modernist impulses but with a distinct perspective (Jameson, 1985). It embodies no nostalgia for the past, unlike modernism. It outlined topics such as multiculturalism, hybridity, displacement, consumerism, globalization, and the industrial-economic and urbanised existence of the present while also reflecting the rootlessness of human identity in this setting. Structuralism and deconstruction are the two critical ideas that evolved in France in the late 1960s from the works of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida (Kurzweil, 2017). According to these ideas, “word” is a linguistic and social construction, and the connection between the text and its

setting is one of approximation, fluidity, and delay rather than correlative referentiality. A "word" in a language has meaning in relation to another word; similarly, a literary book has meaning in relation to other writings and not in relation to its congruence with a fixed reality outside of literature. Consequently, this postmodern philosophy is likewise human-centered.

Post-colonialism was another groundbreaking thesis that garnered widespread acceptance. The major work of postcolonial thought is Orientalism by Edward Said (Lewis, 2007). Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak are among the most prominent postcolonial theorists. The theory addresses issues related to gender, racism, and class. The primary purpose of their ideas was to show the injustice committed by colonists towards the inhabitants of the colonised globe. V.S. Naipaul, William Harris, Salman Rushdie, James Ngugi, Joseph Conrad, Patrick White, and Raja Rao are well-known authors whose works have often been analysed from a postcolonial viewpoint. Only a few postcolonial authors describe both ecological issues and environmental racism. Native American authors reveal injustices committed against them on the grounds of race, class, and gender, preceded by land and resource exploitation. However, postcolonial authors' primary concerns remained anthropocentric. On the other hand, eco-critical theory recognises external reality and rejects the idealistic tendencies of the other 20th-century critical theories.

However, understanding of the five relationships between literature and nature among critics has risen in recent years. Nature and literature have long had a tight association, as proven by the works of poets and other authors throughout the years and in almost every civilization on Earth. Today, the tight connection between the natural and social worlds is celebrated and emphasised across all fields of study. Literary critics try to figure out how authors have written about this close relationship between nature and civilization. Thus Chinyere Okam's work *Difu* explicates her being both a social pedagogue and an ecocritic. Her social pedagogy preoccupies with the environment and how it influences life chances, quality of life, and opportunities in life. Being a critical pedagogue, her *Difu* demonstrates social mechanisms that control people as well as keep them in a certain place in the social structure. That is the reason I chose her masterpiece, owing to her literary and imaginative prowess. Chinyere Okam was also a Janusz Korczak fellow. Janusz Korczak is a Polish medical doctor who took care of children during the Polish-Nazi war. One can learn about his ideology through his 1928 book, *The Child's Right to Respect*.

THEORY OF IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE (TIL) IN DRAMA

The Theory of Imaginative Literature is a new ecocritical theory in literature championed by the Anglo-German literary scholar Hubert Zapf since the early 2000s. This twenty-first century theory principally validates literature as a paragon synergistic model of cultural ecology in regard to its relative literary production and aesthetic creativity. To simplify further, Zapf stipulates that the pivotal claim of the theory of imaginative literature (henceforth TIL) is reflected in the fact that "literature acts like an ecological force in the larger cultural system" (2016b, p. 135). This theory stands on three functional models, which are "culture-critical metadiscourse, an imaginative counter-discourse, and a reintegrative interdiscourse" (Zapf, 2016a, p. 95), to describe literary artefacts based on their changes over time within cultural and discursive systems. These discursive models deal with the intensity of imagination, the complexity of stylistic aesthetics, and the

prosodic semantics of our dramatic texts in order to interpret the symbiotic transformative relativity between culture and nature.

The functional model of a culture-critical metadiscourse explores literature to reflect dominant discourse by revealing social decay, vices, trauma, imprisonment, and peer pressures owing to the trending civilization, whilst literature as an imaginative counter-discourse converts symbiotically the social maladies or excluded culture of the culture-critical metadiscourse into dynamic imaginative stimuli and energy for the drama. As for the third functional model of this theory, it presents literature as a reintegrative interdiscourse, that is, it harmonises both the civilizational system and its dark side with transformative roles to foster continuous renewal of the cultural centre from its margin (Zapf, 2016a, pp. 104–114). Therefore, TIL is applied in this study to validate the possible environmental triggers of the behaviours and worldviews of the characters in *Difu* as probable evidence of the source of the playwright's creative imagination and idiosyncratic textual potency, which renew cultural values via storytelling and critique modern civilization. This theory invokes the literary cultural-ecological approach to *Difu*, a dramatic imaginative work and a social-environmental critique. In this play, cultural ecology is perceived as the study of the ways in which culture is used by people to adapt to their environment (Sutton and Anderson, 2014, p. 3). Hence, I shall examine, among others, the night marriage, dream, and syncretism in Ameshi village as they reflect in the text, which mirrors probably the south-eastern Nigerian society today.

OKAM'S ECOPOIESIS AND CHARACTERS' ECONOESIS

Difu is Okam's first published African drama, premiered in 2017 by a group of students at Alvan Ikoku Fedaral College of Education, Owerri, Nigeria. It is an eponymous 16-sequence play that narrates the story of Difu, the only child of a widow, Ajanupu, in Ameshi village. Her love and care for the only child's future made her unknowingly tie Difu's destiny via diabolical means with the help of a wicked witch doctor, Onyukwe. Later, the spell cast on Difu boomerangs to delay his marriage up to 50 years of age, which is perceived as absurd according to the *Ameshi* (village) norm. His singlehood provokes his friends, family, and relations to consult two mystical powers: the Ameshi traditional priest Ogbunigwe and a Christian prophetess, Ejine, in order to liberate him and restore his destiny. At the end, Difu was liberated by the Christian divine and mystical intervention and married happily to Adaku.

Difu as an eponymous play, i.e., a play captioned after the principal character or a proper noun, has its poetics inherited from common practises among the classical French and English playwrights and also African Francophone playwrights, such as Molière's *George Dandin* (1668), Corneille's *Polyeucte* (1643), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1599), and Nénékhaly-Camara's *Chaka Zoulou* (1954). Difu may have been inspired most recently by *Shehu Umar's* adapted novel, written in 1975 by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, in terms of destiny restoration by mystical interventions (Umaru and Lyndersay 1975, p. 24). This literary composition reveals the syncretized beliefs of the *Ameshi* villagers due to colonial influences of deracination. Consequently, Ameshis are deprived of their Oru-Igbo and absolute traditional practises due to colonial influences. *Difu* is stylishly written in bilingual intra-translation, code switching, and code mixing of English and Oru-Igbo (for example, "OGENE: Umu m, nbona ni. Thank you my children" (Okam, 2021, p. 91), interpolating with a handful of African proverbs as some

of the characteristics of post-independence African literature, which are sort of "linguistic rape," asserted Onyemelukwe (2016, p. 170). Thus, this classified *Difu* as a twenty-first century post-colonial African drama. Okam's writing style is equally structured, like a screenplay made of 24 characters, including the narrator, the announcer, and the crowd.

Night Marriage

Marriage and its ceremony are prevalent sacred practises accepted across the whole world, likewise among *Ameshi* people. It is done at night, such as among Jews, Arabs, and some Margi people of northern Nigeria. In this dramatic masterpiece, the playwright presents a counter-discourse of the age-long practises upheld by the Ameshi customs and norms, whereby they are fading away due to socio-cultural integration with other tribes and clans of the region.

> **IDU**: Onaku, I saw one marriage in the afternoon recently.
>
> **OGENE**: Yes, it is for people who come from outside. Usually, Ameshi people do not marry from outside then. But civilization has integrated everyone. They do it, so that the outsider in-laws can go early since it is not advisable for in-laws to sleep over in their in-laws' place. Though, this must be negotiated (Okam, 2021, p. 95).

The Ameshi cultural ecology is transforming to fit into the global community by being considerate about their relationship with in-laws to foster peaceful conviviality. Okam, as a forerunner of cultural evolution through attitudinal display in her characters Ogene, Idu, and Oputa, She is warning about the disappearance of Ameshi core values in night marriage, which she sees as the loss of Ameshi distinctive identity. In other words, Ameshi who were nocturnal due to their agriculture, geographical location, and natural features such as rivers, still stuck to the night marriage culture. It is rightly stipulated thus:

> **IDENU**: Our people are really nocturnal. I see fishermen going to fish at night with their headlight.
>
> **OGENE**: Yes, we care nocturnal, agrarian, we fish well. You catch the big fish at night (Okam, 2021, p.94).

The playwright is insinuating that changes in the environment trigger new thought patterns (econoesis) of the people within the ecosystem in order to create a new world different from the previous or a continuation of the former (i.e., ecopoiesis). The previous world of the Ameshi was nocturnal. However, their philosophy was patterned after the environment.

> **OGENE**: (laughs), Yes, even now. So, when they gather like that, everything will be discussed and marriage date will be fixed. On the day of marriage, they will still gather at the same time because it is more convenient for them. There is no hurry to go back to farm, no reasonable excuse for not coming. No sunshine to disturb (Okam, 2021, p.94).

The environment has impacted Okam's style in employing the characters in her play to behave that way. Hence, humans behave according to their environment, as asserted by Goldsmith and Reiter (2015). This is my conception of econoesis whereby humans reason only within the parameters of their ecosystem. It is the reason languages are limited by the peculiar registers and vocabulary of our surroundings. On the other hand, our discursive narratives suffer due to limited lexicons to express ideas. Therefore, night marriage and day marriage are co-jointly accepted today in the Ameshi village and, by extension, among the Igbos of Oguta, Imo State, Nigeria. This makes the drama

heterotopic, whereby two imaginative worlds are married to each other to connect nature and culture. This interconnectedness features even in Ajanupu's dream, the adjuvant of the protagonist.

Dream and Syncretism

In Ameshi village, a sort of Christianity and African religions are both practised by some characters as a similar means to reach God in order to get issues resolved. Okam claims through her eco-aesthetic composition that the metaphysical solves social and ecological challenges. It was evident when Ajanupu dreamed of seeing Difu in the river surrounded by many ladies, thus:

> **AJANUPU**: the dream goes like this. Light reveals dream land. Difu is inside the water surrounded by many girls. Difu opens a box filled with money, gives out to the different girls wearing white with maiden hairdo. When his money finishes, they make a path for him to go through. As he steps out, he sees a very beautiful girl coming along his path. The girl seductively walks pass him, and Difu stops her (Okam, 2021, pp.49-50).

Oneirological experience of Ajanupu gave the prophetess Ejine insight into Difu's delayed destiny. It is evident that even the metaphysical environment communicates to us only within the confines of human physical ecology. Shokrollahi justifies that "most, if not all of the world's religious traditions have regarded dreaming as a potential source of creative inspiration, especially great ones, i.e., Islam, Christianity, and Judaism claim that some dreams are the sources of insight" (Shokrollahi, 2016, p.88). This Okam's Difu is probably a rewrite of Shehu Umar by Tafawa Be Lewa, where the messianic mission to fulfil a destiny with the help of divinity is explored. Ejine helped Difu, while Rauhani was the messiah who protected Shehu Umar, which made Shehu Umar fulfil his destiny, according to Okam (2020). In Okam's philosophy, a dream is a divine intervention in human sociological ecology.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the imaginative creativity displayed in Okam's masterpiece reflected the interplay between the hybrid cultures of the Ameshi people: modernity and tradition mixed. Thus, their propensities are nurtured by nature and the cultural ecology. The TIL is vividly validated because Okam stands as a harbinger of the progressive transformation of Ameshi village, tilting towards the narrative of embracing non-members of their society under the aegis of intermarriage. This conviviality brings even nature and culture to integration, from the metaphysical to the physical environment, as demonstrated in Ajanupu's and Okonya's dreams. This means Okam employed reintegrative interdiscourse to reconsider an excluded culture and make it inclusive now. Hence, Zapf's thought is validated. I have discovered that the behaviour, worldview, and culture of the Ameshi people are shaped by the nature and features of their village ecosystem. Thus, it is translated to our present world as environment keeps providing us with the opportunities of survival.

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The Housing Crisis and Living Conditions in the University Residence Zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi)

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ABSTRACT

Food, clothes, and shelter are the three fundamental requirements for human survival. Specifically, the significance of housing has been generally acknowledged since the birth of human civilization. Even the Neolithic man, who lived between 1000 and 2000 BCE, constructed housing such as pit houses, lake houses, and beehive huts. Thus, housing can be said to be important not only for humanity's progress but also for students' acquisition of a quality education. Despite this, a variety of indicators demonstrate that Cameroon's public universities lack good living conditions in the university residential areas. However, an examination of the existing literature reveals that there is little literature on conditions in the university residential zone, specifically in Yaoundé I. For this singular reason, this research studies the varieties of factors that contribute to the housing problem in the University Residence Zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) and its consequences. This study was carried out using both primary and secondary information sources. Personal observation, first-hand accounts, and case studies account for the primary research sources. The secondary information was gathered from books, academic articles, and internet sources. This work submits that the housing crises and living circumstances in the university residential zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) have several consequences, most notably fire dangers, sexual immorality, theft, health hazards, and personality challenges, particularly among students. This paper also submits that addressing the current housing crisis and living conditions requires immediate action. This research, lastly, made some recommendations to address the housing crisis and living conditions in the ZRU.

Keywords: Living conditions; housing crisis; student environment; Bonamoussadi.

INTRODUCTION

Along with food and clothes, housing is one of the essential human necessities for survival. For a citizen, house ownership gives important security and social standing (Jacobs et al., 2019). Since a house provides humans with a social identity, it binds them to their local social milieu. Although the definition of "housing" varies, the majority of academics describe "housing" as a building or portion of a building that is meant to be inhabited by every family or individual. Thus, according to Farquhar (1995), housing is a vital component of the majority of people's lives. Canham et al. (2021) also support this argument by acknowledging that every aspect of a person's life, as well as society as a whole, is affected by the "house" in which they reside. Since a house provides humans with a social identity, it binds them to their local social milieu (Jacobset et al., 2019).

According to De León (2012), as a component of material culture, housing protects against threats to life security and serves an essential purpose by providing shelter. It provides a place for several human activities. Man often uses "house" regardless of place or period. A "house" facilitates communication within the family and with the wider community. Krugman (1980) defines "a house" as a large, sturdy, and permanent product that has a fixed position and is only used at the site where it was built. It tends to persist in existence for many years after its purpose has been fulfilled. It practically becomes a part of the land. Shelter is an essential human need. According to Farquhar (1995), housing is traditionally defined as "the best and noblest product of civilization." Every human needs shelter, a roof over one's head, and for the vast part, this entails a home, a permanent "base" where the majority of one's life is spent. In addition, it is recognised that urban housing has a significant impact on energy consumption, the design of transportation networks, and communication systems (Banister, 2011; Ekuri et al., 2014).

A more accurate definition of "housing," according to Seamon (1982), is an abode for interaction between an organism and its environment. A single individual, a family, or a community might constitute the organism. The organism's natural surroundings as well as its political, economic, social, and cultural surroundings comprise its environment. Wegelin (1978) provides a broad definition of housing, stating that "any established or growing civilization has a fundamental requirement for housing." For every person, whether alone or as a member of a family, a cave or a castle is more than just a physical shelter. It should be a place that fulfils the essential purpose of human civilization. For the individual or family, the house is both a shelter and a symbol, a physical protection, a physiological identity with economic worth, and a basis for safety and self-respect. The spatial pattern of housing in cities is the consequence of a number of variables, the most prominent of which are socioeconomic pressures and the geographical position of the city in terms of physical space and accessibility. According to Duncan and Duncan (1955), residential segregation is stronger for occupational groupings with uncertain status. Several scholars emphasise residential segregation based on similarity in wealth and race. The model utilised by Muth (1972) suggests that the price per unit of housing, rent per unit of land, and production of housing per unit of land all decrease with distance from the market, but per capita housing consumption grows. This is supported by "trade-off" theory and several studies of the urban land market.

Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, is facing a housing crisis (Saghir & Santoro, 2018). While around one billion people live in slums worldwide, 200 million of them are in sub-Saharan Africa (Saghir & Santoro, 2018). The reason for this can be

attributed to the fact that Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is characterised by exponential population growth, several of its nations' debts, and a severe socioeconomic problem. The student population and other vulnerable populations are particularly affected. Access to good housing is becoming more challenging in major cities and even in small communities with over 5,000 residents. As indicated above, population growth is one of the primary causes of the housing crisis in the main cities of Africa. Thus, the problems linked with urbanisation and housing problems in Cameroon are also associated with overcrowding in the country's major urban areas.

Cameroon, a country in west-central Africa, has two major cities, Douala and Yaoundé, which are home to 39 percent of the country's urban population (CAGF, 2014). A picture of Cameroon's living circumstances is incomplete without the all-important indicators of gross domestic product and gross domestic product per capita. Cameroon's total nominal GDP of $38 billion ranks it in 98th place worldwide and 15th place in Africa (Milanovic¸ 2022). Taking its population into account, the nation's GDP per capita of $1,400 ranks it towards the bottom of the world rankings at 152nd and 26th out of 55 African nations.

Despite the above gloomy statistics, Cameroon's economy has made significant gains in recent years toward becoming a thriving emerging market. While the country's reserves doubled to $3 billion between 2004 and 2008, the public debt decreased from over 60% of GDP to about 10% (Milanovic¸ 2022). Furthermore, throughout the last decade, Cameroon's GDP per capita expanded at a consistent rate of 4 percent each year, which is much higher than the world average of 2.6%. In addition, the unemployment rate in Cameroon is a respectable 4.24 percent. Also, despite this, Cameroon has a long way to go, as 48 percent of its people continue to live below the poverty line (Milanovic¸ 2022).

The urban population in Cameroon is anticipated to surpass 60% by 2020. (INS, 2005). Even government initiatives such as CFC (Credit Foncier du Cameroun), MAETUR (Mission for the Development and Equipment of Urban and Rural Land), and SIC (Société d'Investissement du Cameroun) to address housing issues have fallen short. Other government efforts have expanded through relationships with the private sector. As part of the housing development plan, the state entrusted national SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in 2016 with the construction of 1,675 housing units in the cities of Garoua, Bafoussam, Kribi, etc. As predicted by the Strategy document for growth and employment (DSCE), Cameroon has developed a construction programme for 10,000 social housing units by 2020. However, this has not been able to address the housing issues in major cities across Cameroon.

Due to the above, this research attempts to investigate the housing crisis and living conditions in the University Residence Zone (ZRU) in Yaoundé, Cameroon (Bonamoussadi). This study aims to respond to the following research questions: the principal reasons for the housing problem in university residential areas of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) and the link between the rapid urbanisation of Yaoundé and the difficulty in supplying housing in university residence areas. This study is being conducted because, as a result of Cameroon's protracted economic recession (1985–1995; 1995–2005), governmental funding for the building of university dormitories is often insufficient to sustain a considerable financial outlay. Consequently, traditional structures are unable to accommodate the ever-increasing demand. This is due to the annual rise in the number of students accepted to higher education institutions (Otu et al., 20111; Sunday et al., 2014). Most public colleges and universities do not have dorms.

Where we do research, in the university residential area of the University of Yaoundé I, there is a paucity of state-provided housing.

The study was carried out using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. Compared to 39.24% of respondents, 60.76% of the 98 respondents did not feel comfortable in their living environment. 88.89% of respondents felt that the ZRU did not offer safety, while 11.1% disagreed. 85.71 percent of respondents feel their living environment presents a health risk, while 14.29 percent disagree. This paper contends that the lack of good housing in ZRU has become a danger to the safety of its residents as a consequence of a rise in prostitution in the region.

URBANIZATION AND HOUSING ISSUES IN CAMEROON

Practically, almost all developing countries face serious housing problems, particularly in urban areas (Lee¸1988). Thus, it can be said that access to secure and affordable housing is a central feature of urbanisation in undeveloped societies. Housing is said to be an important productive asset since access to credit to secure a livelihood may depend on property ownership. Urban scholars argue that the urban housing problem is not a simple problem but that its nature is complex and intertwined with other problems like urban poverty and unemployment (Slater, 2013).

The problem “urbanization” and “housing” has been worsening in Africa owing to the rapid increase in population, the fast rate of urbanization, the inadequate addition of buildings, the steep rise in land prices, and inadequate investment in other factors (Opoko & Oluwatayo, 2014). In Cameroon specifically, a substantial proportion of households either do not own houses or have inadequate housing (Page & Sunjo, 2018). It is estimated that a large number of the urban population in Cameroon lives in slums and squatter settlements. The spatial pattern of housing in Cameroonian cities is a result of several factors, of which the socio-economic forces and the geographical location of the city in terms of physical space and accessibility are considered to be most significant (Acho-Chi, 2002).

Cameroon is a highly urbanised nation by sub-Saharan standards, with an urban population of around 49 percent (7.4 million) of the overall population (Mbongsi¸2022). From 1970 to 1995, the average annual urban growth rate was 6.1%; in recent times, it is predicted to be 4.1%. Cameroon’s urban structure contains two major poles: the principal port and commercial city, Douala (population: 1,400,000), and Yaoundé, the administrative and political capital (population: 1.1 million) (Munoz¸ 2018). This bipolarity is unique to Cameroon. Unlike in the majority of African nations, the majority of the population is concentrated in a single city (usually the capital). However, in Cameroon, the two cities (Douala, the economic capital, and Yaoundé, the political capital territory), are followed by the secondary cities of Garoua, Bamenda, and Maroua, which each have a population of over 200,000 (Munoz¸ 2018). Thus, Douala and Yaoundé are highly urbanised cities in Cameroon.

The economic crisis of the mid-1980s had an impact on Cameroon’s infrastructure, public amenities, and urbanization. In 1988, the urban poverty rate reached sixty percent, and over seventy percent of the population lived in unplanned settlements. The majority of the peri-urban population lived in areas with insufficient drainage and infrastructure. The decline in public services had the most effect on the water supply and sewage sectors. Consequently, health indices declined. Despite the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, the Cameroonian government initiated the First Urban Project with the objectives of

achieving acceptable infrastructure standards, legalising land, and establishing the institutional basis for continued improvement (Ako, et al., 2010).

The First Urban Project was specifically aimed at improving the Nylon Zone, one of the worst slums in Douala. The first urban project was a multisectoral effort that began in 1984 (Gulyani & Bassett, 2007). During the first years of the Urban Project, it was marketed as a regionally advanced experimental project through a public relations campaign. However, the first urban project was short-lived, and the second urban project was commissioned. Originally, the Second Urban Project was considered a continuation of the first, with the addition of civil works targeted at improving Douala and Yaoundé's traffic conditions. Additionally, the project was also spread to secondary cities. The Second Urban Project was terminated in 1994, and the loan was cancelled prior to the completion of its goals (Hommann & Lall, 2019). The World Bank had deemed the Second Urban Project's implementation to be generally disappointing (Hommann & Lall, 2019). This was the last major upgrade of unplanned settlements in Cameroon, which used a multisectoral strategy and included land regularisation and legalization.

Other smaller minor upgrade programmes have concentrated on urban development by implementing microprojects involving local governments and the people. The Nkonldongo project in the Municipality of Yaoundé 4 and the FOURMI I and II (Fonds d'Appui to Urban Organizations and Micro Projects) projects are examples of these programmes (Asheni & Gabana, 2022). Also, the urbanisation of the Nkonldongo project began in 1991 and was completed in 1996. It was supported by the French Cooperation (1.5 million francs, equal to $270,000) and carried out by two non-governmental organisations: GRET (Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques) and (A.F.V.P.) the French Volunteer Association (Asheni & Gabana, 2022). This 8-thousand-person neighbourhood was emblematic of the majority of unplanned regions, with significant challenges in the administration of urban services, especially water supply, drainage, and sanitation. The goal was to enhance living conditions by completing micro-projects (a short bridge connecting neighbourhoods, standpipes, and drainage) with community involvement.

The rural-to-urban migration in Cameroon intensified throughout the 1960s as a result of the nation's economic expansion (Peer, 2015). Traditional tribal rulers administered the land inhabited by the incoming settlers (Ekuri & Sanusi, 2016). Two-thirds of the inhabitants of both Douala and Yaoundé were expected to dwell in dense residential neighbourhoods that developed around major roadways leading to the administrative and commercial cores of the cities. Douala is situated near the mouth of the Wouri River on the Gulf of Guinea. Large portions of the city are just a few feet above the water table; thus, flooding is prevalent during the rainy season, especially in the unplanned districts. Yaoundé, on the other hand, is distinguished by a terrain that impedes urban development. The steep slopes and flood-prone bottoms of the region's valleys make the development of infrastructure in these valleys prohibitively expensive. There is a high rate of migration and a rising demand for services among the population. Approximately 65% of households do not have access to piped water, and 80% do not have access to sanitary services (Armah, et al., 2018). The population uses standpipes and a limited number of private water connections; nevertheless, leakage and overflow from pit latrines and septic tanks have contaminated the water table, which is the source of water for wells and streams. This prone-to-flooding region has historically been inhabited

by a populace living in unstable dwellings without legal property titles (Armah, et al., 2018; Akujobi & Awhefeada, 2021; Ehirim et al., 2022).

This astonishing rise is the result of the increasing urbanisation of the two cities, which has been propelled by the influx of people from all across the nation in quest of better living circumstances (Udoka, 2006). Annually, 15,000 and 12,000 dwellings must be constructed in Yaoundé and Douala, respectively, in order to address the informal housing crisis caused by fast population growth (Onomo & Nkakleu, 2022). The metropolitan area population of Douala in 2022 is 3,927,000, a 3.53 percent growth over 2021. In the same year, the population of the Yaoundé metropolitan area is 4,337,000, a rise of 4.15 percent from 2021 (Koholé¸ et al., 2022). However, on average, just 2,400 apartments are built annually in these cities. Thus, both Douala and Yaoundé have housing shortages. Despite the government's attempts to resolve the problem, a historical examination of the nation's housing policy demonstrates that there has always been a major disparity between housing supply and demand. To remedy the housing shortage in Yaoundé and Douala, around 15,000 and 12,000 units of housing need to be built yearly, respectively, to fulfil the population-driven demand (Koholé¸ et al., 2022).

Multiple interrelated factors have contributed to the growth of informal housing in Yaoundé and Douala. The UN-Habitat reports that rural exodus, population growth, high housing costs, weak housing governance (particularly in planning, policy, and urban management), economic vulnerability and low-paying jobs, deprivation and displacement caused by conflict, natural disasters, and climate change are some of the negative factors that contribute to the spread of informal housing.

STUDENT'S HOUSING CRISIS AND LIVING CONDITIONS

After education, student "hostels" within and outside the universities are of the utmost significance (Khozaei¸et al., 2010). These dorms serve as temporary residences for students and mirror their home backgrounds. These "houses," which serve dorms, must accommodate the requirements of students and their parents, as well as their social expectations. Researchers have been fascinated by the residential lives of university students, both inside and outside the campus, for decades. Student housing has traditionally been one of the fundamental services offered by colleges and universities to assist students in developing their intellect. However, in the case of the unavailability of "hostels" within the university campus, houses outside the campus have often served the same purpose. College and university are the beginning of a new chapter of life for many students, which includes the experience of living in a dormitory. According to a study, people's emotional moods are influenced by their living situations and the internal changes that occur (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). When prospective students leave home to attend college or university, the kind of housing they find near their school is significant.

In addition, parents are more receptive to the dormitory living arrangements of their children owing to the increased sense of safety and the monitoring of hostel staff, or extra security service from the government for houses around the university premises. Consequently, many students like living in university dorms or "houses" around the university premises. Furthermore, the problem of prices and economic savings has led to a minimalist perspective on dormitory design, which explains why the majority of dorms do not adequately satisfy the housing and educational demands of students. It also explains why students may attempt to reside in "houses" outside the university premises, since it may be cheaper; at the very least, tight regulations on the number of students per

room may not apply. Due to its significance, scholars have investigated the consequences of student housing. Many studies have concluded that university dormitories or dormitories outside the school are a specific sort of structure that is meant to be both a sanctuary for students and a pleasant and functional environment conducive to study and academic performance.

In modern times in Africa, university dormitories, often referred to as "dormitories," are less likely to meet the needs of students (Daliri-Dizaj & Hatami-Khanghahi, 2022). An overview reveals that the architecture of dormitory buildings in most universities is designed and implemented more to meet the basic needs of students, with less attention paid to the qualitative dimensions and aspects related to their mental conditions. When resources are limited and a minimalist approach is applied, students' preferences from among the available options help the designer prioritise design options. Because financial resources are limited for the design and architecture of student dormitories, designers and planners have to choose cost-effective options in areas such as interior divisions, forms, building materials, furniture, and more.

Housing fosters physical, social, economic, and psychological satisfaction for its residents, in addition to providing leisure and reflecting social status. In addition to being a basic human right, sufficient housing has the ability to further the nation's civic, social, economic, and sustainable development objectives. The provision of housing is so intrinsically linked to national socioeconomic development that, despite its perceived high cost on available asset resources, the Cameroonian government, both past and present, recognises the need to provide adequate housing units to meet the needs of working people and students. Literature has long acknowledged that business organisations, including student housing providers, must concentrate on enhancing service quality (SQ) in order to remain competitive and influence student customers' behavior. Numerous studies have identified service quality as a significant antecedent of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Youth in Cameroon and the rest of Africa are disadvantaged, and the education sector is not an exception. Due to distortions in the country's social, economic, and religious components, many youths no longer get a proper education, which has a detrimental influence on individuals and the nation as a whole. Numerous attempts have been made to comprehend and solve this issue, yet the issue of academic quality continues to be a problem not only in the classroom but also in students' living conditions. While all efforts have been devoted to tackling the problem of education in most countries in Africa, little has been done to investigate the suffering of the students, who are central to this issue.

Students' housing in Sub-Saharan Africa has not gotten the attention it needs from both the government and the administration of the institutions (Magesso, 2022). Francis et al., (2020) remarked that hostel accommodations have not received sufficient attention despite being an essential component of student personnel management. It is fairly usual for hostels within and outside the campuses to have inadequately maintained services and infrastructure. There have been reports of students becoming ill in the dormitories due to unsanitary conditions. Student housing must not only be sufficiently provided for in proportion to the university's student population, but it must also be able to meet their demands if the best is to be extracted from them. The most prevalent definition of user satisfaction in this work describes satisfaction as the process of comparing what was received to what was anticipated. One of the key objectives of providing any facility

(including dormitories and housing units for students near university campuses) should be to guarantee student fulfillment.

Babakus et al., (2004) argues that user satisfaction has a favourable influence on the profitability of any organisation, including educational institutions. Some writers argue that it is not sufficient to just please customers; rather, it is essential to guarantee that they are exceedingly satisfied. Therefore, it is crucial that research be conducted to determine the housing crisis and living conditions in university residential areas, because when students are satisfied with the facilities provided in their accommodations, it will lead to an improvement in their academic performance, among other benefits. The purpose of this article is to examine the housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) in order to evaluate the degree of student satisfaction with the existing facilities and the implications of the infrastructure for the students' wellbeing.

STUDENTS LIVING CONDITIONS IN YAOUNDÉ I (BONAMOUSSADI),

About 55 percent of the Cameroonian population is under 35 years old and of school age. Therefore, there is a need for the nation to invest in housing infrastructure for the youthful population that could attend colleges and universities in the near future (Bassey et al., 2022). According to Page and Sunjo (2018), the housing shortage in the Yaoundé metropolis is catastrophic. The research states that there will be a need for 72,251 new dwelling units between 2018 and 2035. The situation is not much different at the university residential zones (ZRU), where housing accommodations for students are becoming progressively inadequate due to the ever-increasing number of students, i.e., more than 60,000 new graduates entering Cameroonian institutions each year. According to reports, the state's provision of student accommodation is restricted since not all state schools provide university dormitories; this is the case with universities in Yaoundé 2 (SOA). In addition, it is vital to note the deteriorating quality of the housing, the narrowness of the university rooms, and the insecurity linked to the permeability of the residences in Cameroon's institutions.

On the campus of the University of Yaoundé I, more and more rooms are vacant, such as building E, which has been closed for years owing to the necessity for renovations. The annual cost of lodging is 480000 CFA francs (about 780.09 USD) for shared rooms and 600000 CFA francs (about 959.35 USD) for private rooms. Due to the ever-increasing number of congested students pounding on the doors of the institution, the housing supply has been inadequate relative to demand for many years. This includes students from private higher education institutions (such as the Siantou Higher Institute, among others) as well as those from governmental institutions (students from the University of Yaoundé I, University of Yaoundé II (SOA), Polytechnic, etc.).

During the 2015–2016 academic year in Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi), there were approximately 2,500 requests for lodging in university residence halls but only 1,362 admissions owing to the restricted number of available beds, many of which were out of order. In addition, the communal rooms (rooms with two beds) have been converted into individual rooms as a result of complaints from several students regarding the rooms' narrowness. This resulted in a shortage of 300 beds, which decreased supplies and exacerbated the issue. It should also be mentioned that the deficit is exacerbated by a lack of infrastructure maintenance by the students. For example, the use of hot plates by students is prohibited by the hall wardens because it damages the electrical installations.

However, this rule is sometimes violated by a few stubborn students. To combat such activities, surveillance teams were established, particularly the "campus police," which strengthened the school's regulations. For this reason, students are compelled to evacuate their rooms at the conclusion of the academic year due to security concerns.

In recent years, landlords around the school area have often charged exorbitant fees for the private supply of student housing. Frequently, landlords use the acute housing crisis to defraud potential student renters. According to my personal interactions with administrators of the University of Yaoundé I's student housing division, landlords often do not adhere to the rent levels set by the extended consultation conducted on April 24, 2009, for university residence areas. This consultation had brought together representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Commerce, philanthropists, student union leaders, and the Special Student Housing Brigade. The agreement reached was on the implementation of inexpensive housing alternatives within the university residence area.

Numerous resolutions have been enacted for this purpose. According to one of the resolutions, "the implementation of authorised pricing is required." However, the reality is quite different. Frequently, landlords violate the agreement by charging excessive rent and mistreating students, particularly newcomers. Another factor that contributes to students' confusion about the housing dilemma is their lack of knowledge regarding student housing regulations. As a result, they are victims of abuse and are occasionally duped.

In addition, Order No. OOOO6/MINDUH/MINCOMMERCE/MINDAF/MINESUP of June 30, 2005, which regulates the rentals of student housing in Cameroon's state institutions, specifies in Chapter III of the conditions of payment of rent, Article 9 that rents must be paid at the beginning of each month. In contrast, the bulk of private university housing requires an annual payment and a deposit of at least two months. This indicates that rent comprises a substantial portion of yearly expenditures. This has made students in precarious circumstances engage in immoral practises (prostitution, theft) in order to be able to cope with the high cost of accommodation.

BONAMOUSSADI, NON-STUDENT POPULATION, AND HOUSING SITUATION

Bonamoussadi is a university living area that belongs to the University of Yaoundé I and is home to more than 5,400 students (Konings, 2002). The situation here is almost identical to that of the whole Ngoa-Ekellé university residential region. It is one of the capital's most cosmopolitan neighbourhoods.

There are 226 university dormitories with over five thousand inhabitants within the said area. Most of the dormitories are constructed in an anarchic manner. The existence of puddles on the streets and inadequate waste management are indicators of environmental deterioration in the neighborhood. Consequently, immorality and lawlessness are often evident (Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2021). Multiple sources assert that high levels of sexual promiscuity, a prevalent problem in the region, often have negative effects that disrupt the tranquilly of local residents, and that students are frequently affected (Foko & Lehman, 2018). It is critical to note that the Bonamoussadi neighbourhood has a sizable non-student population (civil servants and other skilled and unskilled individuals). This scenario exacerbates the housing issue as well as the growth

of insecurity (theft, rape, vandalism, etc.), nuisances of all types (noise at inappropriate hours), difficulties with waste water evacuation and aeration, and the expansion of disease-carrying insects. Since the majority of inhabitants use gas cylinders, it is also crucial to note that the congestion in the restricted housing units poses a significant danger of fire breakouts. Furthermore, the ZRU's growing lawlessness and immorality exposes residents to an increase in the potential threat of social disputes among individuals.

THE EFFECTS OF THE HOUSING CRISIS ON LIVING CONDITIONS IN YAOUNDÉ I.

The building anarchy in Bonamoussadi is caused by the housing problem (Renz, 2018). Some houses are constructed in wetlands. And as a consequence, inhabitants are affected by floods during the rainy season, leading to the damage of personal belongings and the interruption of education. Environmental management also remains challenging. It is usual to see rubbish dumps around the area, sometimes against home walls.

In informal settlements such as Bonamoussadi, poor living conditions are accompanied by rapid deterioration of existing homes and a rise in homelessness. Also visible is the lack of access to services, safety nets, and political representation. In this kind of community, the populace is often poorly educated, yet competition is high, making it tough to find a job (Ogabor & Ekurim, 2016). In addition to schooling, which is clearly visible, they lack access to sufficient food, clean water, and other basic necessities (Renz, 2018). As these individuals have minimal potential for self-sufficiency, the environmental risks and precarious positioning of the informal settlements also have a substantial effect.

Those who reside in hazardous regions, such as swamps, canal setbacks, rail line setbacks, and marginal terrain, among others, are always at risk of unanticipated disaster. Frequently, both external and internal dangers threaten their way of life. This makes them more susceptible to environmental degradation, threats of eviction, and destruction. According to Briggs and World Health Organization (WHO) (1999), informal residents are often sick because of exposure to disease and poor environmental quality. They are always impoverished and unhappy. Inadequate housing and sanitation can jeopardise their health, while natural disasters may cause death and economic loss.

NON-STUDENTS AND INSECURITY AT THE BONAMOUSSADI ZRU

Residents of Bonamoussadi include both students and non-students; this gives it a cosmopolitan character. The inflow of people with diverse objectives affects the living conditions of residents. According to Ajeagah and Landry (2019), the residents of this region think that the presence of non-student layers impedes access to decent accommodation and that the neighbourhood lacks security. Additionally, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Bonamoussadi neighbourhood makes it more difficult to find affordable property. It is also worth noting that security is not guaranteed in the region since it resembles a ghetto, as people might deduce that the cosmopolitan character of the neighbourhood is tied to the assurance of safety (Anderson, 2011).

Additionally, the number of non-students in Bonamoussadi reflects the region's deteriorating hygiene. This is because the region is heavily influenced by human activities. Due to the growth of cultures and people with different goals, it is difficult to manage the environment. Residents' disregard for their living environment, according to Fogwe and Nkelzok (2011), results in poor environmental management.

Consequently, they are exposed to the dangers of infectious illnesses and numerous forms of pollution. The location and quality of a home affect human behaviour and interpersonal connections. The area of Bonamosadi is also well-known for the illegal and immoral activities that occur there. In fact, prostitution is flourishing on a street named "Carrefour Condom" (Fodouop, et al., 2015). This activity also poses a danger of deviation for the pupils that dwell there, particularly for some of the young pupils in the area. They are susceptible to influence, which adds to school dropout and increases the probability of obtaining STDs and other dangerous illnesses.

CONCLUSION

The housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) have many repercussions, notable among which are fire hazards, sexual immorality, theft, health hazards, personality difficulties, etc., especially among students. As earlier highlighted, the existing housing crisis and living conditions, which require immediate attention, would pose challenging propositions if not addressed and taken care of at the proper time. The area has been growing at the hands of inhumane landlords, and thus there's no proper planning, even if there is some messy planning. Ultimately, this growth is obviously going to be more of a problem than a solution. There is an immediate need for more engagement, including officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Commerce, philanthropists, student union leaders, as well as students and other local residents, in a huge town hall meeting to discuss the way forward. The following recommendations are applicable to the housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) in order to alleviate urban housing challenges:

1. Appropriate expenditures in social infrastructure and education, as well as the urban master plan will alleviate the strain on the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi). Government must also implement programmes for poverty reduction, job creation, trade promotion, and other associated development in the neighborhood.
2. There is a great need for affordable housing, for the student majority in the area. This argues for complementing government policies designed to increase the availability of cheap housing with policies that offer housing subsidies to the poor. There should be policies in place for dealing with landlords who fail to adhere to the agreed-upon rent charge and terms. Government should also do everything possible to charge and punish offenders.
3. For the proper planning of Bonamoussadi Metropolis, it is strongly suggested that an urban information system (UIS), more specifically an urban housing information system (UHIS), be established.

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Unleashing the Potential for Promoting Socioeconomic Development in Africa: The Role of Intelligence Services

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ABSTRACT

During the pervasive and protracted Cold War, states developed intelligence services as secret organisations to achieve international prominence and resist foreign influence domestically. Parallel to the globalisation process, states' intelligence agencies are expanding far beyond military exercises to encompass intelligence collection, safeguarding persons and information, defining and authorising sanctions for infractions, and establishing the standards for unconstitutional conduct. Nonetheless, a common perception of contemporary African intelligence organisations is that they are essentially extensions of the occasionally autocratic government under which they operate. This allegation is based on the apparent access, power, and influence of African intelligence and security services by both domestic and international actors. This paper examines the role of intelligence services in encouraging social and economic growth in Africa. In this study, context and historical analysis research methodologies are used in both primary and secondary sources. This paper relates the issue with African intelligence services to their colonial origins. This work also reveals the delicate image of intelligence services in Africa and the issue of global infiltration. This article argues that African intelligence services, like their western counterparts, must live up to their obligation to safeguard Africa politically and economically. This highlights the necessity for African intelligence agencies to contribute to political stability through the development of several channels. This work proposes a strategic reorganisation of the intelligence agencies in order to enhance their image and efficacy in supporting the socioeconomic development of the continent.

Keywords: Intelligence agencies; Africa; economic growth; political stability

INTRODUCTION

"Knowledge is power" is a common phrase. According to Haas et al. (2018), the phrase means that man is powerful because of his capacity for knowledge acquisition, preservation, and transmission to the next generation. Thus, with "knowledge," man has power over the forces of nature and can use them to his advantage. The phrase has also been increasingly acute since the Second World War, when a number of intelligence agencies were formalised and significantly expanded. Over the past year, intelligence agencies and departments have been established in practically every nation since the Second World War to deal with security threats. Large investment in intelligence organisations has become a crucial part of countries' national security frameworks. For instance, the National Intelligence Program in the United States received $65.7 billion in funding for Fiscal Year 2022, while the Military Intelligence Program received $24.1 billion in funding (Sharp¸2022). According to the House Committee, the budget for Nigeria's intelligence agencies was cut from N221. 7 billion in 2022 to N195. 18 billion in 2023 as a result of the country's present economic situation (Ushie et al., 2021a; Ushie et al., 2021b; Morka & Aliku, 2022). The budget for Russia's intelligence agencies for 2022 was 3.51 trillion rubles ($57.4 billion), but once the all-out invasion started, it increased to 3.85 trillion rubles (Zegart¸ 2022). Additionally, 2.82 trillion rubles were allocated for law enforcement and national security (NSLE). For Australia, $14.554 million was made available through Appropriation Bill No. 3 (2021–2022), and $0.105 million will be obtained for Intelligence Service collecting through Appropriation Bill No. 4 (2021–2022) (Zegart¸2022).

According to Vellani (2006), the identification and mitigation of vulnerabilities to national security, the rapid and effective reporting of such threats to decision-makers, and the accurate and timely assessment and forecasting of potential conflicts or threats are the core duties of intelligence services. Military intelligence, secret police, domestic and international intelligence, the criminal investigation department, and many more organisations that fit into the same category may all be considered intelligence agencies. Accepting this model makes sense since it enables us to understand problems with intelligence agencies in nations with several agencies. For instance, when discussing intelligence agencies in the United States, many only bring up the CIA and FBI, despite the fact that the US intelligence community is made up of seventeen (17) additional institutions (Agrawal, 2017). There are now five (5) sub-bodies in Indonesia (Wahyudi & Syauqillah, 2022) and ten (10) in the Australian Intelligence Community (AIC) (Walsh & Harrison, 2021). In Tanzania, there are the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Tanzania's Drug Control and Enforcement Authority (DCEA), Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service (TISS), and others related to defence forces (Makangara, 2022). South Africa has the South African Secret Service (SASS), the National Defense Force Intelligence Division, the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and a few others (Dombroski 2021).

Intelligence agencies are intended to gather information and intelligence using espionage to ensure the survival of a nation (Mishra, 2014). According to Buchere & Jonyo (2011), "Intelligence is one of the most globalised public institutions, with networks the world over." "And since they are a key asset for national sovereignty, they are usually off-limits to interference by external powers, hence the secrecy surrounding the operations of the institutions" (p. 17). Consequently, African countries have created intelligence agencies to collect, analyze, and exploit information to support law enforcement, national

security, and other policy objectives that can be classified as local or international (Ehirim et al. 2021; Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2021; Akujobi, & Awhefeada, 2021). The institutions ought to be tools for maintaining peace and security in their respective countries. As Africa's importance to the global economy continues to rise, well-functioning intelligence agencies are needed to help the continent advance its interests internationally and strengthen its internal ability to serve its people. Nonetheless, African intelligence agencies have a tainted history and face numerous challenges that limit their contribution to content development. The institutions appear to have lost focus and have reserved efforts to develop the continent. They have also turned into agents of torture, chaos, and instability in several places in Africa.

In this light, this paper explores the shortfalls of these institutions and the untapped role that these institutions have not played in promoting social, economic, and political development and prosperity in Africa. It explores the plausibility of these agencies helping various governments in Africa fight poverty, corruption, political and economic instability, and health-related issues like pandemics. It argues for the need for legal and strategic oversight of these institutions in order to avoid past mistakes. This is important as it is well known that issues related to intelligence agencies are rarely discussed in Africa and are mostly left as the business of those who occupy the highest echelons in the corridors of power. The paper's insights might inform how to improve the institutions' performance for the prosperity of Africa. The following subsection presents the haunting past of intelligence in Africa and its prospects.

TAINTED BACKGROUND OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES IN AFRICA

The history of modern intelligence agencies in Africa cannot be discussed without referring to their background. The history of colonialism in Africa can be traced back to ancient, medieval, or even contemporary times, depending on how the term "colonisation" is interpreted. Ancient Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Malays all founded colonies on the African continent, some of which lasted decades (Parker & Rathbone, 2007). In common vernacular, discussions of African colonialism mainly centre on the European conquests of the New Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa (1884–1914) eras, followed by slow decolonization following World War II. However, Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Italy are the major forces involved in contemporary African colonialism. Practically all African nations use the language imposed by their colonial masters in government and media, despite the existence of native African languages in these countries.

Soon after independence, many African countries formed intelligence services to help nation-build and maintain peace and tranquility (Oriji et al., 2011; Ushie et al., 2019). However, the cold war gave these foundations a weak foundation, which has continued to haunt them to date. These institutions were largely linked to the two opposing camps during the Cold War era. On the one hand, there was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an intergovernmental military alliance led by the United States of America (USA), and on the other hand, there was the Warsaw Pact, which was originally part of the Warsaw Treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), generally known as the Soviet Union (Crump, 2015). These Western intelligence agencies assisted several African countries in establishing intelligence institutions and have continued to influence their operations to some extent in recent times. This implies that the nature of African intelligence agencies,

to a great extent, reflected the camp with which they were aligned and the nature and intention of the covert operations they were pursuing.

For example, Ethiopia's modern intelligence agency has its origins in the Communist regimes of the late 1970s and 1980s (University of Glasgow, 2020). The Ethiopian Public Security Organization (PSO), which was established in 1978, was linked to the Soviet Union and its allies, and it received training and other logistical support from the East German State Security Service (STASI) (University of Glasgow, 2020). Its main duties included but were not limited to gathering information from inside and outside the country, counterintelligence actions, surveillance, and direct intervention (University of Glasgow, 2020). Furthermore, after its independence in 1960, the Congolese government under Patrice Lumumba briefly tried to establish links with the West (Iandolo, 2014). However, when it did not work, he turned to the east. As a result, he was assassinated, and a pro-Western government led by Joseph Désire Mobutu took control (Kies, 2015). From there onwards, the Congolese intelligence services, which started as a series of small police units tasked with maintaining order and state security, were highly influenced by the CIA and other western intelligence agencies (Pateman, 1992). Likewise, Malawi, led by the pro-Western government of Kamuzu Banda, was firmly under the control of the CIA (Pateman, 1992). In countries such as Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and a few others, the Soviet Union and its allies, through the KGB, had a big influence on intelligence services and other related institutions (Besenyő, 2019).

Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, was deposed in a military coup in 1966 while he was abroad. He later felt that the United States played a hand in his downfall, and former CIA intelligence officer John Stockwell (1978) claims in a 1978 book that an official approval for the coup does not exist in the American Central Intelligence Agency papers, but he adds that "the Accra station was nevertheless encouraged by headquarters to maintain contact with dissidents" (cited in Kinni, 2015, p. 82). It was given a large budget and kept in close contact with the plotters as the coup was planned. John Stockwell claims that the CIA became more involved in Ghana and that its operatives were given "unofficial credit" for the final coup (Mwakikagile, 2015). A released United States government document reveals knowledge of a scheme to destabilise the presidency but no official support (Kabwato, 2019). Another released memo issued after the coup refers to Nkrumah's assassination as a "fortuitous windfall." Nkrumah was undermining our interests more than any other black African (Kabwato, 2019).

From 1975 through 1990, the Directorate of Information and Security of Angola was the communist People's Republic of Angola's secret police (John, 2002). Stockwell (1978), the chief of the CIA's covert operations in Angola in 1975, says that the United States security agency opted to fight the communist People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) because it was perceived to be closer to the Soviet Union and instead backed the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), despite the fact that they both received aid from communist nations. According to Mr. Stockwell in a film documentary, the CIA then assisted, with the assistance of some members of the Directorate of Information and Security of Angola, in the secret importation of weaponry, including 30,000 rifles, through Kinshasa in neighbouring Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Farah & Braun, 2007). Stockwell also claims that CIA officials prepared fighters for an armed confrontation. A released US government document outlining a conversation between the CIA's director, the secretary of state, and others demonstrates the CIA's backing for the troops battling the MPLA (Blum, 2003). In the

same way, Israel and Romania assisted Holden Roberto's faction in Angola. It is also reported that North Korea and Israel engaged in some collaborative arrangements in Zaire (Pateman, 1992). South Africa's State Security Agency has even been accused of corruption by a judicial commission (Rapanyane, 2021). These accusations represent a complete collapse of corporate governance. Throughout the years, this charge has had a significant impact on the agency's operational performance, national trust, reputation, and international information sharing arrangements (Rapanyane, 2021).

In light of this context, African security and intelligence agencies have continued to face a crisis that jeopardises peace and development. The agencies are tied to citizen oppression and specialise in defending autocrats' interests in their own nations. As a result, African intelligence institutions cannot afford to be out of date and disconnected from civilians. It requires transformation to suit the demands of this era, in which intelligence information is utilised not just to fulfil security goals but is also vital for attaining economic goals. As a result, intelligence services on the continent must adapt their operations and, more crucially, be strategically reformed in order to assist African countries in achieving social and economic growth. In this light, this essay addresses critical challenges concerning African intelligence agencies. It investigates how these vital and distinctive institutions might contribute to the continent's social, economic, and political growth.

THE PERPETUATION OF THE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

Basically, intelligence agencies in any state aim at defending the state and society, which includes protecting democratically elected leaders who deliver as per their political mandate. Nonetheless, it has been documented by many scholars that African intelligence services have remained tools of regime security (Dehez, 2010). In other words, they have largely limited their responsibility to protecting the ruling regime, regardless of its legitimacy or acceptance. They have defended autocratic leaders who do not work for national interests in many places in Africa. To borrow from Aldrich and Shiraz (2019), most of these agencies are highly fragmented and are led by family members, hence the massive divisions between different security agencies within the country (Osonwa & Ushie, 2009). Foreign intelligence services were hard at work helping their countries gain, just as their African counterparts were hard at work helping leaders amass wealth at the expense of their subjects. As if this were not enough, these important institutions came to be feared after neglecting their role of protecting the population, the state, and its institutions. They changed into vehicles of oppression and all kinds of mistreatment of the local population, especially those who were on the wrong side of the ruling clique. According to Ingriss (2020), when the interference between surveillance, patronage, and politics occurs, the logical outcome is mostly the persecution of political opponents. They have been linked to cases of torture, murder, and extortion against the very people they are supposed to protect (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009). One intelligence chief once said, "Such organs have thus come across as instruments for regime survival rather than for promoting and consolidating democracy and (the) national interests, defined by allegiance to the presidential person and political clientelism" (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009).

This, in turn, has isolated the institutions from a large part of the population and rendered them useless and irrelevant to the very people they were created to serve. The impact of the marginalisation and even "minorization" of certain groups by the political

elites or autocratic regimes makes it harder for citizens to support efforts by security services to maintain peace and stability, as these institutions are considered to be proxies of those regimes rather than national institutions tasked with the role of maintaining peace and stability. In these circumstances, these institutions have become a burden to Africa and therefore deserve our scrutiny. The failure of security intelligence services in Africa has had catastrophic consequences, pushing the continent to the brink of disaster and making social and economic progress on the continent nearly impossible. Chaos in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, and many other African countries can only be attributed to the failure of intelligence services to identify danger and work towards mitigating factors that are prerequisites to the chaos. Interrogation of the literature shows that Africa has continued to be a place where powerful international actors continue to influence policies through the very intelligence services that protect these countries against undesirable internal and external influence. The concern of this paper is that these acts do not stabilise countries but rather destabilise them. The acts only temporarily help the regime and the president to stay in power, but in the long run, they destabilise the country and lead to chaos and the socioeconomic meltdown of the country and its population. When security services are solely aligned with the regime and ignore the population's interests, it is indeed absurd and dangerous and does not by any means translate into the stability and security of the state, let alone its population (Dehez, 2010). Over-politicization of these institutions has indeed led to instability in many parts of the continent and consequently retarded social and economic development.

Security services' actions in Africa have generated confusion and disgrace, as in the case of former Zaire. Likewise, the regime of Charles Taylor in Liberia used Special Security Services (SSS) to target opponents by torturing or even killing them (Ingriss, 2020). In short, these institutions appeared to be of no use to the local population and its interests.

THE UNFULFILLED ROLE OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES IN STABILIZING ECONOMIES

The African continent still lags behind other continents in economic prosperity. Reports show that 35 of the 50 poorest countries in the world are in Africa, and even worse, Africa occupies the top ten positions on the list (Global Finance, 2019; Giovetti, 2019). This indicates the enormity of the problem and calls for these strategic institutions, like the intelligence services, to remedy the situation swiftly. As Małecki (2017, p1) argued, national security is now redefined to put economic security at the centre stage. African countries, among other things, need to realise the importance of having well-processed information from the internal and, most importantly, external environment to reduce poverty in Africa and achieve social and economic prosperity.

African countries must understand that national security is much better guaranteed if economic security is safeguarded. Many institutions can help achieve this objective, the first being the intelligence services. Africa must realise there is always competition for opportunities globally, hence the need to utilise economic intelligence to aid strategic decision-making. Intelligence agencies must gather strategic knowledge to help African nations identify markets and negotiate better deals with multinational companies and other business partners (Cioc & Ursacescu, 2012). If countries like the US and others are using their intelligence services to support commercial firms in their

various activities and particularly in competing for markets around the world (DeConcini, 1994), Africa has no alternative but to follow the same path with the necessary urgency.

AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES AND POLITICAL STABILITY

Economic growth and political stability are deeply interconnected (Hussain, 2014). Africa needs to realise that when there is no political stability, it is impossible to attract investment from within and outside. Hence, intelligence services in Africa must strive to bring about peace and stability in their respective countries. Africa is likely the least developed economy of the existing continents, as it is also the most politically unstable continent. It is, for instance, very difficult for its people to work, save, and invest (Hussain, 2014), which are prerequisites for any society's social and economic development. It is observed that many alternative political parties in Africa are weak, disorganized, and do not have any agenda that can be termed "developmental." Even worse, intelligence agencies that should have strengthened the parties greatly contribute to weakening them, irrespective of the fact that ruling parties are deeply fragile and particularistic. This situation does not help the continent in its efforts to promote economic growth that will, in turn, help pull the masses out of extreme poverty. In such a situation, when change suddenly happens, the inexperience and lack of stability and agenda in those parties lead to an unstable political environment that contributes to economic uncertainty.

This underscores the need for African intelligence services to contribute to political stability by devising several mechanisms. First, intelligence agencies should take a prominent role in ensuring that the ruling and opposition parties are stable and well-positioned to safeguard national interests. They should help their countries vet candidates for different political positions, provide information to shape their ideologies, and, in some special circumstances, train them in issues related to the national interest, such as national security. Secondly, intelligence services must ensure that all political parties, both ruling and opposition, work towards achieving national interests despite their different approaches to achieving their different agendas. They should build strong alternative political parties to take advantage of the weaknesses of the ruling party whenever an opportunity arises. Moreover, it is of strategic importance for national intelligence services to ensure that there are alternative and viable opposition parties to rule the country when events call for such a situation. It is dangerous, naive, and even reckless for intelligence agencies to work on the assumption that the status quo will prevail forever. Such negligence has led to political instabilities in many African countries, resulting in an economic meltdown.

The above reasoning should not at any time be interpreted as a push for intelligence services to negatively interfere with the freedom of political parties to operate in a conducive political environment. It should be noted that the suggestion here is to put in place balanced mechanisms that will make political parties vehicles of a stable political system, a prerequisite for social and economic prosperity. Lessons can be learned from some African countries that have well employed their intelligence services to ensure political stability. These include Ghana and Senegal, where the political transition has been peaceful. The same can also be said of countries like Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and Tanzania, which have some degree of political stability.

URGENT NEED FOR REFORMING AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

Sections of this paper have demonstrated weaknesses in African intelligence agencies that do more harm than good to the continent. In order to change this bad image of the African intelligence communities, governments need to reorganise them and strengthen their institutional ability to provide security for the state and its population, protect the political order, and be vehicles to help African countries transform into essential players in the global arena. Such transformations are only possible if strategic reorganisation is made or Security Sector Reforms (SSR) are embraced to accommodate the new realities on the African continent and, indeed, in the globalised world. SSR must transform intelligence services in four broad areas, namely, the political, economic, social, and institutional dimensions (Brzoska, 2000; Wulf, 2000; and Williams, 2005, cit. in Buchere & Jonyo, 2011; Ushie & Jonah, 2022). The transformative processes will broadly enable intelligence agencies to be properly governed, staffed, and funded. This will develop an institutional ability to help Africa address a multitude of threats that were identified earlier, such as mass poverty, environmental degradation, food and water shortages, potential epidemics and pandemics, cyber-attacks, economic sabotage, and many other threats that pose great danger to the population and the state.

It is imperative for "SSR to address the twin challenges posed by security services and security sector governance by transforming military forces to defend their countries against foreign foes and enemies, while at the same time trying to institutionalise civilian oversight and parliamentary control" (Dehez, 2010). The transformations advocated by SSR must enable these institutions to acquire the ability to discharge their duties with the highest level of professionalism, integrity, and discipline. SSR must also transform intelligence agencies into institutions that employ the best brains in their countries in all fields and reward them accordingly. This will provide stability and enable these institutions to contribute strategically to critical sectors of these countries. The strategic reorganisation must take into consideration the new realities of our time. It accepts new paradigms that inform national and international security issues in ways other than the traditional ones.At the core of our discussion is the concept of human security, which shifts the focus of the state as the referent object from humans to individuals (Gazizullin, 2016). The realisation is that people and individuals have a lot at stake when it comes to issues of national security, and that national security is an extension of an individual's security to that of the community, hence the importance of human-centric approaches to national and international security (Kerr, 2003).

Reorganization, which may take the form of Security Sector Reforms (SSR), must now recognise the needs of the citizens, who are both beneficiaries and facilitators of a stable society. With this approach, insecurity can be addressed by focusing on nontraditional threats such as mass poverty, economic shocks, poor governance, weak institutions, environmental degradation (Buchere & Jonyo, 2011), and health (the potential for pandemics like Corona) without ignoring traditional threats. Other challenges include climate change, which is linked to a shortage of food, water (or an excess of it), and other necessities; the dangers posed by terrorism of all kinds and in all parts of the world; the dangers posed by cyber wars from nation-states and nonstate actors; the challenges of managing the ever-expanding influence of social media and issues related to it, such as misinformation and "fake news"; and a variety of others, such as international drug trafficking.

Reforms must ensure the recruitment, training, and remuneration of intelligence officials are all aligned with the main goal of securing the economic security of the country. As Maecki (2017) put it, Africa must put up a system to help with "identification, search, assessment, production, and distribution of information on financial, economic, and corporate matters, which are particularly important for public institutions and companies." Such a system will only work when the intelligence services on the continent are reformed to meet the conditions that would allow them to provide processed information suitable to inform the economic objectives of the country and consequently contribute to the social and economic development of African countries.

This will only be possible if decisions are made to modify the tasks, structure, and function of these public institutions responsible for national security, including but not limited to diplomatic services and intelligence agencies (Maecki 2017). African countries need and must reform their intelligence services for them to perform their role of collecting, processing, analyzing, and disseminating information on threats to the state and its population (Lokaj & Sadiku, 2015). This exercise must play an important role in improving the performance of the state and, particularly, the lives of the people. Contrary to what is seen in many African countries, reforms in this sector must go beyond the protection of regimes and focus more on the prosperity of the nation as a whole. To achieve that, reforms in the sector will inform policy objectives aimed at taking advantage of opportunities within and outside those specific countries. For example, many African countries are well endowed with natural resources. It is the duty of different intelligence services to collect and analyse information about this particular industry to help governments on the continent negotiate better deals with multinational companies and other partners in the extractive sector.

At the state level, reformed intelligence agencies must have well-trained individuals in all areas of expertise. Efforts must be made to get the best minds to accept positions in these institutions. Recruited individuals must have the right skills and mental ability to handle complex operations and remain discrete (Ushie & Imbua, 2006). Governments in Africa have to make sure that these institutions operate professionally, and this will only be possible if SSR is done to enable the recruitment process to be as objective as possible. The tendency to employ relatives with questionable credibility by those in power in collaboration with superiors in those agencies has made these institutions dysfunctional when confronted with complex national security issues. Employment of family members creates divisions and makes them highly fragmented (Aldrich & Shiraz, 2019) and consequently less equipped to deal with all kinds of threats, domestic or external, let alone provide information that will help inform economic policy objectives; this must change quickly. While strengthening these institutions must be an exercise for individual countries, it should also fully involve regional bodies.

From the above, it follows that challenges at the regional level cannot be addressed without strengthening the ability of the intelligence services of member states that form different regional blocks. These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), among others. Collaboration and cooperation among the intelligence agencies of countries in these bodies can help reduce insecurity in places like Northern Nigeria (Ushie et al., 2022), the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, and many others in Africa. Efforts to reduce insecurity, coupled with collaboration in protecting rivers, lakes, and

oceans in Africa, have the potential to promote the blue/marine economy and consequently contribute to ending extreme poverty and increasing the income and welfare of the poor in a sustainable way (World Bank, 2018). It is this collaboration that has to take advantage of the advanced training and technology that exist globally to improve the gathering of strategic information, analyse the same, and provide a quality end product in the form of information to be disseminated to the relevant authorities for the ultimate goal of making effective policies that will help in taking advantage of the economic opportunities that exist globally.

THE NEED FOR THE OVERSIGHT OF AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

Following our discussion above, there is no denying that intelligence services have an important role to play in Africa's social and economic development. However, as it has been pointed out by many other scholars (Kwadjo, 2009; Aldrich & Shiraz, 2019), there is a lot to be done to improve the performance of these institutions on the continent. Examples of misuse of their mandate have been reported in different parts of Africa. The regimes of President Hissène Habre of Chad, that of Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia (Pateman, 1992), and most recently that of the ousted president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, all used intelligence agencies to commit all kinds of crimes against humanity. These and other shortcomings call for the need to reform intelligence agencies on the continent so that they are positioned to contribute strategically to the social and economic development of the continent.

It has been observed that issues of accountability and oversight are being overlooked under the guise of secrecy and national security. It is not surprising that many intelligence agencies have no legal existence whatsoever (Kwadjo, 2009). It should be noted that I am not suggesting that intelligence agencies should not operate in such a manner that important information, their staff, and their operations are concealed. I am suggesting that, despite their secretive nature, ways should be found to make members of the public and other government branches hold them constructively accountable. If governments of advanced democracies like the US are faced with demands to make more efforts to improve oversight of intelligence agencies by Congress (The Hill, 2017), then Africa has to take this issue even more seriously as oversight of these institutions is, at best, superficial. Oversight must benefit the executive, intelligence agencies, and people (through the parliament). Moreover, oversight of intelligence agencies will ensure that these agencies observe the rule of law.

Additionally, oversight will enable members of the public to insert themselves in the value chain by discussing various issues, including what is a threat to security and how to address the threats, and will be able to hold them accountable to a reasonable extent (Africa & Kwadjo, 2009). It is also argued that "establishing mechanisms of regulation and accountability of intelligence services would be in the interests of both intelligence services—which would benefit from institutional legitimacy—and society more broadly, which would have dependable and non-partisan professional services to entrust their national security" (Kwadjo, 2009).

To achieve that, SSR must focus on enhancing the ability of different stakeholders to understand the functions of intelligence services and engage constructively without jeopardising national security. Oversight must carefully balance the need for these agencies to be accountable to the people through their elected representatives (Mallya, 2017) while maintaining the required independence and discretion to protect national

interests. Such a delicate balancing is only possible with SSR, which focuses on providing education to various stakeholders, particularly intelligence officers, the top leadership of intelligence, members of parliament, especially the intelligence oversight committee, and, in some circumstances, the general public (Buchere & Jonyo, 2011).

Ideally, reforms and oversight would institute a system that would make intelligence services accountable to the executive and parliament while at the same time isolating these institutions from abuse by political authorities or from within the institutions themselves. The goal of a functional system of democratic oversight is, accordingly, to provide enough oversight to ensure that intelligence is firmly under executive control while at the same time isolating intelligence from abuse by political authorities or from within the institution itself (Gill, 1994).

Further, reforms and oversight must ensure procedures exist that put legal limits on intelligence activities to ensure they serve the public interest within the rule of law (Gill, 1994). Finally, reforms and oversight will only work if intelligence officials are properly recruited, given a clear mandate to work with goals and objectives to achieve, and, importantly, their work is recognised by, among other things, remunerating them accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Africa needs to modernise its institutions to achieve socioeconomic development. The need to modernise and reform intelligence agencies is even more important given their role and the continent's multitude of challenges. If these institutions are reformed and properly monitored, they will potentially contribute to the social and economic development of the continent. Their contributions can range from reducing crime to improving political stability. This will help various countries in Africa compete for opportunities in the international arena compared to now. By harnessing these institutions' potential, Africa will have a greater chance of making progress and consequently achieving social and economic development for its people. This should be underscored by policymakers too.

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Easter and Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia: A reflection Through the Allegoric-Typological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the observance of Easter Day concerning the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. For this reason, an allegorical-typological approach is used to explain the theological meaning of the Easter celebration and the pandemic situation, both of which have spiritual meanings that need to be raised to the surface to become a reflection of the faith of God's people. Easter celebrations provide a catalyst for people to renew their spirituality and reorganise various aspects of Christ's followers' lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a change in mindset and new habits of life for the world community, including believers. The research data collection uses the literature study method, and the discussion uses an allegorical and typological approach. The findings indicate that interpreting Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, with all of its consequences, is a push to appreciate Christ's work, which saves people from death and restores human relationships with God, others, and the environment, as well as providing directions for Christians to practise spiritual discipline. The results of this research are also a suggestion for every follower of Jesus Christ to apply for spiritual reinforcement.

Keywords: Easter; Covid-19 Pandemic; Indonesia; Allegoric-Typological Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Easter is an important celebration for the church and is the biggest holiday besides Christmas, which is observed every year by all Christians around the world. The Easter celebration itself is celebrated as a moment to commemorate the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the basis of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:12–17). The commemoration of Easter Day is certainly an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which the spiritual meaning of the Easter event has been lived and applied by Christians in their daily lives. There is a difference in Easter celebrations compared to previous years when believers around the world are facing the *COVID-19 pandemic,* especially in Indonesia.

This pandemic has brought about a big change for the world community, especially in a very significant field, namely the field of education with the application of online learning (Kristanti et al., 2021), and online worship (Sastrohartoyo et al., 2021). These two virtual activities are unavoidable and have become a new way of life that the world community will continue to maintain, even when this pandemic ends. This is coupled with the rapid development of digital technology and the needs of society 5.0, which is commonly called the digital society of today, namely a society that is very adaptive to technological developments in all fields. People continuously depend on their work and their daily needs by taking advantage of technological developments that make human life easier and deserve to be maintained. For example, the ministry in the church uses science and technology or is dominated by online interactions as spiritual responses to serve God and others and is increasingly updating its technological tools to reach all people for Christ as a religious community (Parish, 2020).

Several studies have been carried out to provide a theological perspective on online worship, including the Easter service carried out by the church when facing social restrictions (social distancing) implemented by the Indonesian government to break the chain of the spread of *COVID-19* (Baloy & Pali, 2022; Dwiraharjo, 2020; Nainggolan & Purba, 2021; Sunarto, 2021; Widjaja et al., 2020). Research in terms of worship is also carried out about family-based church discipleship in the New Normal era as a substitute for online worship, which is considered less able to fulfil the spirituality of the people (Haryono, 2021).

All the research that has been carried out above is an effort made to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation through online worship, whether it is regular worship every Sunday, celebrations of Christian holidays such as Easter, fellowship in small groups, or onsite family-based fellowship during the pandemic. It is undeniable that Christians need spiritual support when facing the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed many lives. Easter commemoration is an important moment to be interpreted and used as a reflection for the church to increase the faith of the people. For this reason, this article aims to examine the theological meaning of Easter celebrations celebrated by Christians in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with an allegorical and typological approach, which can enrich the spiritual meaning of Easter celebrations concerning the pandemic. This celebration also serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and reorganisation of various aspects of life, as well as an opportunity to adopt a new mindset and set of life habits. The benefits are for the spiritual reinforcement of believers as followers of Christ.

METHOD

This article was written using the literature study method. Various pieces of literature relate to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in most of the cities in Indonesia. The meaning of Easter in the Bible will be studied and analyzed, both offline and online, in the form of books and scientific articles. The writing of this article is done by presenting the impact of the pandemic in most cities in Indonesia, which is correlated with the meaning of Easter. The article is written with a descriptive, logical, and systematic description to explain the connection between the meaning of Easter and the pandemic by using an allegorical interpretation approach, or another meaning that is higher than the literal meaning (Wijaya, 2017), and typology, namely linking people and past events with the present (Verdianto, 2020). The relationship between these two interpretive approaches is an allegory based on things outside the text (extratextual) and typology based on tracking between texts in the Bible (intertextual) (Yuliana, 2018) to maintain the objectivity of ideas in accordance with Bible teachings about the meaning of Easter.

RESULTS

COVID-19 Pandemic and Escape from Death

Historically, the Passover has been celebrated by the Jews since 1300 BC, which is recorded in the Book of Exodus and tells how the Israelites came out of slavery in Egypt. This story confirms how God chose Moses to lead a chosen nation out of slavery by giving punishments in the form of plagues, known as the 10 plagues in Egypt. At God's command, the Israelites celebrated the first Passover, with the blood of the lamb affixed to the upper lintels and the two doorposts of the Israelites' houses so that the firstborn of this people would be protected from the tenth plague (Exodus 12:1–28) (Green, 2012). The lamb that was sacrificed and whose blood protected the homes of the Israelites from the deadly plague is a typology (symbol) of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who died on the cross to escape and deliver His people from the threat of eternal death due to sin (John 1:29:3:16; Romans 6:23). The Apostle Paul referred to Christ as the Passover lamb that had been slain (1 Corinthians 5:7). Bread represents Christ's body, and wine represents Christ's blood.

Exodus 12:1-3 confirms that Easter is an initiative from God himself, with the goal of the Israelites celebrating Passover after being liberated from Egypt. Passover itself means "pass or not be disturbed" and comes from the Hebrew word "*Pesach,*" where at that time the angel of God was assigned to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians but passed through the house of the Israelites, who had been stained with the blood of the Passover lamb (Baker, 2016, p. 280). Passover itself is a feast appointed by God so that the Israelites remember the event of deliverance from Egypt. This celebration also aims to remember how God has done many terrible and miraculous things for the Israelites and will become an annual commemoration. This celebration also shows how the Israelites were redeemed by God because of the extraordinary love in God, which was manifested in His saving act for Israel, so that the power of his message was still effective and relevant three thousand years into the future.

When comparing the Old Testament Easter to the New Testament Easter, there is a common thread between the COVID-19 pandemic and Easter. This pandemic is a plague or epidemic that results in restrictions on the worship activities of God's people today, while Pharaoh restricts the Israelites from worshipping Yahweh until the Exodus event

occurs. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic killed or severely injured many people, and the events of Easter resulted in the deaths of all Egyptian firstborn children. Many people managed to escape death due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, as well as the Israelites, who managed to escape the plague of death that befell the firstborn of the Egyptians through the blood of the Passover lamb that was smeared on the doorsteps of every Israelite's house. Likewise, in the events of Easter in the New Testament, sinners escaped from eternal death due to sin (Romans 6:23) and God's wrath through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, whose blood was shed on the cross (Romans 5:9–10).

The COVID-19 pandemic that is sweeping the entire world has become a phenomenon that is seen as a disaster that God uses to educate His loved ones. This pandemic is something that causes hardship, loss, trials, suffering, panic buying (Hall et al., 2021), trauma (Shead, 2021), and the threat of death, not only for people around the world but also for His church. Through this Easter commemoration during the COVID-19 pandemic, the church is reminded of the great love and sacrifice of Christ and not to forget the forgiveness and escape from death that God has bestowed upon every believer through Christ's sacrifice. Easter during a pandemic is also a sign of the Son of Man, namely, Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the whole world.

Social distancing and relationship recovery

In this digital era, almost all people in the world have become slaves to technology. This automatically alters all of one's habits. Computers and the internet have become symbols and tools that regulate all human activities more in cyberspace, and as a result, relations between humans have become tenuous. The government's policy of implementing social distancing has an impact on many things. Many factories are closed, and people are working from home (Work from Home, or WFH). Many family members who previously rarely got together are now free to do activities together and have a pleasant experience at home. Worship activities are also carried out at home so that each family member can experience a more conducive family worship atmosphere. This condition is redirecting the tenuous relationship between family members.

The fact that this happened before the pandemic took place and how busyness eliminates the focus and purpose of human life without exception for Christians Families are no longer harmonious, and the role of parents as good educators begins to be eroded by busyness, and this has an impact on the younger generation. The universe becomes so sick, chaotic, and destroyed that humans can no longer carry out their main task of caring for His creation, which is marked by environmental destruction and factory and vehicle fumes that damage the earth's atmosphere so that global warming occurs, changes in the earth's climate, and infectious diseases both through water, food, and water, air pollution (Duarsa, 2008). In the pandemic era, Easter can be interpreted as a liberation event from the slavery of human life that pursues mortal goods and life's pleasures that lead to destruction and destruction. The pandemic has also brought about a restoration of relations between humans and God, the Creator, and even the universe, where the earth can breathe a sigh of relief because previously it was filled with a lot of smoke from ozone-depleting factories operating around the world (Selanno et al., 2021; Tudor et al., 2021).

The pandemic is an opportunity for God's people to reflect, adopt attitudes, and make decisions about how to interpret and view Easter, whether to renew faith and hope in life with Christ's grace and love (Gegel, 2021), or vice versa, they only focus on the problem of the pandemic. The choice is whether they want to be forced slaves like the

Israelites were enslaved by forced labour and “unfreedom due to the hustle and bustle of the world” so that they forget or lose the true meaning of life. Or is it getting closer to restoring relationships with God, others, and nature? Global warming is becoming a trigger for natural damage and resulting in pandemics where the church is held responsible for the environmental crisis (Tanhidy et al., 2022).

During this pandemic’s Easter holiday, confirms an experiment that resulted in more infections and harmed humans on a large scale (Diederichs et al., 2022).The church must examine itself in the mirror to determine whether it is imprisoned or free from slavery to sin. Easter in this pandemic period should be interpreted as a moment of liberation from all the busyness that imprisons faith and the restoration of damaged relationships with God, others, and nature so that they are readjusted to God’s glorious and beautiful design for this world. The pandemic during the Easter period should also awaken Christians to rely more on the love and power of Christ in living life in this world, living a new life in fellowship with Christ (Lewy & Tanhidy, 2019), which allows the church to be free from the shackles of sin, tyranny, and other things that are mortal.

This pandemic outbreak serves as a reminder for every believer to express love for themselves through acts of love for others. The highest measure of love is how a believer can love his neighbour as he loves himself (Matthew 22:39); moreover, that love is shown to fellow believers in Christ. In this way, everyone will know that when every follower of Christ loves one another, they are His disciples (John 15:1–17). This truth was confirmed by the Apostle John, who explained that the measure of a person’s love for God is marked by his love for his fellow believers; otherwise, he is a liar. This means that if a follower of Christ cannot love his visible brother, it is impossible to love the invisible God (1 John 4:20). God is the source of love, and every human being, if he surrenders himself to Him as the source of that love, will find it easier to love God. Therefore, the Apostle John said that the proof of a man’s love for God is that he loves his neighbor. The proof that God loves His people at this time is the culmination of the work of Jesus Christ’s salvation by dying on the cross. God first loved us, so we should love one another (1 John 4:11). This is emphasised by the Apostle Paul in explaining that the three essential things in the Christian life are faith, hope, and love, and among the three the greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The second commandment in the Golden Rules is God’s commandment to love one’s neighbour as oneself (Mark 12:31). Josh McDowell explained that if a person loves his neighbour with true love, that person will not kill him or steal his property, nor will he even commit adultery with him (Rom 13:9) (McDowell, 2002, p. 36). These are the divine attributes of the Christian who has lived a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The love that the Lord Jesus refers to is a love that is not limited, a love that is a concrete action as an expression of being able to help people in every individual believer’s life as he loves himself. Love like this is not limited by ethnicity, religion, or race but is an expression of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who first loved His church.

The moment to commemorate Easter with family at home can also be formed through various activities that can make the unity of each family member closer, for example, by conducting family prayer services and online worship. The goal is to reflect on the greatness of God’s love through Christ’s sacrifice. If the world only shows death due to COVID-19, then as Christians, we have a different perspective. Following the teachings of the Bible, as a follower of Christ, we believe that there is hope for eternal life based on the stability of faith in the face of the threat of death due to a pandemic because it already

belongs to God, Romans 14:8 (Lukito, 2020). Every family member can be strengthened in their faith through worshipping together at home, praying for each other, and meditating on God's words written in the Bible. Thus, it will lead to a restoration of relations between fellow family members, especially with Allah, the Creator. These two aspects, both physical and spiritual (theological), become a single unit or link to form the implementation of ethics in the family that encourages the growth of the church at the end (Tanhidy, Daliman, et al., 2021).

Easter celebrations for God's people during the COVID-19 pandemic and afterward have become a celebration to introspect themselves and a tool to reflect on the work of Christ's sacrifice which has brought salvation to Christians whom He loves and who should, as His people, feel the love and sacrifice of Christ as the essence of the Easter celebration actually is (Sidharta, 2013). Through it, the church should take part in diligently carrying out the Great Commission of Christ, namely preaching the gospel to the whole world, both through daily life testimonies at home and by using social media to communicate the gospel message during this pandemic. The church can become a diaconal church that is service-oriented, especially during Easter, to meet the immediate and tangible needs of the people, like food, shelter, medical care, and psychological support (Klaasen, 2020).

Health Protocols and Spiritual Discipline

To break the chain of transmission of COVID-19, the Indonesian government has implemented strict health protocols for the public, especially when travelling to public places such as markets, restaurants, malls, etc. The implemented Health Protocol includes the 3M slogans (wear masks, wash hands, keep distance).in its development, even up to 6M, which is wearing a mask, washing hands with soap under running water, keeping a distance, staying away from crowds, reducing mobility, and avoiding eating together (Ruswanto et al., 2021). All these rules are implemented to protect the public from the transmission of the deadly coronavirus.

The Health Protocol that must be followed by the community during this pandemic gives the meaning of "spiritual discipline" if it is reflected in the Christian life. Although according to Flora Slosson Wuellner (2015), the word "discipline" is less preferred, especially in referring to spiritual things, because the word "discipline" itself has a connotation of routine and is not suitable for matters related to spirituality. The word "discipline" comes from the Latin word discern, which means learning. It was then developed as the word discipline, which has the meaning of education and training. In English, it uses the word "disciple," which means follower or disciple. The spiritual discipline itself in Christianity is a spiritual exercise to build a personal relationship with God by obeying God's laws or commands, intending to increase the quality or maturity of the faith of a disciple of Christ (Istiono, 2021).

Spiritual discipline is obtained when having a close relationship with God and is a personal effort of a follower of Christ to want to imitate the lifestyle of Christ, which includes reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, and serving. In addition, spiritual discipline is also very much needed, especially in carrying out the task of preaching the gospel. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused community activities to be limited by the implementation of social distancing and has become a challenge for the church to be disciplined and consistently spread the good news, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is the church that has received the great mandate from Christ (Matthew 28:19–20) that is

required to be self-disciplined in spreading the teachings of God's word in the form of living testimony, teaching the word of God, and preaching the gospel of Christ so that as many people as possible can believe in Christ and become His people (Darmawan, 2019). With the development of science and technology, all forms of church activities will be carried out more online during the pandemic, and therefore social media is the right tool for building communication between churches and fellow believers and the wider community. This opens a wider way for expanding the outreach of the church's mission to proclaim the work of salvation in Christ across countries and cultures (Tanhidy, Natonis, et al., 2021). Therefore, what is needed by followers of Christ is a spiritual discipline in the form of consistency and faithfulness in showing a living testimony and spreading the gospel.

In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government implemented the Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). The government is trying to be able to provide the best service in terms of serving the community so that they can avoid COVID-19. Theologically, God's people are also called to submit and obey God's authority by learning self-control as a form of Christian learning or education as a result of the pandemic and post-pandemic (Wenas, 2016).Self-control is a form of the fruit of the Spirit that must be developed as a believer's spiritual practise in his daily life (Galatians 5:22–23). Spiritual practise with self-control in commemorating Easter can be interpreted as liberation from slavery to hedonism and subjugation of lust, restoration of relationships with God and others, and living the original love for Christ (Revelation 2:4).

If you look back before COVID-19 appeared, Christians were carried away with busyness at work every day, including church service activities as meaningless routines that did not prioritise personal relationships with God. The services are also focused on activities rather than on who is worshipped.In addition, every holiday that is commemorated is celebrated extravagantly and far from the simplicity that causes the meaning of death and suffering through the crucifixion of Christ to experience a decline in its original meaning. Easter has a deep meaning about the magnitude of God's love, the victory over death, the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of eternal life expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God, who is powerful and will judge the world in righteousness at the time of judgment. Didn't the Lord Jesus Himself say, "Isn't life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25b).

CONCLUSION

Celebrating Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to interpret the essence of Easter as taught by the Bible. How could celebrating Easter during this pandemic period, which is rich in spiritual meaning, not inspire Christians to live more honourably and in obedience to God's commands? The findings indicate that interpreting Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, with all of its consequences, is a push to appreciate Christ's work, which saves people from death and restores human relationships with God, others, and the environment, as well as directions for Christians to practise spiritual discipline. The results of this research are also a suggestion for every follower of Jesus Christ to apply to obtain spiritual reinforcement.

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Introduction to the Aesthetic Aspects of the Slovak Left-Wing Revue DAV

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This paper provides an encyclopaedic introduction to the presented topic, which will be expanded upon in the forthcoming book about DAV.

ABSTRACT

DAV (based on the initials of the first names of Daniel Okáli, Andrej Sirácky, and Vladimr Clementis) was a leftist journal produced by the group *Davisti* (young, left-wing Czecho-Slovak intellectuals) in Prague and Bratislava between 1924 and 1937, with intervals. DAV journal's concept combines avant-garde aesthetics with political lines. The DAV group in itself was not a writers' club but rather a free association of scholars who rejected Nazism during World War II. The Davists, through the DAV Journal, influenced the development of Marxism in Slovakia. The DAV group often discussed art, philosophy, literature, criticism, and politics. The DAV had a significant impact on the definition of philosophical and political concepts in Slovakia, as well as left-wing politics and modernist trends in the country's visual art and literature. The presented text expands on the short encyclopaedia article "DAV (The Crowd) – Slovak left-wing avant-garde group of the interwar period" (2021) and puts it into aesthetic contexts. This work used the context of Slovak aesthetician J. Migaová's work (a study on the influence of the New Objectivity and artistic modernity on socially critical art in interwar Slovakia) and M. Habaj's aesthetical analysis to analyse the first two issues of the DAV journal. This study primarily concentrated on the DAV journal's first two issues' representations of typical Slovak artistic modernism.

Keywords: Avant-garde art; modernity; left-wing periodicals; Slovak left-wing.

INTRODUCTION

"Avant-garde" is primarily a modernist term for a movement in art, culture, and politics that is at the forefront of ideas regarding their manner of expression and societal influence on daily life (Dewsbury, 2009). As a phrase, "Avant-garde" originates in the renaissance, when it was used to denote an advanced position in the arts. The particular objective of the "avant-garde" is to undermine and replace the current order. This is attempted through contrast, challenge, conflict, and self-assuredness (Pritzker & Runco, 2011).

During the French Revolution, "Avant-garde" association with Jacobin politics gave it the connotation of an attack against authority and institutions (Dewsbury, 2009). As it is usually understood in contemporary era, postmodernism is a movement that challenges and surpasses established frameworks for analysing the relationships between art, culture, and politics (Zilliacus, 2022). Simultaneously, the "avant-garde" is heterogeneous because it joins organisations with diverse backgrounds, contrasting with the moment's homogeneous dominant stance or status quo. Typically, an "avant-garde" group consists of a small number of individuals with diverse backgrounds and talents who collaborate just for the length of the innovative event or project that brought them together in the first place.

The DAV (avant-garde group; 1924–1937) was a Slovak leftist revue (journal) about art, philosophy, literature, and politics. In 1922, Daniel Okáli, Vladimr Clementis, and Ján Ponian launched the "Free Association of Students-Socialists from Slovakia" initiative, which led to the formation of the DAV (in Prague) (Baer, 2017). The DAV was greatly influenced by the Prague left-wing avant-garde (interaction with the Czech left-wing intelligence) (Perný, 2021). During the two World Wars, Prague's left-wing avant-garde authors dismantled the barrier between elite literary language and the vernacular and resorted to spoken language, substandard forms, daily sources like newspapers and detective narratives, and aspects of popular entertainment like the circus and the cabaret (Strożek, 2021).

The first issue of DAV journal appeared in 1924 with a cover designed by Mikulá Galanda. It was a quarterly periodical described as an artistic and political publication. The DAV presented modernist architecture and design, the Slovak form of surrealism (nadrealizmus – Rudolf Fábry), left-wing art criticism and Marxist aesthetics. DAV thematised social, political, but also ideological problems of interwar society. Important members of DAV were writers, poets, lawyers, critics, playwrights, scientists, composers, and politicians: Daniel Okáli, Ján Rob Poničan, Andrej Sirackỳ, Ladislav Novomeskỳ, Ladislav Szántó, Vladimír Clementis, Peter Jilemnickỳ, Eduard Urx, Jozef Tomášik-Dumín, Jarko Elen, Jozef Zindra; later, Gustáv Husák, Alexander Matuška, Michal Chorváth, Jozef Rybák, and Andrej Bagar, and others. The Czech avant-garde interwar scene strongly influenced DAV authors in visual arts and poetry – art groups like Devětsil and journal Pásmo, or other journals like *Host* or *Avantgarda*.

This work attempts to expose the DAV revue's representations of typical Slovak artistic modernism.

THE DAV REVUE AND SLOVAK ARTISTIC MODERNITY

According to Gasparec (1970), the DAV queries contain comments and observations on Slovakia's cultural orientation, the possibilities of developing Slovak revolutionary and communist literature, the Slovak national theatre, and similar topics incisive sociological comments as well as observations. The topic of DAV was systematically studied by authors

such as Š. Drug (Drug, 1964; Drug, 1965a; Drug 1965b; Drug, 1976; Drug, 1990), V. Plevza (Plevza, 1965), K. Rosenbaum (Rosenbaum, 1976), J. Rozner (Rozner, 1966), L. Knežek (Knežek, 1974), K. Csiba (Csiba, 2017), P. Kerecman (Kerecman, 2016) and M. Habaj (Habaj 2017). Some books, studies, texts and the DAV issues and books by DAV authors are digitized and available online (https://monoskop.org/DAV and https://davdva.sk/odporucame/).

When discussing the aesthetic component (visual dimension of the DAV revue design), the international context that connects it must not be overlooked:

1. The influence between Prague and Slovakia-Bratislava; with Hungary (texts of avant-garde theorist and poet Lajos Kassák published in DAV),
2. Feedback with French culture (paintings by Frans Masereel in the first issue of DAV; controversy with French poetry),
3. with Russian avantgarde (Okali's appeal to Mayakovsky in the DAV 1924; mentions of Mejerchold, Mayakovsky, Erenburg in DAV 1925/1),
4. with German avantgarde (especially art of the New Objectivity – aesthetics of experience with urban culture in the form of satirical and social-critical images based on aestheticization of visuality of – bourgeois entertainment, nightlife, social periphery and poverty, prostitution, murders, political criticism (paintings by Otto Dix, Georg Grosz – published in DAV revue) (See more: Migašová, Habán, 2019).

The most significant evidence of Slovak modernism was the non-academic type of school – in a relation to the Bauhaus (See more: Susanne, 1998; Mojžišová, 1987; Mojžišová, 2013) represented by M. Galanda and L. Fulla (School of Arts and Crafts, 1928–1939) (See photos 1 and 2) in Bratislava and Eugen Krón on the other hand (Košice Modernism and Krón's drawing school, 1921–1927) in Košice (See more: Bartošová, Lešková, 2013; Kiss, Szemán, 2010; Lešková, 2013).

J. Migašová emphasizes that even though Slovakia was on the periphery of centres of artistic modernity (such as Munich, Berlin, Budapest, and Paris), elements and manifestations of European avant-garde can be found in two centres of Slovak culture – Košice and Bratislava – where these manifestations had their own, autonomous development (Migašová, Habán, 2019). The author of the cover of the DAV revue was M. Galanda (with the alias La Ganda) (See photo: 4), who, together with Ľ. Fulla created the artistic identity of the DAV revue. They collaborated with DAV members through books, posters, and bulletins; for example, Fulla illustrated a book by Ján Rob Poničan before the formation of the DAV and Galanda created drawings for Novomeský's debut poetry book. The Revue also contains the first Slovak attempt at modernist typography, the equivalent of which can be found in the Czech avant-garde (*Host*, *Pásmo*).

The DAV was part of the manifestations of Slovak modernism, which was closely connected with Prague. The DAV was created by authors from Slovakia (partially living in Prague) and the first issue was published in Prague. The first issue was to declare a clear, aesthetically and ideologically oriented revue of the Slovak revolutionary avant-garde. The DAV replaced the magazines *Mladé Slovensko* (Young Slovakia) and *Spartakus*. Furthermore, Habaj (2017) writes,

> The aesthetic efforts of the DAV always have a social and political character, they do not limit their impact to the literary and artistic context. (...) DAV defines itself aesthetically (new art vs traditionalism) and politically (communism vs conservativism and bourgeois outlook, internationalism vs. nationalism). The original and translated poetry and prose production as

> well as fine art build on the context of European avant-garde (Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism) and Proletarian poetry. The core of the DAV´s avant-garde stance is most clearly revealed within cultural journalism in its political attacks and provocations aimed at cultural tradition, bourgeois conservativism and bourgeois society… (p. 269).

D. Okáli's text – with the motto "Not an artistic program! An artistic act!" – represents a pamphlet article of the DAV on social-revolutionary art. Ideologically, (D. Okáli) finds the function of art and culture in the revolutionary rebirth of society, a radical split with tradition (criticism of bourgeois ideology, clericalism, capitalism, and individualism), referring to Trotsky (art as a means of changing the economic establishment and helping to achieve political power). These attitudes were later modified in the DAV community toward a revolutionary left-wing patriotism by Novomeský (Marx and Slovak nation), Clementis (Slovdom then and now), Husák (The Revolution Generation), Púll (120 years of grand tradition) and Šefránek (Štúr's work must be defended) (Drug, 1990; Sojková, 2008).

Okáli considers art to be a "sociological manifestation" (which refers to the intended purpose of social policies, procedures, or acts that are intentionally and deliberately meant to be positive in their influence on society). Okáli demands class and social expediency from art. However, this should not be applied by the intellect; on the contrary, it must be of authentic origin, "experienced" and "felt". Okáli further calls for "*… an effort for an artistic synthesis, which will be formed from constructivist elements and linked into a living and socially effective whole by revolutionary ideology*" (1925, p. 6).

Other studies (in the second issue of the DAV revue) are also devoted to the theory of art: an article by M.Klimanov titled "Definition of proletarian art" and another text by B. Tilkovszky titled "The World Crisis of Art." The political line (in the first issue of the DAV revue) – as Habaj summarises – is represented by Clementis's studies (on the national question and the ideology of the agrarian party), A. Križka's article titled "Fighting for Freedom of Speech", A. Kojnok's article about law and social classes, Obtulovič's analysis of the economic crisis in Slovakia, Poničan's article about the relationship between intelligence and the proletariat, and the pamphlet Fighting for crowds in Slovakia signed by the collective brand – "DAV".

Individual authorship in the avant-garde context transforms into the principle of revolutionary collectivism, as M. Habaj (2017) emphasises; this is reflected in articles by authors such as Okáli and Sirack, anonymous articles (the authors used pseudonyms), and collective articles or poetry (For example, texts like *Pamphlet, Annoying speech, Flag of the Himalayas*) – signed as DAV (THE CROWD). This collectivism—according to J. Migašová—is based on reflections on collective art by L. Kassák, and also under the influence of J. Wolker, K. Teige (Teige redefined the concept of folk art) and early Devětstil (Migašová, 2021). The avant-garde form of aesthetics manifests itself primarily in poetry—experimental typography, Cubo-futuristic form (an avant-garde art movement that arose in the 1910s as an outgrowth of European Futurism and Cubism), expressionist imagery, artworks of New Objectivity and proletarian ideas. According to Habaj (2017):

> The revolutionary poem, using elements of collage and montage, with striking, slogan-like verses expressing cries, appeals and commands, is set in various typefaces and represents a productive experiment typographically and on the level of expression and form… As a whole, it

> represents a hybrid poetics combining cubo-futuristic form, expressionist imagery and a proletarian idea…" (p. 275) (Authors translation from *Slovak* to English).

The authors also respond to theatre, film, and architecture. The aesthetic dimension of the DAV revue magazine also consists of critical and analytical articles on art theory. The publication of non-Slovak authors also shows the international dimension of the DAV revue:

1. The Czech poet and literary critic J. Hora,
2. The German-speaking writer from Prague, F. C. Weiskopf,
3. The Hungarian writer and theoretician of the avant-garde, L. Kassák.

The avant-garde connection included not only articles and poetic creation, typography, graphics, and the design of the DAV revue (See photo 8), but also, as, Migaová points out, the use of paintings by the authors Dix and Grosz.

German authors' works were complemented by Slovak authors (Fulla, Galanda) and painters like Masereel or Chagall. In Grosz's work, Urx (1925) identifies "revolutionary drawing in a kind of negative sense" (p. 32). Habaj (2017) also notes:

> The second issue is illustrated by drawings by Georg Gross and Otto Dix depicting the urban space of Berlin and the social reality of the Weimar Republic of the 1920s with motifs of prostitution, poverty and hunger, skilled soldiers, unbridled debauchery and sexual orgies, corpulent bankers, escaping the lord and the impoverished proletariat (p. 278).

Migašová justifies the presentation of the paintings by Dix and Gross in the DAV revue with the need to declare an artistic paradigm and revolutionary proletarian discourse (Migašová, 2018) (See photos: 5, 6, 7). Václavek also finds German influence in terminology, the inclusion of expressionism, cubism, and purism (Václavek, 1972). The DAV revue focused mostly on German, Russian, and Hungarian avant-garde artists. During its early years, the revue DAV focused on avant-garde left-wing art and cultural politics, later expanding its attention to broader political, social, economic, and ideological issues. According to Drug (1965a), the once literary-artistic magazine transformed into a cultural-political and then blatantly political publication.

The first issues of DAV journal (DAV 1/1924, 2/1925, and 3/1926) were characterised by a strong artistic expression, while the numbers after the interruption of publishing (1929) represented a new form (from revue to magazine). The DAV began to be published again only in 1931 in a new form (the political dimension dominated). While the first numbers of the DAV revue were oriented mainly towards the Western avant-garde, later years tended towards open sympathy for the Soviet Union (as Csiba and Drug notice) (Csiba, 2017) – inquiry about the cultural orientation of Slovakia, Erenburg's articles, reports from the Soviet Union, and the inquiry with Slovak writers (Tido J. Gašpar, Ivan Horváth, Emil B. Lukáč, Dušan Makovický, Milo Urban) about the Soviet Union. The sympathy for the Soviet Union is also documented by Clementis (1931) quote: "*The USSR has set out to build a new world, that societies are at a historic boundary and before the demise of capitalism that everyone wants, albeit for various reasons*." (p. 10). In later years (Drug recalls that in 1931), there was also a split (within the DAV) in opinions about relations to the position of Slovakia between the Slovak and Czech parts of Czechoslovakia (the controversy between Urx and Poničan) (Csiba, 2017).

The topic of the right of nations to self-determination comes to the fore, which will later influence the further development of DAV members in the history of Czechoslovakia

(Olbracht, 1931; Clementis, 1933; Clementis, 1935). There is also a reassessment of the tradition of originally radical anti-traditionalist attitudes to the search for revolutionary continuity in the national movements of the 19th century (Novomeský, Clementis, Husák, Púll, Šefránek). Csiba also discovers a diversity of attitudes toward literature in the later development of DAV, which he analyzes, for example, in an article on F. X. Šalca. Later DAV issues (DAV III/1, IV/8, 11; VI/1, 2) also include entire passages of texts by or about Hegel, Stalin, Marx, Engels, and Lenin. In the 1930s, DAV was also dominated by a robust antifascist motive (anti-militarist and antifascist articles; antifascist cartoons and collages; articles against antisemitism, organization of a congress of writers against fascism by DAV members with Slovak writers; involvement in the Spanish Civil War (Issues DAV III/1, 4-5, IV/11, V 1, 2-3; DAV V/6, 7, 11).

The DAV (Issues DAV IV/5–6, 7) also responds to the social situation in Czechoslovakia after the economic crisis (the strike in Košúty or sociological reports on the situation in Czechoslovakia). The aesthetic dimension of late DAV has been greatly simplified, but interestingly, later issues were often used satirically as collages, responding to the political situation, photographs with social themes (especially from reports); parodying of Slovak clericals, militarism, fascism, and right-wing politicians (see photo 9; some cartoons and photos have been censored; see photo 10). The authors' experimentation with different fonts, designs, text wrapping, underlined passages, alternative advertisements, and posters for left-wing literature and politics continues. The DAV disappeared in the 1930s. Later, the writers organise the Slovak National Uprising in the underground.

Kněžek (1974) averred that during the war the members of DAV prepared an armed national uprising-Jilemnický and Urx in illegal work in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, F. Kráľ in the Bratislava underground communist movement, Novomeský and Husák at the head of the V. illegal leadership of the communist party, and Clementis in exile (where he called for resistance on the radio and fought a political struggle for the future post-war arrangement of Czechoslovakia).

CONCLUSION

The presented text in encyclopaedic brief represents, on the one hand, the aesthetic dimension of the periodical DAV and, on the other hand, the ideological and political development of the whole project. DAV has significantly influenced the development of Slovak culture, art, and politics, so regardless of political views and attitudes, it is necessary to recall its importance to Slovak culture. The task of the presented text was not only to present the DAV to the world audience but also to point out the high artistic expression of this project.

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***GNOSI:* An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis**
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Editorial

GNOSI'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2022

Gnosi: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis is celebrating its fifth year of publication. Over the past five years, the journal has worked to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding theoretical, methodological, and firmly theoretically based empirical papers that contribute to a cross-disciplinary debate within the Humanities and Social Sciences in both English and French languages. By every metric, Gnosi Journal's online publication has been a success: there has been a constant growth in readership, article submissions, and citations to the published papers. Nevertheless, Gnosi Journal has also evolved in other tangible ways as well: its reputation and visibility in the academic world have risen, and the editorial board is continually reassessing and revising the editing process to provide the most efficient and rewarding experience for both authors and readers. Thus, Gnosi Journal is able to celebrate its fifth anniversary owing to the authors' collaboration, the editorial team's hard work, and the enthusiasm of its readers, and it is expected that this tripartite support will continue in the future.

Over the last five years (between 2018 and 2022 volumes and issues), Gnosi Journal's authors have been geographically represented by twenty-six (26) countries. This country includes:

1. Algeria
2. Australia
3. Brazil
4. Cameroon
5. Czech Republic
6. Egypt
7. France
8. Ghana
9. India
10. Indonesia
11. Italy
12. México
13. Malaysia
14. Mozambique
15. Nigeria
16. Philippines

17. Saudi Arabia
18. Senegal
19. South Africa
20. Slovakia
21. Spain
22. Sri Lanka
23. Tanzania
24. Turkey,
25. United Kingdom
26. United States.

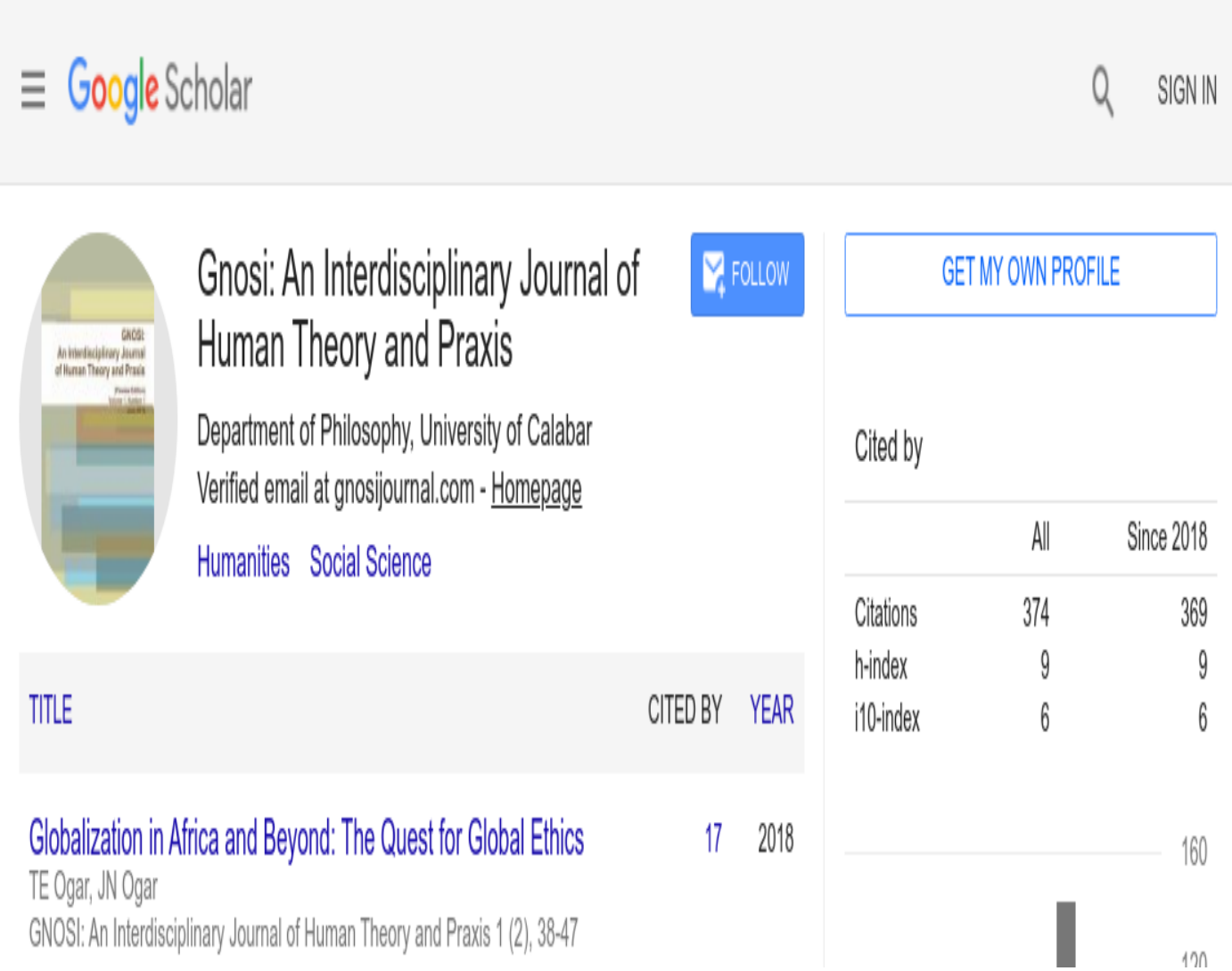
Nigerian authors' articles have been the most published in Gnosi Journal during the last five years (2018–2022), followed by authors from Indonesia and the Philippines. On the other hand, African countries had the greatest author presence in 2022 (Volume 5, Issues 1 and 2), with around seven (7) countries spread across Western, Southern, Northern, and Eastern Africa.

African writers, particularly in the humanities, have sometimes been at a disadvantage in recent years, particularly when publishing in renowned journals indexed in either Scopus or the Web of Science database. This is attributable, for example, to the fact that only a few African-based publications are indexed in the Scopus database. According to the **Scimago Journal and Country Rank** (https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=1200&country=Africa), only 20 journals of African origin are included on Scopus in the arts and humanities categories as of December 15, 2022. According to the data on the **Scimago Journal & Country Rank** (https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=1200&country=Africa), there are thirteen (13) journals of South African origin in the Arts and Humanities category; Egypt has four (4) journals represented; Nigeria has two (2) journals; and Tunisia has one (1) journal represented, which account for a total of twenty (20) journals. However, in the social science domain, the numbers of African journals are much more encouraging.

Africa has the second largest population by continent (1.4 billion according to https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/continents-by-population.php), and yet it is underrepresented in scholarly literature according to the **Scimago Journal and Country Rank** in the field of arts and humanities compared to other regions. This problem may be related to the quality of research conducted by African scholars within the discipline. Likewise, it can also be based on the fact that African methodologies, concepts, and theories are not known internationally. As a result, African authors' manuscripts are often rejected by high-impact journals that originate outside the African continent for the following reasons: lack of reviewers with adequate understanding of African methodologies, concepts, and theories; bias associated with the subject matter of discussion, which is not popular within scholarly research in the arts and humanities. Thus, African journals in the arts and humanities domain must endeavour to meet both the Scopus and Web of Science requirements and standards for inclusion. This will be of extreme benefit to both African authors and the development of African literature in the arts and humanities. This will also help to increase the visibility of new ideas and

philosophies of diverse African cultural worldviews emanating from Africans in Africa. This has been one of the major goals of Gnosi Journal since its inception. Thus, while Gnosi journal is international in scope, work properly supporting African concepts, theories, and points of view that are less well known in world literature is strongly welcomed in 2023. This also applies to texts written by scholars outside the centre of the world's socioeconomic system, which allows for direct dialogue without the need for mediation from the core.

Gnosi journal has strived to be an internationally recognised journal as well as one of the top journals in terms of the publication of quality articles originating from the African continent since the release of its first issue in 2018. Authors from the 26 diverse countries listed above provide evidence of Gnosi Journal's international diversity. Furthermore, citation analysis from the Google Scholar database (**a total of 374 citations, 9 h-index, and 6 i-10-index**) attests to the quality of the publications cited between June 2018 and December 2022.



(Source - https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=02dbFuUAAAAJ&hl)

In terms of published work on Gnosi Journal, as shown in Table 1 below, the number of submissions to Gnosi Journal has grown drastically under the current circumstances. 116 articles were submitted to Gnosi Journal in 2022 (through the OJS portal and email submission), representing a 52.63% increase over the submission in 2021, despite the fact that the 2021 publications contained three issues (two regular issues and a special issue), compared to only two regular issues in 2022. Thus, the acceptance rate for papers in Gnosi Journal has been steadily falling as the number of submitted articles has increased. The slide is also expected to continue as the number of submissions increases. However, the actual acceptance rate for the year 2022 is difficult to compute since some manuscripts submitted within the year are still in "the process," particularly those with the status "Accept with major revisions," which are in the revision process and must be peer-reviewed again before a final decision is reached.

Manuscripts for both review and published articles were received from 15 countries (Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, India, Mozambique, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tanzania, Slovakia, and the United States), as indicated in Table 2. Table 2 also shows that the bulk of manuscript submissions and accepted papers in 2022 came from authors in Nigeria and Indonesia. Table 3 lists the top 14 articles read and downloaded from our official website in 2022, showing the overall number of views per paper in the year.

TABLE 1:

ANNUAL NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS ACCEPTED AND REJECTED BY GNOSI JOURNAL			
Year	2020*	2021**	2022***
Submitted	62	76	116
Rejected	24	35	67
Accepted	38	41	30
In Process	0	0	19

* The year 2020 had three issues (two regular issues and one special issue).
** The year 2021 had three issues (two regular issues and one special issue).
*** The year 2022 had only two issues (two regular issues).

TABLE 2: The top countries of authors from which articles were accepted to be published in *Gnosi Journal*

	NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS FOR THE YEAR 2022		
	Countries	**Number of Manuscript Received**	**Number of Manuscript Published**
1.	Nigeria	44	6
2.	Indonesia	22	6
3.	Philippines	12	4
4.	Brazil	4	2
5.	Malaysia	5	2
6.	Saudi Arabia	3	1
7.	Spain	2	1
8.	Mozambique	5	1

9.	South Africa	3	1
10.	India	6	1
11.	Cameroon	3	1
12.	Tanzania	1	1
13.	Slovakia	1	1
14.	United States of America	5	1
15.	Sri Lanka	4	1

TABLE 3: Top 10 articles viewed and downloaded from *Gnosi* Journal official website

Article Details 30 of 162 articles

Title	Search by title, author and ID	Abstract Views	File Views	PDF	HTML	Other	Total
Chiekezie et al. The Significance of Audio-Visual Aids in Teaching of English Vocabulary		1040	485	485	0	0	1525
Udoudom The Value of Nature: Utilitarian Perspective		988	506	506	0	0	1494
Munir et al. Students' Attitudes on Blended Learning-Based Instruction in Indonesian EFL Classroom		732	606	606	0	0	1338
Abakare The Origin Of Virtue Ethics: Aristotle's Views		719	526	526	0	0	1245
Dursun et al. The Value of Nature: Virtue Ethics Perspective		717	512	512	0	0	1229
Capacite School-Based Management Practices as Predictors of School Performance in Public Elementary Schools amid the Pandemic		420	636	636	0	0	1056
Ravikanth Indian Philosophy and Environmental Ethics		722	332	332	0	0	1054
Inyang et al. Development Communication Process and Theories: An Overview		532	422	422	0	0	954
Kabigting The The Discovery and Evolution of the Big Five of Personality Traits: A Historical Review		556	381	381	0	0	937
Ogar et al. Globalization in Africa and Beyond: The Quest for Global Ethics		505	352	352	0	0	857
Noroña A Comparative Analysis on the Status of Laboratory Resources And Science Process Skills of Grade 11 Learners in The Schools Division of Eastern Samar, Philippines		513	322	322	0	0	835
Operario Managerial Competencies, Financial Management, and Level of Liquidation Practices of Secondary School Administrators		438	300	300	0	0	738
Munna et al. Impact of Active Learning Strategy on the Student Engagement		424	194	194	0	0	618
Ishak et al. Competitiveness of Public Services, Non-Formal Education Institutions Center of Education Indonesia		325	277	277	0	0	602

It is also worth noting that, since 2020, when Gnosi Journal became a major sponsor and partner (https://iseser.com/sponsors) for the ISESER 2020 conference in Manisa, Turkey, as well as the ISESER 2021 conference in Tirana, Albania, the journal has been able to source quality editorial board members from 15 countries, including Albania, Estonia, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. This adds yet another global quality to Gnosi Journal and demonstrates the high calibre of the reviewing process. Gnosi Journal has also partnered with a lot of local conferences and is a member of both the Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA) and the Nigerian Association of Intercultural Values and Indigenous Environmental Ethics (IVIE).

As the main prospect for 2023, Gnosi Journal will further focus on attracting more high-quality submissions and qualified reviewers from around the world and would like to make the journal more visible through different channels, especially indexing. Gnosi Journal aims to promote the journal at an international level, with the hope that the expansion of the journal's visibility will help increase the citations and get the journal indexed in both the Web of Science (clarivate) and Scopus databases. Thus, Gnosi Journal will be applying for indexing in both Web of Science (clarivate) and Scopus early in the year 2023. Gnosi Journal has already achieved the following indexing: Google Scholar, Google Metrics, Index Copernicus, BASE, MLA International Bibliography, EZ3, and more recently, approval for the journal's inclusion in EBSCOhost.

For the year 2023, Gnosi Journal will be hosting a special issue on the "Russia-Ukraine War and its Impact on the World's Economy" (the title may slightly change depending on the final approval). The Journal's editorial theme is currently reviewing two separate proposals on the Russia-Ukraine war. With this special issue, Gnosi journal hopes to achieve more visibility, journal and editorial diversity, as well as quality research on the subject matter. Furthermore, the journal expects to gain a significant number of authors from the French-speaking West and East African countries. This is already evident, as out of the nineteen (19) papers still listed as "in process" in the year 2022, eleven (11) are from authors in French-speaking African countries. This is made possible because some members of the Gnosi Journal editorial board and the Gnosi research group have been able to advertise the journal by distributing flyers at some major conferences and workshops within the regions. Also, Gnosi Journal is currently working towards sponsoring some conferences and workshops in the regions with ***Mendeley*** in 2023.

Currently, Gnosi Journal relies on a publication fee of $50 as well as the annual dues (of $100 and irregular special funding from the Gnosi Research Group (University of Calabar) and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Calabar, Nigeria, to cover the journal's expenses (publication as well as academic sponsorship). The journal will be seeking to make publication free-of-charge for authors coming from French-speaking West and East African countries, as they are considered the least advantaged in Africa in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Also, in the future, once Gnosi Journal is able to secure some sponsorship from either the Nigerian Ministry of Education or other educational agencies, the editorial board intends to make publication free-of-charge to all authors.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone on the Gnosi editorial team, particularly the managing editor, subject editors, and advisory board. My heartfelt thanks also go to all of the international and national reviewers who provided feedback on Gnosi Journal papers received. I would like to thank the department of philosophy at the University of Calabar, Nigeria, as well as the University of Calabar, Nigeria, for all of their advice and support. I hope for more and better collaboration in 2023. In advance, best wishes for the New Year.

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